The Ritual Year and History

THE RITUAL YEAR 3

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE
OF THE SIEF WORKING GROUP ON THE RITUAL YEAR

STRÁŽNICE, CZECH REPUBLIC
MAY 25-29, 2007

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Front cover: The Ride of the King, Vlčnov, Czech Republic. © Institute for Language and Folklore, Uppsala, Sweden. Photo by Johanna Stählberg, 2007.

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The members of the SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year
in the Open-Air Museum of the Southeast-Moravian Village, Strážnice,
Czech Republic, 26 May, 2007
Photo by Elena Berezovich

Contents

2. TRANSITION AND INITIATION

3. THE RITUAL YEAR AND FOLK RELIGION

Editorial

This volume contains papers given at the third international conference of the SIEF working group on The Ritual Year which was held at Stražnice in the Czech Republic on 25-29 May 2007. One of the eight commissions under the aegis of SIEF (The International Society for Ethnology and Folklore), the Ritual Year group was established at the 8th SIEF Congress in April 2004 in Marseilles. In August 2004 in Edinburgh there followed an inaugural meeting at which Emily Lyle was elected President and the committee was formed. The first annual conference was held in Malta (20-24 March 2005) and the second in Gothenburg (7-11 June 2006).

The third conference went under the general title "The Ritual Year and History", which tackles one of the core problems in cultural anthropological studies of the calendric cycle(s). This theme in different aspects was touched on during the previous symposia on the ritual year and certainly will remain a topical subject in the future.

It was one of the intentions of the organisers of this conference held in the Czech Republic to attract the attention of more scholars from Central and Eastern Europe and to learn more about the ritual year and its historical changes in the countries located there. As a result 36 scholars from 18 countries gave contributions on various aspects of the ritual year. Not all the papers presented at the conference are included in this publication, but the papers not submitted for various reasons were valuable and vividly discussed in the sessions. The powerpoint presentation on the Estonian multi-media programme concerning calendar rites (Andres Kuperjanov and Mare Kõiva) had a special meaning for the development of the Ritual Year group. The substantial discussion on how to preserve, use and present folklore and ethnological data with the help of computers turned out to be very fruitful, since digital sources have taken an important place among other types of data used by cultural anthropologists, ethnologists and folklorists. New sites and digital archives relating to the ritual year will be presented and discussed at future conferences.

This volume consists of four parts. Part 1 contains articles on the correlation between ritual and history, which is seen as a set of facets. There are two major perspectives on history, which are discussed in the articles presented. The first one, touched on by Emily Lyle in her opening address, is the incorporation of historical events into the calendar from that point onwards, celebrating the date in the future. The other approach is a retrospec-

tive one – from the present backwards, into the past, searching for a suitable event for ideological, political and/or religious needs. This raises an important issue concerning the role of the epoch in which the event has taken place. The change of epochs, regimes (and leading political and religious figures) brings in new rituals, the rethinking of heritage and an inventing of tradition with a restructuring of the ritual year. Thus the whole ritual year, a single ritual or a part of one (performance, folklore, magic object, art object), are subject to historical transformations. The modern state of the ritual year reflects the new values of the consumer society and its choice of festivities and celebrations. Many rituals like processing and masking, drama and games have socio-historic allusions.

Part 2 consists of articles on transition and initiation – a cross-cutting issue of all the conferences on the ritual year. The papers track these crucial notions in a wide historical, and geographical context, from ancient Greece to modern Austria and from Udmurtia to Scotland. The parallels between life and calendar customs, or the correlation between personal, natural and cultural calendars, are also investigated in this part.

Part 3 discusses the ritual year from the point of view of folk religion. The days of the Christian saints (St Savva in Serbia), holidays (St George's Day in Hungary, Christmas in Sweden), processions (the Twelve Days' masking in the Republic of Macedonia) and calendric weatherlore (Sweden) incorporated in the ritual year reveal the tight convergence of church and folk attitudes.

Part 4 presents an outline of the traditional Czech and Slovak ritual year, a comparative analysis of prominent religious figures in modern official ritual discourse and a panorama of the Slovak open air museum in Martin.

In preparing the set of papers for this volume, I have been extremely grateful to Board Members, Emily Lyle, Nancy McEntire, David Stanley and Elizabeth Warner, for their great help with the editing of the texts, including revising the English.

The conference, apart from discussing key issues of the correlation between the ritual year and historic events, epochs and personalities marked an important stage in the history and development of the group itself. At the closing session the participants decided to launch a series of annual volumes which will follow the conferences. The title for the series is "The Ritual Year" which adequately and accurately reflects the major field of research of the scholars in our SIEF group. We are "incorporating" the previous conferences making the proceedings published out of the series run as the first two volumes:

The Ritual Year 1: *Proceedings of the First International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year.* Malta: Publishers Enterprises Group (PEG) Ltd., 2006.

The Ritual Year 2: *The Ritual Year and Ritual Diversity. Proceedings of the Second International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year.* Elanders, Välingby: Institutet för Språk och Folkiminnen Dialekt-, Ortnamns- och Folkminnesarkivet i Göteborg, 2007.

The venue and the time of the third conference were chosen partly with the aim of seeing the famous well-preserved Moravian ritual "The Ride of the Kings" in Vlčnov, Czech Republic. (A presentation on this ritual was read by Jan Rychlík of Charles University, Prague, at the conference in Gothenburg in 2006 and published in *The Ritual Year* 2, pp. 327-331.) This ritual procession has many historical allusions, and so fitted very well with the general theme of the conference.

The cover of this volume is a wonderful memory of the live ritual witnessed by the conference group. On Sunday, the 27th of May, early in the morning, the group was taken to Vlčnov where the Ride of the Kings took place. First the principal participants in the festival (all the boys and girls who had reached the age of 18) in beautiful regional costume were blessed in the church, then the boys with the help of their relatives decorated their horses with flowers and then they went to get "the King" – a boy of 12 years old, from a reputable family. The procession passed through the whole town, while the King disguised in girl's garments kept silence, holding a rose in his mouth. The older boys called out short rhymes, asking for money, as they rode along. Meanwhile many smaller and bigger orchestras, ensembles and choirs were performing in all the streets of the town. The members of the conference group were invited to a reception by the mayor of Vlčnov, who told us the history of this festival.

The cultural programme was very rich so as to give a closer look at the ritual life of the Czechs. Apart from the Ride of the Kings, the participants in the conference had a tour round Strażnice Castle (where the conference took place), an excursion to one of the oldest European skansens – the Wallachian Open Air Museum, Rožnov pod Radhoštěm – and a short guided tour in the famous as "The Fortress of Culture" town of Uherské Hradiště.

The Ritual Year group had a wonderful opportunity to get acquainted with the history of wine-making in Moravia during the opening reception in a wine cellar and with local music traditions at the closing dinner in the castle.

The organising committee and all the participants are most grateful to the host of the conference – the National Institute of Folk Culture in Strážnice, Dr. Jan Krist - and the staff of the castle (NULK). Our special

thanks go to Dr Vlasta Ondrušová, who put all her effort to make the conference run smoothly and our stay in Moravia unforgettable.

When this volume was almost ready, we received tragic news. An esteemed member of the Ritual Year SIEF group committee, one of its founders Dr George Mifsud-Chircop died on 19 December 2007 after a short illness. It was George who presented the plans of the Ritual Year group in Marseilles and then reported that the group was affirmed. George's willingness to take on the organising of the first conference took the members of the Ritual Year group to Malta for an unforgettable time rich in academic discussions and cultural information on the ritual year in this country. The proceedings of the conference in Malta which George compiled and edited also marked the beginning of the new activity in the frame of the Ritual Year group. We will keep warm and vivid memories of our colleague and dear friend, whose contribution is also presented in this volume.

Irina Sedakova

Secretary of the SIEF Ritual Year Working Group

EMILY LYLE
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Opening Address: The Incorporation of Crisis Rituals and Historical Events in the Annual Cycle

A historical event, by definition, occurs only once and any particular crisis becomes a historical event after it is over, although it may well belong to a category that recurs. To take three of the most common crises – famine, plague and adverse weather conditions – these are likely to occur from time to time, but particular cases can be dated, like, for example, the Great Plague of London in 1665, which was immediately followed, incidentally, by another crisis, the Great Fire of London in 1666, after which the extensive remodelling of the city took place, including the building of St Paul's Cathedral designed by Sir Christopher Wren.

Although a crisis in the past is a historical event, it seems worth while to mention crisis as a distinct type of historical event since it can be the subject of a ritual performance, and this ritual performance can be compared to the performances set between seasons in the annual cycle. Thomas DuBois, in a recently published paper, has looked at the relationship between crisis rituals and year-cycle rituals and has come up with the finding that Christianity, more than the other world religions, has downplayed sporadic crisis rituals and emphasised the efficacy of regular liturgical activity throughout the year. He says (2006:74-75):

> Medieval Christianity emphasized seasonal rituals, to the extent that crisis rituals hardly existed at all. In fact, often former crisis rituals – such as the Greater and Lesser Litanies (Vauchez 1993:129-139; [1987: 145-155]) – had become transformed into seasonal rituals over time... Fixing petitions to an annual calendar decreased their sense of connection with the immediate needs of the community, allowing for a more generalized view of God's ongoing care for his people and avoiding the appearance of asking for favors. On the administrative plane, annual celebrations created a powerful sense of unity. Thus, crisis rituals came to be subsumed into the seasonal calendar: entreaties for luck in planting, livestock husbandry, or health becoming attached to existing feast days and saints rather than arising spontaneously as events might dictate.

DuBois refers to a study of the Greater and Lesser Litanies by André Vauchez. These litanies were related to historical crises in 590 AD (floods and an epidemic in Rome) and c. 458-470 AD (fire and devastation in Vienne) and were caught up into the Catholic liturgical calendar on St Mark's Day (25 April) and the three Rogation Days before Ascension Day.

Each case serves as a commemoration, not so much perhaps of a crisis, as of the control of a crisis or, as one might say, of the victory over a crisis. This can also be expressed as a return from the negative state into which a society has unfortunately fallen – a movement back to its normal condition. This is the manner of expression chosen by the Danish scholar, Jens-Peter Schøedt, who has given close attention to the nature of transition rituals, including crisis rituals.

He takes as his starting point van Gennep's insight about the nature of a rite of passage published nearly a century ago, with its three phases that can be named: separation, transition, and incorporation, and he develops this threefold scheme into a fivefold one which sets the whole threefold rite in the context of the conditions that held before and after it. (This structure is explored with the aid of useful diagrams in Schøjdt 1986 and Rydving 1993.) Van Gennep's central transition is a liminal period when transformations take place and it is framed, in van Gennep's scheme, by periods that release the participants from their connection with their everyday non-ritual state at the beginning and restore them to their everyday state at the end. It is Schøedt's additional insight that the states before and after the performance of the ritual series need to be included in the total picture. That is to say that van Gennep's triad, with its transition placed between separation and incorporation, should itself be framed by the state before his sequence begins and the state after his sequence ends. In Schøedt's view, the states before and after the sequence may be the same as each other or may be different, with the final state on a higher or lower plane than the initial state. He uses the terminology of zero (0), plus (+) and minus (–), and we can, for example, picture movement from a crisis represented on the negative plane (–) through the threefold ritual experience to an eventual return to the everyday world that is in a non-crisis state and can be represented on the zero plane (0), i.e. a condition of normality.

If the crisis was illness, as in the Roman case mentioned earlier, then the desired state to which society returns is health. If the crisis is war or dissention, then the desired state to which society returns is a state of peace and harmony. When a historical event is incorporated into the annual cycle it seems to me to frequently have the sense of a victory. It may be the commemoration of a victory in a specific battle over a named enemy but,

underlying this, is the return from an undesired state to a desired one after undergoing crisis.

Although I hope that these points may help to focus our discussions of "The Ritual Year and History", I do not expect that what I have said will apply to all the cases of the inclusion of historical events in the ritual calendar that will be considered during the course of this conference, and I look forward to hearing about a wide range of possibilities.

I have not dealt with one key case which has deeply affected calendars throughout Europe. The recollection each year during Easter week of the undoubted historical event of the crucifixion of Jesus on a specific day in the year tied to the Jewish Passover – which itself was an annual commemoration of a historical event – is a topic which will require to be explored for years to come before we can hope to understand the rich texture of the folk calendars that emerged in symbiosis with Christian liturgy. At present, I will just point out that the gods were implicated in the year structure as we first come to know of it in our earliest historical records and that there is a divine dimension to be taken into account in the pagan as well as the Christian year. I think, too, we will find that this divine dimension has been drawn upon in the glorification of human figures that have become quasi-divine, and I anticipate that this is an area that will receive attention in some of the papers at this conference.

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1.

The Ritual Year and History

GEORGE MIFSUD-CHIRCOP
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The Ritual Year Cycle in pre-1960 Malta

This paper focuses on pre-1960 Malta, a time when the forces of change, secularisation, political pressure, migration, urbanisation and major economic factors were generally believed to have eradicated rural folk beliefs and rituals. This was seen as a liminal time, characterised by a state of indefiniteness between the traditional world of the past and the unstable world of the future. Here I intend to discuss the Maltese way of life, dominated by the forces of nature and superstition, yet poised within a framework of temporally related patterns of tradition and pre-industrial social groups. From our present perspective, a temporal framework lends a sense of security through the fixed nature of a chronological system and calendar holidays within which to examine taboos, entertainment, beliefs, and rituals. Reflexivity and ritualization as a strategy for the construction of power relationships also play a dominant role (Bell 1992).

As we consider Maltese traditional practices, Catherine Bell's contention (1997:255) that "rarely does a society have only one style or one worldview"[1] is of utmost importance. Farmers used to say: *"Is-snin bħall-aħwa, ma jixxibhux"* (Years, like brothers, are not alike); "*L-ebda xitwa m'hi bħall-oħra*" (No one winter is like another) and *"Skond l-annata l-qannata"* (The water pot is filled according to the rainfall during the year)[2]. However, the decline of many aspects of traditional ritual in Malta in the past half-century was the result of a process of social evolution and particular historical-political and politico-religious crises that the Maltese lived through from the mid-fifties to the early seventies. Abstract forces of rationalism, secularisation, and modernization dramatically changed Maltese traditional religious communities and introduced new types of rituals, replacing traditional ones that they had repudiated, challenged, or rejected. As a result of these changes, many rituals lost their meaning or vanished entirely.

In addition to finding references to written documentation dating from the eighteenth century, I have done field research in Malta since the late 1960s. I have been fortunate to discuss the situation with elderly people who were connected with the rhythms and processes of nature. In the 1950s and 1960s they lived in a transitional period, characterised by testi-

monies both to the affirmation of traditional wisdom in the face of the brutal modernity and anomie of modern society. Such transitions were exemplified by a new dress code (e.g. miniskirts, bikinis, etc.), as well by a process of negotiating new forms of commonality and difference or of redefining the magical, the religious, and the rational. The few remaining festivals had lost many of their various layers of meaning, including the deep-seated meanings normally related to agriculture, which were supposedly less vulnerable to change. The time when the community looked within itself to find ways of entertainment had clearly passed.

Leap Years

In this paper I do not aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of a full account of the ritual year in Malta, but instead to simply outline its main features through the lens of the proverb. Our calendar is a predominantly Christian, solar calendar. The Catholic Church calendar had become assimilated with a pre-Christian agrarian calendar making the basis for time reckoning. The weekly and annual cycles of time are all of Christian inspiration.

Malta's ritual year was a cyclical time and dreamtime or frozen time, what Evy Johanne Håland (2001:197-198) has identified with Braudel's *la langue durée* (1990):

> The cyclical perception of time is characterised by predictability and repetition, and is typical of peasant societies. Dreamtime or frozen time presupposes a static perception of time without movement and involves an orientation to the past; its vehicle is oral tradition.

The cyclical perception of time and the perspective of frozen time were still to be found in Malta till the 1962. The island today has become more dependent on tourism and, in the last five years, on information technology.

Leap years are always unlucky and dangerous (Cremona 1923:14):

LEAP YEARS		COMMENTS
Meta Frar ikollu s-slejjef aħjar il-bidwi joqgħod mal-ġwejjef.	When in a leap year February takes a day or more on loan, it's better for the farmer to stay with the idle.	Work on these days is vasted effort.

Tab. 1. Leap Years.

Particular days and feast days were and still are periods of prophecy, with various proverbs revealing the system of folk chrononyms. On Satur-

days the sun must shine because it is believed that it was on Saturday that Our Lady used to dry the swaddling clothes and washing of Baby Jesus. However, rain is expected on St George's Day. *"L-Irwiegel"* (the Calends) start on St Lucia's Day – the twelve days in terms of time which are close to the winter solstice. As Tolstoy remarks (2002:199), "they [the twelve days] correlate from the point of view of the rituals and beliefs with the day (more exactly, the night before the day) of St John the Baptist, which follows the day of the summer solstice." As I commented during the Second Ritual Year Conference (Mifsud-Chircop 2007), [t]he year is divided into months, the months into days, the diurnal cycle is divided into day and night and the day into hours, taking into account the solar rhythm. The border-time markers are sunrise and sunset, midday and midnight.

The Moon and the Stars

Months were not generally regulated by the moon, but adjusted according to the solar cycle only. So were and still are the seasons that take equinoxes and solstices as their starting points. There is only one proverb recalling the solstices, specifically *"l-itwal tax-xitwa"* (the longest distance from the sun), the winter solstice: *"Nhar San Tumas il-ġurnata titwal b'pass ta' ħmar qammas"* ("On St Thomas's Day [21 December], the day grows longer by the pace of a kicking donkey"), which means it does not grow longer at all). The moon is subordinated to the sun and deprived of its functions.

For farmers and animal breeders it was and to some extent still is not the sun alone that decides about time and reproduction. Easter, for example, depends on the lunar cycle, falling on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the spring equinox. There are examples when the moon plays a decisive role in human, animal and vegetable growth, just as the sun does. The moon and stars, particularly the Pleiades, are the natural symbols of life and abundance. They are associated with fertility of humans, animals, and plants and so influence human life and work. In Maltese the word for seed, *żerriegħa* [zer'ri:a], is also used to mean semen and human offspring. Hence, farmers sow seed according to moon phases, hoping for abundant crops.

Seasons

The duality of summer and winter is a recognised Indo-European pairing (Lyle 2000:152). As noted by Nikita I. Tolstoy's seminal study "The Magic Circle of Time" (2002 [1997]), "[A]part from the strictly marked borders of the summer and the winter which are denoted and affirmed by

feast-days with their rituals, there exist also border-line festival days which mark the middle – the halves of the summer and winter periods." Maltese normally divided the year into the two halves, not into four quarters, but the halves ran from Tolstoy's "middle" days. Our climatic conditions have always regaled us with an extended summer down to November, including *"is-Sajf ta' San Martin"* (St Martin's Summer), which Joseph Aquilina in his *Maltese-English Dictionary* (1990:788) rightly translates "halcyon days" even though it falls about five weeks away from the winter solstice. I agree with Emily Lyle (2005:378) that ". . . while there is a strong sense of the year being divided into summer and winter halves, the actual dates are variable." Drawing mainly on Tolstoy (2002[1997]:195), Lyle continues:

> Tolstoy ... indicates that noon divides the day and midnight divides the night while correspondingly St John's Day (24 June, midsummer) divides the summer and Christmas (25 December, midwinter) divides the winter.

In Malta, Christmas is specifically connected with the beginning of winter. The traditional Christmas season begins during the last week of the year. A proverbial phrase associated with this time implies hard times for the poor: *"jibda jagħti bil-buq"* ("striking with a rod"). Summer starts on 24 June: *"F'San Ġwann tidħol l-għassa"* (In the month of St John there is a change of guard), meaning that it is the time when spring ends and summer begins. Other proverbs indicate the variability of the weather at this time of year, such as *"Sa San Ġwann tal-ħġejjeġ tneħħix il-ħwejjeġ"* (Do not change your clothes before bonfires), or *"Min ommu tħobbu tagħmillu kabozza f'Mejju"* (The mother who loves her son makes him a hooded coat in May). This emphasizes that late spring is not yet the time to wear lighter clothes.

Folk Terminology

Our traditional calendar has evolved a system of folk proper names, such as the names for religious holidays and fasting periods, and the names of the saints celebrated on a certain date. This folk calendrical terminology adjusted the name of holidays or saints to the traditional worldview, deviating from the official religious one. To date we don't know really when the literary and learned system of the twelve months came into being, but it seems that through education (especially since the introduction of Compulsory Education in 1947) that the whole system was being gradually introduced and accepted, thus obliterating most of the folk denominations.

As noted by Sedakova (2002: 212-213), "[t]he openings and endings in the course of a ritual year are connected with the concepts of cosmos/chaos, time, counting and order and as such reflect obvious changes in the surrounding world and in society and/or its mental reflection. . . . Openings correlate mostly with cosmogonic views, initiation, apotropaic, and mantle rituals. Endings usually involve acts of destruction and purification. . . . [A]n interesting aspect of the folk calendar is the concept of the middle of a season. This idea is a widespread one. Thus several days in various traditions mark the middle of winter." Some examples here would suffice. People believe that June changes his clothes from the winter ones to lighter ones: *"Ġunju Ġunjett ineħħi l-qmis u d-dublett"* (June, little June, makes you take off the shirt and the skirt). Chaos is also identified with stubbornness, metaphorised in Maltese by *"ras il-ħmar"* (the head of a donkey): *"Ġunju kbir, rasu ras il-ħmir"* (June is big, with the head of a donkey). The Day of the Exaltation of the Cross (3 May) is connected with strict bans on work at home and outside, especially where any semiotic resemblance to the Cross is involved. Similar apotropaic rituals are typical of St Catherine's Day (25 November) celebrated in Żejtun and Żurrieq: there are strict bans on work at home and outside, particularly on the use of the wheel. At Żejtun people still believe that during the week of St Catherine's Feast *"Santa Katarina tieħu 'l xi ħadd magħha"* (During St Catherine's *festa* celebrations some lovely lady would always have to die).

Agriculture and fishing were the key elements in ancient Malta. Summer in Malta was production time, winter was consumption time. The transition from summer to winter was socially marked, so that the passage of time implied leaps from one qualitative state to another. As remarked by P. E. Ariotti and quoted by Lyle on the concept of time in the Mediterranean, "Ancient peoples, at least in the region of the Mediterranean, did not separate time from its contents. For them time was qualitative" (2000: 152). The socio-economic content was integrated with Christian saints, though the calendar was a social representation of the order of "the natural year", including sowing, bird migration, changes in weather temperature, threshing, harvesting, pruning and stockbreeding, pasturing, etc.

People used to divide the year not by months, but by holidays, agricultural needs or periods of fasting and merriment which created a specific system of counting. The periods were named after the biggest *festas*/festivals/holidays. The diurnal cycle was and still is divided into day and night. The border-time markers are sunrise (M. *tbexbix, żerniq, sebħ, tlugħ ix-xemx, l-awrora*), afternoon (M. *wara nofsinhar*) and sunset (M. *għabex, inżul ix-xemx*), and midday (M. *nofsinhar*) and midnight (M. *nofsillejl*). Sunrise and sunset are liminal in

Maltese culture to this day and are richly documented in oral tradition. However, there are other specific markers, typical of the Maltese Islands, which are still part of contemporary Maltese life, including *"mal-paternoster"* ("at the Lord's Prayer," the time of the chiming for the first morning mass at 04.00); *"ma' l-ave-marija"* (at the time of reciting the Hail Mary', circa 17.30, when the faithful are daily encouraged to pray and recite the Hail Mary to Our Lady); *"ma' l-għasar"* ("at the time of the recital of the church prayers in the afternoon"); and *"f'ta' l-erwieħ"* ("of the souls," when a daily chime is rung everyday round about 20.00 or 21.00 to remind the faithful to pray for the departed).

Maltese folk perception of time follows the natural symmetry of the seasons and the rhythms of day and night. It reflects the interrelation between the naturally and culturally defined time, but it also follows changes in nature, agricultural activities, animal behaviour, and the growth and decay of vegetation. The introduction of motorised farming machines, fertilisers, pesticides, and new methods in modern farming have greatly shifted the periods when farm work has to be done.

In Maltese folk belief and ritual the early and middle winter period was seen traditionally as a period of prophecy, a liminal time at which the doors between the present and the future were open. The same concept applies to summer, when the first appearance or sounds of the animals and insects or natural phenomena are also valued, signifying a beginning, according to folk belief (Sedakova 2002:216). All these, together with solar and lunar cycles and agricultural activity, are factors that influence the folk perception of time and are reflected in calendar system (Sedakova 2005:473). We speak of various magic signs as indicators of change, including cocks crowing, donkeys' sensitiveness to atmospheric pressures, dogs or cats rolling on the ground, song-thrushes chirping during the night, cats sitting on the balcony, washing their face in the direction of the wind, or coughing or sneezing.

The forces that govern the perpetuation and the variation of our rituals have changed radically. The shifting of the celebration of village *festas* to Summer that has taken place over the last thirty years illustrates the weakening of the relationship with the natural calendar. Modern Malta is less dominated by the forces of nature and superstition than by economic forces, the interests of tourism, and the need to underline personal and local identity amid increasing globalisation.

Notes

[1] Bell's words (1997:255) run as follows: "...[R]arely does a society have only one style or one worldview. Usually there are several different cosmological orders more or less integrated with each other but capable of tense differen-

tiation and mutual opposition. Different parts of a society – social classes, economic strata, or ethnic groups – may hold different perspectives on ritual, or the same subgroup may have different attitudes on different occasions. Hence, any repudiation of ritual, like all ritual practice, must be seen as a very contextual thing."

[2] See (Aquilina 1972) for the proverbs quoted in this paper.

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The Social Background of the Maskers' Plays in Lithuania: The Road to Modernity

Motifs Correlated with Social Reality and their Meaning

Many of the masking motifs in Lithuania in the first half of the 20th century are easy to relate to historical events or other forms of social reality.[1] For example, the character of the soldier or officer among the maskers became very popular after the First World War (Kudirka 1992:25). Such personages had an important role in the traditional play of the masked villagers, and sometimes "the Officer" acted as the leader of the maskers' group.

The oldest inhabitants of Lithuania still remember the itinerant "Hungarians" at the beginning of the 20th century (LII ES 1470-15:89; LII ES 1471-6:24.); this was what they called the inhabitants of the Hapsburg Empire who travelled in the western provinces of tsarist Russia and offered medicine to the peasants. The Shrovetide character, "the Hungarian", probably derived his name from them. After the decline of the Empire in 1918, the Hungarian masks were replaced by those of doctors. The latest form of this character, "the doctor with a nurse", developed only in the second quarter of the 20th century (Vaicekauskas 2005:136).

Close to the Second World War, when the social situation in Soviet Russia was known better in Lithuania, the motifs of the poor Russian Jew or soldier occurred. Sometimes the custom of giving gifts to the maskers is explained in this context.

In a similar manner we can explain the popularity of the Soviet soldier characters in the present-day Shrovetide carnival. They became especially popular at the time of the 'singing revolution' in 1989-1990 and a bit later when the last unit of the Soviet army left the territory of Lithuania in 1993. At this time, included in the group of traditional maskers, we can see not only Soviet solders but even the masks of the activists of the pro-Soviet part of the Lithuanian communist party who at that time acted as the Soviet fifth column.

In the year after the terrorist attack on the New York twin towers in 2001, a masked group of "Arabian terrorists" and their opponents – police officers – appeared in the Vilnius city carnival and, from time to time, they imitated the conflict with shooting from guns and so on.

So it is not strange to find that Lithuanian researchers stress the point that some anthropomorphic characters among the maskers were taken from the social surrounding of the Lithuanian peasantry. For example, the ethnographic literature considers "the Gipsy" to be of late origin, borrowed from the social environment of the peasants (Balys 1993:59; Skrodenis 1966:293). Such a claim can easily be applied with no exceptions to all the anthropomorphic characters described in ethnographical sources.

Now I would like to discuss some aspects of this understanding. When we speak about the comprehending of something's meaning we should not forget that the relations between the meaning and the historical background of the customs could also have their own history. Certainly, the meanings of the customs were always taken from the social or historical reality, but in each separate case their semantic relations with surrounding reality could be different. For example, when we speak about the meanings of the masking characters of the first half of the 20th century we can speak about at least two different types of the invention of history. One of them was based on the mythological world-outlook and represents the meaning of the ritual-type society. Another represents the more modern understanding of the surrounding reality which took root in the peasants' culture after the First World War when Lithuania regained its independence from tsarist Russia. In Lithuanian tradition we can quite easily observe the boundary between the end of one stage of the invention of history and the start of another.

The Changes in the Custom's Meaning Illustrated by the Roles of "The Jew", "The Gipsy" and "The Hungarian"

The changes in the custom's meaning in the Lithuanian peasant tradition of the first half of the 20th century can be well illustrated by the evolution of the three main anthropomorphic personages of this period – "the Jew", "the Gipsy" and "the Hungarian".

In the tradition of the border between the 19th and 20th centuries the appearance and the actions of the Hungarian-Chemist and the Gipsy did not differ much from the appearance and activity of the Jew mask (Vaicekauskas 2002: 16). Semantically significant features of these anthropomorphic masks show that they imitated the representatives from another world. Their chthonic nature is confirmed by the squint-eyed and crooked-nosed mask as well as by the clothes that are worn turned inside out, the straw humps and the lame walk (LII ES.1359-6:33; LII ES.1362-2:13; LII ES.1362-4:37). The impression of lameness was strengthened by their straw humps and by the sticks they carried. Turning inside out, lame walk and any other inversion is common to an alien, non-human otherworld (Nekliudov 1979:33).

The links of the masked revellers with another world are confirmed by the late evening time of their action which is mythically opposite to the light period of the day; it is considered unsafe for a person to be outside at that time of the day (Bernštam 1985:129; Čičerov 1957:35). Semantic elements of the ancestor cult also may be noticed in the tricks of the Jews. The Jew would carry with him a dead crow and would offer it to the farmer as a hen, or would ask persistently for eggs, promising that the crow would hatch them (LII ES 1361-3:25; LII ES 1470-4:26; LII ES 1470-12:67; LII ES 1484-4:16). Less often the Jews would ask the farmer to sell a hen to them. The dead bird, as it were, highlighted the world to which the maskers belonged. Semantically, both the hen and the crow may be connected with the world of the dead.

The sources of information provide fragments about the maskers' success in being allowed inside the dwelling house. The essence of the begging consisted of the dialogue between the leader of the maskers and the owner of the farmstead. Despite the clearly entertaining purpose, the opposition between the space of the dwellers in the farmstead and that of the crowd of maskers is dominant in most of the orations of the asking to come inside (Vaicekauskas 2005:107).

The maskers would trample mud, spill water, smear with soot or prick with a nail fixed to the nose, frighten children. However, rarely were the farmers seriously angry with them. More often the maskers would be given some treats or gifts (LII ES.1358-530; LII ES.1359-4:68; LII ES.1359-10: 79; LII ES.1359-13:8). The ritual giving of food to strangers that is met in the ritual of house-visiting revellers reflects the mythic role of a beggar as a mediator between this and the other world and the universal mythologeme of the strangers justifies the links of this custom with the cult of the ancestors. The good wishes of the maskers (LII ES.1362-4:13; LII ES.1484-5: 46), expressed after having got some presents, undoubtedly had the power of magic enchantment and, in the mythological plan, they corresponded with the following principle: service (that is a guarantee of success in household or in personal life) for service (that is a ritual giving of presents). If the maskers were poorly received – if they did not get presents or were not let inside – they would often utter words opposite to the wishing of success (LII ES.1358-6:35; LII ES.1360-13:14).

We can safely say that in the ritual tradition the ethnonyms – "Jew", "Gipsy", "Hungarian" – expressed not their foreign origin but the mythologeme of the "other" which in the each case has the same meaning – the representative of the "Other World" (or the world of ancestors).

In the period 1920-39, the situation changes in essence. At this time anthropomorphic personages specialize strongly by name: the Jew becomes

the usual Jew known in the Lithuanian peasant's environment – a small merchant from a town or village. The Gipsy becomes the horse-thief or the teller of fortunes and "the Hungarian" is finally transformed to "the doctor from the town". Their appearance and actions are changing accordingly.

The appearance of the Jew mask in the period 1920-39 imitated the usual character of the social environment of the peasants – the Jew trader (Vaicekauskas 2005:134). The Jew used to carry a "*kromelis*" (a tray with goods) and offered "goods", or wanted to buy something from the dwellers of the farmsteads that he visited. Often the entertaining aspect of the character of the Jew was emphasized. The Jews used to smear their faces and hands with soot and put a nail or a needle into the nose of the mask, so that it would be possible to prick with it when kissing. But, even in the funniest cases, the motifs of inversion of the carnival are evident. For instance, the Jew would change shoes: he would put his left shoe on his right foot, and vice versa. The inversion manifests itself clearly in the patter of the Jews: "Oh, I am as rich as the handle of the spoon. I have a lot of land – five valakai (about 100 ha) on the second floor, around the vat" (Balys 1993:52). They talk about the "buying of dry cows", which is a direct allusion to the buying up of barren animals for meat, but the comparison of a maiden with a barren cow highlights the antithesis: to be useful for the community, one has to create a family.

In the case of "the Hungarian", the clothes had to emphasise his foreign origin (Vaicekauskas 2005:136). Such a Hungarian would wear blue pants, high boots, and a high hat. The Hungarian would try to change his speech, but not so much that he would not be understood by others. The doctor would often dress pompously, in a town manner (Vaicekauskas 2005: 137). On his head he would wear a hat or a high cap. Less often the doctor would wear white clothes, and a red cross tied to his arm. Inside the house the doctors would look for "patients"; they would diagnose a disease, and cure or give advice. Often young ladies would "become" their patients. Both the Hungarian and the Doctor would try to amuse the members of the family by their talk. Motifs contradicting the real situations dominate in their verbal formulae. For instance, having diagnosed rheumatics, they would advise: "You don't need anything; just lie down on the snow and cover yourself with ice. You will sweat and become healthy" (LII ES.1360-14:83).

The mask of the Gipsy does not distinguished by an abundance of semantically significant elements. In the 20th century tradition that character more or less imitated the peculiarities of the clothes and the behaviour of the Gipsies. Sometimes he acts as a horse-thief or as the owner of a dancing bear (LII ES 1470-3:20; LII ES.1360-1:8). In the entertaining activities of the Gipsies we

also can notice carnival inversion (Vaicekauskas 2005:132): men in women's clothes would represent women and, less often, women would dress up as men. The Gipsy women used to carry their children upside down. The stealing of hens, the sprinkling of water and the teasing of ladies make the costumed Gipsies of the Christmas period similar to the character of the Shrovetide Jew.

Conclusion

These and other transformations were brought about by the changes in the consciousness of the Lithuanian peasantry, especially in the first decades of the 20th century when the social and cultural surroundings of the village inhabitants changed. The new cultural and economic conditions which were formed in the second decade of the 20th century destroyed the social structure of the traditional village community.

What was before?

The inhabitants of the village almost up to the First World War formed a quite closed territorial community where the activities of individual members were effectively controlled by the public opinion of the village. The latter made the members of the community keep within certain norms of behaviour, which were, in their turn, directed to the codification, preservation and handing down of the information which was important to all the inhabitants of the village, to the younger generations. Even in the relatively late tradition of the first half of the 20th century the villagers of all age groups took care of the performance of the rites. As mentioned above, most of the calendar customs functioned in the shape of the village community's agrarian rituals up to the very end of the 19th century.

What happened between the First and the Second World Wars?

Firstly, the elements of agrarian magic lost their ideological foundation and gradually disappeared. Or, in other words, the former rites became customs. How did this happen? In the beginning of the 20th century, after the revival of the national Lithuanian State, the newly created centralised network of national administrative institutions, education and social-cultural organisations brought cultural opportunities to the inhabitants of both cities and villages. The greatest influence here was the vastly changed nature of village education (Vaicekauskas 2005:37). A network of teaching institutions was quickly created, and in 1923 compulsory primary education was established. These two facts not only broadened the cultural outlook of the young villager's generation, but also strengthened the importance of a rational natural-historical world outlook in their way of thinking. The cultural influence of the town and modern education liberated the individual

thinking from the authority of the collective opinion which was held by the village community (Vaicekauskas 2002:268).

Secondly, the rational scientific world outlook changed the structure of peasants' thinking. In other words, the individual thinking, which was relatively independent from the public opinion of the village community and which attached the greatest importance to individual experience, was also able to interpret the stereotypical images of the traditional customs in the most unrestricted way, at the same time increasing the possibility of their variety (Vaicekauskas 2002:269).

In the first case, we still find the ritual context of the maskers' activity and, in the second, the prevailing of public entertainment. Not only the functions but also the structure and the content of the masking custom changed (Vaicekauskas 2002:269), and, when the ritual functions disappeared, the time and space dimensions of the ritual also lost their former meaning.

Note

[1] Historical aspects of this research are based on the written sources from the first half of the 20th century and data I collected in 1988-1997. In the questionnaire I prepared, two groups of people were questioned: those born up to 1910, and those born between 1911 and 1937. The distribution of the informants into the different age groups made it possible to study the different functioning of the masking tradition on the border between the 19th and 20th centuries (in fact, up to 1914) and in the period 1920-1939.

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The Impact of Socio-political Developments on Ritual Life

Ritual is a symbolic reflex of people's religious views and notions. Ritual confirms and favours the development of spiritual interests and aspirations. Without ritual accompaniment, religious views are condemned to failure. The disappearance of religion is not caused by people's unwillingness to have faith but by the pressure of different circumstances and reasons.

Historical changes in the traditional religions of various ethnic groups in Russia have followed similar paths. Here I will focus on the Udmurt people and outline the changes that have taken place in the last century, particularly during the past few decades, as a result of political and social events and developments in the country.

The Udmurts live in the pre-Ural region, in the basins of the rivers Kama and Vyatka. Their population totals 636 906 (2002). The majority of them (496.5 thousand) live in the Udmurt Republic (Official website http:/www.udm.ru) Besides the Udmurt Republic, the Udmurts live in the neighbouring republics and provinces, as well as in Siberia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. Officially most of the Udmurts are Orthodox Christians. However, there are many pagans as well.

What are the characteristic features of the traditional religious system of the Udmurts?

Inherent in the religion of Udmurts is polytheism, i.e. belief in many gods and spirits. Every god or spirit symbolises a different kind of natural element or is responsible for the various spheres of human activities (Vladykin 1994:137).

The religion of the Udmurts is part of an oral tradition and may be subdivided according to tribal and territorial characteristics.

The smallest religious unit depends on kinship or some kind of tribal organization, which imposes certain restrictions on its kinfolk and insists on obligatory adherence to a number of its inner rules.

Another type of subdivision is a unit of one or several villages. In most cases these villages are located close to one another.

The largest religious unit consists of a number of villages situated at some distance from each other, and who are united by mass religious ceremonies in designated places.

The Udmurts today continue to possess landed property. They celebrate religious ceremonies and worship their gods and spirits on these plots of land. Every village has a number of sacred places and places of worship on meadows and fields, in woods, glades, on the river bank etc. Within the farmstead the south-eastern corner is regarded as a holy place. Some families and kinship organizations have a special dwelling for worship, the *Kuala*. In a house, in the holy area, there is a sacred table and a sacred corner. The holy places are considered prohibited zones and are spatially isolated from the rest of the house by a crossbeam in the ceiling. The borderline between the sacred and the ordinary every-day spaces can be crossed only when worship is taking place there. Visiting the sacred place when no worship is taking place is condemned. Such an act can cause a number of negative consequences for the person who performed it as well as for the society in general (Minniiakhmetova 2001:107-119).

In the past, the Udmurts had numerous rituals for worshipping and making offerings to their spirits, connected both with the calendar and with the life-cycle. Nowadays, many of these traditions persist and are practiced in diasporas areas only.

The most significant form of worship was and is the Great Worship or the Common Worship (*Bydzym vös' / Mör vös'*), which took place on the days of the winter and summer solstices. There was also a form of worship called *Lud* or *Keremet*, ceremonies in which, in the past, only males participated in.

In former times the most significant acts of veneration were the Common Worships performed once in 36 years and which lasted several days.

The religion was a system of moral and ethical standards that every member of society had to follow, and which guided the community. By these rules the community was guided. Obeying the religious regulations was obligatory both in temporal and spatial parameters. By obeying the religious regulations each individual felt him-self to be a competent and real member of the community and was perceived as such by the community. Thus, the concepts of religiosity and morals coincided.

The reform processes taking place in the official policy of Russia, in the spheres of economics, socio-political and cultural life had an effect upon all regions of the country and their inhabitants. They also affected all religious systems and orientations.

Of course, the traditional belief system of the Udmurts had previously endured forced Christianisation, which lasted from the 16th century until the 20th century. The process of Christianisation played a very special role among the non-Christian population. It caused mass migrations from the

conquered lands. In addition, in the new lands the Udmurts found themselves under pressure from Islamisation.

But what was happening in the 20th century? What kind of changes did it bring in general? Firstly, the beginning of the 20th century was chaotic for the Udmurt people. The First World War did not have any great impact and caused little change, although the country in general suffered a huge economic crisis. The October Revolution in 1917 did not immediately play some special role in religious life of the Udmurts, who were living in the deep and distant woods. The Civil War did not affect all Udmurt villages, although some people lived in fear and poverty. Both the "Reds" and the "Whites" behaved barbarously to all people, irrespective of their ethnic, confessional or social differences.

After Christianization, the next period to have a significant impact came at the end of the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s. This was the period of Collectivization in the Soviet Union, when the whole traditional economic and social system of the people collapsed. This was followed with deportations, imprisonment, punishment, and executions. Religion was a forbidden subject, and people were obliged to reject it. The process of collectivization was very harsh, and people did not have time to realise and understand what was going on before the country was overtaken with the next World War.

During this quite extensive period – from Collectivization, continuing through the Second World War, and on to the end of Stalin's regime – survival became the first and the most important priority. In this period the whole traditional life-style and life-support system of the Udmurts also changed; their compulsory rules and duties to their communities, the regulations which affected the life of society and the carrying out of religious ceremonies, the duties considered to be of importance for every ordinary human.

The actuality of religion and a pious way of life among the people did not vanish completely but it changed its forms. The ritual life of the people was minimized and curtailed to a large degree and all popular religious events in communities, such as organizing the praying ceremonies, sacrifices and offerings to the gods and spirits, ancestors, etc were considerably diminished. The main and visual points of religiosity became secretive in nature and the public worship ceremonies with hundreds and thousands of participants in the sacred places became more like family occasions and were organized secretly in people's houses. Henceforth they lacked festivity in outward appearance and mood.

The situation was not the same in all the provinces, however. For instance, among the southern diasporas, people continued to carry out the

public worship ceremonies at the same sacred places, but offerings and the festival character of events was forever changed. If in past centuries, during the Great Worship ceremonies, people sacrificed 70-80 head of cattle (cows, bulls, heifers) (Smirnov 1890:226) in the period now being discussed they limited themselves to offering poultry, such as a goose and a duck, or to cooking porridge and gruel. Until comparatively recently, children might have sacrificed a cow and a horse for their dead parents, whereas now they could offer a hen and a cock only. The people were poor now and were not capable of offering even the smaller domestic animals. Most communities could not organize the main rituals every year, and instead conducted them once every two or three years.

Following the religious life in an urbanized milieu was not possible: Christian churches were closed in the towns and big villages. Individuals who were still pagans either went home for the religious ceremonies or went without an overt pious life. In circumstances like these, faith became a personal and very private duty, existing only in the mind and consciousness, something locked up inside the individual. People were apprehensive of showing their faith in case they would be repressed and punished.

During this period a new generation had grown up, one which had never witnessed a traditional, pious way of life and the real festive ceremonies, which in the past had played a very special positive role in the regulation of a community's life. This generation viewed religion and faith as unwelcome, forbidden, persecuted and dangerous for normal life. Their stereotypes of behaviour were different and they were incapable of translating the religious experiences of their ancestors into their own life-style.

A well-known phenomenon, the emergence of a crisis situation within a society leads to the mobilisation of preserving mechanisms within a group, when responsibility for the stability of the society is undertaken by a small number of leaders of traditional consciousness. As members of the community, they are able to influence its value orientations and promote continuity of their culture. The maintenance and survival of traditional worldviews was also encouraged by strong families that, in spite of everything, tried to uphold traditional beliefs and customs. Thus, in this crisis situation the family played an important role in the religious consciousness of its members.

In the next period, more precisely from the end of Stalin's regime, from about the 1960s until the 1990s (the period of Perestroika), mass ceremonies of worship could not take place due to massive and antihuman persecution. However, during the last few decades attempts have been made to restore the common worship ceremonies of the Udmurts.

The process of restoration of traditional Udmurt religious ideas and, consequently, of the ritual life has probably had both a positive and a negative effect on society. The religious ceremonies have a festive character, which attracts more and more participants. This situation makes some people glad and happy, while others, who really have faith in God, suffer stress.

In the last decades another type of activity has been forced upon the people, causing them anxiety and fear. These are the activities of priest-missionaries of different confessions and religious orientations. Any non-Christian religious aspects, or any sign of other world religions among the so-called 'heathens' are seen as barbaric, dangerous and in need of anxiety eradication.

But what is happening today?

The characteristics of the situation may be subdivided into three types of opinion. There are people who are not interested in current events and developments. There are others who pay full attention to every change and event. Within this group is a sub-group which protests against every change and innovation, which might bring some diminution of the religious regulations. They see the motives of negative social phenomena in these transformations, something that is taking place not only close to them, but also around the world. These three groups of opinions coexist peacefully and do erupt into the sort of public protests that can bring society to a conflict situation. In spite of the differences in attitudes, all of these people participate in ritual and festive ceremonies.

Such a situation, reflecting the various characteristics of current events within a small society, represents a positive process and shows that this society is not in crisis but is developing and progressing normally.

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The Influence of Social and Ecological Crises on Maintaining Calendar Rituals among the East Slavs

Introduction

The end of the 20th century was marked by a number of cataclysms that affected all spheres of life of the East Slavonic peoples. The break-up of the USSR, the economic recession and the worsening of the people's well-being, changing ideological reference-points, a number of ecological catastrophes, the biggest of which was the nuclear explosion in Chernobyl – all these events have radically changed the way of life in the post-Soviet territories. Inevitably, they have also been reflected in the traditional culture of the Russians, the Byelorussians and the Ukrainians.

One might have expected these critical situations to accelerate the irreversible process of the dying out of folk culture and lead to its total disappearance. Paradoxically, however, all these tragic happenings provoked a burst of cultural activity in different regions of the East Slavonic world and contributed to the reanimation of many rituals, magic practices and folk-musical texts, primarily calendar ones.

I will not deal with the question of the cultural policy pursued in the 1990s in certain regions of Russia, where folklore, alongside local industrial enterprises and sporting achievements, was involved in the assertion of local identity. As a rule the activities of the local authorities were limited to separate actions, festivals and concert programs with the participation of "souvenir" folk groups.

Much more interesting and important were the processes that were taking place in rural communities related to the conscious effort to revive, preserve and maintain cultural traditions appropriate to certain areas. In many regions this took place on a mass scale (for example, in villages near the Russian-Ukrainian and Russian-Byelorussian frontiers). Villagers born in the 1960s started to record from the old people stories about local customs and calendar practices that had already disappeared, as well as the texts of certain ritual songs. Later, they would learn how to sing the songs by practicing together with the older singers. It should be stressed that this cultural initiative was not at all related to the activities of the local village cultural clubs.

In the Russian villages of the Kharkov region (in the Ukraine) one can note examples of the revival of forgotten practices that marked the borderline between spring and summer, such as a procession to the wood at Whitsun with wreaths made of lime, maple and alder, throwing them into the water and telling fortunes, according to whether they floated or sank. Rituals of saying goodbye to spring continue to exist in many villages in the Eastern Polessie – on the border between the Briansk (Russia) and Gomel (Byelorussia) regions. One has the impression that at moments of crisis the village turns to traditional culture as a powerful means of deliverance from catastrophe.

The 1990s were known as a time of agricultural decline everywhere in the former USSR. Agricultural machinery was breaking down, which resulted in a mass return to ancient forms of work, to a natural economy and more or less manual labour. These traditional ways of farming contributed to the revival of many calendar practices and related ritual songs and a return to a peasant way of life rooted in the past. Thus, for example, the western areas of Briansk region saw the return of harvest songs into the musical life of the village as soon as the peasants started to reap manually with the help of scythes.

As the same time, these revived practices suffered considerable changes. They acquired features of festive gatherings and details from other rituals of the calendar and the life cycles including some which had gone out of use and which were preserved only in the memory of the older generation. Let us, for example, analyze the well-known ritual of "burying the arrow", using a contemporary version found in the western part of Briansk region, specifically the Novozybkovsky and Krasnogorsky regions. This area remains to this day the zone of the most severe radioactive contamination from the Chernobyl disaster and constitutes the so-called "evacuation zone". The local people were recommended to leave these territories and those who preferred to stay receive an allowance that is referred to there as "coffin money". So this area can certainly be considered a zone of ecological catastrophe.

How a Crisis Helped the Survival of One Calendar Ritual

The burial of the arrow is described by such researchers as Viktor Gusev, Jury Marchenko (Gusev, Marchenko 1987; Marchenko 1999;) Olga Pashina (Pashina 1986; 1997) and others as an example of a transitional ritual in the East Slavonic calendar tradition marking the borderline between spring and summer. The ritual takes the form of a procession accompanied by ritual songs, which moves through the village to the field where the symbolic burial takes place; it coincides with the religious feast

of the Ascension – the 40th day after Easter. Local people call it "Ushestia" which can be roughly translated as "going up" and "going away".

The most radical changes to the ritual in recent times concern the composition of the participatory group. Previously, all the females of the village, from teenage girls to old women, were supposed to take part in it. The participation of older women in the ritual was determined by their physical ability to walk a relatively long way, 4-5 kilometers. If the women were not fit enough they were given another role to play: they were supposed to come out of their houses and to set up tables with food and drink for the participants in the procession at their gates.

At present there are very few people in the villages where the "burial of the arrow" is performed and even fewer who know the traditions and can participate in the ritual actions. For this reason the rite takes place in different villages in turn. Each year one village acts as host and peasants from all the other villages come there for the ceremony. This means that each year as many as 200 to 400 people may participate. It is important to note that this initiative came "from below", from the local inhabitants. The support of the village authorities is usually limited to the provision of transport for the people taking part in the ritual, to enable them to reach the village in which the "burial of the arrow" is taking place. Apart from the practical function of the rite, marking the transition from spring to summer, it may also be seen to have the function of uniting people who have suffered adversity and helping them to overcome their troubles together. If previously only women could participate in this rite, nowadays a few males are also allowed. The main ritual heroes of the procession are the Old Man (in Russian – Ded) and the Old Woman (Baba). Traditionally these roles were performed by females, one of whom, playing the part of the Old Man, would put on a beard and men's winter clothes: a fur hat, a sheepskin coat, sometimes inside-out. The Old Woman would wear festive female garments and her face was brightly painted.

In many regions of Russia we know of similar couples participating in the goodbye-to-spring rites: the Mermaid and the Merboy, a Tatar Man and a Tatar Woman, a Hen cuckoo and a Cock cuckoo, a Semik and a Semichikha etc.

The Old Man and the Old Woman leading the procession are supposed to walk in silence clutching big walking sticks. Contact is allowed only with the old women from whom they take food and drink and with little children to whom they may redistribute these treats.

Nowadays the roles of the Old Man and the Old Woman are played by young males and there may be more than one couple. Those who are

dressed in female clothes behave provocatively, smoke and flirt with passers-by. In addition they play the Russian accordion, sing "chastushki" – short funny couplets – and dance. Other males – accordion players and dancers –may also participate in the procession. Today this resembles the carnival-like processions of mummers on the final day of the wedding ceremony or at open-air festive gatherings during Sviatky – the period between Christmas and Epiphany.

Some changes can be seen in the musical code of the rite. Traditionally the ritual would begin near the village church immediately after the end of the Ascension day service. This was the place and the time when the last spring round dances of the year were performed. In the local tradition these round dances accompanied by specific songs were considered to be symbolic of the spring season, taking place from the Annunciation (April 7th) until Ascension Day. As a rule there were several circles of 12-15 women and girls each. Each circle would sing a different song, their asynchronous sounds intertwining to create a single, continuous musical fabric. Then the procession would start and the different groups of women would begin singing the so-called "arrow" songs. Each village of the region had a single tune for this type of song, to which many texts can/could? be sung. No other types of song could be sung during the procession.

At present the ritual starts at the site of the church which was destroyed in the 1930s. The beginning of round dancing is determined not by the end of the church service but when milking has finished.

Nowadays each circle sings songs from different villages, which strengthens the "dissonance" of the round dance songs. A new element of this stage of the rite is dancing and the singing of "chastushki" accompanied by the sort of accordion playing characteristic of festive street gatherings. All these musical genres – round-dance songs, chastushki, instrumental music – continue during the procession. To these are added the "arrow" songs from different villages. In this way an absolute cacophony of sound is created, which resembles the famous East Slavonic rite of "Harrowing".

"Harrowing", recorded by ethnographers in northern Belarus, consists of the simultaneous singing of calendar songs from different seasons: winter (sowing songs, carols), Shrovetide, spring, Whitsun, Midsummer and harvest. This particular ritual takes place on Midsummer's Eve, which is regarded as a perilous moment when dark forces are abroad, and serves as a means of surviving the crisis in the context of traditional culture. This means that the changes which have taken place in the modern version of the "burial of the arrow" follow ritual models which already existed in local foci of traditional culture.

The final stage of the ritual – the arrow burial itself – takes place in a field outside the village and has suffered the fewest changes of all. Once it has left the village, the procession moves to a field sown with rye. It is curious that the ritual takes place only in a field belonging to the kolkhoz (Collective farm), even if there is a privately-owned field closer. When it comes into the field, the procession stops. In the past one of the women would recite the Lord's Prayer which is followed by a traditional text – an exorcism or a non-canonical folk prayer – addressed to the field. Nowadays the original text has been forgotten and instead the woman pronounces the monologue which was used in Soviet times to praise front-rank collective farmers. After that the same most active woman takes a small bundle of white cloth which contains bread, salt and a needle – the symbol of the "arrow". She raises this above her head on out-stretched arms, then she kneels down and buries it in the field. All the participants of the procession pick ears of rye and throw them over their shoulders – a gesture characteristic of East Polessian burial rituals. Right there in the field they lay a table-cloth and arrange something like a funeral repast upon it, breaking into pieces the big loaf which they have brought with them.

Previously the women were supposed to return home in complete silence. Today the action is finished with the same dances and chastushki which took place during the procession, adding to the sensation of a merry festival?

The contemporary version of the "arrow funeral" ritual demonstrates the capacity of traditional culture to adapt itself to the conditions of the contemporary village. The ritual, preserving its original magical meaning, has absorbed the elements of festive culture and the realities of contemporary rural life. However, in this form it continues to fulfill its function and helps people to overcome the hard situation of ecological crisis. Every year local people get together in one of the villages for the "arrow burial" ritual believing that if they don't do it, time will stop.

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Interaction between a Folk Calendar System and the System of Soviet Holidays

From the moment of establishment of Soviet power, accompanied by the gradual formation of a system of Soviet holidays, an active process of interaction between that system and the folk calendar system commenced.

The folk calendar system itself was the result of a long-lasting historical development and interaction between the archaic (pre-Christian) and Christian calendar systems. In folk culture the set and sequence of annual holidays were determined by the religious calendar while an informative interpretation of time periods and certain holiday dates predominantly belonged to the folk tradition. Merging the two calendar systems resulted in church holidays absorbing myth and the poetic semantics of folk holidays, which, in their turn, enriched themselves with Christian characteristics, after subjecting them to a certain degree of rethinking. In the 20th century, the introduction of the system of Soviet holidays brought about a situation apparently similar to the one which was observed in Russia following the acceptance of Christianity, as the two calendar systems came into close interaction, both at the level of ideologies and at the level of the structure of the annual cycle.

Analysis of expedition materials revealed several mechanisms by which mutual adaptation of the two calendar systems took place. It should be stressed that the initiative for changes came from both sides: from the top, i.e. from representatives of the Soviet authorities, and from the bottom, i.e. from the rural population, the bearers of traditional culture.

From the very first years of the existence of the Soviet Union, the Soviet authorities exploited a system of folk holidays, which had existed for hundreds of years, for their own purposes. They tried to change the conceptual content of these holidays by removing the Christian elements. To this end the Communists took advantage of large assemblies of people at key church holidays such as Easter, Holy Thursday, Trinity Sunday, etc to promulgate Communism and discourage people from religion. As a result, almost everywhere Trinity Sunday was transformed into Russian Birch Day, because traditionally on that day houses were to be decorated with

birch sprays; Easter, or Holy Thursday, turned into First Rigs Day because in various climatic zones those holidays coincided in time with the start of tilling and spring sowing; Shrovetide became Russian Winter Farewell Day, which preserved the traditional burning to ashes of a Shrovetide dummy as well as tobogganing down ice-covered hills and horse-riding. In the Kursk Province, Collective Farmer's Day (*den' kolkhoznika*) was substituted for *Dimitrovskaja* Saturday, one of the most important remembrance days of the year. A communal remembrance ceremony at a cemetery and also, after the Great Patriotic War, at a local war memorial commemorating all villagers killed during that war, was followed by a general assembly at a local school, with a remembrance meal for all people. To mark that event, the collective farm administration would commission in advance from a local TV company a programme about the labour achievements of their workers, mixed with a performance by a local folk ensemble.

All holidays mentioned above envisaged certain precise scenarios. Firstly, each contained certain ceremonial events (for example, tobogganing down ice-covered hills and burning a dummy), which used to be of a magical nature in the past, but which became purely entertainment in Soviet times, and secondly there were key ceremonial objects (for instance, Trinity greenery), which acquired a decorative meaning only. It was the presence of those events and features in the content of holidays that, together with their changed conceptual background ensured the required succession from the pre-Soviet to the post-Soviet holiday system.

Another mechanism applied by the Soviet authorities was to use traditional patterns of calendar holidays and ceremonies in the creation of new holidays.

As is known, in addition to common religious holidays, every village had its own Patron Saint's Day, linked to a certain Saint, to whom the local church might have been dedicated, or to an event in Christian history. Such holidays were respected by the local population to the same degree as other significant religious holidays. Party leaders used that commitment of the peasants to their local holidays in order to introduce new ones, to be celebrated in that particular village only. This led to the organising of folk festivals to emulate old traditions.

Thus, in villages of the Mezenskiy Region in the Russian North, Patron Saint's Days were held in an *Open Day* format, i.e. they were attended by people from neighbouring villages. In the early 1930s they were replaced by a holiday to mark the introduction of a collective farm in each particular village and which was known as *Godovshchina* (Collective Farm Anniversary Day). However, the general presentation of the holiday remained un-

changed. On the eve of that day, beer was brewed. In the morning, all the local residents, dressed in their best clothes, would assemble on the square in front of the village church. At the beginning of the festival, young girls and women in the first year of married life strolled in pairs along the street and sang lyrical songs. Then they formed a circle and danced figure dances (*khorovody*) while other villagers listened to their singing and assessed their dresses. In the early evening a common meal was arranged, where the brewed beer was offered to everyone. The meal was followed by dances and a competition for the best *chastushka* singer. Verses (for example, rhyming couplets) were improvised in the process of singing and reflected events important to the villagers. This demonstrates that even new village holidays preserved a traditional form and repertoire while at the same time acquiring new content. Interestingly, after the 1941–45 Great Patriotic War, there was a relaxation of religious persecution, because of the extraordinary circumstances, and local people returned to the traditional celebration dates of their patronal festivals.

In some regions Communist party representatives established special holidays to mark the transition from an old to a new way of life. To this end, they used archaic forms of calendar rituals, based on the pattern of funerals, such as the well-known Russian ceremonies *Burial of the Cuckoo*, *The Funeral of the Rusalka* (*water nymph*), or *The Funeral of Shrovetide*. That ritual pattern was usually connected with holidays which celebrated a change of calendar seasons, conceived of as the death of a preceding and the birth of a succeeding calendar season. In *The Village Theatre* magazine, Issue No 5, 1925, there was a story about the ceremonial *Burial of the Plough*, which presented virtually the same archaic forms as the corresponding calendar rituals. It involved a crowd of local people gathering together on the central square of a village to watch the ceremonial burning of a plough, an obsolete land cultivation instrument. That was how one village in the south of Russia marked the transition to tractor-assisted land cultivation.

As has already been mentioned above, representatives of the ruling authorities were not the only ones who tried to mix the folk calendar system with the system of Soviet holidays; peasants also tried to adapt their traditional ceremonies to new conditions in their attempt to preserve them somehow.

One of their strategies was to move ceremonial activities, connected with certain dates of the folk calendar, to dates close to those of Soviet holidays. For instance, after the 1941–45 Great Patriotic War the first spring exodus of cattle from their winter quarters into the fields, which almost

everywhere previously took place on Saint George's Day (06 May),was often put off until Victory Day (09 May). Traditionally, on the day in spring when cattle were first allowed into the fields, the shepherd would execute a ritual walk around his cattle, carrying an icon and a musical instrument associated with shepherds. That procedure had magical connotations, as did the rifle shots which frequently accompanied it, and was intended to protect the cattle from attacks by wolves. Quite possibly it was the apotropaic action of firing guns, so similar to the Victory Day fireworks, that underpinned the postponement of the first spring driving of cattle into the fields until Victory Day.

Similarly, in western areas of the Tula Province there was a tradition, according to which on Ivan Kupala Eve (from 06 to 07 July) young people misbehaved. For example, they stole onions from other people's gardens, they blocked up the doors of houses so that their residents could not leave them in the morning, threw chopped firewood about and so on. This kind of behaviour symbolised the 'demonic' revelry, typical of Ivan Kupala Eve. In Soviet times, this tradition was continued on the Day of the Last School Bell, when on the night immediately after their school- leaving party, boys and girls behaved in a way reminiscent of those traditional customs, without any fear of being punished for it.

Another way of making old festivals relevant was the incorporation of Soviet holidays into cycles of religious holidays. Thus, until recently, one of the traditions which had survived in the Smolensk Province was a cycle of Trinity Ceremonies, which took place from Ascension Day to Trinity Sunday, or Whit-Monday. Traditionally, over that period, on week-ends and holidays, the village youth used to organise open-air celebrations in a local forest. After the introduction of collective farms these celebrations acquired the name *Mayovka* (derived from the word *May*) since, besides Ascension Day and Trinity Sunday and Monday, the holiday dates also included First of May Day. Here is an abstract from an interview with local residents: "*Young boys and girls, young people, used to go to the forest for merrymaking. They called it Mayovka. We usually did it on the day of an official holiday, First of May Day, when trees burst into blossom. We did not have that holiday in the past. But on old holidays we went to the forest for celebrations too*" (Tugovishchi village, Krasninskiy District). It should be pointed out that in that area Trinity ritual songs were known as *mayskiye* (because of the refrain *Mayyu, mayyu, mayyu zelyano!*), a fact which, quite possibly, contributed to the inclusion of First of May Day in the system of folk holidays.

Over the whole period of the existence of collective farms, calendar customs and magic practices related to economic and particularly agricultural and stock-raising activities were well-preserved in the village environment. Their observation often depended on weather conditions and they were not linked to particular religious holidays. This applied, first and foremost, to ritual activities connected with the beginning of spring tilling and sowing, haymaking, manuring the fields, as well as the beginning and ending of harvesting. Such calendar ceremonies continued to be important as long as agricultural works were carried out by hand and collectively. In the 1930s collective farms received tractors, but, for well-known reasons, the war- and post-war periods saw a return to hand labour and correspondingly, to ritual practices. The traditional profile of those ceremonies remained almost unchanged. However, the peasants began to include features of contemporary life in a collective farm, replacing ritual characters by representatives of the local administration.

This kind of replacement was very evident in harvest ceremonies, where ritual functions, formerly exercised by a 'lord' of the crop field, were now performed by a collective farm chairman or foreman. In actual fact these managers of collective farms were responsible for the cultivation of the land too and in this way were the equivalent of the earlier, mythological 'Lord of land', upon whom the harvest depended.

Thus, if in the past a harvest sheaf or wreath had been brought as an offering to the landowner or a 'lord' of the crop field, who was traditionally helped in the work of harvesting by the whole community, in the 1930s such a wreath was delivered to the office of the collective farm chairman or foreman. In the north of Smolensk Province, on completion of rye harvesting, a female doll, with hands and legs, named *Solokha*, was made from the last sheaf. She was dressed in traditional clothes: a gown decorated with embroidery, a *sarafan* (a typical Russian woman's dress without sleeves), and a kerchief tied around her head. Solokha was then taken to the collective farm chairman's office and seated in a corner, directly beneath a red banner (before the establishment of collective farms the doll had been seated in the *red corner*, i.e. under the icons, in the house of the 'lord' of the crop field). The collective farm chairman was supposed to make a token payment to the reapers in exchange for Solokha. On completion of harvesting of the last grain crop, usually oats, the last sheaf was used to produce a similar doll, but this time of the male sex, *Ovsey* (a derivative of the word *oats*). Ovsey was also brought to the office of the collective farm chairman, where the doll remained seated for some time. Eventually, both dolls were undressed and the sheaves were taken to the drying house.

In the West Russian region there was a rather widespread Shrovetide custom which involved rolling a priest in snow, sometimes with a woman clutched in his embrace. This was supposed to produce a good harvest of flax. In the time of collective farms, the chairman was rolled in the snow, since the peasants believed him to be the 'god' in their village. This shows that in the perception of the peasants a collective farm leader, much like a priest, enjoyed a specific, sacral status and was invested with productive capabilities. Notably, he too was supposed to roll on the ground with a woman, a symbolic expression of the act of coition, capable, as people saw it, of affecting the fertility of the land in a very positive way.

Quite often an anti-church campaign resulted in bans on carrying out traditions associated with significant church holidays. One such tradition was carol singing, when a group of people in fancy dress performed a Christmas walk round all the houses in a village. At the same time 'congratulatory' songs were sung, filled with wishes for a good harvest and prosperity. Striving to keep that tradition – especially in view of the magical meaning attached to well-wishing – female residents of one village in the Bryansk Province, would dress as gypsies and visit all homesteads, carrying red flags, as a demonstration of their loyalty to the Soviet authorities.

For the same purpose, words in ritual songs were often subjected to changes, as was the case, for example, with *volochebniye* songs. In the West Russian region, such songs were performed at Easter during a congratulatory walk around homesteads. Besides wishes to the effect that the host would have a good harvest and healthy livestock, such songs listed saints, who helped peasants in their work. Since the Soviet authorities were waging a war against the Church, the names of saints were replaced with those of Communist Party leaders and representatives of local authorities, and now the songs themselves were sung at First Rig Day. Later, in the 1950s, collective farmers used the melodies from that kind of song to accompany poetic texts, in which the drunkenness of a foreman was laughed at or poor workers were criticized. The creation of new texts by no means affected the tunes themselves or the style of folk singing: the pattern of performance, the polyphonic texture of the songs and specific local vocalisation devices were left unchanged. The creation of a corpus of poetic texts, to be performed to one tune, was quite in keeping with folk tradition. Among the East Slavs, each melody, particularly those of ritual songs, correlated with not just one but a whole group of poetic texts. Analysis of their poetics has shown that such poetic texts originated in various historical epochs and reflected features of their respective times.

Field materials provide many examples of how texts and features of Soviet times were adopted and re-processed by folk culture in accordance

with the worldview of its bearers. Thus, for instance, in the Smolensk Province, there was a tradition of drawing crosses (*zakreshchivaniye*) with chalk above windows and doors on the last day of Christmastide, which lasted from Christmas to Epiphany. On the one hand this symbolised the end of the Christmastide period and on the other it was one of the ways to put an end to the revelry of demons, which reached its apogee right at this turning point in the annual cycle. In Soviet times, peasants began exorcising these demons, who, according to folk belief, had been cursed by God, by singing the '*Internationale*' which begins with the following words: 'Arise, ye who are branded with a curse, world of slaves and starving masses'. Folk singers stated that by performing that song they woke the demons up, forced them to their feet and made them leave for the 'other' world.

To sum up, it could be stated that in the very beginning, before a system of Soviet holidays was completely formed, the Soviet authorities used a system of folk holidays, trying to fill them with new contents, while preserving traditional elements to ensure succession from the old to the new. Moreover, in cases of the introduction of non-state, local, holidays, authorities quite often copied traditional patterns of folk calendar holidays and rituals. For their part, the rural population, standing up for their old traditions, enriched their calendar ceremonies with Soviet features, changed the texts of ritual songs and so on. Thus, the two calendar systems accommodated themselves and adapted to each other in a continuous search for points of contact.

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Inventing the Ritual Year in Modern Russia

This paper was inspired by a dialogue I overheard in the check-in queue at Arlanda Stockholm airport on my way back to Moscow from the Second Ritual Year conference, held in Gothenburg in 2006.

It was the 12th of June, the Day of Russia, which has been celebrated in new Russia since 1991 but was known as the Day of Independence, or the Declaration of Sovereignty Day, up until 2002. The conversation between two of my compatriots went as follows: "When we arrive in Moscow, the shops may be closed." – "Why?" – "Today is a day off." – "Why?" – "Today is an official state holiday." – "Which one?" – "The Day of Independence." – "What sort of independence?" – "The day when we realise that nothing depends on us any more."

This short dialogue made me to look more attentively at what is going on in our country in the sphere of the ritual year. I was lucky, because the years 2006-2007 proved very fruitful from the point of view of "Ritual year and history". This period produced many new initiatives and discussions of the calendar in the government followed by many interpretations (including those in Internet blogs and chats) and mass media coverage, which are the main sources I used for this study.

I will concentrate on the modern official holidays, leaving the field of the changes in the traditional and folk festivities in Russia to my colleagues (see the articles by O. Pashina and E. Dorokhova in this volume).

The state ritual year in Russia is still under construction, or reconstruction, and historical events play a crucial role in this process. It is hard work making the new ritual year applicable to a new country and a new society. We are at present witnessing a variety of attitudes to the events of history and different ways of incorporating them into the calendar. I will mention only the attempts to keep the Day of the October Revolution as an official holiday by renaming it. Since 2004 this holiday has been a memorable date in the calendar[1].

There are two new holidays that were introduced after the perestroika started: 12 June – Independence Day, or Day of Russia – and 4 November – Day of National Unity – which I will discuss in detail. A third holiday – that of the Day of the Constitution (12 December) – just changed its timing after the new constitution was instituted in 1993. It was a day off in the Soviet offi-

cial calendar under the same name[2], but was celebrated on a different day (5 December). In 2004 the day off on the 12th of December was abolished, and this holiday is now only a memorial date.

The official holidays display their own unique features in the correlation History – the Ritual Year, but they have much in common. In our country the state festivities fall into the range of "empty", meaningless festivities, that are purely ideological. The majority of the population of the Russian Federation do not remember them (as the dialogue above illustrates) and always have a nice surprise when they realise that they do not have to go to their offices. Thus the old meaning of holiday (Russian *prazdnik*) 'empty, not busy day' is restored to its literal meaning.

These new celebrations are not popular. People do not know the very name and meaning of them, or what and how they should celebrate. The dates are definitely not included in the set of esteemed holidays. The 2006 sociological poll conducted by ROMIR Monitoring showed that among the favourite holidays of the Russians only Victory Day (9 May) is highly evaluated (49% of the respondents), while Independence Day was mentioned by 0.2% of the respondents (www.vz/2007/2/26/html).

The ritual year marks the points of unification of the people, and at the same time their separation according to their attitudes to history. It is difficult to satisfy all the members of society, especially people with different backgrounds, in a time of a change of regime. This is one of the reasons why the attempts to conciliate the people of different backgrounds are so topical now.

The means and aims (sometimes they coincide) of introducing the official holidays into the ritual year can be schematically shown as follows. The main objective is to develop a national identity through celebrating modern and old historical events, while following the European and the World democratic systems of festivals[3]. It is done by:

1) mild revision of the existing Soviet celebrations, leaving the same date or the nearest day but giving a new historical reason for it;
2) revival of some of the pre-revolutionary (1917) celebrations with a new appraisal of the Church festivals, which now develop national dimensions;
3) offering a new celebration with a new date and filling it with a complex of rituals[4].

A Brief Reference to the Revolutionary Past

The changes in the calendar in modern Russia have their historical parallels. Each epoch tries to adjust time to the ideological needs of the au-

thorities. The Socialist revolution, which has transformed the whole picture of the world and society, succeeded in creating its own calendar. One of the first Decrees (February 1918) aimed at conformity with the European Calendar, moving from Julian to Gregorian, which caused a confusion in dates (even the October revolution is celebrated in November). Then followed experiments with the structuring of the year – dividing the year into periods of 5 days and 6 days instead of normal weeks (26th August 1929-1940), explained to the people by industrial needs and non-stop productive activity, with no set day off. Thus the year first consisted of 360 days – 72 five-day periods. 5 days were considered holidays, and were dedicated to memorial dates of the Soviet and revolutionary calendar: 22 January, 1-2 May, 7-8 November. There are people who were born on 30 February (1930, 1931). This calendar lasted till 21 November 1931. Then the working calendar was divided into 6-day periods with fixed days off on the 6th, 12th, 18th, 24th and 300th. This system was in force for nine years up to 16 June 1940[5].

After the decay of the USSR all the former Soviet republics and all the countries of the former socialist block re-arranged their ritual years, giving up the system which had existed till the crucial 1990-1991 (Dubin 2007).

The Ritual Year of the 1980s

The official calendrical heritage we received and maintained till the end of the 1980s was a stagnant one. The favourite holiday (not so ideological compared to the other ones) was the New Year (no Christmas!). Among the days off were the Day of the Red Army (23 February), International Women's Day (8 March), the Day of International Solidarity (1 May), the 7th of November, and the Day of the Soviet Constitution on the 5th of December. Some of them were celebrated with huge demonstrations (a vivid feature, "the central moment" of all the Soviet ideological festivals, Von Geldern 1993:7), some had additional gender allusions, some demonstrated lack of rituals (the enigmatic Day of the Constitution). The major dates of Lenin's biography were also remembered, as well as the dates of the foundation of the Pioneer organisation, the Komsomol Youth organisation, etc. The exception was, and still is, Victory Day (9 May), commemorating the victory in the Second World War – a day which even the official rhetoric could not spoil and turn into a purely ideological celebration. It remains humane, unifying people of all ages and political views and has some claim to the status of the main state holiday.

The Ritual Year of the 1990s

The decay of the USSR brought freedom of religion and reintroduced the Church ritual year into the calendar. Christmas became an official day off

and Easter was celebrated in the Kremlin. The close union between the Orthodox Church and the Russian government is being explicated in many ways, including celebrations. Previous Christian holidays have turned into an important part of the ideology of national identification and patriotism. The Day of Sovereignty, from which I started my paper, was introduced after the independence of the Russian Federation was declared and one by one the old symbols – the eagle, the flag – came back instead of the star and the red colour everywhere.

According to a poll, 7% of respondents answered that they considered the Day of Independence an important festival, 15% said that this date is the beginning of a new era for Russia, and 12% think of it as the anniversary of a tragedy. For 32% this day meant nothing, or they knew it only as an additional day off, and 34% did not care at all. There are many links which display the connection between an interpretation of a holiday and a historical event, perceived through a historical figure. Thus, the reasons for the indifference to the Day of Russia would be:

1. The figure of Eltsin – his personality and activity were more evident than the Declaration. Here are some comments of the date for celebrating the Day of Russia taken from the Internet chats: "Eltsin was elected somewhere." "This is the day when the first president of Russia was elected; this day became the Day of Independence." Nowadays, when Vladimir Putin's epoch has taken the shine out of Eltsin's times, this celebration has acquired a dubious reputation and there is a certain shift towards "Putin's" holiday – the Day of National Unity.
2. Many Russians think that independence brought too much grief and discomfort in their own lives and to the country as a whole. – "Before I was independent, I had a good salary."
3. They also think that "the role of Russia dropped in the world scale."
4. What kind of independence? "We do not know on WHOM Russia does not depend now. I do not understand the meaning of this state holiday."

Interestingly enough, I found the same ideas in Bulgarian Internet blogs. The Bulgarian language, as one of the closest to Russian supports, this thought with the same play on words: "nishto ne zavisi ot mene" (nothing depends on me). Bulgarians who heard of the newly "created" Day of Independence commented that they perceived it first as the well-known American holiday (Sedakova 2008).

The Weird Inventions of the Beginning of New Millennium

Major modifications to the ritual year followed in 2004-2005. The Great Red Day of the October Revolution became a usual working day. Instead there was introduced an enigmatic date of the 4th of November – the Day of People's Unity – in commemoration of the events of 1612 when Kuzma Minin and Dmitry Pozharsky with an army of citizens started from Nizhniy Novgorod, reached Moscow, and put an end to the time of troubles. They fought off the Polish-Lithuanian occupants (and Pseudo-Dmitry) and the ruler became tsar Mikhail Romanov. The idea of **historical memory** dominated in the speeches of the officials. It is definitely an ambiguous date and event to be chosen for the high point on the path of national history. But the authorities are very determined and they are looking for, and finding, reasons for that date. They never mention, though, that it became an official day instead of the Day of the October Revolution on 7 November.

Another motive for choosing this date comes from the Church authorities, for this is the day of the Kazan icon of the Mother of God, celebrated on the 4th of November. The direction of combining these facts seems evident: In Moscow the memorial to Minin and Pozharsky is erected close to the Church of Kazan Mother of God (destroyed by the communists and rebuilt in 1990-1993) in the Red Square. The attempt to satisfy most of the people of different political views is also obvious. But the communists will never give up the date of November the 7th; no compromise is possible, as the passage of time proves.

The way the people started to celebrate this new invention gives us an idea of what is going on in modern Russia today. The national idea which combines historical events and religious content is at the core of many political performances.

In 2006, Nizhnyj Novgorod was chosen as the centre for celebrating this day and the main focus was the square now called the Square of the People's Unity, where the Minin and Pozharskij memorial is erected. The festival program consisted of:

the laying of flowers on the monument by the Vice-President of the Russian Federation,

the sanctifying of a new Church dedicated to the Russian St Sergij Radonezhskij,

an official demonstration,

and a laser show depicting the heroic story of Minin and Pozharslij in the evening.

All over the country this holiday and the very concept of unification was broadly discussed and interpreted. As journalists commented, it awoke

inventiveness in the 136 cities where it was celebrated. For example, members of the party 'Ours' have used a carnival with masks of democrats and billionaires as the symbol of this day. In Jaroslavl, the people begged everyone to unify around the Russian rouble and to give up foreign currency. In Krasnojarsk, the celebration had a Communist aura – the governor himself marched in the streets with columns of workers. The rituals are still to be formulated, because in each location they depend upon ideological issues.

Conclusion

The two official holidays I have briefly depicted in this article give us two views on history and incorporating it in the ritual year. The Day of Sovereignty emerged soon after the historical declaration of the Independence of Russian Federation. The Day of National Unity shows another perspective – the purposeful search in the depths of Russian history for the sake of ideological manipulation. The date is carefully chosen so as to meet the needs of the state official ideology and to fit into the modern Russian ritual year.

What is the ideological essence of the Day of Independence? It pretends to relate to a new country with new life. It pretends to follow the world democratic traditions. But it has strong associations with the difficult 1990s and the figure of Eltsin. The Day of National Unification associated with the time of Vladimir Putin and the period of "stability" is beginning to dominate, putting the Day of Russia in the shade.

What is the ideology of the 4th of November, which is already called Putin's day? It is still ambiguous, both in the choice of the historical event of the 17th century (with much symbolic interpretation) which is celebrated, and in the ways the celebration is performed. It does not make a statement about the future of the country, democracy and legitimacy. It is a purely ideological holiday that has the major objective of declaring the unification of the nation.

In many countries worldwide the national days are major state holidays, like Independence Day, or the Day of the Constitution . The same practice is followed in many former USSR republics which celebrate sovereignty in the frame of independence from the USSR (all since 1991: Estonia – 20 August; Georgia – 21 May; Kazakhstan – 25 October; Ukraine – 24 August, etc.).

As the Internet discussions and the popular opinion of the Russians indicate, the best state holiday would be Victory Day, the 9th of May, which proved to be a joyous day and survived through the years of socialism and post-socialism. It can be compared to the American 4th of July Independence Day and to the state holidays of other countries.

Notes

[1] There are six memorable days in the modern state Russian ritual year: the Day of the Students (25 January), the Day of the Cosmonauts (12 April), the Day of Solidarity against Terrorism (3 September), the Day of the October Revolution (7 November), the Day of the Hero (9 December) and the Day of the Constitution (12 December). These festivities also give us an example of constructing the official ritual year and merging it with historical, ideological and religious issues. Thus, the Day of the Students is celebrated on the Day of St Tatiana, the Patroness of the Students (re-introduced into the calendar in 2005). The Day of the Hero is the saint's day of George the Conqueror, the Guardian of Moscow. Initially the Christian holiday turned into an important state festival and was celebrated from 2006, when it was instituted by the Parliament. The Day of the Cosmonauts survived from the Soviet times and commemorates a historical event – the first flight of the cosmonaut Jury Gagarin (12 April 1961). The ritual activity and symbolism of these dates deserve a special study which I cannot undertake here because of the restrictions on space. On the six days, see further: http://www.rian.ru/society/20070216/ 60834702.html.

[2] There were several versions of the USSR constitution (1924, 1936, 1977) . The 5th of December was long remembered as the celebration of Stalin's Constitution of 1936. See http://constitution.garant.ru/DOC_0000810003000.htm.

[3] Various aspects of celebrating national holidays in Sweden and Norway were discussed in Gothenburg during the Second conference on the ritual year See Gustavsson (2007); Pettersson & Ulfstrand (2007)

[4] Last but not least the ritual year is designed to support the commercial part of the festivities, though this applies more to the seasonal holidays than the state ones.

[5] In some post-socialist republics with new authoritarian regimes the names of months and days of the week have been changed. For example, in Turkmenistan, Saparmurat Nijazov introduced a new calendrical system and renamed the days of the week, the months and the years according to the new history and symbolism.

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The Annual Equestrian Games of the *Gardians* of the Camargue:

Invented Traditions, Identity, and Ritual Drama

The raising of domestic animals in the Camargue – the region of Provence between the two branches of the Rhone River – has a history of many hundreds of years, but it is only in the last one hundred years that the occupations, practices, and rituals of *manadiers* (ranchers) and *gardians* (cowboys) have become codified and established. In the term coined by Eric Hobsbawm (1992), the practices of these *Camarguais* are "invented traditions", created for a variety of reasons and often thought, today, to be very ancient. Over time, these ritual practices have become intertwined with regional identity, religious belief and custom, and tourism.

The history of settlement and civilization in the Camargue is complex and subject to speculation; indeed, even the origin of the name "Camargue" is still debated (Urquhart 2004:25; Duret and Sibille 2001:9). But certainly the breeding and rearing of horses and probably other animals was well established by early in the first millennium. Still, various kinds of livestock passed in and out of favor over the years. In 1555, Pierre Quiqueran de Beaujeu said that the Ile de Camargue, by now part of the kingdom of France, supported more than 4,000 mares and 16,000 oxen (Duret and Sibille 2001:19). In 1830, an engineer named Poulle estimated 550 bulls, 2,000 horses, and 75,000 sheep in the various *mas* (farms or ranches) in the area (Duret and Sibille 2001:26). Meanwhile, the breeding of cattle to pull plows declined, not to be revived until the beginning of the twentieth century, when the growing popularity of the Spanish and French bullfights and the growth of tourism encouraged local manadiers to invest in bull breeding again. The estimate in 2001 was 15,000 Camargue bulls, 6,000 "Brave" (Spanish) bulls and about 6,000 horses, although sheep have declined to about 5,000 head because of EU regulations and international competition (Duret and Sibille 2001:29, 44-45).

As in other cultures based on agriculture and livestock, the Camargue had a ritual year—an annual round of holidays, feast days, seasonal markers and practices. One of the major ones was the *ferrade*, a community

event held in spring when one-year-old bulls were branded and ear-notched, as Quiqueran de Beaujeu reported (Duret and Sibille 2001:36). Catching and holding the young bulls took daring and strength, and competitions often developed. Poulle, the engineer, described an 1830 ferrade:

> Several gardians, and often, indeed, courageous members of the bourgeoisie, rush off into the marshes in pursuit of the animal. The best horsemen, carrying long tridents, gallop up to it, encircle it from the back and sides, and skillfully lead it, by pricking its flanks with the points of their weapons, to the enclosure where the glowing iron awaits it. This enclosure... is made of planks, ploughs, carts... even the carriages of the spectators, who sit on fences as though they were sitting on the terraces of an amphitheatre; and from these vantage points they watch what is happening in the arena.
>
> The horsemen, for their part, close in on the bull. They harass it and goad it until they judge it too tired to be dangerous. They dismount, and the more intrepid among them approach the animal with a view to engaging it in combat. Neither its bellowing nor its frothing maw can stop them. As soon as it lowers its head to charge, they rush forward, seize it vigorously by the horns, and bring it to the ground by pulling its opposite leg towards them.
>
> Applause and cries of delight greet the defeat of the bull. All the combatants throw themselves upon it to overcome its resistance, and the person whom they wish to honour is invited to enter the arena and apply the red-hot iron (qtd. in Duret and Sibille 2001:36-37).

Another major event involving the gardians is the three-day festival in the village of Les Saintes Maries de la Mer (Stanley 2007). Based on a legend about the exile from the Holy Land of Mary Magdalene, her handmaiden Sara, Mary Jacobé, Mary Salomé, the risen Lazarus, Martha, and others, the festival celebrates the arrival of the saints on the shores of the Camargue and the subsequent Christianization of Provence. In recognition, on May 24th, Romani (gypsies) from all over Europe come to Les Saintes Maries de la Mer for a pilgrimage honoring their patron, Saint Sara; on May 25th Mary Jacobé is honored (Mary Salomé has her own day of celebration on October 22nd). On these days, gardians on horseback dressed in traditional clothing, carrying their tridents and flanked by the *Arlésiennes*, women (and their male escorts) dressed in nineteenth-century costumes, escort the statues of the saints from the fortified twelfth-century church to the sea, where the statues are blessed. On May 26th, the gardians and Ar-

lésiennes celebrate their culture with a memorial service for the Marquis Folco de Baroncelli-Javon followed by, in the local arena, *jeux des gardians* (games or contests on horseback), and the *course camarguaise*, the Provençal bullfight, in which young men try to snatch rosettes and ribbons from between the bull's horns. In the course camarguaise, the bull is never killed, and indeed the rules of the contest impose a time limit to avoid tiring the bull too much.

This event in the village of Les Saintes Maries de la Mer is probably related to an earlier event held traditionally on Whit Monday, the day after Passover, which usually occurs in late May or early June. On that day, the *Confrérie de Gardians de Taureaux et du Cheveaux Camargue*, which originated as a kind of trade guild in 1512, honored its own patron, Saint George, with a High Mass, a parade, a banquet, horse races, and a game called *aiguillettes* (lances), also called *jeu de la bague* (game of the ring), in which riders at full gallop attempt to spear a hanging ring. In the twentieth century, the date of this event was moved, often to May 1 (Duret and Sibille 2001:37). The *fête des gardians* is still being held on that date in Arles, a day that celebrates gardian heritage, culture, and tradition. In turn, it owes its origins and much of its structure to the *fête vierginenco*, part of the city's *fête provençales*, as established by the influential poet and revivalist, Frédéric Mistral (Zaretsky 2004:98).

The establishment of black bulls, white horses, and the gardians as prototypes of Camargue life, symbols of a life lived close to the land in harmony with nature, dates back to four principal figures: Frédéric Mistral, Carle Naudot, Joseph d'Arbaud, and the Marquis Folco de Baroncelli-Javon. Mistral (1830-1914), who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1904, was a poet who sought to honor and revive the language, literature, and traditional ways of life of Provence. In 1854, as a young man, Mistral joined others in founding the *Félibrige*, an organization dedicated to those ends. Written in Provençal, his poems both commemorate and romanticize the culture of Provence. The best loved of them, at least in the Camargue, is *Mirèio* (*Mireille* in French), the romantic tale of a tragic love between a fifteen-year-old girl from a large *mas* and a young man of Romani background, a humble basket-maker.

Joseph d'Arbaud (1874-1950), poet and novelist, became a follower of Mistral and sought to revive Provençal as a literary language. Many of his poems celebrate the gardian heritage and culture, and he was actively involved in the breeding of horses and bulls (Duret and Sibille 2001:44). Naudot (1880-1948) married the daughter of a manadier and spent the rest of his life recording and celebrating the ways of life in the Camargue

through his writings, drawings, and photographs. A member of the *Société d'Ethnographie Française*, he wrote and illustrated two works about the gardians, one on the horsehair rope, the other titled *Camargue et gardians* (Duret and Sibille 2001:39).

Baroncelli (1870-1943) was also inspired by the example of Mistral. Moving to a mas in the Camargue in the late nineteenth century, he began organizing local manadiers and gardians. Deeply influenced by William (Buffalo Bill) Cody, whose Wild West productions traveled several times through France in the late nineteenth century, Baroncelli imagined that what Cody had done for the supposedly vanishing American Indian and cowboy, he, Baroncelli, could do for the *Camarguais*. In 1909, Baroncelli founded an organization called, in Provençal, *Nacioun Gardiano*, which succeeded an earlier one, *Coumitat Vierginen*, founded by Mistral. In fact, Mistral is reputed to have said to Baroncelli, "I entrust the Camargue to you; you know it so much better than I." The purpose of Nacioun Gardiano was to maintain and celebrate the traditions of southern Provence – Arles and the Camargue – especially the costumes, customs, and festivals of the region, along with encouraging the retention of the Provençal language and of art and literature featuring the gardians. The organization, still in existence today, declares that working gardians are members by right (Duret and Sibille 2001:44), although some of the members today seem to be urbanized enthusiasts and revivalists rather than working gardians

As part of his work with the Nacioun Gardiano, Baroncelli designed a gardian costume, clearly indebted to Buffalo Bill's Wild West and to the U. S. cowboy as well as to certain fabrics and colours associated with Provence. Broad-brimmed hats, wide belts with large buckles, brightly colored shirts with neckerchiefs, dark trousers, and black moleskin jackets or waistcoats are features that fans of U. S. cowboy films would recognize. Women – the Arlésiennes – wear something akin to a nineteenth-century costume with long skirts, white stockings, loosely fitted white linen blouses, a lace shawl over the shoulders, and hair arranged elaborately in a Victorian style, often with a large tortoise-shell comb holding it in place under a tiny silk bonnet (Urquhart 2004:268; Carlisle 1987:1). At the fête des gardians, the women ride their horses sidesaddle in deference to their presumptive nineteenth-century traditions.

At both Arles on May 1 and at Les Saintes Maries de la Mer on May 26th, the emphasis is on the games and exercises of the gardians in addition to the traditional bullfight. Among the games are three that were devised by Baroncelli himself around the time of the founding of the Nacioun Gardiano; he claimed that they were "inspired" by the games at the fourteenth-

century papal court of Avignon and "reconstructed" by "hypothesis" (Zaretsky 2004:103-104). According to Carle Naudot, these "invented" games were first tried out at St Raphael in 1912 (Naudot 1988:175). They include the *tournoi des écharpes*, in which two mounted riders from opposite teams joust with each other with padded poles; the *tournoi de l'épervier,* a contest in which two mounted riders try to snatch a bouquet of flowers held aloft by a third rider; and the *jeu des oranges*, in which riders circle the arena at full gallop, trying to grab oranges from the outstretched palms of four women dressed in traditional costume. Other features of the games include the music of Bizet and the dance called the *farandole* (Urquhart 2004:269), as well as the nighttime parade called the *pegoulado*, from *pegot,* "lantern" (Carlisle 1987:5). Also, before and after the games, gardians bring a group of bulls through the village at a run, keeping the bulls in the center of a group of tightly packed horses and riders to prevent their escape and possible damage to people and property. This event is called the *abrivado.*

As an example of how thoroughly these gardian games became established in Provence, here is a sample of d'Arbaud's poem "*Rêverie d'un gardian*":

Where are the clear light of the dawn and the gallop (*l'abrivado*)
Of horses neighing in the wind of the morning?
The fire throws onto the shining pewter of the dresser
Its soft warmth and the reflection of the flame.

* * *

There was a time when in the little streets with white walls
Proudly I galloped in the midday heat,
Lance in hand, the belt above the haunches.

There was a time when we left the corrals at the break of day.
The girls clustering round the doors of the cabins
With their clear laughter wished us their good-days (*bonjour*).

But, grave, rolled in our woolen burnouses,
In the breath of dawn we pressed the bulls along,
The rising sun shining on their horns.

Pride of the strong, swelling pride of the chieftains,
Thirst of the conqueror swooping down on conquered towns...
All these were ours when we galloped before the door.

A-gallop, invincible, we swept into the arena
And the girls from the balconies clapped their hands for us.

Then when came evening before the calm of the night
Erect in our stirrups we drove out of that oval
Pressing before us the panting bulls
And the blood of our horses bathed our spurs.

(qtd. in Mistral 1986:71-73)

Naudot – writing in the 1940s – reported observing only one truly traditional sport, the jeu de la bague or aiguillettes, already mentioned. Naudot also commented wistfully on the traditional games that had been "abandoned": "Il est vraiment regrettable que les gardians aient abandonné la course des hommes et les trois sauts; ce sont pourtant, là, des jeux bien arlésiens" (Naudot 1988:175; see also 175-183). These are clear indications that the calendrical celebrations of the gardians have evolved over time, ever-changing and subject to a constant process of invention and reinvention, subtraction and addition.

Although these celebrations may on the surface appear to be "rites of competition" in Alessandro Falassi's words (1997:300), it seems to me that the competitive element is minimal except in the bullfight, for, as Zaretsky has said, "The games are meant to highlight one's horsemanship, not one's brute strength; thus the efforts made to prevent a fellow *cavalier* from attaining his goal are largely theatrical" (2004:102). Instead, I would suggest that these games resemble ritual dramas rather than true sport. Falassi points out that ritual dramas have as their subject matter a creation myth, a foundation or migratory legend, or a military success, and the games, the bullfights, the costumes, the religious rituals and processions, and the memorials – in the form of ceremonies, grave markers, and statues – create (or seem to re-create) a historical *presence*, a sense of heritage and continuity, an image of life unaltered for hundreds of years. Falassi concludes: "By means of the drama, the community members are reminded of their golden age, the trials and tribulations of their founding members in reaching the present location of the community, the miracles of a saint, or the periodic visit of a deity to whom the festival is dedicated" (2004:299). In the sense that Mistral and Baroncelli comprise the saints of the Camargue – they who were responsible for its founding identity, at least in modern times, as well as its sense of history and its public personality – the annual round of gardian festivals are an interlocked set of dramas that enact the invented traditions of the region.

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The Claim for History in Contemporary Calendar Festivals: Legendary, Historical and Present Times

To analyse the relationship between the ritual year and history, I have chosen to study the ways different historical events are evoked in local contemporary festivals. I will consider history, in an anthropological perspective, as something which is mainly built up by the present (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983). I will not try to use history as a global frame, which would be the case if I wanted to study the organization of some given festivals at different historical times, for example. I will rather consider history as a set of themes which are more or less used and appropriated because they interest people who are involved in the festivals. With some examples taken from my fieldwork in Provence, I will show different ways of using history as a tool in building local calendar festivals. I will show how different scales of time are used, each of which matching with some precise types of festivals.

I will first study the way some contemporary folkloric features are connected with a legendary past, and this will enable us to understand the paradoxical relations people have with otherness in local festivals.

Second, I will take into account the numerous cases of historical spectacles which are scheduled in local festivals and have to be related to a specifically modern "taste for history" (Amalvi 1996).

Last, the study of some exhibitions which are, in recently created festivals, devoted to the previous editions of the festivals themselves, will illustrate a tendency of contemporary festivals to incorporate more and more recent historical references in order to display self-orientated images of local communities.

1. Saracen Collars: Displaying Legendary Times. My first example will focus on "Saracen collars", which are emblematic of regional culture in Provencal festivals. During the summer, in some villages in the "Pays d'Arles", in Provence, there is a cycle of religious celebrations devoted to Saint Eloi, Saint Roch and Saint Jean (Fournier 2006). Inspired by traditional agrarian rituals, these festivals today display richly harnessed drought horses pulling decorated carriages. The main elements in these festivals are

quests, balls, masses, meals, and the procession of the harnessed horses which are blessed by the priests while they pass in front of the church.

Used in these celebrations, the "Saracen" horse collars are known as remarkable since the first folklorists' works in the 19th century. The local interpretations of the ritual usually explain that it is a survival from the time when the Arabs were occupying Provence in the Middle-Ages. In fact, nobody really exactly knows about the origin of this ritual, but the popular worship which fuels the festivals has been enough to maintain them in spite of the disappearance of horses due to the mechanization of agriculture.

For those who keep them and use them, the "Saracen" collars are very paradoxical because they are connected with both conflicts and encounters. A monographic approach of the collars, crossed with the ethnography of the situations in which they are used, enable to understand how a precise social order is incorporated in this specific harnessing. Conflicts appear under the form of struggles and rivalries, involving complex questions of honour and hierarchy, between the concurrent guilds, the "prayers of the year" in charge of the festival, the horses' owners, and some influent members from the guilds' federation. Because the collars display the local social order, they often feed conflicts, and there are many discussions, all year long, to set the order of the procession and to know who will take the first places.

Nevertheless, behind these sorts of conflicts also hide encounters: the harnessing, at the same time as it feeds the local conflicts, is claimed to be the right way to gather around "traditional" and "rural" shared values. In fact, the collars create a confusion between the Self and the Other: they are obviously exotic and "Saracen", but at the same time they symbolize a deep-rooted Provencal local identity and they are supported by a very conservative audience, in a political right-wing area. In this case, the "Saracen" Other is disconnected from the present immigration issues and connected with a legendary time; the claim for history in this type of festival uses the fictional pattern of a mythical time in order to anchor today's Provencal identity. The paradoxical status of the collars is an answer to the paradoxical status of cultural identity itself, which needs both the Self and the Other to exist.

2. Historical Spectacles: Displaying Historical Times. My second example concerns historical festivals and spectacles, which are more and more successful and popular nowadays. In many places in Europe, historians have recently spoken of "the explosion of medieval festivals" (Crivello 2006: 49). The trend was born in the 1970's in Great-Britain and in North America under the name of "Living history". The idea was to bring back to live medie-

val towns and villages, fortresses, fight-places, etc. Once again, such local historical frescoes are very close to identity speeches (Bensa & Fabre 2001). But at the same time, for the people who participate in the festivals, they are above all interesting because they are connected with play and performance.

Very early, historical spectacles have been seen as means to legitimate an election. In 1932 the French Automobile Club manages to sponsor a "Route Napoléon" in the Alps with the support of some local politicians. In 1977 began the famous "Cinéscénie" in Le Puy du Fou in Vendée, created by the conservative leader Philippe de Villiers (Martin & Suaud 1996). In 1989 the second century of the French Revolution is the moment when this type of spectacle really becomes popular in France. In all these spectacles, costumes, music, so-called genuine medieval food, help the audience to search for emotions and to experiment the past: a popular taste for history is performed through the historical spectacles which connect today's people with their mythical ancestors.

Another thing is, in Normandy for instance (Mezeau 2006), there's a clear relation between the apparition of historical themes in the local festive agenda and the risks coming from the huge new nuclear centre built in La Hague in the 1970's. Historical festivals then feed a new balance when the old social and political balances are endangered; they fill the empty space when the parish traditional festivals disappear. Historical spectacles as well as old style markets or rural folklore reconstitutions use history as a mean of ritually connecting the real community and its own mythical image in order to face social transformations.

Historians give a clearly political analysis of the phenomenon. According to them, it has to be connected with a change of scale of history, which is less and less present at a national level and more and more present at a local level: in other words, "never before have so many been so engaged with so many different pasts" (Lowenthal 1998). The creation of historical spectacles illustrates the "multiplication of history issuers" phenomenon (Garcia & Bosseno 2006: 9) and the "improvement of local scales" in the making of history. In France, this situation feeds a competition between different visions of the past: this strikes the centralist doctrine of the French republic, in which we normally have no more than one single national history. There's a clash between two visions of history: the history of the society as a whole in front of the histories of all the different local communities. More than a simple display of the past, history is then connected with identity and memory: it legitimates political claims from regional, religious or ethnic minorities, promotes cities, and creates new social links.

This popular taste for history is properly modern. Connected with local calendar festivals, it shapes the time of the year in a new way. In comparison with the first example, there is still a claim for history and a concern with origins, but in this case an effort is made to refer to "real" documented historical facts. Moreover, the historical references which are used here concern the past of the community itself; they do not refer any more to otherness.

3. Exhibitions Devoted to the Festivals Themselves: Displaying Present Times. The third example I will develop is not really an example because it is not related to a specific type of festival. I will concentrate on the media in the analysis of the connections between calendar festivals and history. Festivals, indeed, document more and more their own histories, and this is mainly because they are becoming local development and tourism issues. Such "revitalized rituals" (Boissevain 1992) pay more and more attention to their own images.

The mediatisation process begins with flyers, programs, posters, papers which are worth being studied because they signal the festival and because they structure its memory and the ways it will be performed in the future. In the past, such programs did not exist at all, and the success of a festival simply depended on the way it was orally advertised. In the Saint-Eloi celebrations in Provence, dated programs have now become symbols of the festival; they are made by local artists and offered as gifts to the main organizers who keep them as relics. The programs themselves, as material evidences of the festivals, thus earn a commemorative value.

In an even more characteristic way, local festivals more and more devote exhibitions to some images of their previous editions. These exhibitions appear in all sorts of festivals, not only in the traditional ones. They can consist in classical exhibitions, which can be held out just like in museums. They can also consist in special moments in the festival: under the form of a conference concerning the history of the festival, or under the form of a shared moment to look at some photos, etc. These evocations are more and more numerous. They seem to be extended from previous private uses of photographs or narratives as souvenirs. With the arrival of digital cameras and cellular phones taking pictures, some youth began in 2005 and 2006, during some parish festivals in Provence, to document actions from the day or even from the hour before. With such behaviours, in a quite narcissic way, on a huge screen in the middle of the main street, the people in the festival look backward at themselves and the present festival is not performed anymore.

Thus, new technologies change dramatically the relationship between festivals and history, at the same time as they paradoxically set up new ar-

chives for tomorrow. On the one hand the new technologies seem to totally destroy the references to history, which are reduced to the day before, but on the other hand they form a new documentation that had never existed in the past at this scale. What changes here is the relation between ritual and spectacle. Because festivals become games or simple leisure activities for their participants, and because they are now widely opened to strangers, they abandon the seriousness of the ritual structure, which usually proposed fixed and organized sequences. This seriousness is now transferred and carried forward in the ways of organizing the festivals, which are much more structured than in the past in a managerial way which replaces the usual means of bricolage and oral transmission. With the extend of media in festivals, the scale of time used in the claim for history has been reduced to present times.

Conclusion: The presented data finally opens a debate concerning the abilities of social actors to understand and to perform their own history and identity through the cycle of the ritual year.

In the first example, local identity is claimed through the representation of a struggle between the Self and the Other in mythical or legendary times. In the second example, local identity is claimed through the representation of a self, but a self which is often removed far in the past. The third example shows that in all type of festivals today, local identity is claimed through the representation of a self, but a near and present self that can be easily commented and documented.

The three cases finally show how our relations to history can gradually change. In the first type of festival, which was codified in the 19th century by the folklorists, imaginary patterns were necessary to build up new regional identities. In the second type of festivals, which appeared in the 1970's, the taste for displaying historical patterns appears as a compensation to the dangers involved by urbanization and industrialization. The last example shows that today, the media totally change the perception of the festivals: they use present images or focus on their own recent history, so that they claim their own time and their autonomy.

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The Neo-Pagan Ritual Year and Reinterpretations of History

This paper addresses the mechanism of historical reinterpretation at work in Neo-Pagan culture by examination of the Neo-Pagan ritual year and the relationship between the Neo-Pagan movement and historical paganism (i.e. pre-Christian indigenous religion).

The term Neo-Paganism denotes contemporary nature-based spiritual traditions. It is an umbrella term for a broad range of spiritual and magical beliefs and practices. Even the definition of this movement itself involves consideration of the relationship this modern movement has to ancient paganism.

Many of those who self-identify as 'Pagan' in contemporary times feel that they are followers of a religion that has its roots in the distant past; because of this belief, these people prefer the term 'Old Religion' or 'Ancestral Religion' to be used in reference to Pre-Christian Paganism. They feel it is a precursor to their own belief-system and spiritual practices.

It should be made clear that the use of the prefix 'Neo-' is in no way an attempt to detract from the authenticity or validity of contemporary religious traditions. It is employed simply to make it easier to distinguish between the contemporary movement and the historical religious traditions.

Neo-Paganism is a relatively recent cultural movement and particular 'paths', or denominations, within it have been classified by some scholars as NRMs (New Religious Movements)[1]. It has been argued that many forms of Neo-Paganism have been established in comparatively recent times and that they do not have historically traceable antecedents. For example, Wicca, which is a form of modern Pagan witchcraft, was founded as a mystery religion in the 1940s by Gerald Gardner, who "was probably inspired by Margaret Murray's historical account of witchcraft as an organized pre-Christian fertility religion" (Luhrmann 1991:42-43). Murray, in her book *Witchcult in Western Europe* (1921), proposed that a fertility cult existed in pre-Christian Europe and that it centred on celebrations related to the seasonal cycles and pantheistic world-view. She claimed that the inquisition had twisted the symbolism of this older religion during the Witch Trials due to the belief prevalent at that time that magical rituals must be connected to devil-worship. Stirred on by this notion, Gardner set out to make what he considered to be a pre-Christian religion, ac-

cessible to people once again and named it Wicca. Academics refute that Wicca and other Neo-Paganism are historical. Despite rebuts from historical analysts, many practitioners feel that there are direct historical precursors to the modern forms of Paganism.

While Neo-Pagan movements were emerging in various countries from the 1960s onwards, and there were groups forming in Ireland throughout the 1970s and 80's, Paganism did not become visible on the Irish cultural landscape until the 1990s. In the Irish context, the majority of Neo-Pagan orders and organisations were founded in the early 1990s. Even though some groups and orders claim to be drawing on older sources of knowledge, this cannot be proven.

Projecting New Meanings onto the Past

Some Neo-Pagan groups identify their own spiritual tradition with that of an ancient "ancestral" religion and view themselves as the revivers of an ancient form of worship. There is an interesting process of attributing new meanings to the distant past. Many connections are made with the past, or at least with the notion of a perceptible pre-Christian religion having existed that shares something of the worldview and practices of modern Paganism, including the ritual acknowledgment of the changing seasons.

Four main seasonal festivals are celebrated by Neo-Pagans: Samhain on October 31st / November 1st, Imbolc on February 1st, May Day (*Bealtaine*) on May 1st and Lughnasadh on August 1st. The solstices and equinoxes are also observed.

The notion that these eight annual festivals were observed and celebrated in a certain way by ancient people has also been influence by the writings of Margaret Murray and others. The belief that the system of holidays known as the "Wheel of the Year" has been celebrated by pagans in ancient times and onwards is part of what James Lewis (Lewis 1999:300) has called a "foundation myth" of modern paganism.

However this kind of matching up of presumed ancient Irish festival practices with contemporary Irish Neo-Pagan festival celebrations is tenuous as relatively little historical evidence exists on the religious beliefs and practices of pre-Christian people in Ireland or of the beliefs and practices extant in Ireland prior to the arrival of Christianity. The Neo-Pagan Wheel of the Year is similar in structure to the Irish folk religious calendar. However, the beliefs and practices connected with each calendar (i.e. Neo-Pagan and traditional Irish folk festivals) belong to substantially different contexts. Neo-Pagans may feel that they are celebrating the changing seasons in a similar way to how pre-Christian pagans did, but it is not possible to conclude this. The celebration of the changing seasons in Irish folk tra-

dition includes many customs believed by scholars to be ancient in origin but this is not to say that all aspects of traditional celebrations can be traced back to ancient times; many festival customs originated in pre-modern times or medieval times but do not have a pre-Christian origin. There is a tendency for Neo-Pagans to equate folk religious customs with that of pre-Christian religious customs.

Neo-Paganism is not the same thing as indigenous religion or folk religion. Even where a tradition has continued on in an observable and traceable way from the past, there are of course discontinuities between indigenous traditions and those of the modern Pagan movement. There is some durability in traditions, from folk practices of the pre-modern era into modern-day Paganism but this also involves much reinterpretation.

While many Pagans attempt to continue and maintain some aspects of older traditions, it is apparent that there is also self-consciousness with regard to issues of historical continuity and identity. There is awareness that it is unfeasible to 'revive' ancient religious practices *per se*, or even reconstruct accurately what older religions might have been like since so little information exists on indigenous paganism. Others are of the opinion that aspects of old religions, or at least those aspects that have been documented in even a limited way, can be revived and simultaneously changed to suit a modern mindset. Despite the fact that ancient paganism cannot be known about in any detail, people choose to carry on specific religious traditions that are associated with ancient religion, which they then modify to suit modern contexts. Discussing tradition in terms of his own group's ritual practices, one Druid says: "Some things of course we can't maintain [...] simply because they are not appropriate. It's not appropriate to take a life and dissect somebody's shoulder and have a look to see what's going on with the world (*chuckles*), you know? So in those things, you know, that's where Druids use change through the centuries, Mmm, but Druidry is always changing" (Interview with Mel)[2]. The reference here to dissecting an individual's shoulder is an allusion to the ancient practice of *scapulomancy*, a kind of divination by means of observing the cracks appearing in a burning shoulder blade. It is believed that pre-Christian pagans would sacrifice human beings as part of religious observances; whether or not it is true that these kinds of practices occurred in the past, they would not be considered acceptable in modern-day Irish society and would obviously be illegal. Some Pagan groups and individuals choose to make symbolic references to these supposed older customs. For example, some people might have a "symbolic sacrifice" of a gingerbread man where the destruction and consumption of the biscuit represents the "death" of a figure that

stands for a particular aspect of life that the group/individual are letting go of on an emotional level. This custom would usually take place as part of a ritual at the festival of Samhain. This festival is seen as the marker of the new year by many Neo-Pagans and as such is viewed as a time when aspects that belong in the "old year" can be symbolically discarded. Thus, the crumbling of a gingerbread man as a representation of certain psychological features that an individual wants to be rid of is one example of symbolic sacrifice. Since Neo-Pagans often have a holistic worldview, which honours human and animal life, the idea of physical sacrifice or harm to a living creature would be very negatively received.

The past is often viewed in a selective way by Neo-Pagans. Many have a romanticized view of the environment in which pagans existed prior to Christian influence in Ireland and elsewhere. Many have rose-tinted notions of pre-Christian people as having a deep spiritual connection with the land, living in harmony with the natural cycle and worshipping the Old Gods.

There is a tendency to focus on idealizing a certain part of history and to leave out the elements that are thought to be "Christian history" from the romanticized version of the past. One example of this is the inclination of some Pagans to feel that they have spiritual ownership over particular historical phases. This attitude can be demonstrated in one Witch's description of how she "reclaims" what she views as a Neo-Pagan sacred site. The site in question is Croagh Patrick, a mountain named for Saint Patrick and said to be the 'holiest mountain in Ireland' (Dames 1996:169). The mountain draws a large annual Christian pilgrimage which is centuries old and it also has associations with pre-Christian religion and the pagan deity Crom Dubh. Carmel tells of climbing this mountain on "Garland Sunday", the day of the traditional Christian pilgrimage:

> "On the Garland Sunday, Peter and I actually climbed Croagh Patrick [...] and I made a very special corn dolly and I put it in Patrick's Bed. I hope it has good dreams (*chuckles*) and re-dedicated the mountain to Crom Dubh. And, well it's a small way of reclaiming our history but I felt that that was important because all these people were climbing this holy mountain and not realising that it was a *Pagan* holy mountain *long* before it was ever a Christian one" (Interview with Carmel).[3]

A corn dolly is a straw decorative item that in folk magic has connections with fertility. By placing this object in "Patrick's Bed", a place on the mountain that was once visited by barren women in the hopes that they would be made fertile, is a way of emphasising the connections that the

mountain has possibly had with fertility cults in the distant past. The significance of the mountain to Christians is largely overlooked in her narrative.

The natural landscape and heritage sites, especially megalithic monuments, are chosen as loci for ritual practice because of their historical significance. Even though it cannot be known for certain how the indigenous cultures of Ireland interacted with the natural world or what sites they might have demarcated as sacred, there are still connections made between these megalithic sites and historical religious observance.

The correlations made between ancient religion and that of the modern-day Pagan spiritual movement seem to be intended to be poignant and evocative of certain religious ideals rather than suggestions of historical religious prototypes. For instance, many modern Druids use the term 'Grove' to denote the group with which they practice ritual. The word 'grove' can also be used in the sense of a copse. Classical accounts tell of woodland and forest clearings as being the loci for druidical practices and the term '*nemeton*' indicates a sacred place and particularly a sacred grove (Green 1997:108). Thus, intentionally adopting the term 'Grove' as a name for contemporary Druid groups resonates with the notion of ancient Celtic Druids practicing their religion in sacred woodland groves. Using the term 'Grove' has emotional value rather than being indicative of any historical evolution of Druidry from a long-ago era.

Megalithic stone circles and standing stones on the Irish landscape are favoured as sites for ritual gatherings. There have been instances where these monuments have been replicated in gardens or on private land for ritual use. These monuments are symbols of Irish heritage and the imitation structures with new associated meanings shows clearly how history is being reinterpreted.

Similarly, another commonly chosen location for the practice of ritual is that of ringforts, circular shaped settlements consisting of a round wall of earth or stone, often with a ditch outside (Harbison 1997:22). Some of this ringforts date to the first millennium of the Christian Era or later, while others date to the Iron Age or earlier (Ibid.: 24). In traditional Irish worldview, these sites have associations with the fairies and were believed to be the places where the fairy host resided. This association of the mounds with the fairies has been continued in Neo-Pagan worldview but again there is reinterpretation of the past – the fairies are viewed as 'spirits of place' and new meanings are attached to "fairy places". The fact that ringforts were human settlements for a period in history is ignored in favour of the folklore of fairies living in them.

Historical fact can often be pushed aside in favour of mythic history or an idealised version of the past that better suits Neo-Pagan sensibilities. Documented historical fact becomes less important for those who feel emotional connections with ancestral religion and culture. Some Neo-

Pagans claim that it is possible to sense and "tune in" to spiritual energies that are thought to still permeate sacred sites, such as megalithic monuments, in the belief that they have been used as ritual sites by pre-Christian pagans. It is subjective feeling and spirituality rather than objectively recorded historical information that is important to the practitioner. Whether or not the historical information is correct is of little importance to someone using the site as a spiritual resource; what is important is the believed connection the site has to a spirituality thought to have existed in the distant past. For some, carrying out rituals at these sites could mean that they practicing ritual in the same sacred space as their ancestors once did. To the Pagan mindset, the prominent factor is the association between these locations and the notion of pre-Christian Pagan religion. Speaking of sacred sites, one scholar states that: "there is no point in anyone denying the importance of special locations to those actively, and believingly, involved in their appropriate ('correct') management ('treatment') at any given time, simply by arguing that their meaning may have been different in the past, or may shift again in the future. At any particular moment such places are vested with identity, an identity which involves both the supernatural sphere and the power of social self-definition and personal self-identity" (P. J. Ucko quoted in Carmichael, Hubert, Reeves & Schanche 1994:*xviii*).

The mechanism of identity formation and negotiation at work in Neo-Pagan culture, as with all cultural groups, heavily involves history as a cultural resource. Peter J. Fowler states that: "we shape elements of our present in the light of those parts of the past we select for imitation and emulation" (Fowler 1992:5). David Gross speaks of traditions that come into being "because they satisfy some internal, psychological, even visceral 'need for tradition'" (Gross 1992:64). Neo-Pagan traditions may be fabrications or reinterpretations of historical and even, as is often posited, pre-historical ritual practices, but there is an overriding sense that an adherence to such practices gives a sense of authenticity to modern-day practitioners.

Notes

[1] There are difficulties here in terms of categorization since not all Neo-Pagans view Paganism as a religion.

[2] Interview with Mel. *Ard Draoi* (High Druid) of the Owl Grove: 14.09.02.

[3] Interview with Carmel: 09.12.03

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The Swedish Christmas Goat: To Burn or Preserve a Symbol

Each and every year Christmas goats, or Yule goats, made of straw are erected in public places in Sweden. The very second the goat is in its place – in all its glory – a question emerges: For how long will it stay untouched? Despite the fact that some goats nowadays are under camera surveillance, they are not safe. Perhaps it is even more appealing to the perpetrators when the deed requires more planning and inventiveness.

What effect has the modern technology, that makes it possible to follow the public Christmas goats' whereabouts day and night on web cam, had on them? The goat's destiny is in some cases given, because it has already been decided that it is eventually going to be set on fire legally. What is the effect on this phenomenon, the destruction of the Christmas goat, when something seen as a crime – vandalism – in some cases is legalised in others?

Legal/Illegal

Sweden's most famous Christmas goat is without question the goat located in a city called Gävle. Its history began in 1966 when an advertisement consultant, Stig Gavlén, came up with the idea of making a giant version of the traditional Swedish Yule Goat and placing it in the square (Gavlén 2004). It is 13 meters high and 7 meters long, is made out of straw, and has become a trademark for the city. The goat is known as The Gävle Goat. When people are asked what they associate Gävle with many people mention the goat, saying: "That's where they burn down the goat!" We celebrated the goat's fortieth anniversary in 2006, and during those forty years it has collapsed due to vandalism, or had its legs partly destroyed, but several years it has been left untouched and been dismantled at the end of the season. But despite that, people seem to be under the impression that the goat goes up in flames every year.

What is it about fire that fascinates us so much? The first Christmas goat in Gävle, erected in 1966, was burnt down by a youngster who – just for once – actually got caught, admitted the crime and was convicted for it.

During these years only about four persons have been caught. The youngster claimed that he was struck by a sudden impulse to pick up a lighter and set the goat on fire, an act rendering him liable to a conviction for a serious case of damage (Gustafsson 1995). The irony in this particular case was that it was the same firemen who erected the goat who had to come and try to save it later on, but unfortunately in vain. The inventor's brother was at the time chief of the Gävle fire department, so that is why they were involved originally.

In 2001 the goat was set on fire by Lawrence Jones, a 51-year-old visitor from Cleveland, Ohio, who spent eighteen days in jail and was subsequently convicted and ordered to pay 100,000 Swedish crowns in damages (which is approximately 7,000 pounds or 14,000 dollars). The court also confiscated Jones's cigarette lighter with the argument that he clearly was not able to handle it. Jones stated in court that he was no "goat burner", and believed that he was taking part in a completely legal goat-burning tradition. After Jones was released from prison he went straight back to the US without paying his fine.

The 3rd and 4th of December, 2005 was, thus far, the most violent weekend for public Yule Goats around Sweden. The Gävle Goat was burnt on the 3rd and the weekend escalated into a frenzy of copycat goat-burnings. The Visby goat on the island of Gotland burned down, the Yule Goat in Söderköping, Östergötland was torched, and there was an attack on a goat located in Lycksele, Västerbotten. That goat escaped with only minor burn marks on the legs.

The Christmas goat or Yule Goat, in general, is one of the oldest Scandinavian Christmas symbols; its function has differed throughout the ages but it has spread both fear and joy amongst the crowd during its unruly practical jokes and delivery of Christmas presents (Bringéus 1981).

Perhaps it is the little devil in him who can't be stopped. Earlier on there was a notion that the goat possibly could be the devil disguised in the shape of an animal. This could originate from the devil being played by a dressed-up goat in the theatrical plays performed by the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages, where he was in company with Saint Nikolaus. Also, the goat was a sacred animal with specific significance for the harvest in pre-Christian times, and now we can see that reflected in the straw goat as a Christmas decoration (Schager 1989).

In older Scandinavian society a popular prank was to place the Yule Goat in a neighbour's house without them noticing; the family successfully fooled had to get rid of it the same way. The modern version of the Yule Goat figure is a decorative goat made out of straw and bound with red ribbons, a popular Christmas ornament often found under the Christmas tree.

The god Thor from Old Norse mythology rode the sky in a wagon drawn by two goats and, although they were eaten, they constantly reappeared and, like these goats from the fertility rites from prehistoric times, the straw goats return year after year despite all the attacks they are subjected to. Many of my thoughts on this subject derive from the goat in Gävle, since it is, without question, the most well-known straw goat in Sweden.

There is a certain attraction to the forbidden. Perhaps one or two of us get obsessive thoughts about saying a dirty word when faced with a microphone in an otherwise serious context, or are drawn to the edge of the balcony on the eleventh floor, even though we are afraid of heights and suffer from dizziness. It can be hard to resist; waves of delight mingled with terror run through your body and the public straw goats pile up in the streets and town squares like a temptation.

Lately, modern technology has been used both as a link between the public and the goat and also in order to protect the latter. Since 1996, it has been possible to follow every single step during the building process while the goat is being completed on the community's web cam. There is the possibility too, whenever you feel like it, to go online and have a look and either breathe a sigh of relief when it can be seen intact or growl for the same reason. An interest in the goat's wellbeing can through the camera spread all over the country and also abroad.

For instance, the last time the goat in Gävle was set on fire it was reported by the internationally known news agency USA Today; it was side by side with the trial of Saddam Hussein and other top headlines. Moreover, the people of Swedish descent living in Lindsborg, Kansas, built their own straw goat in 1997 when the yearly celebration of their Swedish origin took place. They built the goat to create publicity all over the nation and put Lindsborg on the American map, so to speak (Gradén 2003).

The surveillance cameras have only had a limited success in keeping people from damaging the goat, because, unfortunately, the quality of the pictures from the cameras is not good enough and cannot be used as evidence should you go to court. For this reason, a special security company was hired in 2005 to keep an eye on the goat in Gävle and they applied for permission to use their more professional cameras.

But there are strict rules concerning how big an area you are allowed to watch over so you won't intrude on people's freedom of movement and personal integrity. This was something that the goat-burners the same year took into consideration when they added a new way to approach the task but with a slightly old-fashioned weapon – the good old bow-and-arrow! The crime scene

investigators could then examine very clear and sharp pictures showing the fire-arrows hitting the goat with an admirable precision and accuracy. It was possible to determine where the perpetrators had been standing – based on the angles at which the arrows were fired – but there were no pictures of them since they stood out of reach of the cameras' permitted catchment area.

Rumour has it that the guilty ones were a disguised Santa Claus and gingerbread man since witnesses saw them running from the crime scene. The hunt for the arsonists responsible for the goat-burning in 2005 was featured on the weekly Swedish live broadcast TV3's "*Most Wanted*". "*Most Wanted*", which has been running since 1990, shows reconstructions of serious crimes committed in Sweden and requests assistance from the public in solving them. In one of the most bizarre segments they have shown they asked the public to help track down two suspected arsonists, a man in a Santa mask and a man dressed as a gingerbread man, wanted for burning down the Gävle Goat.

The Goat is on Fire

The manner of going about it and the dressing up imply that it required both time and effort to conduct the criminal act. And no matter how much you appreciate the Christmas goat, isn't it hard *not* to laugh when you think about the humour in the way they choose to disguise themselves?

If the vandalism this time was carefully planned, other cases seem to be pretty spontaneous – someone passes by and sets the goat on fire. Often, however, there has been fire-lighting fluid involved so someone took the time to make the arrangements. The perpetrators have been disguised before, but not in this new inventive way, more just to cover their faces. The bow-and-arrow marksmen were the first to keep out of the goat's surrounding fence.

They actually tried to set the goat in Gävle on fire in an organised, legal, way in 1997. The goat's wooden construction needed to be replaced so, just for once, it was okay to sacrifice the goat and huge crowds had gathered. The goat's originator was asked to do the honours. Funnily enough, it was a struggle to set it on fire! The originator did say that it felt a bit peculiar to set the goat on fire, but it's interesting to note that he accepted the assignment. Would it be so popular to set the goat on fire if it was legal? There are different opinions on the subject. A general, common belief is that the whole point disappears if it isn't forbidden. One of the students' associations erects a smaller goat, about three meters high, every year near by the big goat to challenge it. When I spoke to their chairman, he believed that even if it was legal to burn the goat down the act would still be tempting to young people so that they could brag about being the ones who got there first (Andersson 2006). But of course, we get so used to the goat always being on fire, that it becomes a sen-

sation when it is *not* on fire. Approximately ten out of forty straw goats have made it through the season (and that is from Advent Sunday through to January the 2nd).

The deed itself – the fire – entices and awakes feelings, but what really creates reactions and personal commitment is *the fight* and *the power struggle* between "good and evil". Many people have volunteered to take part in some kind of civil rights' movement to protect the goat, but offerings of that sort have had to be declined since interventions should only be made by the police and similar authorities. British bookmakers have paid attention to the interest in the Gävle Goat and it has been possible since 1988 to bet on its destiny, if – and when – it will be set on fire.

The ceremony to greet the goat in Gävle takes place on Advent Sunday, which according to Western Christian tradition is in late November or early December, depending on the calendar year. It used to be a simple arrangement with some fireworks but nowadays it has become more of a popular festival, attracting a lot of spectators. And since the turn of the millennium a guest is especially invited to make a speech in the goat's honour.

Students in a town up north in Sweden (Umeå) arrange a special party around Christmas called something like "The burnt goat's party" to celebrate the goat in Gävle, and they have been doing this since 1991. Part of the programme during the party is to legally set a straw goat on fire. When I spoke to the police in Umeå they said they didn't know much about "The burnt goat's party", which is an indication of the ritual's significance to the public at large, or lack thereof, when it is legal. There is a similar situation in a place called Österfärnebo, Gästrikland, where – for quite a few years – a fairly large straw goat has been set on fire legally every year on the 9th of January by its originator, without creating any spectacular headlines in the newspaper.

As a parallel to the straw goats you could also find a few, public, enlarged Christmas corn sheaves in Sweden. And they too, have faced the same destiny and have been torched a couple of times. No one has been caught but the camera pictures show young men running.

Vandalism and PR

Fire will always fascinate people. But the interest in setting public straw goats on fire would probably die down if it became legal, since the illegal destruction is part of an ongoing, yearly drama engaging a lot of people. One wonders if it isn't the case that the majority of both groups – both the ones who want to preserve the goat and the ones who want to destroy it – secretly believe that it is part of the game, that something *should* happen before the season is over in the beginning of January?

Some public spokesmen – who perhaps shouldn't praise harmful actions – admit that it is pretty good PR nevertheless. Others firmly claim that this play back and forth isn't beneficial at all. There are arguments revealing that the desire for people to leave the goat alone really comes from the heart. Kurt Lagerholm, the chairman of the special Goat committee, says: "The people erecting the goat puts in an tremendous amount of work, and spend many hours of idealistic labour, something no one would do if they didn't believe that the goat will stay untouched. Besides, it costs 100,000 Swedish crowns to build a goat of that size from scratch and there are limits to how much the sponsors can take, both costs- and patience-wise. There is a limit, and should it be passed there will be no more goat. And that's that!" (Lagerholm 2006).

Rest assured, latest news on the Gävle Goat is that it was taken down on January 2nd and is now stored in a secret location.[1]

Note

[1] A Swedish version of this article can be found in Charlotte Hagström, Marlene Hugoson, Annika Nordström (Eds.) *Nu gör vi jul igen* [Recreating Christmas Again] (2006). Göteborg.

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Transition and Initiation

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Jane Ellen Harrison and Ritual

The British classical scholar and historian of ancient Greek religion Jane Ellen Harrison (1850-1928) was the central figure in the so-called Cambridge Ritualist Circle, a group of British classical scholars who were active at the turn of the last century. As their name suggests, the members of the group were proponents of ritualism, which can be briefly defined as the idea of the priority of ritual over myth. In this presentation I propose to offer a brief biography and an intellectual context for Harrison, and then discuss in detail one of her less well known books, *Ancient Art and Ritual* (1913), in which she presents her understanding of ritual most clearly.

Early Life 1850-1870

Jane Ellen Harrison was born in 1850 into a wealthy merchant family in Yorkshire. Neither of her parents had been to university or displayed any special intellectual gifts. Her mother died soon after her birth and for some time little Jane and her two older sisters were educated by a governess who subsequently became their stepmother.

Jane's unusual intellectual interests became evident very early. After she persisted in studying Greek grammar and reading scholarly books that she had obtained secretly, it was decided, although unwillingly, that Jane must be sent to school. At the age of seventeen Jane entered Cheltenham Ladies College and a new life began for her. Although the purpose of the school was primarily to prepare the girls to be attentive wives, able to talk to their future husbands and their guests, it satisfied most of her needs. When she graduated in 1870, unlike the majority of her schoolmates, she did not consider her education complete, nor did she wish to marry or to become a governess, the two usual "careers" for educated young women at the time.

Newnham College 1874-1879; London 1880-1898

In 1874 she became a member of the first generation of Englishwomen to enjoy a university education when she entered Newnham College in the

University of Cambridge as a student of classics. Newnham became Jane's new home and its students and teachers her new family. After graduation in 1879, and disappointed at not being offered a teaching position at Newnham, she taught for one year in a girls' high school in Oxford and then moved to London. In the British Museum she met and worked with the leading classical archaeologist Charles Newton, studied Greek vase paintings and lectured on Greek art, which was at that time admired for its "ideality". She spent the next twenty years in London, where she wrote her first books.

Jane Harrison entered classics when it meant predominantly textual criticism, especially in Cambridge. The first person to suggest that other ways of studying classical antiquity were possible was Charles Newton. Newton insisted that in order to understand the ancient past better, analysis of texts was necessary but far from sufficient. Material artifacts, like visual art or objects of daily use, together with folk-lore customs, songs, tales and rituals all bear the evidence of the past and must therefore be studied with the same intensity as was given to written texts. He even insisted that archaeologists must direct their attention *"less to those customs which form a part of the established religion and legal code of a race than to those which, being the result of ideas once generally prevalent, still survive among the peasantry in remote districts, or of which dim traces may be still discerned in the institutions of modern society"* (in Robinson 2002:59). He believed that rituals and art – the dramatic and visual expression of the belief of "primitive" peoples (and here he included ancient Greece and Rome) – were older than its literary expression. The things done are older than the things written.

To Harrison this may have resonated with an unformulated idea of her own. She made the study of Greek vases her special subject, particularly the mythological scenes depicted on them. Some of the myths were known from written sources, while others were not. But the major motivation may have been the feeling that she was dealing with a deeper layer of the ancient Greek culture; that she was one step closer to its origins. Studying art was therefore an important move in her scholarly career. Textual criticism, reading about people's culture and life is surely an enlightening experience – but handling the artifacts created by real people is quite another.

Journey to Greece 1888

The break with Ideal Art came in 1888, when Jane Harrison visited Greece for the first time and observed the numerous excavations of the classical sites then being conducted. Here she was able to see the artifacts not in the display case in the museum but in their natural environment and she realised clearly what she only suspected before. This experience is

reflected in the introduction she wrote to a guidebook to the ruins, *Myths and Monuments of Ancient Athens*, in 1890:

> I have tried everywhere to get at, where possible, the cult as the explanation of the legend. My belief is that in many, even in the large majority of cases, ritual practice misunderstood explains the elaboration of myth. Some of the loveliest stories the Greeks have left us will be seen to have taken their rise, not in poetic imagination, but in primitive, often savage, and I think, always practical ritual. In this matter – in regarding the myth-making Greek as a practical savage rather than a poet or a philosopher... (Harrison 1890:iii).

It is possible (but not certain) that these lines derive not only from her first-hand observation in the field but also from her reading of the Scottish biblical scholar and orientalist William Robertson Smith's *The Religion of the Semites*, published in the preceding year. This book contains the following statement:

> All this seems to us so much a matter of course that, when we approach some strange or antique religion, we naturally assume that here also our first business is to search for a creed, and find in it the key to ritual and practice. But the antique religions had for the most part no creed; they consisted entirely of institutions and practices (Smith 1889: 16).

Newnham College 1898-1922

Two years before the end of the century Harrison's dream was fulfilled when she was awarded Newnham's first research fellowship. From now on she could enjoy the security of college life, travel freely and write. In this fruitful period of her life, which lasted 23 years, Jane Harrison formulated her ideas about Greek religion in three books: *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (*1903*), *Themis: A Study in the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (*1912*) and *Ancient Art and Ritual* (*1913*). An essential idea in all three books is ritual, the main thesis being the primacy of ritual over myth. These are the years of ritualism, the search for origins and the formation of the group of friends and co-workers now known as the Cambridge Ritualists: the Oxford classicist Gilbert Murray, the Cambridge philosopher Francis Cornford and the classical archaeologist Arthur Bernard Cook.

Ancient Art and Ritual (1913)

Themis was a book intended for scholars. The year after its publication, Harrison wrote *Ancient Art and Ritual* as a volume in a series intended for

a popular readership. The change of audience seems to have acted to clarify her ideas concerning this subject.

The main aim of the book is to advance her thesis that art has its roots in primitive ritual, from which it developed via religion. The process of the development is briefly as follows: from the practical necessities of life arises the action in the form of a ritual, which is in fact a special kind of copy of life. The driving power of the ritual that springs up together with the urgent practical need is the collective emotion of the worshipping community. (Here the influence of Durkheim, whom she read around 1907, is clear.) The first deities worshipped in these rituals are vague, unformed spirits out of which slowly arises the image of the god; once some of these beings attain separate existences, it seems reasonable to call this religion. Art appears at the end of this evolutionary process and is thus a copy (at several removes) of the image of god.

To achieve her goal Harrison begins with the explanation of the relationship of the Greek words *dromenon* and *drama.* Both words have the same meaning – "the thing done". Dromenon is the "thing done" collectively and is based upon collective emotion. It is a ritual pursuing practical needs and as such it springs up naturally, and everyone in the community takes an active part in its performance. Drama appears later, when the belief in practical effectiveness of such an action weakens, and the ritual comes to be performed by a small group of people while the majority of participants keep their physical distance and become spectators.

Drama and dromenon, art and ritual have diverged today but they have a common root. This root, an emotional impulse, is the same impulse that *"sends a man to church and to the theatre"* (Harrison 1913:10). Neither art nor ritual represents simple imitation of an object or event; on the contrary, both stem from a desire to reproduce or re-create it; better still, to recreate the emotion. Harrison clearly understands ritual as something alive and powerful. The reason why many rituals seem to be only meaningless, repetitive activities today is that over time the emotion has been extinguished. *"...because a rite has ceased to be believed in, it does not in the least follow that it will cease to be done"* (Harrison 1913:27). The original powerful ritual has become mere mimicry.

Longing to recreate the emotion, by doing things instead of expressing the longing verbally, the "savage" practises sympathetic magic.

> The savage is a man of action. Instead of asking a god to do what he wants done, he does it or tries to do it himself; instead of prayers he utters spells. In a word, he practises magic, and above all he is strenuously and

> frequently engaged in dancing magical dances. When a savage wants sun or wind or rain, he does not go to church and prostrate himself before a false god; he summons his tribe and dances a sun dance or a wind dance or a rain dance (Harrison 1913: 30).

Harrison then offers numerous examples from Frazer (*The Golden Bough*) about the magical dancing that was still going on in Europe. Sympathetic magic, then, "*is an utterance, a discharge of emotion and longing*" (Harrison 1913:34). Harrison, however, following Durkheim, goes even further. The utterance of emotion must be collective. Individuality was not fully developed yet; the feelings and movements of an individual lacked the power to perform a ritual. In the group performance the emotion intensifies and the movements gain rhythm. Feelings shared socially, the rhythm of the performance and its consequent intensity are necessary aspects of dromenon. *"Collectivity and emotional tension, two elements that tend to turn the simple reaction into a rite, are – especially among primitive peoples – closely associated, indeed scarcely separable"* (Harrison 1913:36).

Another important step in the transition from ritual to art, Jane Harrison explains, is the process of abstraction that is a result of a repeated representation. The basis of ritual is *not* the actual emotion (the emotion felt only during the actual hunt, for example) but its representation. When participating in ritual it is necessary to evoke the emotion that is for the time being detached from its natural cause. Because people enjoy repeating a pleasant experience, this representation of emotion is repeated; in so doing, the experience thus reenacted becomes an *abstraction.* The particular hunt or battle is forgotten as time passes but the abstraction of what it felt like to participate in that event remains. *"Like children (the savage) plays not at a funeral, but at 'funerals', not at a battle but at 'battles'; and so arises the war-dance, or the death-dance, or the hunt-dance"* (Harrison 1913:43).

For practical purposes, however, "playing at battles" after the battle is not as important as "playing at the battle" before the event. In Harrison's words, the battle or hunt is not represented but *pre-presented* as a kind of anticipation of the oncoming event in the hope that it will magically bring about the desired outcome of the action in the real world. The purpose is practical but suddenly not *"altogether practical"* (Harrison 1913:44) – the main purpose is the recreation of the emotional experience. Instead of developing the idea of the magical purpose of the ritual (ie practical – by doing magic people do what they want done), Harrison offers psychological explanations. The dances are repeated because humans enjoy repeating pleasurable experience.

Harrison then speaks about the uncompleted cycle of the action and reaction, in this case the desire and its fulfilment. *"The hunt or the battle cannot take place at the moment, so the cycle cannot complete itself. The desire cannot find utterance in the actual act; it grows and accumulates by inhibition, till at last the exasperated nerves and muscles can bear it no longer; it breaks out into mimetic anticipatory action"* (Harrison 1913:44).

At this stage Harrison turns to Plato and his concept of mimesis, which she believed has been at least partially misunderstood. She explains that in this kind of re-presenting and pre-presenting *"Plato would have seen the element of imitation, what the Greeks called* mimesis, *which we saw he believed to be the very source and essence of art"* (Harrison 1913:43-44). Harrison explains that Plato surely never saw a war-dance but what he definitely saw was something seemingly different, yet similar in ways Plato never fully understood. He must have seen plays of Aristophanes with the chorus imitating birds and other animals, dressed in feathers and skins and mimicking their movements. His judgement was right for his day *"but again, if we look at the beginning of things, we find an origin and an impulse much deeper, vaguer, and more emotional"* (Harrison 1913:45).

Here once again we have Harrison's belief that the truth about things is hidden under the layers of time and changing traditions, beliefs and acts. Thus, mimesis is not the beginning of art but only its later stage. To support her statement she invokes the famous preaching of St Francis about the ancient belief that animals are equal or even superior to men. This can be traced back to the institution of totemism as described by Durkheim. The members of the Kangaroo tribe were both people and animals, she explains, all being in a deep sense kangaroos. So when the men-kangaroos *"danced and leapt (they) did it not to imitate kangaroos – you cannot imitate yourself – but just for natural joy of heart because they were kangaroos"* (Harrison 1913:46). Obviously this is not imitation but participation.

She concludes by an analysis of the word mimesis and suggests that translating and then understanding the word as imitation is mistaken. *"The word mimesis means the action of a person called a mime"*. The mime was actually an actor and his task was not *"to copy something or some one who is not himself, but to emphasize, enlarge, enhance, his own personality"* (Harrison 1913:47). With the last point she returns to her "practical purpose theory" and claims that these kinds of activities were not performed for aesthetic pleasure only but for magical purposes to bring about a result. The community does what they want done. However, Harrison concludes sadly: *"as faith (in magic) declines, folly and futility set in; the earnest,*

zealous act sinks into a frivolous mimicry, a sort of child's play." (Harrison 1913: 48). From the maker of things becomes their mimic.

Jane Ellen Harrison was and still is often criticized for being too emotional and therefore allowing her feelings to confuse her intellect, a statement with which even an enthusiastic but careful reader must at least partially agree – and Jane Harrison herself would not dispute. She was painfully aware of this weakness. However, nothing is purely black and white and a weakness may appear as a strength sometimes – and vice versa. Perhaps she wanted to see things in black and white and clearly distinguishable but with the best will she did not find them such. Perhaps she wanted to organize clearly things she discovered yet her books are far from neat. Her books, however, offer something else – Harrison's texts speak on more levels than just words and sentences. When she writes about things not attached to intellect solely she does not address the reader only on the level of the intellect. Ritual, which is based on emotion and has practical ends, is one of those things. A reader begins to understand how Harrison perceived ritual in the way she did it – both intellectually and emotionally; on the level where, surprisingly, even logical contradictions cease to be real contradictions. This is what the book *does* to the reader's mind. Harrison's discussions of ritual are alive, powerful and, like ritual itself, are unable to be grasped by reason alone.

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Water Rituals in the Transition to Marriage of Girls in Modern and Ancient Greece

Generally, Greek women have been analysed from a western, male point of view, and have been categorised as unfree, secluded and not living a worth-while life. But, if the view is taken from within the "female sphere" which still exists in Greece, the picture changes. The female world may also be public, but here the female activities exclude men, as at the cemetery when washing "their tombs", at the spring-house or in the modern church. Greek women are often strong personalities and a long way from the suppressed creatures presented by earlier researchers, but the main point is that they have other values and interests, as, for example, in celebrating the midwife, Babo (*Agia*/Saint Domenika), when each woman pours out water for the midwife to wash her hands, thus anticipating the day when the midwife will assist her in childbirth. It is important to explore whether ancient women had their own values too, in their "public" spaces, such as at the fountain.[1]

Today *Panagia*, the Virgin Mary, is the most important saint in the Orthodox Church. She is at the head of the entire church because she was the vessel of Christ. Modern Greek women are very proud of their motherhood, because it gives them a clear connection with Panagia, the primary mother, the "Life-giving Spring". This may have been the case with her ancient parallel, Demeter and other mother goddesses. Thus, modern Greek women's experiences of the practice of "being a woman", their roles and womanhood may be more in agreement with ancient women's experiences than analyses made from a male point of view would allow, at least as far as the few sources we possess from ancient women are concerned, since they subscribe to the same interests and values as present-day women.

The role of the spring in initiation rites seems primarily related to the loss of the virginity of the girls in connection with their marriages and future motherhood. Thus, they became feeding and nourishing mothers, new copies of the "Life-giving Spring".

Modern Greek Water Rituals Relating Especially to Girls Entering Womanhood

In modern Greece, several religious rituals are performed to ensure a person's health and they may also mark, and thus secure the transitions from, one state of life to another. Pilgrims still come to one of the many springs found all over the country which are dedicated to Panagia, the Virgin Mary, to get life-giving holy water (*agiasma*), particularly on the festivals dedicated to the Panagia, and especially on August 15th which is dedicated to the Dormition of the Panagia and is celebrated with special reverence all over Greece.

On this day pilgrimages are made to the greatest shrine of Greek Orthodoxy, on the Aegean island of Tinos, the shrine being famous for its miraculous icon. Below the main church at Tinos are several cave-shaped chapels, in the first of which is a holy spring where the pilgrims draw water that is considered to have powers of fertility and healing. Although pilgrims come to Tinos throughout the year, the crowd of devotees is much larger during the days around the August festival. People, mostly women, make their way up to the church barefoot, on their bare knees, or on their stomachs, and they bring with them various offerings such as candles as tall at the donors and icons, sometimes tied on their backs. They often bring a sick child in the hope of cure. The most common offering is a silver- or gold-plated ex-voto representing the person who has been miraculously cured, or the cured limb itself, or the person or limb needing to be healed. The street, named *Megalocharēs* (i.e. the Blessed Virgin), leads directly from the harbour to the church. At the top of the hill, after arriving at the doorway of the church, the pilgrims offer their candles and then wait their turn to enter the main chapel, to perform their devotions. Most pilgrims confine their attentions to the main sanctuary and to the chapel of holy water beneath the church: "Where do we go for holy water?" pilgrims ask each other, and other more knowledgeable pilgrims direct them downstairs, to the chapel where they will find the holy water font. Inside the chapel, they take some earth from the hole where the miraculous icon was found and afterwards they queue up to obtain holy water in small bottles or they drink directly from the tap. On the eve of the feast, many pilgrims spend the night inside the church, while the priests and cantors sing invocations and, at the same time, many are occupied in fetching earth and water in the chapel below. Both the earth and water are considered to be particularly holy and powerful at this time, so that, during the Dormition of the Panagia, many children are baptised in the "Life-giving Spring", and it is particularly marriageable girls or newly married girls who fetch earth and holy water to assure their own fertility and health.

Holy water is found in all Greek sanctuaries, but some sanctuaries offer particularly wonder-working water. According to the ex-votos, it may still cure eye-diseases, and several caves with springs, which were dedicated to ancient deities particularly nymphs, are transformed to chapels dedicated to saints, such as Agia Paraskeuē, but particularly to Panagia. The significance of water is demonstrated through the festival dedicated to the Panagia under her attribute of the "Life-giving Spring", which is celebrated on the Friday after Easter Sunday. On this festival the Athenians come to her chapel inside a circular spring-house hewn in the rock on the slope of the Acropolis to fetch life-giving water in the cave, which is dedicated to Panagia, since she has taken the place of the ancient water nymphs (Håland 2007a).

The Transition Rite of the Offering of a Lock of Hair

Through the custom of offering a lock of hair to Artemis or Hera, and later to Panagia, before marriage we meet the ancient Olympian religion's, and later the church's, adoption of the cult of nature. Water and hair symbolise life according to the belief that water is a chthonic symbol and that a living individual's vitality is in her or his hair. So, the childhood is offered in exchange for the status as adult. Usually, girls have offered a lock of their hair on the eve of their marriage to their native spring in the place where they grew up.

In mythology rivers are the inhabitants of the land before the arrival of men, and rivers may figure as ancestors. Rivers and springs are particularly associated with those growing up: they are *kourotrophoi* ("youth rearing"). Hair was offered to them and water for the bridal bath is brought from them; it was thought to promote offspring. Accordingly, as initiation (see also Håland 2007b) is about the allocation of civic identity and the perpetuation of the community, rivers and springs frequently figure in the rites and mythology of maidens and youths.

The offering of hair is a rite surrounding the emergence from childhood. It gives admission to society, for boys and maidens, by making their passage to adulthood and marriage. A votive relief also illustrates a hair offering (Håland 2003/2008). By giving the primal offerings of their hair to the youth-nourishing waters, boys who were initiated as warriors and girls who were about to be married sought to ensure their success and fertility in their future lives. The hair-cutting symbolises the transition to another stage in life. In this connection the theme of death and rebirth is important, since the initiates die to their old life and are reborn to the new.

Moments of transition from one state of life to another are high points of danger, and the person is especially vulnerable to spirits and influences

that swarm the air of human society, since transition is neither one state nor the next, it is undefinable. At such crisis points, rituals instigated as safeguards usually include purificatory measures to wash off the past and assimilate new strength for the future. Baths are standard.

The Nymphs and Other Ancient Greek Water-Deities

Although water in the Ancient Greek context may be both a female and male symbol, springs are nymphs and therefore female. The nymphs provided the water of rivers and pools, but they were particularly believed to give water through springs, and prayers and thank-offerings were made to them in this connection, as can be seen, for example, in a votive relief with nymphs found south of the Acropolis in Athens. The nymphs were believed to have the power of averting barrenness and protecting offspring and the springs and brooks which they personified were held to possess this power. The nymphs were worshipped as deities of marriage and of birth, because they were water-deities, connected with all sources of water, and water gives fertility and life to everything which grows. They were believed to assist the growth of everything springing from the ground and of animals and people. The water where they were worshipped, for example the water of Peirene (Paus. 2.3,2 f.), had healing and fertilising power.

Before marriage it was customary for girls to go to the local river or spring to bathe, to honour the nymphs of the spring in order that they might make the marriage fruitful. The spring of water dedicated to the nymph *Kallirhoē* ("Fair Stream"), later was known as *Enneakrounos* (The Nine Fountains). On the wedding day, the Athenian bride and groom, separately, were given a ritual bath with water brought from the Kallirhoē spring. The special vessel used for this purpose came to be known as a *loutrophoros*, although technically the word means "someone who carries the bathwater", and on several vases girls are represented as carrying water for this purpose. When the water for the nuptial bath was taken, votive miniature *loutrophoroi* were offered to the nymphs of the spring.

Several streams were considered to purify maidens after a transitional condition before marriage. This is illustrated with many myths, such as the story about the daughters of Proitos, the Proitids. They were beautiful and had many suitors, but rendered the jealous goddess of marriage, Hera, angry, by their devaluation of her. Accordingly Hera poured down a dreadful skin-disease, *alphos*, over them, they lost their hair and beauty and became cows. Following a period of wandering "across the boundless earth", they came to a cave and the waters of Lousoi, and their sickness was healed at Lousoi Artemis shrine. The cave would probably have contained a spring

where the "madness", or ritual dislocation, of the girls was purged, leaving the spring with their sickness. This is a typical wilderness rite: time spent in a cave, the wild counterpart of the civilised precinct, and a usual place to find initiatory cult practices. Water and washing keep recurring at Lousoi since the very name *Lousoi* refers to "Washing". In its vicinity there were numerous springs forming the water of the River Aroanios. The temple of Artemis at Lousoi was equipped with a bathing pool in its precincts for sacred use. So, the healing waters of Lousoi purified the maidens before marriage.

A parallel may be the ritual performed at the stream called *Eleutherios* (the stream of "Freedom" or "Liberation"), which runs not far from the sanctuary dedicated to Hera. The women of the place use it for purifications and the sacrifices, which are not spoken of, according to Pausanias (2.17,1), which means that they were secret rituals performed by women, of which he was ignorant. A *kanephoros* ("basket-bearer" in procession), a girl pure of marriage, performed the initial rites of the sacrifices, other maidens were also present, and since the stream was called Eleutherios, it has been suggested that this stream, like the waters of Lousoi, purified the maiden and released her from her bovine condition.

Legends frequently associate virginity with a river or spring, such as the *Parthenios*-river or the *Spring Parthenion* (the *Virgin Spring* or *Maiden Well*). When Demeter came to Eleusis on her search for her daughter, she sat down by the side of the spring Parthenion, where the marriageable daughters of the queen and king found her when coming to the Maiden Well to fetch water. The name of the well also suggests that virgins drew the water for their nuptial baths from the site.

Nymphs are the regular companions of the most important Maiden, the goddess Artemis, and at the spring called *Pēgē* (i.e. spring/source) the nymphs used to hold their dances and sing the praise of Artemis by night. In antiquity, the term pēgē (spring/source) was connected with goddesses as nursing nymphs, but was also used for Hera.

A nymph is not only a divine being. The ancient Greek word nymphē also means a young girl or marriageable maiden. Not only the goddesses or nymphs of springs, but also their human counterparts used to play close to rivers, and at the fountains when going for water and several vase-paintings illustrate them drawing water from a fountain. According to a myth, the Pelasgians used to follow the Athenian girls when they went to fetch water from the Nine Springs and rape them, and this was the Athenian ideological reason for expelling these former inhabitants of the area. Like meadows, however, wells were in antiquity often the setting for the abduction or molestation of women.

Clay is associated with female fertility, and the purifying and fertility-ensuring function of mud, i.e. water and earth, in connection with rites of passage is demonstrated in several ceremonies when marriageable girls go down to a river and assimilate the life-giving waters by smearing themselves with mud. Aeschines (*Ep.* 10.3), reports the nuptial custom of Troy: "In the Troad, it is the custom for girls who are getting married to go to the Skamandros and bathe there." They waded into the river Skamandros to wash off their wildness, while intoning the following ritual formula: "Take Skamandros, my virginity." The words addressed to the river, clearly refer to the consummation of marriage. Four days after the bathing rite, there is a procession of "newly married" women made in honour of Aphrodite.

Conclusion

The "wildness" of women and "madness" of pubertal girls jumping into wells, are notions found in several ancient sources. They recommended marriage as the context wherein a female may transform savagery into a fruitful life. Thus, the wedding ceremony dramatised the shedding of virgin "wildness" and the transition to civilised wifehood. The bride completed her preliminary rites by dedicating the first fruits of her hair to Artemis or another water nymph, to symbolise her transition to another stage in life. The bride then took her nuptial bath. The bath was a crucial moment in her transition from girlhood to wifehood.

This may be seen from a new perspective, when compared with the importance of the womb, nourishment, water and springs in Greek culture. The female body symbolises everything connected with conception, nourishment and birth. It is seen as a container, but also as a microcosm. The "standard Greek representation of fertility" puts fertility in the hands of woman, or in her womb, according to the logic behind the "Life-giving Spring".

Note

[1] See further in the extended version of my paper (2003/2008), which also gives full references for the materials touched on here.

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The Luck Contest in the Ritual Year

There are traces of a "luck contest" in the European ritual year and I suggest that it particularly relates to young manhood and can be expected to occur in the part of the ritual year that corresponds to young men, either at the point of initiation or at a later stage when they pit their strength against each other with the purpose of determining a winning side, and possibly also choosing a king drawn from that winning side. I would like to suggest that The Ride of the Kings (Rychlík 2007) may be a case of a ritual like this which has survived, not precisely in the form of a contest, but as a display of the result of a contest in the presentation of the chosen king.

In my current model of the ritual year, which has been revised in the light of some questions raised by Mirjam Mencej, the young men relate to spring and their initiation (which might involve group contests) would be associated with the midwinter point or with the transition from winter to spring in or about February. The battle between winter and summer, which also concerns the young men, appears to relate primarily to the transition from spring to summer, for which one focal point is 1 May.

The distinction between a game and a battle in this context is a fine one; games may be rough to the point of resulting in the accidental deaths of competitors, and battles, that are expected to lead to deaths, may be fought according to limiting rules like those of a sport. There is an excellent study of war as ritualised competition among the Nunu of Equatorial Africa by Robert Harris (1987:142-148) which includes accounts of fights between opposed groups that took place on a known battle-ground at a pre-arranged date and generally lasted for a single day. The young men showed their courage in the face of possible death and the songs of victory that followed celebrated the winning side and gave glory to its bravest warriors. The game and the battle have this in common: when they end there is a winning and a losing side. It is a "luck" contest, when winning or losing the game or battle is conceptually connected with the gain or loss of intangible objects of value.

There is a vivid account from Britanny of an annual conflict where there is clearly a supposed magical connection between winning the contest and gaining what I have called "luck" in the course of the year, the luck in this case consisting of a good harvest. Thousands of people assembled to celebrate the

feast day of St Servais (called in Breton St Gelvest ar Pihan) on 13 May at his "poor sanctuary" in the mountains. The competing sides in the contest that took place there are, on the one hand, the people from the area centred on the town of Vannes (or Gwened as it is called in Breton) and, on the other hand, the people from the Duchy of Cornouaille centred on Quimper (Kemper) which lies on the south coast of Britanny to the west of Vannes.

We owe our information on this custom to the author, Anatole Le Braz (1859-1926).[1] He was born at Saint-Servais, and one of his earliest memories was of his mother patching up the wounded after the conflict. Writing in 1894, Le Braz says that, up to a few years before that date, Saint-Servais had been famous for the contest that took place there after Vespers on the eve of the festival. The pilgrims, both men and women, came from a distance and the men, instead of carrying the peeled rod, which was the usual emblem of a pilgrim, carried the *penn-baz*, an iron-headed staff made of holly or oak which was attached to the wrist by a leather thong. Le Braz gives a first-hand account of the contest as told by an old woman called Naïc who came from Quimper and I will quote this account in full for it is a remarkable expression of the force of the belief in a connection between the outcome of a struggle to gain possession of the saint's banner and effigy and the success of the grain harvest. It also illustrates, in a striking fashion, the juxtaposition of Christian worship and pagan practice. Naïc says:

> We started in several bands, and on nearing the chapel we found the Gwénédiz, or people of Vannes. They were our most ferocious foes. Every one waited for Vespers ranged in two camps, the Gwénédiz on one bank of the stream that skirts the churchyard, we on the other, and there we stood glaring at each other with evil eyes.
>
> At sound of the vesper bell the great doors opened, and we all streamed into the church. At the far end of the nave could be seen the great banner, its staff passed through a ring near the balustrade of the choir. Not far from it was a wooden stretcher, and upon this stood the little figure of the saint – Saint Gelvest ar Pihan. There is a new one every year; the same would not serve twice, for it is regularly torn in pieces.
>
> Now the Magnificat is intoned.
>
> Then at once all the *penn-baz* are in the air. After each verse there is a sound of "Dig-a-drak, dig-a-drak"; the church is full of a hideous turmoil of staves clashing against each other. The people of Cornouailles cry –
>
> *Hij ar rew! Hij ar rew!*
> *Kerc'h ha gwiniz da Gernew!*
> Shake off the frost! Shake off the frost!
> Oats and wheat to the Cornouaillais!

The Vannetais reply –

Hij ar rew! Kerc'h ha gwiniz,
Hac ed-dû da Wénédiz!
Shake off the frost! Oats and wheat
And the black corn to the Vannetais!

Meanwhile a strong young fellow has clutched the banner, hanging on its eighteen-foot staff, and two others lay hold of the stretcher, to which the figure of the little saint is fastened. Then between the Gwénédiz who are massed on the left, and the Cornouaillais on the right, advances the Rector of Duault, very pale, for the terrible moment is at hand. The banner stoops to pass under the archway of the door, and there is a moment of silence. Then suddenly a clamour breaks forth, a furious yelling hurled from thousands and thousands of throats –

Hij ar rew! Hij ar rew!
Shake off the frost! Shake off the frost!

And so the conflict of the *penn-baz* begins. The great staves rise and fall, they whirl round and round, describing large bloody circles, and thrashing unmercifully everything that comes in their way. The rector and his choristers have fled to the sacristy, and it is just a question of who is to remain master of the banner and the little wooden statue. As to the women, they are no less savage than the men, only in place of clubs, they use their nails and teeth.

I remember one year particularly. The Cornouaillais had triumphed, and there had been a perfect hurricane of blows; arms were broken, heads were smashed, and on the tombs of the churchyard sat men vomiting blood from the top of their lungs. As for the saint, he had long ago been reduced to fragments. "Pick up the chips in your aprons!" said the men to their wives. Only the banner remained intact. As a last effort, the Vannetais made a fierce assault to take it from us; but they were victoriously driven back, and retired bearing their wounded, from whom the jolting of the carts drew forth groans of pain. For our part, we carried the banner back to the church, singing a song of thanksgiving; and that year in Cornouailles the straw bent under the weight of the corn.

Victory in this Breton contest is perceived to result in a splendid harvest later in the year, and there are accounts also of contests in Normandy where the parish that wins a game of football is said to be assured of a good crop of apples (Frazer 1913:183; Lecoeur 1883-1887:1.13, 2.153-165). It should be noted that in ball games like this, the two sides struggle for possession of the ball, in the same way as the contestants at Saint-Servais struggled for possession of the banner and effigy of the saint. The supposed results of the contests imply the existence of a "limited good"

conception of the world (Foster 1965), where it is envisaged that there is only a certain amount of grain or apples and the question is how this amount will be distributed. Distribution is according to the result of the contest, with the winners gaining the lion's share (cf. Lyle 1990).

It seems to me that the relationship between the contest and the result is rather "formal" in the cases just discussed and that this is probably connected with the fact that the actual contest takes place on a "this-worldly" plane. To really feel a connection between battle and consequence, we may have to enter into consideration of trance states and a shamanic mode, as explored by Carlo Ginzburg (1992, esp. pp. 153-204). I was interested to see that his study in *Ecstasies* includes references to material like that drawn on here (p. 193): physical clashes between groups of youths and the belief that the winners will have a good harvest. It seems possible that there is a continuum with wonder-working wizards and shamans in trance at one end and institutionalised controls and ordinary people glorying in a good fight at the other.

We can hope to gain some illumination concerning the more magical end of the spectrum, through considering folklore material from Eastern Europe where we find two types of shamanic contest. In both types there is a community shaman or wizard and, if he wins, that community is assured prosperity. But the opponent can be envisaged in different ways. In some cases he is an evil demon but in others he is simply the shaman or wizard representing the neighbouring community (cf., e.g., Pócs 1989). Each community has its champion who attempts to secure the limited resource of fertility for his own people.

It seems, too, that it may be possible to get to the heart of the concept through looking at the role played by shamanic contests in relation to the luck of hunters who are acting as individuals and not on behalf of a community. Robin Ridington has explored how the tensions relating to scarce resources are worked out, and balances redressed, in a society which is markedly without formal political institutions – that of the Dunne-za (formerly called the Beaver Indians) in Northern Canada (Ridington 1990:144-159). A hunter who is unsuccessful at a particular time will claim that the game has been taken away from him by another hunter whom he accuses and with whom he may engage in a medicine fight involving dreams in which the animal spirits of the two hunters fight each other. A hunter who is successful at a particular time will be assured that his animal spirit has won the contest; his status is high and is demonstrated by the distribution of meat. There may be many steps between this way of life and a centrally controlled society, but the root concept seems to be the same. The theory of limited good is sporadically invoked by the loser (the hunter who has failed to kill game) to account for his failure and to sug-

gest a means of redress through a medicine fight. When he fails entirely, he is forced into a dependent position of low status relative to that of the successful hunter who can supply meat. This complex seems to be institutionalised and formalised in the system being discussed here in which, at a set time, a contest is held to determine which of the two halves of the community will have the superior resources and status in the coming year.

Note

[1] Le Braz 1924:xxi-xxiv, with "shake off" replacing "throw off" and "scatter", and "pain" replacing "pains". The Breton words of the chants are taken from Le Braz 1900:x-xiv.

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Epiphany and Baptism as Threshold States: Liminal Elements in Tales of Perchta and her Child Souls

In a number of Austrian folktales, the magical female figure called Perchta appears accompanied by the souls of unbaptized children (known as her *Kinderseelenschar*) during the Twelve Days of Christmas, which span from Christmas night to Epiphany (January 6), enveloping the turning of the year. Baptismal status often functions as a threshold between polarities in folk-religious traditions associated with this 'time between times', and this interplay of opposites is mirrored by parallels between the human life cycle, the ritual year, and the Christian spiritual trajectory as well. These stories describe transitions from one state to another, for better or worse – a change in spiritual status or moral condition. Hence Perchta functions here as a kind of threshold guardian, a moral tester, judge, and, in some cases, executioner. My aim here is to examine the folktales involving Perchta and her *Kinderseelenschar* and the light they shed on folk-religious conceptions of baptism and the function of Epiphany in the ritual year.

Perchta is especially associated with the Twelfth Night of Christmas (*Perchtennacht*, 'Perchta's Night'), the eve of the feast of Epiphany,[1] which commemorates the manifestation and baptism of Christ as well as the visit of the Three Kings (in Austria it is commonly called *Dreikönig*, 'Three Kings' Day'). Tied to the themes of baptism and incarnation, Epiphany was once the date of the Nativity as well (Meras 1995:185-186). Considering this, popular observance of this feast was bound to attract and reflect various ideas concerning the meeting and parting of God and man, body and spirit. These points of transition seem to have been conceptualized as spiritual gateways embodied and experienced in the life passages of birth and death, in which baptismal status played a crucial role.

In many European folk traditions, the Twelve Days acted as a kind of temporal hinge and a fissure through which spirits could enter and interact with humanity, for good or for ill.[2] The word 'limen' is from the Latin meaning 'threshold' (*Oxford English Dictionary Online* 1989), and liminal states, places and times are indeed sites of transition. They are typically dangerous and demand precise, ritualized action and correct behavior; what

happens there shapes the world on either side of the threshold in question, and we shall see this dynamic at work in these tales of Perchta and her child souls, which describe a number of threshold states, points of transition or tension between one thing and another. This constellation of folklore elements involves liminality of several different types:

1. Temporal: time of year (the Twelve Nights) and time of day (dusk to dawn).
2. Spatial (the thresholds of the house, separating inside from outside).
3. Phases of the life cycle (the period between birth and baptism).
4. Spiritual (the interval between death and afterlife; the purgatorial state).

The following chart represents the parallel limens found in these tales: liminal states, spaces, and intervals which appear to mirror, reinforce and illuminate one another where they coincide in these narratives.

Seasonal	Old Year > Nativity	The Turning of the Year	Epiphany > New Year
	(December 25)	(Twelve Nights of Christmas)	(January 6)
Spatial	Outdoors	Threshold of the House	Indoors
Life Cycle	Birth	Rites of Protection	Baptism
Spiritual	Life > Death	Purgatory	Heaven / Rebirth
Temporal	Night	Midnight	Day

Nikita I. Tolstoy describes Slavonic traditions of belief in which the earth opens during the "unbaptized days" (the twelve days from Christmas to Epiphany) and releases a horde of demons who "wreak havoc" on Earth (2002:198-199). According to these traditions, the reason "the cross has no power" over these spirits (Tolstoy 2002:199) is that Christ was not baptized until the end of this period, January 6 (although Christ's baptism as a discrete historical event is supposed to have occured during adulthood, it seems that in the context of the seasonal round, these twelve days were conceptualized as the period between his birth and baptism, reflecting more closely the typical birth-to-baptism period of Christian children). Perhaps a similar reasoning was at work in other beliefs and customs associated with the Twelve Nights found throughout Europe, such as the Wild Hunt, which is sometimes led by Perchta: "in her train... are barking, three-footed dogs, witches who ride on broomsticks, clattering skeletons and

headless animals," and hounds "which were supposed to be the souls of unbaptized children" (Rumpf 1991:23). In most of the folktales, it is these child souls who roam with Perchta through the midwinter nights, weeping and dragging a plow (Rumpf 1991:25), the smallest child trailing behind, carrying a pitcher heavy with the tears of grieving mothers (Motz 1984:66).

Perchta seems to set moral tests for people who encounter them, with the result (and perhaps the objective) that a child is released from her company. This can occur if the child is given a name, even accidentally, and "those who were touched with consecrated oil or baptismal water had to stay behind" (Rumpf 1973:112), the implication in this case being that they return to the world of the living rather than passing into heaven. In one tale, a man sees one of these pitiful little souls struggling along and calls out, "O du arm's Zoada-Wascherl" ("Oh, you poor little ragamuffin"). Not only does Perchta release the child, but she blesses the man with good fortune for his own newborn child (Rumpf 1973:114-115). Holy water, consecrated oil, and naming are of course all elements used in Christian baptism, but in these stories, the conferring of a name is the most important element. Naming is the decisive magical act which effects a transformation: the transition from one spiritual state (damned) to another (redeemed). The naming constitutes a claiming of the souls for Christendom and, by extension, the human community. It may be seen as an echo of the original Christian baptism, the original Epiphany, in that (according to this interpretation) it is the spirit made manifest in human form, mirroring "the Word... made flesh" (*Holy Bible*: John 1:14).

These stories, like those of the Wild Hunt, cast light on folk-religious feelings and beliefs about the fate of those who died without the rites of baptism and confession. They may stem from a medieval popular conception of Purgatory in which the souls in limbo wander the earth.[3] In his *Corrector* (circa 1008-1012), Burchard of Worms refers to the belief that the souls of unbaptized babies roam as restless and troubled spirits: "When any infant dies without baptism, [some women] take the baby's corpse... and impale its little body with a stake, saying that if they did not do so, the infant would rise from the dead and cause many people harm" (Shinners 2007: 470). Later tales of Perchta and her children seem to have inspired more compassion than fear, however; it would seem that popular feeling could not quite consign these unbaptized children to hell, and so imagined for them a kinder fate, one with a hope (however slight) of salvation and escape.[4] Nonetheless, most of the tales are grim enough to remind one of the implacability of death and church doctrine; in one from Tirol, a 'miracle-doctor' is fetched in order to bring a child back to life long enough to bap-

tize him, thus sparing him burial in the graveyard reserved for unbaptized children, but Frau Perchta appears to claim the child, body and soul (Nepomuk 1857:66-67).

The thresholds of the house play an important role in these narratives, which emphasize a spatial polarity: Perchta is outside and the human protagonist is inside, a distance which various folk customs sought to preserve. "Holy water, baptismal water, and the three crosses which were placed on this house on Three Kings' Day... protect against Berachta and act to keep her from entering the house" (Rumpf 1973:113). The protective power of the cross may also be seen in a ruse to escape the Wild Hunt: one must lie down crosswise – a form of playing dead, while making the shape of a cross with one's body (Nepomuk 1857:71). In a Carinthian tale, a man out late on the eve of Perchta's Day runs in terror to the nearest house at the sound of a cowbell in the distance, only to hear thumping and scratching at the door the moment it closes behind him. He stabs the door with a knife inscribed with "the sacrosanct name" to banish "die Berchtl", but on the following morning he finds the door "clawed from top to bottom" (Andree-Eysn 1910:159). In another tale, a farmer escapes Berachte only by running to a house marked with three crosses; the tunic he tore off in the heat of the chase is found ripped to pieces the next morning (Rumpf 1973:113).

Here Perchta as the raging nocturnal force which tears men to pieces is seen in contrast to the safe place reached just in time – the house protected by the sign of the Three Kings, three crosses. The door is the point of contact, and thus the closed door sealed with protective symbols provides the ultimate protection. One account describes an Epiphany house visit from mummers representing Perchta and the Three Kings, whose initials (C + M + B for Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar) are chalked on the house door to protect against misfortune in the New Year (Hoffman-Krayer and Bachtold-Staubli 1927-1942, 2:1): "In the Gailtal she is in the retinue of the Holy Three Kings... She carries the star, but may not enter the houses because she is not baptized" (Rumpf 1991:40). Here the border between baptized and unbaptized, human and non-human, is represented by the threshold of the house door.

In these instances, being indoors seems to symbolize inclusion in the living human community of baptized Christians, shutting out the dangers of the wild, nocturnal world, the realm of animals and ghosts. Inclusion in and exclusion from the community of the saved is conceived of in spatial terms: humans encountering non-human spirits, the living encountering the dead, and spirits either crossing or being barred from crossing physical thresholds such as windows, doors, and bridges, where blessing may be courted and danger deflected. Taken together, this material reveals paral-

lels between the dangerous period between birth and baptism and that between Christmas and Epiphany, the feasts associated with Christ's birth and baptism respectively. Shared elements between the complex of folk beliefs and customs dealing with protecting unbaptized children from dangerous spiritual forces and that dealing with the protection of the household during the Twelve Nights come together in these tales of Perchta and her *Kinderseelenschar*, illuminating the folk-religious conceptions of Epiphany and baptism which underlie them.

Notes

[1] Arguments that Perchta is a personification of this day have been put forth based on etymological analysis and her position in the seasonal cycle (notably in Jacob Grimm's *Teutonic Mythology*). If she is indeed 'Lady Epiphany', then it is not surprising that she should be associated with baptism in folktales.

[2] With respect to the 'time outside of time' character of the Twelve Days of Christmas, it is interesting to consider that in calendrical terms, they may be said to span from Christmas to Christmas, encompassing the same date twice: December 25 in the Julian calendar is January 6 in the Gregorian. The lost interval of time resulting from the transition to the Gregorian calendar (which took place in Austria in 1583-1584) may in itself be seen as a kind of 'time outside of time'.

[3] Peter Dinzelbacher traces the Wild Hunt motif to the medieval conception of Purgatory as a "furious army" of the dead roaming the earth (Purgatory 2000:809).

[4] According to Dinzelbacher, the Council of Florence consigned the souls of all who die in original sin (including unbaptized children) to hell. Unbaptized children "were thought to be in eternal darkness in a limbo, *limbus puerorum* (literally, a borderland of children)" (Hell 2000:474).

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The *Schleicherlaufen* in Telfs – for Men Only?

Large Shrovetide festivals are held at several places in the Alps, and one of these is the *Schleicherlaufen* (slinking run) held in Telfs, in Tyrol, Austria, which is organized every five years. It is not a unique festival, because several neighboring villages organize their own Shrovetide festivals, e.g. the *Wampelerreiten* (paunchy riding) in Axams and the *Schellerlaufen* (bell run) in Nassereith, but in different years.

The *Schleicherlaufen* is a fine example of Alpine traditions and the local people are very proud of it. The most recent *Schleicherlaufen* (which I attended) took place in January 2005 and approximately 20,000 spectators were present. About 500 *Fasnachtlers*, the active participants who belonged to fifteen different groups, played the main roles, but the number of those who are active in the preparation and organization is much higher. This festival sets the whole of Telfs to work for several months. It has been estimated that about half of the population of 14,500 are in some way connected with it. For the local men it is something special because, without participating in the *Schleicherlaufen*, one is not a genuine *Telferman*. Only local and native men are allowed to take part in it. This has always been the case and it will always be so in the future too, if we can believe the locals. However, at the same time, it is quite evident that the *Schleicherlaufen* could not be organized without the women.

There are numerous publications and even works of art relating to the *Schleicherlaufen*, which is locally a very significant event that has been well documented in the past (see Gapp 1996: esp. 152–156, and also Pfaundler 1981, and Streng and Bakay 2005). Here I will study the *Schleicherlaufen* in terms of gendered spaces and places and give a view of the festival from an outsider's perspective. I spent four weeks in Telfs in order to observe the preparations as well as the event itself and I interviewed both *Fasnachtlers* and women during my fieldwork.[1] In this paper, I explore two questions:

[1] I wish to thank my friend Doris Stippler and her family for all their help and hospitality during the *Schleicherlaufen*. In addition I wish to thank all my informants, whom I cannot name here.

Whose festival is the *Schleicherlaufen*? and What meaning and function does the *Schleicherlaufen* have in contemporary society?

A Brief Historical Overview

The first archival documents about the *Schleicherlaufen* are from 1571 and 1612, and later trial documents show that it was not a single event. There is a short description of it from the 1830s, where some figures that are still known today are mentioned. Since 1890 the festival has taken place every five years except for the interruptions caused by the war years (Pfaudler 1981:13–22; Gapp 1996:152–156). During the past decades, the *Schleicherlaufen* has been developed into a high-profile event that is known nation-wide and that attracts numerous spectators from far and near, both native and foreign visitors.

There are a number of theories about the origin of the *Schleicherlaufen* but it is not relevant to discuss these in detail here. The different theories see it, among other things, as a remnant of fertility rites, or as spring driving away the evil spirits of winter, or as an adjuration or enchantment of the spirits of the dead. Today it is understood that Shrovetide had a place in the liturgical calendar of the medieval church in connection with the fasting time of Lent and the transition to it from the joys of gluttony and carnality (Dörrer 1949; Gapp 1986). The *Fasnachtlers* themselves and also the local population know and discuss these different theories and explanations. According to my fieldwork, some of them doubt the last explanation; they still prefer the romantic and mythological origins of fertility cult or spring defeating winter. These motifs are also seen in the designs on the clothes and in the huts of the *Schleichers*, e.g. they are interpreted as representing decorated cows that are returning from the Alps with the herdsman and the dairymaid.

An Overview of the *Schleicherlaufen*

Although the Sunday before Lent is the high point of the *Schleicherlaufen*, many things have already happened before then. The extensive preparations take much time and participants even take leave from work in order to devote more time to preparations and rehearsing. When you are paying attention to the preparations, you recognize at once the importance of the women's contribution. Women have their own duties and tasks: they design, sew and produce costumes and also hats and other head decorations. They also stay at home and look after the house and the children so that the men can construct the displays for the various floats and rehearse and prepare for the carnival. I asked some middle-aged men what their wives say when they are so much absent from home. One of them an-

swered: "Lately she hasn't said a word." Several people said that the entire community suffers from "Shrovetide fever" and that fortunately the *Schleicherlaufen* is only every fifth year.

There have been meetings and preparations already during the previous year, but the festival period proper begins on the evening of the Twelfth Day, i.e. on the 6th of January (on the 6th on the Epiphany, but late in the evening) when the ceremony of "digging out" the *Naz* takes place. The *Naz* is a rag doll symbolizing Shrovetide.

During the weekends before the *Schleicherlaufen* all groups collect money by selling refreshments in their own marquees or vans. Money is also collected by selling such things as calendars, posters, pictures and key-rings.

The *Viechertaufe* (baptising the animals), which is organized by the Bear group, comes a week before the *Schleicherlaufen*. It is a new tradition, enjoyed especially by children. Doctors make a physical examination of the animals to check if they are healthy enough for the festival.

On the day before the *Schleicherlaufen*, a Saturday, the floats are revealed for the first time and are driven through the center. The themes and decorations of the floats have been kept secret until this day. The inhabitants have fun, enjoying liquid refreshments and dancing. Local people must show themselves there.

The *Schleicherlaufen* finally begins on Sunday morning at 7 o'clock, when the 'Sun' is carried through the center in order to pray for good weather. A couple of hours later, at 10 a.m., the 'Bear' is hunted down. Early in the morning the participants are gathered to be dressed and masked. Later horse-drawn carriages bring the *Schleichers* to the assembly point. Each man wears a white jacket with a white ruff and brightly-colored silk knickerbockers and carries a huge cowbell on his back. The bell must not be heard as they sidle along but rings during their dance. This slinking gait is the origin of their name, *Schleicher*.

Before the parade at 11 o'clock begins and goes along the main street, the skilfully made, baroque and valuable headdresses of the *Schleichers* are on display so that the visitors can admire them and take pictures. The groups have their own programs and shows at six different venues. Some of the groups are old, while others, e.g. Four Seasons, are more recent. The heralds ride first in the parade and proclaim the *Fasnacht* (Shrovetide festival). Then, the *Wilde* (wild men) come, their main task being to act as orderlies during the procession. They wear clothes made of beard moss and frightening wooden masks and are accompanied by the *Panzenaff*, a person acting the role of an ape. The wild men make a space for the

Schleichers, who dance and skip in a circle. The lantern-bearer belongs to the *Schleichers* as well. He is dressed as a harlequin and swings his lantern all the time. He is followed by the innkeeper, the waitress, the *Glaslbua* (busboy), the dairyman, the dairymaid and the goatherd, who all form the inner circle for the dance of *Kroastanz*. The outer circle is composed of some fifty *Schleichers*.

Other groups follow one after another: the Bear group, the music group *Musik-Banda*, the *Laningers* (vagrant people) and other groups who play their own pieces – fifteen groups altogether. The themes are taken from local politics. On Monday the flats and stages drive through the center again and there are spontaneous festivities in the center, e.g. the public shaving of the participants is a popular event.

On the following Saturday a very beautiful and intimate ceremony takes place, *Totengedenken*, the remembrance of the all the *Fasnachtlers* who have died during the previous five-year period. The members arrive with lanterns made of colourful paper and have candles inside in their hands and gather below the church stairs. After a short commemorative service during which the names of the dead are called out, the men put wreaths with candles on the graves. Later that evening a Shrovetide ball is organized. On the next Tuesday the burying of the *Naz* takes place, and this marks the end of the *Schleicherlaufen*. On the first Sunday after Shrove Sunday a commemorative service for the deceased *Fasnachtlers* is held in the parish church.

Whose Festival is the *Schleicherlaufen*?

And is it only for men as I have a little provocatively asked in my title? Actually there are two different reasons why these thoughts came into my mind. Only a couple of days before the *Schleicherlaufen* two researchers were giving lectures in connection with an exhibition of different Shrovetide traditions in the Alpine region, and they emphasized that the *Schleicherlaufen* and other similar large Shrovetide traditions in Tyrol are purely for men. That is, of course, true because only the men may appear. But what annoyed my friends as well as the rest of the female public was that these two researchers disregarded the role of women, although the *Fasnachtlers* themselves often say that "*Ohne die Frauen gibt's koa Fåsnacht*", "Without the women there is no Shrovetide" (Gapp 1996:160). By this expression they mean that local women – wives, mothers and daughters – have their own duties, work and responsibility for the *Schleicherlaufen*. It is the women who make it possible for the men to prepare and rehearse for the Shrovetide celebration.

The other reason for my question in the title is the *Bandengehen*, who are music groups of some kind. In Axams, near Telfs, the *Bandengehen* (going round in bands) is still a living tradition and women are more active than men. On Monday, Tuesday and Thursday dressed up and masked groups with musicians go from inn to inn, as in earlier times they went from house to house. The members of each group wear a particular costume and are disguised as *Laninger* (vagabonds), *Madln* (girls, i.e. men dressed as women), *Bujazzln* (spring figures), *Zottlers* (winter figures) etc. The groups used to consist of family members and today consist also of friends. They perform between three and five dances, and invite guests to dance. The guests buy drinks for their dance partners and they try to recognize the masked participants.

The *Schleicherlaufen* is above all a festival for native Austrians, especially for Tyrolean people. It is also important for those who have left Tyrol that they return for the festival, bringing their family, friends and colleagues with them. Some of them may still participate in the groups. It is very important for the *Fasnachtlers* that their sons or sons-in-law participate. This came out very clearly in my interviews. Several roles in the groups can be passed on only within families (e.g. the figure of the lanternbearer). However, the number of the *Fasnachtlers* is limited in many groups and there is a waiting list for the most important and traditional roles. The clothing, masks and hats are often a family heritage and are displayed in the home.

Although the *Schleicherlaufen* is also important as a tourist attraction, tourism takes second place and the tourists have to adapt themselves to the local traditions. The shops have decorated their windows with *Schleicherlaufen* motifs and the *Schleicherlaufen* is seen and heard everywhere; it is the most important topic of conversation for a long time.

The *Schleicherlaufen* seems still to be only for the native Austrians, because I saw only a few immigrant children on the floats on Saturday and Monday. The numerous immigrants in Telfs were, however, the subject of a play in which a group presented humorously the future of Telfs and the *Schleircherlaufen*, saying that in the year 2050 the last *Schleicherlaufen* would be celebrated since the new mayor, who came from Turkey, had closed it down as unnecessary.

The festival has also changed over time and renewed itself, e.g. more attention is now paid to the children. There are special children's programs, and kindergarten groups visit the groups of their fathers or grandfathers. The children draw and do decorations with Shrovetide motifs for schools, kindergartens and local restaurants.

The meaning and function of the *Schleicherlaufen*

"A beautiful time", "a nice festival", "a great event", "has its own atmosphere", "beautiful anxiety", "belongingness", "community and locality", "connects and integrates different persons and groups" – these answers I got in Telfs when I asked, What is the meaning and the function of the *Schleicherlaufen*. A visitor immediately understands also what this festival means for the local identity, because it is the only topic of discussion.

The *Schleicherlaufen* is a tradition and festival which the local people appreciate and are proud of. They also know well the historical background and the traditions of their festival. During the festival, old friends, acquaintances and family members meet. There are also some disadvantages mentioned: the *Schleicherlaufen* costs a great deal of money and time, alcohol consumption is high and after the festival many divorces take place.

As I already mentioned, the *Schleicherlaufen* has changed and developed over the years; new groups and new programs have been born. Before the *Schleicherlaufen* in 2005, a sociologist said in a regional radio program, that gradually women should also be allowed to participate in the *Schleicherlaufen*, but she did not get any support. According to the local women, with whom I discussed the matter, the *Schleicherlaufen* is their – and everybody's – festival, although the women are not allowed to participate in the parade, or not yet. The *Schleicherlaufen* is a valuable cultural heritage because the people can celebrate it with friends and family members and display to others their valuable tradition. It brings "beautiful anxiety and chaos" into their lives, and reinforces local identity and togetherness.

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***Field material*:**

Interviews, field notes, photos, newspaper cuttings and leaflets are in the possession of the author.

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Blackening and Foot-Washing: A Look at Scottish Wedding Pranks

The Scottish wedding contains elements of solemnity and foolishness, both of which are manifested in rituals before, during, and after the event. This paper examines two pre-wedding rituals: blackening and foot-washing. Sources of information are historical accounts and, when possible, those closer to the present day. Blackening is the act of smearing the face or other parts of the groom or the bride with a black substance, such as soot or shoe polish. The "victim" is then hauled through his or her hometown on the back of a cart or a lorry, displayed for all to see. The procession is noisy, and the blackened person's appearance is announced with shouts, blaring horns, and/or banging of pots and pans. Foot-washing, which is less public, may also include the groom and the bride, but traditionally focuses on the cleansing of the bride's feet before her wedding day. Examples of these rituals come from many parts of Scotland, with special attention to the north-east island regions.

In the Orkney Islands, Scotland, and in Shetland, further to the northeast, weddings were traditionally held in the winter. Pre-wedding rituals began in Orkney on spearing night, when the groom would formally request the consent of the bride's father. Orkney folklorist Ernest Marwick noted that "The shy wooer invariably brought with him a bottle of whiskey, which served as a symbol of his intentions if the words he wanted would not come" (2000:87). Once permission had been granted, the rest of the evening was spent discussing the wedding preparations. The next occasion was booking night, when the couple's names were entered in the session-clerk's books. Then came an eve-of-the-wedding ceremony of *fit-washin'* (foot-washing), observed in Orkney, according to Marwick, until a few generations ago:

> A group of unmarried girls gathered at the bride's home to scrub her feet in a large tub of water. This had once been a serious ritual, during which the father took off the bride's shoes and her mother the stockings, the latter pronouncing as she did so a blessing on her daughter. It degenerated over the years into a rough and tumble attempt

> to find a ring which had been dropped into the tub. While this was going on, the bridegroom was being subjected to a much more vigorous foot-washing by the young men of the neighbourhood. This was so rough that a victim once tried to evade it by running several miles to the next parish with the foot-washers in pursuit (Marwick 2000:88).

Another of Marwick's descriptions of this ritual can be found in *An Orkney Anthology. The Selected Works of Ernest Walker Marwick,* edited by John Robertson:

> While the men were away, a number of the local girls prepared a tub of water in which to wash the bride's feet. The bride had to sit on a stool beside this tub, with her right side next to it. Her father removed her shoes, then her mother took off her stockings, and pulled her feet over the water in a sunwise direction (which was very important). The mother patted each foot, pronounced a blessing on her daughter, then plunged her feet beneath the water. This was the sign for all the girls to surround the tub and help to scrub the bride's feet. As they did so, they searched for a ring which the mother had dropped into the water. The one who found it was inevitably the first who would marry. In the scramble everyone got wet, but it was splendid fun (Robertson 1991:119).

Marwick stated that in some districts in Orkney the bridegroom also took part in the ceremony.

> The empty tub had to stand in the sunlight for twelve hours, and no dog must look into it; so all the dogs in the neighbourhood were shut up for a day. Then into the tub went a pailful of fresh water from a well and a pailful of water from the sea. The man and woman sat on opposite sides of the tub with their feet in the water, but so placed that the growing moon could shine between them.
>
> Sometimes the water was kept until the night before the wedding, to allow the couple to wash their hair. Thereafter the liquid could not be thrown away in the ordinary way, but was poured into a round hole dug in the earth. The oldest woman in the house said a certain form of words over it, the hole was filled and covered with turf (Robertson 1991:119-120).

G. F. Black's *County Folk-Lore. Examples of Printed Folklore concerning the Orkney & Shetland Islands* (1901) also alludes to the search for

the ring. In this book he quotes Samuel Hibbert's description of Shetland wedding rituals in the early 1800s:

> Marriages, which are chiefly contracted during winter, serve to draw together a large party, who not many years ago, used to meet on the night before the solemnity took place. It was then usual for the bridegroom to have his feet formally washed in water by his men, though in wealthy houses wine is used for the purpose. A ring is thrown into the tub – a scramble for it ensued, the finder being the person who would be first married (Black 1901:213, quoting Hibbert 1822:554).

There seems to be only a thin connection between these descriptions of foot-washing and the often-quoted biblical passage of John 13:5-15, in which Jesus washes the feet of the disciples after the Last Supper.[1] The biblical ritual, in its sacred context of devotion and humility, parts grace to the recipients; while the foot-washing associated with Scottish pre-wedding traditions shows a shift from what may have begun as a solemn blessing to a secular emphasis on frivolity (Marwick 2000:88). Carol Shaw's book, *Scottish Myths & Customs,* notes similarities between the Scottish custom of foot-washing and the Norse tradition of the bride's bath.[3] Here she also links the practices of blackening and foot-washing as one extended ritual, noting an instance in which the bride and groom are ritually soiled before they are cleansed:

> A symbol of the couple's fresh start in life together, the ritual feet-washing was performed on both the bride and groom, usually on the night before the wedding... Although a significant and symbolic event, this was also an excuse for horseplay, with the protesting couple's friends covering their feet and legs with soot and grease before washing it off. A ring was sometimes thrown into the water, and the person who found it would be the next of the party to marry. After the rowdy ceremonial, the rest of the night was spent singing, dancing and drinking (Shaw 1997:42).

In *Scottish Customs. From the Cradle to the Grave,* Margaret Bennett cites several nineteenth-century accounts of foot-washing and blackening. The first, from Reverend Walter Gregor, comes from the north-east of Scotland: "...a large tub was brought forward and nearly filled with water. The bridegroom was stripped of his shoes and stockings, and his legs and

feet were plunged into the water. One seized a besom [broom] and began to rub them lustily, while another was busy besmearing them with soot or shoe-blackening, and a third was practicing some other vagary.[2] A more recent account, also noted by Bennett, was recorded by Fred MacAulay in Fearn, Easter Ross, in 1969. A Gaelic-speaking woman recalls a ceremony in which "several items, including a wedding ring, a half crown and a sixpence, were put in the tub [wash tub] of water, along with cinders and hair. After the girl's feet were washed, her friends scrambled for the ring to see who would marry that year" (Bennett 2004: n. 35, p. 115; SA1969/185). In 1988, Margaret Bennett interviewed Elizabeth Stewart from Mintlaw at the School of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh. Here is a portion of their tape-recorded conversation:

MB (Margaret Bennett): What is the blackening?

ES (Elizabeth Stewart): Oh, they mak a right mess o ye! They would plan to get a hold of the bride either comin' from her work or whatever she was doing, and get a hold of the groom the same way. Just sort of trap them intae something so you could get a hold of them and really make a mess o them!

MB: What would you put on them?

ES: It could be anything – tar, syrup, treacle, feathers, chocolate, anything, like cocoa...

MB: And did it matter what they were wearing at the time?

ES: Not at all!

MB: If they were wearing their Sunday best you'd still do it?

ES: Yes, oh yes! Even better! I just happen to know a family not long ago – my nephew was one of them. Oh, it's terrible, it was ridiculous! They actually stripped him and he had nothing on but a pair of [under]pants, and they took him all through the streets of Ellon... He's a musician, this boy, and he was really dressed up to go away to do some teaching this night, and they caught him and put him in a lorry. Of course I was on top of the lorry with them, holding him down! All through the streets of Ellon! [laughs] They poured syrup, treacle, feathers, eggs, flour... Fit else, Michael? [to her son] You wis there! Aye, they mixed everything you could get in a kitchen into big bowls – sauces, salt, spices, anything!

MB: And you'd call it "a blackening" even though it wasn't necessarily black?

ES: Oh aye. And soot! Long, long ago it used to be soot!

MB: Did they do this to the girl as well?

ES: Oh yes! (Bennett 2004: 123-124; SA1988/25)

In his essay in the website for the North East Folklore Archive, David Hood comments on the interesting interplay between foot-washing and blackening. Here it is clearly depicted as the kind of ritual that a groom – or a bride – would want to avoid:

> Both bride and groom are still at risk from a "foot-washing" or "blackening." This involves being seized by their friends. In the past their shoes and socks were removed, their feet plunged in water and smeared with soot or blacking. In recent decades it has become more ferocious with tar, paint, feathers, flour or any other noxious and hard-to-remove substance added to the soot. Bondage to a lamppost or other street furniture may be used to restrain the victim and their whole person may be "washed" (Hood 2007: Customs and Beliefs, part 1, "Birth, Marriage and Death").

The most recent printed narrative that I could find, also in Margaret Bennett's book, was recorded in 1990.[4] The narrator, Susan Huntly, gave this account:

> ...some of the young ones would catch him [the bridegroom] unawares and they would get a hold of him, take his shoes and socks off to blacken his feet – it's supposed to be lucky. Now it has got out of hand. At the stag night in the pub they strip all his clothes off, *the lot*! They blacken anywhere they can get a hold of, and then they turn him upside down and mark the ceiling with his feet (Bennett 2004:122-123; SA1990/18).

What do we make of these pre-wedding rituals? Clearly they have a long history, during which time they have undergone a number of changes. Changes are to be expected, and there are reasons for them. One way that we can come closer to understanding them is through in-depth fieldwork, during which we derive as much information as we can from those who are familiar with the rituals they describe. The interview that Margaret Bennett conducted with Elizabeth Stewart, for example, gives good insight into the chaotic nature of blackening. Ms. Stewart's reflections stress the groom caught unawares, the communal fun had at his expense, the upheaval that ensued ("Oh, it's terrible, it was ridiculous!"), and the messiness of the blackening, making use of everything in the kitchen to accomplish the desired result. She notes that the more proper the victim's clothing, the better the fun. Further, women are just as likely to be captured and blackened as are men.

What more could we find out that would help us gather contextual information? We could find out more about the informant's background, and, more importantly, about the members of the community of which the informant and her family are a part. There are hints of this communal context in Elizabeth's asides, such as "I was on top of the lorry, holding him down!" or community involvement, in her phrase "...all through the streets of Ellon!" "You wis there," she says to her son, confirming the group behavior that sparked and sustained the tradition.

In her asides and in her narrative about blackening in her hometown, Elizabeth Stewart reveals important attitudes about a living tradition in her own community. She participated in it; she accepted and understood it, and she relived her enjoyment of it as she was being interviewed. The fact that she was an active participant gives us a better understanding of the event than would an informant's recollection of something that occurred in the distant past. To be on hand for the event would be a dramatic way for a researcher to experience it. However, in order to come closer to an understanding of the event in its context, the researcher would benefit greatly from interviewing members of the local community who also had taken part in it, as in the case of Margaret Bennett's interview with Elizabeth Stewart (Ref. Honko 1989:34-38; Fenske 2007:67-99).

Blackening and foot-washing are longstanding yet continually evolving Scottish pre-wedding pranks. Although foot-washing may recall an ancient ritual, it is more of an opportunity for a lively game of divination. Blackening sticks close to its initial function of altering the appearance of the prospective groom or bride, though the substance used for this purpose has varied. For example, although the act of blackening with soot is still practiced, many other household items are used if soot is not available. Many Scottish homes are now heated with electricity, so coal soot is not as handy as it once was.

As the groom and the bride make the transition from a single to a married state, the rituals of blackening and foot-washing transform them, literally from head to toe. Disruptive noise and public display are a key part of these rituals, calling attention to the couple's liminal status. Foot-washing promotes wet and chaotic fun, and the blackening procession causes a commotion throughout the groom's or bride's hometown.

Closer examination of foot-washing and blackening, following models initiated by Victor Turner, reveals several levels of opposition. First is the contrast between the instability of the pre-wedding day and the stability the couple will assume as married members of the community. The bride, for example, changes from a "bare-footed lass" to a "proper" married woman,

presumably with stockings on her feet.[5] Next is the opposition of the rituals themselves. The washing will tidy the bride and groom before they start their new life, whereas the blackening will soil them, even if only temporarily. The act of blackening also contrasts an everyday regard for personal appearance with a ritualistically constructed disregard for personal appearance (see Turner 1969:106). In short, washing imitates the cleansing forces of purification and rebirth, whereas blackening imitates burning and destruction, calling attention to a "marked" person for the purpose of public embarrassment. When blackening and foot-washing are combined, the rituals are more like one extended prank, with chaos and disorder as their key goal. When they are separated – either temporally or by gender – their functions are more distinct, with the groom being subjected to more embarrassment and possible physical harm, and the bride and her female friends focusing more on the game of predicting the next woman to be married. Blurring of these distinctions may be a sign of less attention to unique function and more emphasis on widespread disruption or humiliation. Whatever the outcome, these pre-wedding rituals are worthy of our analysis.

Notes

[1] The passage (King James Bible) reads as follows:

13:5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe [them] with the towel wherewith he was girded.

13:6 Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

13:7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

13:8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

13:9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also [my] hands and [my] head.

13:10 Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash [his] feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

13:11 For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

13:12 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

13:13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for [so] I am.

13:14 If I then, [your] Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet...

13:15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

[2] Shaw (1997:42) states that the Scottish custom of foot-washing seems to be an example "...of the Scandinavian influence on Scottish customs; it is very similar to the Norse tradition of the bride's bath."

[3] A second source, John Dixon, notes in 1886 that in Gairloch, Scotland, the custom is to wash the feet of the bride and the bridegroom in their respective homes on the evening before the wedding (Bennett 2004: 116).

[4] Recorded by Margaret Wilson (1990); Ref. Bennett 2004:122-123.

[5] Thanks to David Stanley (Westminster College, Utah, USA) for this analogy. Thanks also to Jenny Butler (University College Cork, Ireland) for her suggestion that the foot-washing ritual might be connected to a desire to prevent the bride from getting "cold feet" just before her wedding day.

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Commemoration of the Dead as Part of the Udmurt Ritual Year

Udmurts – an ethnic group of eastern Russia who speak a Finno-Ugric language – were, and still are, in constant dialogue with their deceased relatives. Visitors from the beyond are awaited during folk calendar holidays, they are remembered during agricultural prayers and family occasions, and offerings are made to them in happy and unhappy times. Yet there are certain times and periods in the Udmurt folk calendar that are considered preferable for commemorating the dead. For example, relations with the dead play an important role in the course of the winter liminal period called *vozhodyr*, and they are frequent at the beginning and ending of every agricultural cycle. Let's observe how commemorations relate to different time categories.

The Day

The neighbouring Besermians attributed the cause of an illness or child's sleeplessness to the anger of the dead, so a sacrifice to them was performed after sunset facing north. Commemoration feasts and the last sacrifice, the *iyrpyd s'oton,* were organized near nightfall. After darkness fell or about midnight, the head and legs of the sacrificial animal were taken to the cemetery or to a special place north or north-westward from the village (Popova 2004:36). The same ritual in Udmurt villages also culminated at night.

The Week

Saturday was considered as the proper day for commemorating the dead (Popova 2004:39). Northern Udmurts commemorated the dead on Saturday, but Besermians began preparations on Thursday, when some baking was done and a sacrificial animal was killed. On Friday, they celebrated with a commemoration feast at home and on Saturday they visited the cemetery (Popova 2004:41). In the village of Varklet-Bodia in Tatarstan, both commemorations were carried out during the vernal sacrificial cycle *gershyd,* which coincided with Tuesdays.

The Year

There are two main commemoration periods in the Udmurt ritual year – one in spring before the beginning of agricultural work, and another in autumn, after it ends. The vernal commemoration period often coincides with Easter. Maundy Thursday night is called *kulem/kulon poton ui* – night of the emerging of the dead. It was common belief that during that night, dead ancestors would visit their living relatives. Looking out from a window through a sieve allowed an observer to see the dead returning from the cemetery (Minniyakhmetova 2000:26). Nine days after Easter Sunday, Besermians visited cemeteries and carried out the so-called Tuesday commemoration or ninth-day commemoration (Popova 2004:87). Springtime commemorations in Udmurt villages in Bashkortostan and Tatarstan also began about a week after Easter and were performed during the weeks before cuckoo singing time (Minniyakhmetova 2000:34). On the first day, groups of relatives visited each other's houses; visits began at the upper end of the village and continued downstream. On the next day, a cock or a hen was killed and a special soup called *pös' shyd* (hot soup) was made. The eldest family member went to the cemetery and called the dead relatives home to eat and drink. Near the stove was placed a bowl containing ritual food (Minniyakhmetova 2000:35-36).

B. Gavrilov states that at the end of the nineteenth century amongst the Udmurts of Mamadysh province, *kis'ton* "commemorating" (from the verb *kis'tyny* – to pour) was held on the Thursday or Friday of Holy Week and on one of those days before the holiday devoted to Our Lady of Kazan (22 October). In these case, the deceased were commemorated at home. Pancakes were placed in a small bowl on a bench beside the stove. A candle burned on the edge of the bowl. Moonshine (homemade liquor) and beer were also poured out. The next day, two chickens were killed and a soup was made, which was then offered up in a wooden box next to the stove (Gavrilov 1891:121).

Up to the middle of the twentieth century, Besermians performed prayers and sacrifices in burial places called *bigershai* (Tatar cemetery) before springtime sowing. They regarded such places as the burial places of their pagan ancestors, founders of the villages (Popova 2004: 93). Archaeologists say that *bigershai* burial places in Northern Udmurtia were built either from the 9th to the 14th centuries or from the 16th and 17th centuries.

According to I. Vasiliev, at the beginning of the twentieth century, a chicken was sacrificed for the dead in spring, and, on the condition that the people were good shepherds to the herd, an animal was allowed to be

killed in the fall. Dumplings made of rye flour were put into the chicken stock. The meat and dumplings were also offered in a trough placed by the stove. While the food was in the trough, no one was allowed to come in or go out the door. Afterwards, the trough and the food inside it were taken to the dogs. If the dogs began fighting over the food, it was taken as a sign that there was a lack of harmony amongst the dead. During the ceremonies a promise to sacrifice a sheep in the fall could be made (Vasiliev 1906:260).

Udmurts from the village of Varklet-Bodia commemorate their dead during the *gershyd* holidays, held following the end of springtime work in the fields. The first commemoration, called *kuias'kon* (from *kuias'kyny* – to throw away) takes place a day after the crop prayer *iu vös'*.in a grove north of the village near trees from which the skulls and leg bones of animals sacrificed for *iyrpyd s'oton* have been hung. People arrive either one by one or with families, a candle fastened to a tree trunk is lit, and bread and egg are scattered on the ground beneath the tree. A bit of is also poured on the ground. Today, prayers are no longer read and the names of deceased relatives are not called aloud. After this, a small campfire is lit in a nearby clearing. Only men sit there and sip moonshine; the women keep to themselves by the edge of the field.

The *gershyd* holidays end with the second *kuias'kon*, which takes place by a lone tree in a clearing north of the village. On that day, all of the relatives who have not been buried in the local graveyard are remembered. In addition to breaking up and scattering food, a sheep or calf is killed on this day in honour of the dead, and barley porridge is prepared. The same cauldrons are used for making the porridge as are used when sacrificing; the serving of meat and porridge is carried out in the same way. This *kuias'kon* differs from other sacrificial ceremonies in that there is no praying.

In many Udmurt, the village's autumn commemoration *siz'yl kis'ton* was carried out immediately after the cycle of autumn festivities *siz'yl iuon* (autumn feast) that was celebrated at the end of November or the beginning of December (Vladykin 1994:247-248). The trans-Kama Udmurts organized their autumn commemoration during the period between the autumn festivity *siz'yl dz'uon* and the winter solstice (Minniyakhmetova 2000:72). Besermians also commemorated the dead after the autumn feast *siz'yl prazn'ik* at the end of October or during the first days of November. Due to the use of products made from the new harvest, they called the commemoration *vil' dzhuk pominka* – "commemoration with the new porridge" (Popova 2004:144).

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the autumn commemoration of the deceased was in some places organized next to a winter crop field, where an old stallion or a rust-coloured cow was sacrificed. Food for the deceased was crumbled beneath a tree (Vasiliev 1906:202-205). A rooster or a chicken was also sacrificed to the dead in the fall, for the sake of the winter grain crop. The bird was killed right on the field, but the offering of the dumpling soup was carried out at home. The bones and feathers of the sacrificed bird were taken back onto the field (ibid.:261). According to P. Bogaievski, the deceased were commemorated in the forest, where the food and moonshine were dug into the ground and the closely related deceased were called by name (Bogaievski 1890:57).

Irregular Sacrifices

In addition to regular memorial rituals, offerings have also been taken to the dead when they appeared to someone in a dream or when the seer (*tuno*) believed the discontent of a deceased person to be the reason for a certain disease or hardship. Often in the first case, the dreamer would take a chicken egg to the roof of the root cellar or to some higher spot and promise to commemorate with food the person seen in the dream. The promised food was then immediately prepared and a regular commemoration was carried out (Holmberg 1914:36-37). In the latter case, the seer's instructions were followed.

When a batch of moonshine didn't turn out right, it was blamed on the dead in some places. I. Vasiliev states that in this case, a black chicken was sacrificed (Vasiliev 1906:275). The chicken is the only bird that was sacrificed especially to the deceased and the ill. According to Udmurts, the expression *berlan' tshabias'ke* "scrabbles backwards," explains why a chicken will not do for any other kind of offering.

The Horse's Wedding or Backwards Wedding

An interesting tradition was *val s'uan* "horse's wedding", *kulem murt s'uan* "the dead's wedding", or *mydlan s'uan* "backwards wedding", which involved an offering to a dead parent: the son had to sacrifice a horse for his father and the daughter a cow for her mother. This ceremony often took place many years after the parent's death and was carried out during the winter half of the ritual year. The idea of the sacrifice was to pay debts or give a dowry to the dead parent for his or her final union with the clan of dead ancestors.

Giving the Head and Feet

The custom of sacrificing a horse or a cow to one's deceased parents has slowly become the sacrificing of just the animal's head and feet and is called *iyrpid s'oton* "the giving of the head and feet" amongst Southern Udmurts, *viro s'oton* "giving of blood" amongst Northern Udmurts and *ly kel'an* "the sending off bones" in Bashkortostan Udmurt villages. In some villages (e.g. Karamas-Pel'ga) the proper time for the ritual was before Christmas (*ymus'ton*). In other places it was performed on the night of the 14th or 19th of January. All these dates coincide with the winter liminal period *vozhodyr*. But the villagers of Varklet-Bodia considered the days of the autumn commemoration to be the right time for *jyrpid s'oton,* and in Piseievo (Alnash region), it was carried out during the Russian Lent period.

P. Bogaievski wrote at the end of the nineteenth century: "There is a tradition according to which every Votiak woman who has married must sacrifice a cow's head and feet following the death of her parents. One Votiak justified carrying out a sacrifice with the explanation that a married person got a dowry from home and must now honour his/her parents for it" (Bogaievski 1890:47-48). Bogaievski continues:

> With this goal in mind, the woman rides to her previous home (in some places without her husband) and takes along an animal's head and feet. The sacrifice is carried out by an older man in the bride's previous home. Sometimes [...] this family's *böl'ak* ("relatives") gather to commemorate. During the night, all of the things brought along are placed in the basket and all of the people present fall to their knees and add either canvas, or money, or food to it, saying: "Do not suffer any needs, let there be no money problems." At midnight the basket is taken with a wagon, jingling with bells, to a nearby forest where it is then either hung in a tree, or, in some places, thrown on the ground. The whole way there, the following lines are sung: "Father, brother, uncle, mother (depending on the relation to the singer), protect us, who are left living, protect us from enemies, protect our herd from wild animals, grow the grain, do not harm us. We finished and finally brought you a cow." (Bogaievski 1890:56-57)

The basket with the animal bones symbolised the sacrificial animal and in some places it was handled in this manner: the bridle attached to the basket was held onto and the people repeated: "*Kute, kute! Tshizhas'kyny turtte, kute*!" "Hold on! The horse is trying to buck, hold on!" (Vladykin, Tshurakova 1986:114-115). In some places the women dressed as men and

the men as women and in some places a specific old woman was chosen as the "bride" when the ceremony was carried out in honour of a man (ibid.:115). Sometimes in addition to strips of cloth and coins, miniature items of clothing were added to the bones in the basket: a shirt, a dress and a head covering for a woman, and a shirt and pants for a man. In the village of Tylovyl-Pel'ga, such clothes were not sewn together, but simply cut out (ibid.:113). In many villages it was customary to wrestle on the spot where the bones were thrown away. Afterwards, on the way home, an older man drew a line with an axe behind each person and said that the person with such and such a name was turning back. Those at home were brought greetings from the deceased and were told that the living relatives did not surrender to the dead people (ibid.:116-118).

The "horse's wedding" or "giving of the head and feet" was a unique kind of performance in that the activities took place in two locations, as was the case in the two-ended wedding. The deceased person's home answered to one side, and the place where the bones of the sacrificial animal were taken to the other. Unlike a real wedding, wedding song melodies were used the wrong way at a "horse's wedding": *börys' gur*, "the melody of the bride's relatives," was sung at the ceremony dedicated to the man, yet when commemorating a woman, *s'uan gur,* "the melody of the groom's family," was sung (ibid.:122). And as was the case at weddings, a competition between the families of the bride and groom was also held at the "horse's wedding", which was marked by wrestling at the place where the bones were thrown away. The "bride" and the "groom" belonged to two different worlds, one's relatives were the living and the other's were the dead. From this point on, the deceased went permanently to live amongst the dead.

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Grim Threshold of Eternity: Death and Dying among the Slovene Minority in Rural Carinthia in Austria

In the book collection of published life-stories "*Tako smo živeli – Življenjske zgodbe koroških Slovencev*" ["That's How We Lived – Life-Stories of Carinthian Slovenes"] (1993–2004, 12 books) the narrators often referred to death and dying. 76 life-stories from linguistically the most endangered southern area of the Austrian part of Carinthia were used to illustrate the attitude of Carinthian Slovenes towards social and personal aspects of thanatology. Narrators were mostly born before the 1930s in a rural environment, their highest education was vocational school, they had different professions and were from different social groups (maidservants, tenant-farmers, agricultural labourers, farmers, doctors, engineers, mayors) and they lived in different circumstances (Ramšak 2003).

When they mentioned death, they were focused on: causes of death, such as war or fatal occupational injuries; near death experiences; coping with death, grief, mourning, expectation of and reconciliation with death; symbolic immortality, notions of the afterlife, death journey visions, and various descriptions of death.

Spiritual dimensions of death include unexplained premonitions, with pure mythological elements, suggesting solutions for the eternal uncertainty about death, religiously strengthened notions of various forms of afterlife existence, family and community attitudes toward death (which do not always confirm the stereotypical notions of traditional funeral rituals), vanishing Slovene epitaphs on gravestones and the energetic rejection of presenting unnecessary violent death on television.

Different methods and strategies for the understanding and acceptance of death are discussed: from simple rational logic to the sophisticated meditative ways of selflessness and detachment needed for acceptance of the unavoidable. Memories about death, compared to other turning points of life, are described rather sparingly, fleetingly, partially and with respect. Over the years the narrators have turned pain of loss into a bitter awareness of life's shortness and its uniqueness. Death, which was somewhere

nearby, was an unwanted intruder, but it no longer invoked fear – only reconciliation with life as it is.

Frequent encounters with death were not without consequences for people's attitudes to dying and death. Various experiences from the narrators' earliest years were accompanied by death, for instance women in childbirth, who sometimes did not receive satisfactory or timely medical assistance; some women had babies or children who died in the first months or years of their lives; death loomed before those who were careless at work, those who went to the army, those who were killed or died in the Nazi concentration camps. Of those who, for whatever reason, committed suicide, interviewees spoke weightily – many times they changed their chosen words, as if they were trying to express respect towards the intimate decisions of those who could no longer bear the world (or whom the world no longer tolerated).

The fear of death was chased away from people's minds in different ways. Parents made their children familiar with death by taking them to vigils to pray. Touching the deceased's feet in the coffin was supposed to make children overcome their fear of the unknown. There were also other forms of superstition, for instance the belief in the magic power of a headscarf wound around the deceased's head to prevent him/her from opening their mouth. Toothache was supposed to be alleviated by touching the sore tooth with a nail from a coffin; they believed that happiness in the family and at work could be ensured by a nail from a coffin, picked up in the cemetery and driven into the table at home (Zablatnik 1990:102).

Death presented itself with special warnings. Firm beliefs that no death occurs without warnings were still present in the nineteen-seventies. Death warnings were varied. The usual warnings were uncommon occurrences or phenomena experienced with the organs of sense: various sounds made by animals or objects, such as the owl's hooting cry in the yard, a dog howling, a door creaking, a clock ticking, an unexplained rumble or apparitions.

The majority considered death as the natural finale of life's journey, something in accordance with the original wishes of God and therefore to be accepted without scruples or any urgent desire for further explanation. When somebody died of natural causes, God had called him. The narrators believed and trusted in "God's plan", which showed the benevolence of God, although people did not understand how or why this should be.

On the other hand, despite their devotion to God's will, people beg and pray not to go down with a severe illness and not to be a burden to themselves or others. They pray that such a life would not last long and that they would not suffer at the end of their life. They say that a beautiful

death is a quick death. A quiet death is deserved by honest folk and those who can forgive the deficiencies of others before parting from them.

The principal demographic changes in Carinthia occurred as late as the mid 20th century and at that time relatively efficient health care was established and this extended life expectancy. More or less in the same period, the mortality rate of children, young people, and adults dropped because of improved hygiene and living conditions and better food; it was also the period when there were no more deaths resulting from the world wars. Though conditions improved slowly, they nevertheless managed to reach the most remote geographical areas, but it took much more time for them to affect people's mentality, especially those who were used to the meagre subsistence of the past. Among these people in particular, death due to poor living conditions was something normal and self-evident, and they rarely dared to imagine that their circumstances in life might change for the better. But awareness of how significant hygiene was and of how much more control one could have over living conditions produced a change in demographic trends in favour of a living and healthy population.

Nowadays we know that "infantile diarrhoea" is an indication, not only a disease. Bottle-fed babies contracted the disease. As long as they were breast-fed, they were usually healthy and grew well. But after they were weaned and fed with cow's milk, they developed diarrhoea and their body weight no longer increased. On the contrary, they lost weight and finally died, suffering from fits. Infantile diarrhoea occurred in babies, because their intestines were irritated by the fat of full-fat cow's milk. Many children died of infantile diarrhoea. This frequently happened because many mothers died during delivery and their babies were immediately fed with cow's milk. Epilepsy is a hereditary disease and was very rare in children. The severe fits of infantile diarrhoea reminded people of epilepsy. Among the many diseases, which had high death rates in the early 20th century, epilepsy was widespread, but the disease's pathology was often very different (Dolenc 1999:183, 184).

Living conditions had an important impact on dying and the attitude towards death. This is most clearly articulated in memories of the Spanish flu epidemic after the First World War and the fever diseases around 1923. Family members who died about the same time of tuberculosis, diphtheria, scarlet fever, or the consequences of the war were also mentioned. The flue epidemic broke out officially in March 1918 in a military base, Camp Funston, in Kansas, and reached the American forces near Bordeaux in France by April. In May, the lethal disease had infected eight million Spaniards, whence the name "Spanish flu". The disease was finally checked in the

spring of 1919, after the virus had infected a fifth of the world population. The Spanish flu caused the death of 40 million people, the highest death toll of any epidemic.

These immediate contacts with death from childhood onwards, when those who survived witnessed the deaths of their kin or people from their immediate environment, left their mark on the attitude of the peasant population towards death in the first half of the 20th century.

Reflections about the inevitability of leaving this world and the possibility of life after death often waver between suppliant negotiations with God and conscious resignation to death as an unavoidable element of life. The dialogue with God occurs in the form of pleas for help and patience in the face of the "*last trial*" or for the departure to eternal life. Eternal life is referred to as the "*better home*", "*the great divide*", and the "*grim threshold of eternity*". In eternity they hope to meet their parents, friends, and acquaintances. It is as if they are not only haunted by the sudden disruption of their human connections, but also by the question, whether death finally terminates their life. In the life-stories, in all these cases, images of the other world are involved that do not instil fear, but rather hope for a new quality of existence, which people are to earn by being true believers in this life. Eternity is not just another place to them; they also refer to it as a condition, in which they are closest to God. Eternity was seen as a perfection that cannot be achieved in this world. Living an honest and devoted life makes the transition to the goal of eternal life possible. Life's light is thought to shine in eternity too, and here the narrators compare eternity with nature and the sun. They hope for such a light after death that will enable them to look into eternity. Life's light in this world will be extinguished by death, but after death another, "eternal" light will shine. Death itself will make it impossible to look back to this world, just as the living cannot look into eternity.

There were frequent endeavours of the dying to make peace with their kin and other people, if they had involuntarily offended or neglected them, or made them suffer. Expressing this need often alleviated dying, and was also important to the relatives and their later mourning. A person, who, in the face of death, regrets the evil he committed and the good he failed to do, begs God for mercy, forgiveness, and company on his last journey. This lessens his fear, because his past deeds may not be inwardly connected with God. Reconciliation can take place on several levels: it may be in one's intimate thoughts, written down, or pronounced in the presence of the offended, if they are still alive, but it can also be performed by the priest as one of the sacraments. Reconciliation before death is in principle

an essential need and even the dying person's enemies will come to see him, because his death has to be alleviated by forgiveness. Otherwise, his soul will not find peace (Zablatnik 1990:98).

The death of a loved person, even if expected, was always a great shock. In addition to the stress experienced upon the disruption of the relationship with the loved person, the death of someone's wife, husband, fiancée, child or parent often sets them on a new path in life. In these liminal situations the unrest caused by the loss reveals itself as the need to do something, for instance leave one's native village, change one's job, turn mourning into verses, or search for a new goal which will replace the lost person. In mothers, this may be the wish to give birth to another child or pay more attention to the living ones. This unrest is at the same time a wish to re-establish the initial relations with people, relations that were destroyed by their death, but it is also a form of resistance to the changes required by the new circumstances.

Following the death of their partners, young women thought the worst problem would be the financial difficulties they had to cope with. These difficulties were the most frequently mentioned in their life-stories, in addition to the burden they had to take on in caring for and raising children by themselves. Older narrators were most affected by loneliness after the death of their partners, and they were also aware of the changes in their environment, especially if the taboo of death was extended to the mourners, that is, if they treated them in an overly-cautious way, in unusual ways, or by withdrawing from them. Such behaviour only adds to the feeling of loneliness. The fragments about death show that the paramount question involves the meaning of life, sometimes accompanied by doubt in God or His justice.

Dying and death were taboos and should not be mentioned. However, the process of mourning was not as private in the past as it is today. The death of a relative caused a family to feel reduced and the reaction to this reduction was shown in the ritual of gathering. The common distress had the same effects as common happiness, for instance because of a newborn baby or a wedding; it strengthened the feeling of collective belonging. This is particularly evident in the stories about praying and sprinkling holy water on the deceased, or about the vigil at the home of the deceased, and in the preparations for the funeral meal.

In cases of death, the family network and neighbourly assistance were well developed, and were aimed at relieving the mourning family. The narrators also recalled individual cases where sorrow was faked, or where the deceased was slandered during the vigil, although its purpose is to pray for

the dead individual. These were cases when the deceased had a truly wicked character, was generally unpopular, or even hated. Here, the techniques of mourning remained unchanged, and the adopted body language of mourning was maintained, until alcohol took over. It was not unusual to hear vicious denouncements of the deceased's sinful life, and disrespect might even be shown to the dead body.

In such cases, where the people at the vigil did not limit themselves to devoted prayers, it would have been better for the deceased to rest in the funeral chapel, not at home. Eventually, the custom of having the deceased resting at home overnight was abandoned. The reasons for that are sometimes attributed to the fact that the family simply doesn't want to have anything to do with the corpse. As funeral chapels spread, many funeral customs and traditions related to death, previously common in traditional Carinthian peasant society, disappeared.

In rural Carinthian society death represented an important social event – not only the end of an individuals' life-cycle. It was therefore quite often photographed. Up until 1970, when mortuaries were built alongside the village cemeteries, the most common motifs on photographs are of the deceased lying in the coffin at home and the funeral procession. It is possible to see a large number of photographs of the deceased and the funerals in many home archives dating to this period. Today, there is a shared opinion that the public showing of the deceased in an open coffin is no longer appropriate.

Also of interest in this context are Slovene epitaphs on tombstones. Until the First World War epitaphs showed considerable tolerance towards the Slovene people and were sometimes even bilingual. Before the Second World War that changed too, completely Slovene names were written in German or even in German with Gothic characters. Under Nazism Slovene inscriptions were forbidden. Today, there are fewer and fewer Slovene epitaphs to be found in cemeteries and Slovene verses are an even bigger rarity. Old inscriptions are fading and are hardly visible; some are quite illegible because nobody takes care of them. On new tombstones most often only the names of the deceased are written and their years of birth and death, but there are very few Slovene rhymes. This is caused by a great fear that any Slovene word or even Slovene letter might betray one's concealed nationality (Feinig 1997:7–8). Keeping one's Slovene identity post mortem is being slowly transformed by Germanization tendencies, reaching a peak in the funeral ceremony which, due to the lack of bilingual Catholic priests in Carinthia is most often conducted in German. Monuments, erected in commemoration of the deceased, are the last material

witnesses of the Slovene minority in Carinthia and also witnesses of how attention has shifted from the private to the public domain. The dying of Slovenes in Carinthia is no longer only a private affair but is, above all, something for the political domain.

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Comforter-Trees or Gifts for Santa Claus: Toddlers' Rites of Passage

Two years ago we received a gift of eight photographs at the Nordiska museet archive.[1] The pictures showed a tree, from Dalby in Skåne, hung with comforters[2] in different models and colours. It was a comforter-tree – a rather new custom in which a tree is used to make it easier for toddlers to stop using comforters.

I was not unfamiliar with customs making the transitional period easier for children who are about to give up comforters, but I hadn't really thought about it as a kind of ritual until I saw these photos. I now consider it a *rite de passage*. The child goes from being a toddler to being a "big" boy or girl, at least, I think, in the child's own view, when the comforter is given up. I started to search for information about different kinds of variants and I found a, for me, new world of interesting folklore and ethnological phenomena.

The twentieth century is, in contexts like this one, often referred to as the children's century. The conception of childhood and the development of child psychology as well as the social and economic changes have made the life of children today very different from the one experienced in a peasant society.

Today it is an important step for many children to give up the comforter. Most parents nowadays prefer not to force the change on the child but try to involve the child in the decision, which means that the child must make the *choice* to quit using something that is associated with comfort and safety. This is a big decision for a small child. To make it easier the parents sometimes create a ritual for the child. These rituals can look a bit different but they have many common features.

Two Kinds of Rituals

These rituals are interesting simply as phenomena but I also find them interesting because many of them concern both modern folklore and the way in which we today view the folklore of the peasant society today.

In the material that I have studied there are two slightly different kinds of ritual, and, of course, there might be more that I have not yet been in contact with.

To hang the comforters in a tree is the first kind. The second one is harder to describe briefly, but the common theme in the rituals is that the child *gives away* his or her comforter to someone or something. These two forms of ritual, however, as you will see, are not entirely separate from each other.

Comforter-Trees

Trees have traditionally been an essential theme in mythology and folklore, and they have also been used in many rituals. The forms change with time and social context but the trees are still there. In myth we have the prehistoric belief in the world tree – in Norse tradition the ash Yggdrasil. Cultic activity in Norse tradition is believed to have taken place in groves. The most well-known example of this from Sweden is the account Adam of Bremen gives of the animals and humans that were hanged on trees as sacrifices in Old Uppsala. In later peasant societies trees have been used in rituals intended to cure illnesses, tooth-ache and carbuncles. Farms often had a special tree near the main house that was believed to be bound up with the farm's luck and welfare (Tillhagen 1958, Schön 2000). Trees were, and still are, used at festivals – in wintertime we bring a fir tree indoors and decorate it to celebrate the holiday; in summer green leaves are used as decorations.

Basically the ritual with the comforter tree is simple. The child and the parents go to this special tree where the child hangs the comforter on one of the branches. Sometimes the children also hang photos of themselves and/or little letters along with the comforters.

The locations of the comforter-trees are different. Some are outdoors, often on a central spot in the community, and others are indoors. Most seem to be in public places, and these are mainly used by families, but I also found an example on the Internet of comforter-trees in day nurseries.

I think that one of the important things is that the child sees that the tree already has comforters hanging among the branches. This shows that many children before him or her have hung their comforters there and that makes them part of a special context.

Comforters as Gifts to the Young of Animals/Birds

The central component in the other kind of comforter ritual is, as I mentioned before, to give them away to someone with more need of them. Animal youngsters are particularly popular in these rituals.

One of the earliest examples of comforter rituals that I have encountered is the giving of comforters to the kittens in Skansen – Sweden's old-

est and largest open-air museum. In Little-Skansen children are allowed to come close to, and pet, animals like goats, rabbits, hamsters and kittens. The kittens are taken care of at Little Skansen because they are parentless or have been abandoned by humans. They have also come to play an important role in the rituals of the comforter.

According to Kerstin Johansson, who has worked at Skansen's Zoological Department for more than thirty years, this started in the early seventies when a new yard for the kittens was built. The children who stood outside the fence and looked at the kittens sometimes dropped their comforters into the kittens' yard. The parents didn't want the children to use the comforters after that, which of course often caused a lot of tears over the lost comforters. To make the children feel better, the animal keepers began to tell them that the kittens would use their lost comforters. The children felt good knowing that their lost comforters would give comfort to kittens with no parents.

The comforters that were dropped into the yard were often left there for a while – they evoked the children's interest in the place. When other children asked why there were comforters in the yard, the staff told them that they were gifts from children to the kittens.

The animal keepers began to collect the lost comforters and made toys of them for the kittens to play with. The children found this very amusing to look at. After a time the staff noticed that children came to Little Skansen with the *intention* of giving their comforters to the kittens. In other words: the custom has been created by children and parents – it was not an intentional invention by Skansen. Parcels with comforters for the kittens also started to arrive from different parts of the country; sometimes the only address is *To the Kittens* but by now the post offices know what that means. The staff saved all of the comforters and kept them so that they could be seen by the children. In the last couple of years they have begun to make garlands of the comforters and have hung them in a tree near the kittens' yard.[3]

To give comforters to the kittens in Skansen is the earliest example of a ritual to ease the giving up of comforters that I have found, but there could, of course, be other examples that I do not know of yet. For now my guess is that this custom started in the seventies.

It might be that other examples of giving comforters to young animals are inspired by the custom that has established itself in Skansen but it could also be possible that they have been created separately.

One mother gave the following example of a ritual like this, which was based on a gift to young birds. When her son was too old for his comforter, they hung it on their balcony in the morning so that the owl could borrow it for her owlets during the daytime. After a couple of weeks without the

comforter in the daytime, the owls got the comforter as a gift from the child and the comforter was gone for good the following evening.[4]

Comforters as Gifts to Imaginary Creatures

There is another type of ritual for giving away comforters that I find very interesting from a folklorist's point of view: to give the comforter to an imaginary being like, for example, Santa Claus. The child makes a Christmas gift of the comforter and gives it to Santa Claus when he arrives on Christmas Eve (in Sweden, Santa makes a personal visit on the eve of Christmas).[5] But the comforters can also be delivered personally to Santa's front door by the children – or at least to a fun establishment which claims to be Santa Claus's home.

There is such an establishment, called Santa World, in Dalarna. I contacted them and asked if they often got comforters sent to Santa Claus. This was the case and in his answer the director for Santa World told me that they had a comforter tree – not surprisingly a fir tree. The children bring their comforters when they visit Santa World and hang them on the tree. The tree is cleared once a year but all the comforters are saved and made into garlands, which decorate the ceiling. They often receive comforters by mail, not only at Christmas time but all the year round.[6] Santa World as a phenomenon is interesting because it reflects our conception of the folklore of the past and the use of this folklore in our time.

I will give another example of rituals that include beings that exist only in fiction: one mother said that when it was time for her twins to stop using comforters, they went into the wood, where they laid the comforters on a tree stump as a gift for the babies of the *rumpnissar*.[7] The *rumpnisse* – a creature that lives underground and is recognized by its large bottom – was the creation of the author Astrid Lindgren, who wrote books for children (Lindgren 1981).

In an Internet forum for parents the "comforter-fairy", who collects comforters, is sometimes mentioned.[8] She is, of course, a variant of the tooth-fairy, an innovation we in Sweden have recently got from English-speaking countries.

One of the reasons I find the rituals involving imaginary beings so fascinating is that they give evidence of the diversity in our conceptions of the world. Most grown-ups in modern societies consider themselves to have a rational and scientific view of the world. This is the accepted worldview and those who differ too obviously from the norm are considered strange and possibly a little crazy. But many grown-ups find it cute when children believe in fictitious beings. Books and movies and special establishments

for children like Santa's World often include magic, fairy-tale motifs and supernatural beings. Grown-ups want their children to have a little belief in magic or at least to get the impression that fantasies can come true and that there is hope of a magical world just around the corner.

In comforter rituals the children's vivid imaginations and playful beliefs are used to help them make a big decision.

Notes

[1] Acc.nr 2006/010, Nordiska Museets Arkiv, Stockholm. With thanks to Anders Follin, Sollentuna, who took the photos of the comforter-tree in Dalby, Skåne and was kind enough to give them to the Nordiska museets archive.

[2] "Comforter" is synonymous with "dummy" (colloquial English) and "pacifier" (Am. English).

[3] Kerstin Johansson at the Zoological Department of Skansen.

[4] Petra Lundqvist, e-mail message of 2nd May, 2007.

[5] Kristina Svensson, e-mail message of 28th April, 2007.

[6] Henrik Nordgren at Santa World, Dalarna, e-mail message of 24th April, 2007.

[7] Jeanette Larsson, e-mail message of 11th April, 2007.

[8] http://www.bukefalos.com/f/showthread.php?t=532008&page=2 and http://www.kanalen.org/foraldrar/forum/read.php?frame=1&f=39&i=67427&t=67412&PHPSESSID=cd96dec07700ed80a6d4522e76ca6860

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3.

The Ritual Year and Folk Religion

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Saint George's Day in Hungary and Europe

"The dividing line between the folklore of Eastern and Western Europe is whether springtime, year-beginning customs fall on the first of May or on the 24th of April, that is, on Saint George's Day," wrote Géza Róheim in 1925[1]. Yet Hungarian scholars have not paid much attention to St George's Day since then. The observance of this day seemed not spectacular enough for researchers of folk customs; therefore it disappeared from the category of calendar festivals and was categorised as a custom related to agricultural work. Overviews of folk beliefs have mechanically repeated the same well-known characteristic features of this day[2]:

- The first driving out of animals to pasture;
- The protection of animals;
- Collecting dew;
- Snakes and healing;
- Finding treasure;
- Contracts for grazing in the meadows;
- Contracts with wage labourers;
- Ablution at dawn / health magic;
- Divination of weather and crops;
- The beginning of some jobs (sowing melon seeds; sitting hens);
- Stimulation (weather, growth, fertility).

It is obvious from earlier sources, primarily from witch trials, that St George's Day may function as a temporal orientation, but it also can be a terminal day and in this way a festive day. Before this day, in other words, it may be permitted or forbidden to do something. The negative or positive interpretation of the period prior to St George's Day is not stable. The night of St George's Day is interpreted as a witchcraft night, as in the case of Walpurgis Night, which might make it a terminal day; that is, it is either permitted or forbidden to graze, to go out to the meadow, to search for herbs, and so on before St George's Day.

In Hungary it was a general custom that one of the contract-making days for those who were employed in agriculture was St George's Day.

This custom slowly came to a halt by the end of the 1930s under the influence of legal regulations. St George's Day is especially well known as the shepherds' contract-making day. Its parallels can be found throughout Europe.

Traditionally, the first driving out of animals to pasture takes place on St George's Day. A related custom is the public determination of the quantity of each sheep's milk in Kalotaszeg, in Romania. A peculiar feature of the custom is that in this case, the collective dinner for all the sheep farmers is held at the beginning rather than the end of the year's work, which is the predominant custom in other parts of Hungary. In Kalotaszeg, however, after completion of the practical tasks related to the measurement of sheep's milk, not only is a community feast held, but behavioural rules about conduct between genders are suspended. The purpose of this practice is not the representation of the inverse world, as in the case of Carnival, but, rather, fertility magic, in a very archaic sense. Also, as St George's Day is a terminal day, the idea of inception or beginning is related to it, which can be observed in the practice of "the first driving out of animals to the pasture."

Traditionally, the relationship during this time period between lizards or snakes and healing magic seems to be especially strong, since lizards and snakes cannot be seen in winter and reappear only in spring. Although the relationship between lizard and snake has not yet been clarified in Hungarian scholarship, it should be noted that in ancient Greece and Rome as well as in the Middle Ages, lizards were assigned to the category of snakes, and there was a relationship established between lizards and salamanders as well. In popular healing, the lizard is related to witches and magic on the one hand; on the other hand, it has healing power.

As is well known, among rural peasants the year is divided according to the agricultural jobs to be completed. Presumably, this idea can be detected in those customs that are assigned to certain points of the year in a practical or symbolic dimension beyond the sacred sphere. As far as St George's Day is concerned, its emphatic position in the calendar undoubtedly invests it with the meaning of the beginning of spring, although several elements of St George's Day recur in the Eastertide festive cycle, and, in a more or less marked way, these elements and meanings are reinforced in other periods of springtime.

Parallels in Hungarian Springtime Folk Customs

In the whole springtime period one can point out elements that are similar to the following beliefs and customs related to St George's Day:

- Divination of weather and crops;
- Ensuring beauty and health with washing (see Good Friday);
- Customs related to love and sexual customs (erection of maypole, jumping over fire on Midsummer Night);
- Using green branches for protection (see catkin on Palm Sunday);
- Collecting herbs (at Midsummer Night).

The relation between cow's milk, black magic and witches is fixed, regardless of the day or season. The history of this process might be revealed through an investigation of witch trials. Another interesting issue is the relationship between lizards, healing and festival times. It is a well-known archaic notion and symbol that has been maintained and transmitted via medical literature as well. Therefore, in this case, this influence must also be taken into consideration, providing reasons why a historical process and transmission can be expected that is different from the other cases.

In folk custom research, I find it useful to divide customs into their elements and to investigate these elements one by one, followed by a comparison, since the interpretation of customs, if related to only a single day, has an uncertain and vague outcome. As is well known, relations between beliefs, ritual actions and their contents have become loose, and the components of customs have been displaced, to apply Zoltán Ujváry's term. By now scholarship has moved away from that approach, which was favoured by eminent researchers between the two world wars, and according to which, one element, such as the custom of lighting fires, was identified and its occurrence throughout the year was scrutinized. This method was thoroughly utilized by cartographic researchers as well. Nowadays it seems more fruitful if the recurrence of the elements of a custom in a given period is investigated.

I consider this approach as an analytic method only, especially in those cases when the way of thinking behind the forms of customs is to be revealed. This approach is in compliance with the theories of Claude Lévi-Strauss, according to which customs are reiterated so that their content can be expressed in various forms and codes of manifestation. Customs related to St George's Day, as a sort of pre-figuration of Eastertide customs, express and mediate the meanings of the period such as purification, preparation and initiation.

European Parallels

The legend of St George is generally known throughout Christian Europe. From the time of the emergence of folkloristically interpretable

data – that is, from the end of the Middle Ages or later – it turns out that the interpretations of the dragon-slaying saint are different in popular and elite culture. The situation is especially peculiar in those countries and religions where the cult of the saint is integrated into the ideology of the state or the church, as in the cases of England, Russia or the Eastern Orthodox Church. Let me refer here briefly to the pilgrimages, village feasts and fairs held on St George's Day, as well as the processions in which the fight between St George and the dragon is represented.

St George became the patron saint of horse-riders and then of horses through the mediation of the medieval culture of knights and chivalry, primarily in popular piety. Horse-riding on St George's Day in German-speaking areas and even in Estonia can be related to this phenomenon. Riding round a village, even if in a Catholic/Christian guise, retained some features of the magical protective function. In German Protestant areas, riding round a village survived as a form of horse racing. Riding or racing as a springtime custom, perhaps as a form of lads' initiation, also spread over a large area. In Hungary it is known as a form of electing a king for Pentecost. Contracts with wage workers, already mentioned, also are related to the seasonal character of agricultural work and the beginning of the year. Such practices are frequent elsewhere in Europe, too, for instance in Estonia and in Finland.

The interpretation of this demarcation/terminal day, according to which before St George's Day nothing grows from the soil, and after St George's Day everything grows, is widely spread in Europe. This is why the magical power of the herbs and plants collected or animals found before St George's Day is emphasized. The assertion of these customs is illustrated by the practice of children/youth inviting the sun with songs. In eastern and northern Europe, St George's Day is also the day of the first driving out of animals to pasture and the protection of the animals. Springtime visiting of fields belongs to the idea of renewal through purifying the paths and wells. These customs are often realised in the Eastertide festive cycle. Love magic on St George's Day may also occur, as in Slovakia. It requires further investigation to determine why and how money or treasure – that is, luck – is related to the traditions of St George's Day. In Hungarian folk belief, on this day flames can be seen on the ground in the place where treasure is buried. In German-speaking areas it is a belief that on St George's Day purses should be cleansed. In east-central Europe during the Thirty Years' War (in the 17th century), the so-called St George's coin was worn by soldiers as an amulet. Perhaps these customs are not so different as they may appear.

The so-called *Jahresfeuer* customs frequently occur anytime between Christmas and Midsummer, but scarcely ever during the rest of the year.

Fire-lighting on St George's Day belongs to the set of springtime fires, and of its meanings, both concrete and abstract, clarification/purification is the most important. International scholars have been especially interested in a custom when a male figure is covered with green branches and then is poured down with water on Saint George's Day. This figure covered with green branches may occur on the first of May, on Ascension Day and at Whitsuntide, too. The custom is variously termed in academic literature *Zelenij Juraj*, *dodola*, *Grüner Georg*, and *Wasservogelsingen*.

In 1936 P. Geiger classified ablutions on Good Friday and the general use of water in springtime customs as rain magic. It is obvious that this interpretation is much more legitimate in areas that suffer from drought. Yet, as water is essential for life, its symbolic meaning and use in various religions adds up to this: if water appears in any custom, at any time and any place, it reinforces the meaning of the custom. The sacredness inherent in the substance itself may be a common feature in springtime customs, such as collecting dew and magical ablution to acquire beauty as well, regardless of the date of the practice. In the eastern part of Europe (and not only among Russians), St George is a saint of protection against wolves. Such interpretations suggest the survival of pre-Christian totemistic ideas in this relation.

Similarities and Differences

From a comparative point of view, it turns out that the beliefs and customs related to Saint George's Day in Hungary are multiple, yet, despite their diversity, these are not strongly marked or emphatic forms. By this I mean that the message that is manifested in discrete customs in other parts of Europe is in Hungary expressed as a sort of dim reflection and is split into many parts. The character of this feast as a day that separates various periods is perceivable. The purification aspect is hardly manifested, since water and ablution only sparsely occur. The belief that it is forbidden to air bed linen before Saint George's Day can be interpreted as the beginning of purification only with some effort. Fire hardly emerges in Hungarian customs of this period. The area where the custom of the first fire lighting in springtime emerges is a peripheral region. Data referring to abundance, fertility and sexuality are also sporadic.

Marked, emphatic and generally spread phenomena are (regardless of the date of data collection): collection of dew, the interconnection between milk and witchcraft, healing with lizards, treasure finding or the indication of the place of treasure, and some form of finding luck. In international material, one can rarely encounter this latter phenomenon.

Notes

[1] The topic of St George's Day has been widely studied; see selected bibliography of the most important or most recent items.

[2] A custom of St George's Day is known in some villages near the river Garam (i.e., river Hron in Slovakian), which is similar to the judgment customs of Carnival, since the lads make a fire in the middle of the village and cry out the shortcomings and sins of the local women.

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Saint Savva in the Serbian Ritual Year

St Savva was born in 1175 in Serbia and died in 1235 in Bulgaria (Tyrnovo). He was the son of Nemanja, king of Serbia, and his first name was Rastko Nemanich. He became a monk in about 1190 in Athos in Greece (*Agion Oros* – Saint Mountain) and from 1219 became famous as the first Serbian archbishop. In the XIII century Savva and his father became known as protectors of the Serbian people and the Serbian church.[1] Savva performed miracles when he was alive, and many extraordinary events were attributed to his appearance after death. The day of Saint Savva is celebrated on 14/27 of January because this was the day when people heard about his death. The Church made him a saint and his incorruptible body was brought from Bulgaria to the cloister in Mileshevo in Serbia, where many sick people visited his grave in the hope of regaining their health. People believed that he was still alive in the same way as they believed that St Ilia and the Archangel Mikhail were still alive. His relics were burned by Turkish conquerors in 1595. According to Serbian tradition, at that very time an eclipse of the sun occurred (Kulishich, Petrovich, Pantelich:403). In medieval Serbia the image of St Savva was a symbol of Serbian unity, but later some modifications of his image into that of 'bad' or 'angry' saint crept in. These are considered to be the result of people returning to their earlier, pre-Christian religious perception of the world (Popovich 2006:118).

St Savva appears to have had a high public profile: more than 40 churches are dedicated to him, a great number of legends and epic songs were composed about him and his travels all over the country. There are many real places in Serbia that are named after St Savva: places where Savva may have stopped and had a rest: Serb. *Pochivala Svetog Save* 'Stands of St Savva', Serb. *Stolica Svetog Save* or *Savina stolica* 'Chair of St Savva', Serb. *Trpeza Svetog Save* or *Savina trpeza* 'Table of St Savva'. The toponyms 'chair', 'table' mark mainly stones and rocks. The sacral attributes of St Savva are chains and a walking stick (or healing crosier).

St Savva, so it is believed, took part in the Creation, and in this activity his walking stick was of particular significance: by its use Savva uncovered water in stones and in the ground, moved rocks, turned towns into lakes and men – into animals. By means of his stick St Savva saved people

from the devil, by driving him away. The origin of such animals as the bear, the wolf, the squirrel and cat as well as of some insects is ascribed to St Savva. Many water-sources are named after St Savva: *Savina voda*, *Savina chesma* 'water, well of St Savva'. These springs are supposed to be curative. Conversely, in some regions (for example, in Hercegovina) it is thought that Saint Savva drained many springs and rivers by a touch of his magic stick (Kulishich, Petrovich, Pantelich:401, 403).

A great number of scientific works are devoted to St Savva and his role in history and legends. The most famous are by V. Chajkanovich, V. Chorovich, S. Dimitrijevich, Lj. Radenkovich and B. Jovanovich among others. There exists an opinion that the image of St Savva adopted the features of an ancient Serbian supreme deity. The fact is that St Savva in many legends and mythological tales is represented as an **old traveler** or **a beggar** who puts places and events in order, brings prosperity to diligent and clever people and punishes lazy and stupid ones. He teaches people how to plough and dig, how to make windows in houses, how to obtain fire and also how to master various handicrafts. Through him women acquire knowledge of weaving and knitting, baking bread, cooking milk products, blacksmiths acquire knowledge of forging iron, wine-growers are taught by him how to plant vines and make wine. These functions of a traveling deity are known in many Mediterranean countries, but as a rule, the traveling deity is God or angels or other saints. Only in the West-Serbian, South-Serbian, Montenegro, Bosnian and Hercegovian regions is Saint Savva the main acting character (Radenkovich 2001: 89, 91-95). For example, according to my own notes in one village of "pomaks" (muslim Bulgarian people) in the Rhodopes (Southern Bulgaria), the traveling deity, envisaged as a white-bearded old man, who teaches people to plough and sow is the "good fairy" or angel, sent by God to help people. He is called *evlie* (Plotnikova, Uzeneva, 2002:44).

When traveling all over the world, St Savva performed miracles, returning the sight of a blind man, giving health to invalids, reviving the dead. But during his travels he would also curse all who argued with him, and his curses always came true. For instance, according to one legend, St Savva asked a man mowing hay to give him some hay for his horse, but the man answered that he had no hay, so Savva cursed him and turned him to stone. People say one can still see the stone in the form of a haystack in the village of Biljanovats, not far from Studenitsa; it is believed that the stone has curative properties (Kulishich, Petrovich, Pantelich:342).

Almost all the peculiarities of a mythological character that are ascribed to St Savva and that have some historical relevance are reflected in

Serbian customs during the ritual year. St Savva's day (14/27.01) is celebrated as the major **family holiday** by many people in Serbia (famous in Serbian as *Slava*, *Krsno ime*). Before the Second World War, this day was celebrated as a school holiday (Serb. *Shkolska slava*) all over the country. This is connected with the instructive and educational functions of St Savva, both in real history and especially in folk legends. Nowadays, this tradition has been revived in schools. Teachers tell pupils about Saint Savva's role in history and read them legends and there is usually a small party with refreshments on this day in schools.

Before the Second World War, St Savva's day contained many features of rural celebration. On this day every year a 'master of celebrations' was chosen (or sometimes two hosts – Serb. *kolachar, kolachari*). Among his duties was the preparation of a large loaf of ritual bread and a dish named *kolivo*, the making of domestic candles, incense, wine and rakija. Since St Savva, according to folk tradition, taught Serbs various kinds of knowledge and trades, craftsmen respect him as their patron and protector. So, in South Serbia shoemakers, furriers and many others craftsmen celebrated this day (Serb. *Esnafska slava*) (Nedeljkovich 1990:202).

The day when St Savva's relics were burnt (27.04/10.05) is named *Savine verige* ('chains of St Savva'), and is celebrated as the day when one makes a vow to carry out some act (Serb. *Zavetina*). Very often the whole village takes part in the celebration.[2] In Serbian villages in Kosovo, however, the day named *Verige svetog Petra* as indicated in the Christian calendar for that day. Chains play an important role in all the rituals for this day: they are used for cooking a meal on an open fire or for fastening dogs in a farmstead. Parents hang these chains around children's necks in order to make them strong and healthy (Vukanovich 1986:380).

The fact of such substitutions of the celebration of other Saints in winter by "the day of St Savva" is the result of widespread legends and myths about St Savva as a **patron of wolves**. This is why winter days, when wolves are very dangerous, are celebrated as the days of St Savva. St Savva is believed to be a leader of wolves: in Serbian tradition Savva turned his dogs into wolves (or his dogs turned into wolves after Savva became a saint). Therefore, all wolves always submit to Saint Savva; they follow him everywhere just as if they are his dogs. According to legend, every year on his special day Saint Savva (*Savindan* – 14/27.01) would climb up a tall pear-tree and call together all the wolves in the world in order to feed them and to give orders about the sheep-folds the wolves would visit during the course of the year (Serbia, Hercegovina). Before St Savva's day a seven-day fast (named by Serbs *Savica, Savin post,* in Mon-

tenegro – *Savina Nedelja*) is observed: eating the meat of domestic animals is forbidden in order to prevent them being devoured by wolves and other wild animals. Shepherds in particular observed this rule. During this period one must not use a knife, scissors, razor or shaving set; the hackles or combs used for combing flax fibres must be placed one on top of the other (so they look like the closed jaws of a wolf), and spindles (Serb. *vretena*) and yarn-windles (Serb. *motovila*) are not used so that wolves will not 'spin' or 'wind' around the village (Serbian verbs *vrtiti se, motati se*). It might be defined as some kind of magic protection from wolves with the help of the words. During the week before and the week after St Savva's day nothing may be painted red in order to avoid the shedding of blood by the devouring of sheep by wolves (Nedeljkovich 1990:201-202). In Serbian villages in Kosovo on the evening before St Savva's day chains over the fire-place were tied together in order to "tie" the mouth of the wolf symbolically. In the morning, the head of the family heated a stone, representing the mouth of a wolf, in a pot on the fire and then threw the hot stone far away from the house in order to make wolves keep their distance (Vukanovich 1986:380). In Central Serbia (Aleksinats's region) on St Savva's day a large loaf of bread is baked and a lighted candle is set in it in order to ensure the health of the cattle.

In some Serbian regions on St Savva's day hunting is forbidden. Hunting on that day is dangerous because St Savva can turn a hunter into a wolf for the whole year (Southern Banat). According to beliefs in Metohija, if someone meets a wolf in forest he must pronounce the name of Saint Savva and by this means he can avoid being killed by the wolf. Throughout Serbia it is believed that in the period from St Andrew's or St Nicholas' day until St Savva's day wolves are particularly dangerous. Therefore during this time women in Gruzha do not wind thread or weave and they keep the pair of combs (gills or hackles) used for combing flax and wool tight closed in order to stop the wolves from opening their jaws. In North-Eastern Serbia it is believed that on these days all other wild animals, and most of all bears, are especially dangerous (Homole).

Another of St Savva's attributes connected with the animal world is a cock. According to Serbian legends St Savva carries the cock in his traveling bag or it is placed there by others. Stones supposedly bearing St Savva's footprints may also reveal the imprint of a cock's foot. This attribute links St Savva to St Martin who is also a patron of wolves in Eastern Serbia. A black cock or a chicken is sacrificed to St Martin (or to his wolves) during "Martin's days" (serb. *Mratinci*) at the beginning of winter (11/24.11-18./1.12) (Plotnikova 2004:72-79, 348-358).

Some folk beliefs show St Savva as a spirit-master of clouds and of **weather**. When the sky is overcast, in some Serbian villages it is the custom to ask St Savva: «Sveti Savo, svoja goveda vrati iz nasheg sela» [St Sava, turn back your bulls (= clouds) from our village] (Kulishich, Petrovich, Pantelich:403). Since St Savva's day falls within the period of the hardest winter frosts, the whole week before this day (*Savina nedel'a*) is named *Besne kobile* 'mad mares', a way of indicating bad weather (there is a South-Serbian proverb: *Savina nedel'a, besna kobila*). One folk song contains the theme of how various functions were distributed among all the saints. According to this song St Savva chose to have authority over frost and ice. So, when St Savva is angry he punishes people by frost and hoar-frost on the fruit-trees and plants. In legends, St Savva summons up hail in the castle of the king of Budim in order to cool wine; by means of exorcism he stops a storm at the sea (just as God stops a storm in the lake). If on St Savva's day thunder is heard, Serbian people expect some great disturbance in their country because thunder is so unusual at this time of year.

So we can see that the whole period around St Savva's day and the day of the burning of his relics is linked with numerous ritual and magic actions which reveal various features of this historical figure as he appears in folk imagination.

Finally, it is necessary to mention that there is another celebration also named *Sava, Savica*. It is known not only in Serbian tradition but in all other Orthodox Christian traditions. It is the day of St Savva of Jerusalem (he lived in the VI century), celebrated on 5/18.12 (Russian *Savva*, Polesian *Sava, Savka, Savij, Savy, Savki,* Serbian *Savitsa, Sava Osvecheni,* Bulgarian *Sava*). He is not linked with the Serbian St Savva of this paper in any way although his day is also celebrated in winter. In the folk calendar this day is one of a sequence of three days which form an indivisible complex: St Varvara (4/17.12), St Savva (5/18.12), St Nikola (6/19.12). Rituals performed on this St Savva's day are a continuation of those carried out on St Varvara's day. At the same time, since they are performed on the eve of St Nikola's day, they may be regarded as an introduction to the rituals of the next day. For instance, the dish consisting of various gains and named in Serbian *varitsa* should be cooked on St Varvara's day but it is very often kept on St Savva's day in a central position on the table and eaten only on St Nikola's day. This has led to the proverb one can hear in many areas: «Vara vari, Sava ladi, a Nikola kusa» [Vara is cooking, Sava is cooling, Nikola is eating]. South Slavs celebrated the day of St Savva of Jerusalem for the health of the whole family: thus, for this purpose in North-Eastern Serbia on this day women gave the dish *varitsa* to their children and also a portion of it to cattle and poultry.

Notes

[1] There are many medieval biographies of St Savva. In one of them, dating to the end of the XIII century, written by the monk Theodosie, a great number of events are described where St Savva is presented as God's favourite person, almost on a spiritual level with the Apostles and Prophets.

[2] On this day all the people gather near some place which the whole village regards as sacred (a big tree or stone, or something similar), very often without their priest, and there they pray for the prosperity of the whole village. This prayer is pronounced by the oldest man who accompanies the prayer by thurification with a lighted candle (Kulishich, Petrovich, Pantelich:183).

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Rituals with Masks in the Republic of Macedonia with a Special Focus on the 'Twelve Days'

As a part of folk tradition, masks may be found in the cultures of all peoples throughout the world. The origin of masks, as ritual and magical objects, may be found in the distant past. It dates back to Paleolithic times, the earliest period in the existence of humans. Archeological evidence has suggested the existence of various types of zoomorphic masks in cave drawings.

Since these early times, and until the latest data recorded by folk culture, we have considered masks in various ways – as a powerful tool for fulfilling people's need to present themselves as something or someone else. Often the wearing of masks is done to mock someone, to transform oneself or to express one's own personality. In preserving its own rituals and cults each people has kept the mask and masking as part of its own distinct national cultural identity, but also as a part of the regional identity characteristic for the wider ethnographic space.

According to archive material and written sources originating from the middle of the last century, when it comes to customs involving masks on Macedonian territory and also in the Balkans generally, we arrive at data that inform us about the period when they were practiced. At the same time, the data describe the presence of masking as a part both of the calendar ritual cycle and of the rituals related to life cycle customs (Rusic, 1-7). Thus, masks and masked groups may be analyzed in two ways: According to the annual calendar or according to rituals related to life cycle events.

Ritual processions taking place at different times during the year can also be divided into two groups; on the one hand 'periodical' and on the other those organized for special occasions.

Periodical processions are processions of masked participants that take place during the annual calendar. They include types of masks from the past, from pre-Christian/pagan times as well as from early Christian times.

Masked processions also take place on special occasions when, according to the beliefs of the population, there is a need for ritual practice with a protective or initiation function. Thus, in certain areas of ethnic Macedonia, masked processions were active on Christmas Eve (06.01), *Pokladi* (Shrovetide), *Trimeri* (first three days of the Easter fast), the second and third day of Easter, on St George's day (06.05) and *Spasovdan* (the Ascension, 40 days after Easter), but were in addition part of ritual practice during village celebrations, weddings and the circumcision ritual – sunet. At times critical for the existence of the village community the population undertook activities that contain elements of ritual games involving the wearing of masks. Of this type, for example, was the ritual 'dodole' (a part of female rituality which included songs, dance, ritual splashing with water), performed during droughts, when it was believed that a concrete ritual and magical activity, such as homeopathic magic – 'like produces like' – would result in rain (Ristovski 1977:37-63; Frazer 1992:31, 99-100). Masking among Macedonians of Muslim faith is mainly a part of ritual practices relating to wedding customs and the circumcision of male children, called sunet. Masking for the purposes of protection in the frames of the wedding ritual is carried out by women with a special gift for this activity. They cover the face, forehead, eye-lashes and neck of the bride with a special whitening cream called 'live silver' (mercury). The women do this with great skill, so that the bride, after being covered in this way, loses her natural looks and cannot be recognized. According to popular belief, the demonic forces cannot identify her either and she becomes protected from their negative influence.

Both historical data and current religious rituals show that the Christian teaching has never been literally accepted among the Macedonians. The authorities had great problems eradicating pagan customs. The remains of this past cultural heritage are quite visible in rituals related to key events in an individual's life – birth, baptism, marriage, death and funeral. These are initiation rites or transitions from one life phase to another resulting in social, sociological and status re-identification of the individual both on a personal level and as regards his/her relationship to the community. The community, through the identity changes of its individual members, also experiences change, through a process of inevitable self-definition (Turner 1969:94, 96).

In the beliefs of Macedonians there are certain days which, according to folk traditional religion, although not according to official Christianity, are considered as especially important. These are the 12 days between Christmas (07.01) and Epiphany (19.01) – the day of the birth and the day of the baptism of Jesus Christ. According to folk legend, however, Jesus

was not baptized during this period and the demons did everything they could to prevent his baptism. For this reason the 12 days were popularly referred to as the "non-baptized days". There have been scientific attempts to explain this period through the time difference (12 days) between the solar and lunar year. However, in the frames of the ritual masked games characteristic of winter ritual practice, both the masks and those wearing them have preserved the archaic and formal relation to the old cults of nature and of the souls of the ancestors. But later, when the rituals were Christianized, the time dimension became re-dedicated to the solstice, to the new vegetation period and the awakening of nature. These 12 days, filled with many beliefs from the Pre-Christian period (Gavazzi 1988:216), are considered by the Macedonians, as indeed by many other nations (Zečević 1975:51-54), as especially dangerous. At this time, according to folk belief, many demonic creatures are active (fairies, 'karakondzuls', vampires, 'tolosums'), which can harm people, cattle and property in general. The whole period is accompanied by various interdictions with a protective aim (Mirchevska 2006). As a type of group protection system, men would organize themselves into masked processions that looked scary, creating noise in the belief that this would chase away the evil spirits and forces of darkness and would protect the community. Ritual games with masks are exclusively part of male rituality. It is widely known that in the frames of Macedonian patriarchal society, as well as in the wider Balkan region, women were included in ritual activities through the family, whereas participation in public events was reserved for the adult male population (Ortner 1983:168, 169). In different parts of Macedonia the masked men have different names: *vasilichari*, *surati*, *mechkari*, *dzamalari*, *kamilari*, *babari*, *eskari*. In each of the ethnic areas where they appear, masked rituals have their own specificities and local characteristics. Thus in some places the groups do not communicate verbally, while in others there is a unique dialogue between the participants (Konstantinov 1975:377).

In Vevchani (around 25 km north-west from Ohrid) today, during the festival of St Basil (13-14.01) there are masked rituals which have preserved the symbolism and semiology of their archaic origins (Mirchevska 1995:189, 191). Two groups of 'vasilichari' are formed: gornomaalski and dolnomaalski (from the lower and higher settlements of the village). The leaders of the groups are the 'bridegroom' and the 'bride'. They wear folk costumes and go round the village visiting all houses. The presence of the bride-groom and the bride has also been noted among other ethnic groups (Antonijević 1982:69). The basic symbolic function of the ritual structure is concerned with water. The ritual takes place at the village wells, early in

the morning (around 2 a.m.). The population goes to the wells and each representative of a family wears a small bouquet made of 'vasilicharki' (a dry thorny plant) (Radenković 1996:207-8) and basil (Čajkanović 1935:4-10), tied with a red ribbon (Radenković 1996:294), and carries some ritual bread. They take some of the blessed water and bring it home. The water symbolizes a universal set of properties: it is fons et origo, reservoir of all possible existences, it precedes all forms and serves as the basis of each creation (Elijade 2004:95). It is for this reason that contact with water sometimes involves the notion of regeneration, although the symbolism of water is as much concerned with death as with re-birth. This is the unique part of the celebration in which women participate, of course without wearing masks.

In Ovche Pole (Eastern Macedonia) and in the village of Begnishte (Tikvesh, Central Macedonia) during the same period we find the dzamaldzii, dzamalari. These ritual performers dressed in rags, had their faces blackened with coal, wore moustaches and beards made of hemp and wool, had big bells and cowbells around their waist, and carried big sticks (Bocev 1993:117). Around Skopje, the basic characters of these processions are the so-called 'sureti': the 'grandfather' dressed in rags with a blackened face plays the role of a ploughman; the 'grandmother' who carries a cradle with a cat inside; a bride mounted upon a masked donkey with no saddle, carrying a doll that represents an illegitimate child. The grandfather makes constant movements to symbolize plowing and sowing. According to popular belief, the grandfather should die at the end, and then his place is taken by the illegitimate child of the bride. This symbolic death and rising from the dead is a theme present in many parts of Macedonia. Besides these characters there are masks of a doctor, priest, devil, policeman, Gipsy, bear, wolf etc. (Zdravev 1975:370-371). The presence of music is an indispensable part of the masked processions, most often two pairs of drums and shawm, or pipes.

According to certain authors, the mask is a magical tool in folk rituals which helps the masked person to become liberated from his personality and to attain magical power in order to chase away the evil spirits and demons that harm people in the period when the Sun triumphs over winter (Kulišić, Petrović, Pantelić 1998:298). The masks are prepared in extreme secrecy. They can be zoomorphic, anthropomorphic and anthropo-zoomorphic, made of different materials: leather, fur, wood, metal, tree bark, all kinds of fabric, cork. Bells of different sizes are placed around the ankles, the hands and neck, creating much noise during movement. All of this has a protective function; the loud noise should chase away all evil forces. The

costumes are made by hand by the participant in the game. This involves skill, fantasy and an aesthetic sense.

There is another important factor when it comes to games with masking. This is the presence of erotic elements, mostly expressed through the cult of the phallus (Antonijević 1991:173, 174), but also through a staged sexual act between the grandmother and the grandfather. Erotic elements are present also in verbal communications, something that has been registered when it comes to the neighboring ethnic groups (Ibid.), but also to other more distant ethnic groups. The existing ethnographic materials on the ritual masked groups of Macedonians only mention the erotic elements briefly. The raw, often exhibitionistic humor, to be found in the frames of these rituals, is something that belonged outside established ethical and moral norms. Up until about the nineteen-sixties the collectors of ethnographic and folklore materials were not prepared by their education to accept this aspect of the rituals. Even when they recorded certain examples of Christmas, New-Year and wedding songs they autocensored themselves regarding these 'impudent' topics (Svetieva 1998:7).

The process of masking today is clearly a mixture of traditional and contemporary forms of expression. The magical aspect is also largely absent.

The masked processions that form part of the spring cycle have become a vehicle for amusement, they became of type of a social valve (Simonić 1997). Here, we can see influences from the *comedia del arte* model and from the Italian renaissance carnivals. However, these processions were also influenced by many stories originating in Central-European cultures. Such is the example of the Strumica carnival (South-Eastern Macedonia), which has a European, contemporary profile, with masks that reflect every-day life.

Today the mask has lost its cult and magical features and meaning and has become an instrument of fun: it has become an object of symbolic importance through which communication with the community becomes easier. Thus, masks no longer have their original meaning as instruments from the realm of ritual and religious practice, but have entered the realm of the profane. They have become an instrument of fun and artistic creation, and through their purpose and form have gained unlimited freedom to provoke, protect, seduce and bring joy to the people who wear them and the people who see them. The mask in this context can be treated as a socially accepted new identity with temporal importance, bearing in mind that it opens a free space for the one who wears it, so

that he can perform some activities that are considered prohibited, or immoral in 'regular time' and gain new rights and obligations.

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How Christmas Cribs Came to Sweden. Examples of the Mediation of Tradition from Germany

In the archives of the manor of Tagel in Mistelås Parish in south-west Småland there is a picture which shows Baron Wilhelm Rappe and his family in the drawing room on 3 January 1870. It was drawn by a friend of the house, August Quennersedt, later professor in Lund. The picture shows that Christmas trees were a part of manor-house culture at this time, but what is most interesting is the crib between the Christmas trees.

Before this, in a letter dated 27 December 1858, one of the Rappe daughters wrote: "We had a cheerful and ceremonious Christmas Eve when people gathered as usual between 6 and 7 in the drawing room when everything and everyone was in order. We first sang hymn 52 and then Daddy read a Christmas sermon, after which we sang yet another hymn and then Mathson said a short prayer. After that, while the people were still in, the candles were lit on the two big Christmas trees and those who wished went forward to look at the Bethlehem hut that always stands between the trees" (Helén 1977:68).

Even after the death of Baron Rappe, the tradition of gathering around the crib on Christmas Eve continued. The young Adelheid von Schmiterlöw – who now owned Tagel – writes in her diary on Christmas Eve 1893 that, after the Christmas dinner, "the estate employees with their wives and children came into the drawing room. Mummy read the Christmas meditation and played the hymns. She played such deep and full chords, but I could not possibly sing along. The tears kept welling forth, whether I looked at the lighted trees and the Bethlehem hut or at all the many small, clear children's eyes fixed on them, or thought about all that cannot be expressed or written down – just felt" (Helén 1977:156).

Adelheid von Schmiterlöw continued the tradition. In 2006, the 94-year-old Filip Hallernäs, who was first employed at Tagel in 1926, remembered that the Christmas crib "was in a kind of wooden box and the lid was opened by the Mistress". Work stopped at 12 noon on Christmas Eve. "Then everyone was invited to dip in the pot, you know, all the crofters. At 5 o'clock all the people on the estate gathered for coffee in the big drawing room, where

we were received by Adelheid von Schmiterlöw and Hanna Borrie. Lots of Lucia buns were served. After coffee, Adelheid von Schmiterlöw stood at the tiled stove and read from the Bible and then talked at the Christmas crib. Children were able to ask questions about the crib and Adelheid von Schmiterlöw answered."

The Christmas crib at Tagel is still brought out for the coffee to which the employees are invited every Christmas. It is made of a wooden frame covered with birch bark on the sides. It is 82 cm wide and 44 cm deep, and 72 cm high. The front of the crib is covered each Christmas with garlands of spruce, and green and white moss is placed on the bottom. The six surviving cardboard figures represent Mary and Joseph with the baby Jesus and three shepherds. We do not know exactly when it was installed at Tagel, but we know how it got there. As is evident from 300 letters preserved in the Tagel archives, Wilhelm Rappe was in close contact with Emelie Petersen, known as "Grandmother at Herrestad". They shared the same Christian piety, inspired by the Moravian Church of Herrnhut.

Wilhelm Rappe had received his crib figures from a German Fräulein Liborius, who stayed with Grandmother at Herrestad, as C. W. von Sydow says in an article about his childhood Christmases (von Sydow 1929:25). Emelie Petersen had met her in Hamburg in 1828, and in 1830 she came to Herrestad where she later married the estate foreman. Her younger brother, Theodor Liborius, born in 1809, was the closest childhood friend of Johann Heinrich Wichern, who founded the famous rescue home for boys, Das Raue Haus in Horn outside Hamburg in 1833 (Åberg 2005:117). For the very first Christmas here there was already a crib, made by one of the boys in the home. It was in these circles that Christmas cribs were brought out. Gustav Jahn, like the evangelistic nobility, played an important part in this. In 1858 Jahn founded a similar home at Züllchow outside Stettin, where he started the manufacture and sale of Christmas cribs (Nagy 2003:50).

In imitation of Tagel, Christmas cribs were spread among friends and relatives. Wilhelm Rappe's brother Carl at Drettinge in Dädesjö Parish also acquired a Christmas crib. It is still preserved at Drettinge, and along with the crib at Tagel it must be the oldest in Sweden.

C. W. von Sydow tells in an article from 1929 about his childhood home of Tranhult: "Then the Christmas trees were decorated. There were two of them, which reached the ceiling, and between them was placed a Christmas crib. In front of the crib stood two smaller Christmas trees, roughly a metre and a half tall. The trees were decorated with wax candles, with baskets and long streamers cut out of coloured paper, apples, sweets in coloured fringed paper, and biscuits shaped like animals. The crib was

also a Christmas custom that Mother had brought from her home [she was a Rappe from Tagel], where there was a little thatched stable with no front. Set up inside it were pictures painted in watercolours on cardboard, depicting the baby Jesus in the manger surrounded by the ox and the ass, Joseph and Mary and some shepherds. Our pictures had been painted by my mother's eldest sister. What we had, however, was not a thatched stable but a rock made of cardboard and partly covered with moss. On the front was a cave in which the figures were set. Behind the baby Jesus was a lighted candle, and a row of candles was also set up in front of the crib... Then came the longed-for moment when we were allowed to enter the drawing room. The Christmas trees and the branched candlesticks were then lit, and places were arranged for all those whom we had gone round to invite. After we had greeted the guests and admired the trees and the crib, a Christmas hymn was sung, after which Father read the Christmas gospel and a short meditation. Then we sang another hymn. Then came the coffee with buns and cakes..." (von Sydow 1929:25).

C. W. von Sydow's son, the actor Max von Sydow, mentions in a letter to me that for his first Christmas in 1929 he was given a crib from Tagel. It was made by Adelheid von Schmiterlöw's good friend, the artist Hanna Borrie. The crib is of the same type as the one at Tagel, and the figures are still set up in his home in Paris. Whereas a Christmas devotion was associated with the crib at Tagel and Tranhult, nowadays it seems to be set up like any other traditional Christmas decoration.

Neither Adelheid von Schmiterlöw nor her aunt use the word *julkrubba* or "Christmas crib". Instead they speak of *Betlehemshyddan* or "Bethlehem hut". This seems to be a direct translation of the German *Bethlehemhütte*, the word used at Das Raue Haus (Nagy 2003:47). Yet another Swedish term for the Christmas crib at this time was *julbord*, literally the "Christmas table" on which it was set up (Högrell 2001:96; Rehnberg 1995:52). As Bertil Rehnberg has shown, the clergymen's homes on the west coast of Sweden had close contacts with the German diaconal institutions. The German scholar Sigrid Nagy has shown the role these played for both the manufacture and the distribution of Christmas cribs. It was simple cribs with cardboard figures that were customary there. This type is considered to go back to Bohemia and Moravia, the origin of the Herrnhut movement. The figures were originally painted by hand, but the famous picture producers in Neuruppin north-west of Berlin, Gustav Kühn and Ohemigke & Riemschneider, hit on the idea of making crib pictures by chromolithography (Gockerell 2000:197 f.). Their cheap pictures were widely spread, not least in Scandinavia.

The Christmas crib at Tagel, like the one at Tranhult, was placed between two Christmas trees. This was evidently no coincidence. Sigrid Nagy writes: "Das Zusammengehören von Krippe und Christbaum dürfte im 19. Jahrhundert wesentlich verbreiteter gewesen sein als wir heute annehmen" ("It must have been much more common for crib and Christmas tree to go together in the nineteenth century than we assume today" (Nagy 2003:64)). It is thus not unlikely that the Christmas tree and the Christmas crib came together, at least to Tagel and the Rappe family.

Even if Fräulein Liborius must be reckoned as the first to bring Christmas cribs to Sweden from Germany, there are further examples of this. A statement recorded from a daughter of Bishop Ullman in Strängnäs runs: "We had a beautiful Christmas table which our parents acquired in the 1870s. It could not be obtained in Sweden, so they sent to Bielefeld in Germany for it. Count von Boden-Schwinkh, who set up a home for orphan boys, made these figures. Daddy used to arrange the Christmas table, which included wax angels from Germany and small houses of cardboard." The daughter of a senior master from the same town says: "Christmas figures could be found in one place only: the home of Bishop Ullman, where we went and stood reverently and looked at the glorious sight" (Bringéus 1965:7 f.). Ullman had studied theology at Erlangen in Germany and married a daughter of the lawyer Ludwig Pieverling (1793–1879). While there he had also obtained nourishment and guidance for his ecclesiastical-aesthetic interest and started to realize the significance of art for church work (Bexell 1988).

Christmas cribs in Swedish homes in the 1880s were likewise bought in Germany. Examples are a crib bought in 1883 by Dr Leonard Holmström at Hvilan Folk High School outside Lund, and one that originally belonged to the diaconal institution Barnhuset in Gothenburg (Schlyter 1972:12).

In church contexts the earliest find of a proper Christmas crib is at the Ersta diaconal institution in Stockholm. It was donated in 1906 by John and Antonia Borg, who had acquired it at the diaconal institution in Züllchow (Ahlfors 2004:19). From Ersta the idea of arranging Christmas cribs was spread by diaconal workers and priests. It is characteristic that the cribs set up by diaconal workers were initially placed in parochial halls, as at Ersta, and not in the church itself (Bringéus 1965:8).

It was not until a century after the first Christmas cribs were incorporated as a family tradition at Herrestad and Tagel that they were admitted to Swedish churches. The first one in a church was installed in the church at Hjorthagen in Stockholm by the assistant vicar August Lind in 1922. In this case the figures of polychrome stucco had been made and bought in France (Ahlfors 2004:23).

As I have shown in a previous article, church cribs were spread from the Stockholm area and from Malmö. In 1962 there were cribs in 9 per cent of the country's parishes, and 20 per cent in 1968 (Bringéus 1972:187). By 1995 that figure had risen to 88 per cent and in 2002 it was no less than 95 per cent (Gustafsson 2006:84). The former bishop, Lars Eckerdal, writes in his episcopal report to the diocesan synod in Gothenburg in 1994 that the Christmas Eve service has been complemented or replaced by a gathering at the crib, and his own explanation for the spread of the new service can be found in the actual form: "Even if there is not physical space for everyone around the crib, it is the visual centre for preaching which usually involves several people and more means of expression than purely verbal" (Eckerdal 1994).

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Naked Christmas: Art, Kitsch and Advertising in Sweden

Challenging the Traditional Representations of Christmas

Wandering through the city at Christmas the pedestrian meets a multitude of images showing various Christmas motifs. At first they appear to be the same old representations found each year, but on closer inspection there are also images that go against the common perception of what Christmas "ought" to look like. The representations are more than depictions of a traditional Christmas – the art, kitsch and advertising also challenge tradition.

Studying art, kitsch and advertising it can be hard to see where one area begins and the other leaves off; kitsch mocks what is generally considered good taste by borrowing motifs from Renaissance masters, pop art icons, and the religious and folkloristic fields. Advertisers hire art photographers, while simultaneously mimicking street art, to reach a broad public and sell their merchandise. Art challenges itself, by trying out both kitsch and pornography, to stretch boundaries and conquer new areas and materials. Where the exact lines between them run lies in the eye of the beholder, but it is here, in this borderland, that the taboo-breaking public art, kitsch, and advertising is to be found – perhaps emphasised by the celebration of Christmas, as one of our most idealised and tradition-bound feasts.

During Christmas artists and designers experiment with new materials, and in an innovative way they reinterpret Christmas. At an art gallery in the town of Söderfors, thirteen artists assemble for a group exhibit called *Ginger Art*, where portraits, sculptures, bowls and mobiles made of baked ginger snap cookie dough are put on display. In the lobby of a hotel in Stockholm well-known Swedish clothing designers present ideas for dressing the Christmas tree. One of them, Christer Lindarw, strips his tree of its branches and presents a *Christmas Pole* (i.e. a Christmas Maypole). Roland Hjort spray-paints his *Death Tree* with gold and decorates it with images of dead rock stars like Elvis (for angels), and black Christmas-tree balls. Even the scent of the trees is altered, as Pär Engsheden decorates his tree with white orchids, and Greger Hagelin decorates his tree with over fifty tree-shaped car fresheners – with the ironically chosen scent "Forest fresh".

Examples of intentional artistry is also displayed at construction sites. In Uppsala someone has welded a Christmas tree out of scaffolding, spray-painted it white, and decorated it with Christmas lights before putting it on display on a builders' hut. On a fence on the other side of the construction site a Christmas star of the same material offers an extra sense of Christmas spirit to builders and passers-by alike.

In a similar way the celebration of Christmas is expressed in private gardens, for house owners have begun to decorate their gardens as well as the interiors of their houses. Traditional Swedish Santas stand side by side with electrically lit snowmen made out of plastic and glowing reindeer and sleighs of American origin.

A Change in Taste

A common characteristic for many of the previously mentioned examples is that they are closely related to kitsch. In a new generation of artistically interested people, kitsch has found a new public who ironically mock good taste and welcome new interpretations. And the examples above are not the only ones. In window displays passers-by will find silver Christmas trees with pink Christmas tree balls, Gothic Christmas trees with black plastic branches and decorated with luminous tags in the shape of skulls, and Christmas trees of inflatable green plastic.

In shops selling knick-knacks an army of religious artefacts have been reinvented as jewellery, lamps, and time pieces. Previously mainly brought over from abroad as souvenirs, these religious artefacts have now been given new shapes and new status. For which true lover of kitsch can resist a Christmas-tree ball made out of hand-blown glass in the shape of a Madonna with child, or an electronically lit manger of genuine plastic?

Technical development contributes to the emergence of new kitsch, such as Advent candlesticks for the dashboard, drawing electricity from the car's cigarette lighter. A similar function can be found in the miniature Christmas trees found on office desks, drawing electricity from the computer's USB-port. Even cellular phones can be decorated with stickers and dangling jewellery shaped as snowmen or Santas. Furthermore Christmas-themed displays can be downloaded to the cell, along with ring tones of familiar Christmas music. Nowadays Christmas-related kitsch can even be privately imported from abroad: why not a global and multi-religious piece, a reclining Buddha to be used as an Advent candlestick?

Sexualising Christmas

In the midst of this reinterpretation I find a sexualisation of Christmas. Ever since Christmas 1990, advertisements of clothing firm Hennes &

Mauritz have raised eyebrows, and pulses, with their scantily clad fashion models. Each year these models signal the beginning of the Christmas season, and from the start the ad campaigns have been subject to attacks: ironical and critical comments left in marker pen on the large posters, stickers glued to the posters pointing out the dangers of the disrobed and skinny female ideal on display, logos of different feminist movements painted on the posters – some signed "Simone's Daughters", a reference to Simone de Beauvoir. Ad displays have also been vandalised and posters torn.

But not all attacks have been of a destructive kind; some protesters have used humour as their weapon of choice. An urban legend arose as tales of men driving off the road after seeing the posters of Anna Nicole Smith (1993 H&M model) were reported. In Umeå the lightly clad model was covered in a warming sweater nailed to the poster so she would not get cold in the winter storms. With a great deal of irony someone also copied the scrawling on the Hennes & Mauritz posters on an ad poster for butter, writing the words "Sick Ideals" on the image of a flat, brown, ginger-snap cookie in the shape of a lady.

Regardless of whether or not these attacks are interpreted as self-defence, civil disobedience, or simple acts of vandalism, the communications on the posters have been adopted by the advertisers. To signal youth and appeal to a new generation of customers, the advertisers have begun to use marker-pen writing, spray paint, and real clothes in their ads.

If allowed to deviate from the subject of Christmas for a moment, I would also like to share how the Anna Nicole Smith ad has been re-used for other purposes than selling wares. Various organisations have also mimicked the ads. A male construction worker struck the same pose as Anna Nicole Smith in a union campaign against the way foreign workers were used by the construction industry. The feminist organisation Women Without Borders ran an ad campaign where men struck poses from Hennes & Mauritz ads, this time to question the sexual roles of men and women, and to broaden the perception of beauty.

Paradoxical as it may sound, the Hennes & Mauritz model has worked as a stimulus in the debate about how women are portrayed and objectified in public, while feminist groups, who work to safeguard the female form, have actually been using the female body as their public notice board.

Returning to the subject of Christmas, the sexualisation of Christmas can also be found in other places, for example in the Christmas display at Carlings, a popular clothing store for teenagers, where the male and female mannequins are positioned in a very suggestive way. The scantily clad mannequins appear in other window displays during Christmas as well,

and the effect can sometimes be bizarre. Wearing nothing more than lingerie, and in a few cases high heels, the mannequins stand and sit in the windows, not unlike cleaned up versions of the women found in windows in the Red Light District in Amsterdam.

The Sexualisation of Christmas in Art

The use of underwear and underwear models in Christmas campaigns also provoke reactions from Swedish artists. Eva Högberg plays with the Hennes & Mauritz' Christmas ads from 1993 and 2002 by replacing the heads of the models Anna Nicole Smith and Claudia Shiffer with the head of a blonde poodle. In the midst of ongoing Christmas shopping, three high-school students attending an art programme in Uppsala make a statement against verdicts in rape trials, where women who were under the influence of alcohol or wearing sexy underwear are not considered to have been raped. By attaching warning notices to liquor bottles and string briefs they spread the message: "Use of these items entails liability to concede to any form of intercourse".

The sexualisation of Christmas in art can also be found as artists attack the impregnable position of Christmas by provocative interpretations of the well-established symbols of Christmas. Eva Högberg's exhibit also shows a Christmas tree made out of newspapers, decorated with male genitalia – the latter made from the pink pages of the sports section. For the Christmas exhibit at Sweden's main art school, a student displays a Christmas tree crowned with a gold-coloured baby Jesus, penetrated by the top of the Christmas tree and with a mouth resembling that of a inflatable plastic woman. This representation does not only go against the common symbols of Christmas, but is also part of the defusing of religion, where it is no longer off limits to make fun of religious motifs.

Folkloristic beings cannot escape the reinterpretation. At a traditional Christmas market in the town of Eskilstuna, ceramic artist Marita Palm displays male and female Santas wearing nothing more than their caps, and she is not alone. A mass-produced garden gnome – like a flasher dressed only in overcoat and cap – stands in a shop window by the side of a bare-breasted female gnome. In another shop window yet another bare-breasted female gnome stands alone among the lingerie. Because of the evolutionary connection between gnomes and the Swedish Santa, these garden gnomes are used as Christmas décor in Sweden.

The images of naked Santas also appear on the Internet, on e-cards and traditional Christmas cards, and are sent from one cellular phone to the other. In recent years a Swedish-Norwegian reality show in the form of an

Advent calendar has also been broadcast on television. The series is a parody, in which a Christmas goat, a Santa, and a Mrs Claus have been nominated. The competitors' bad manners and naked skin are shown in the same manner as in the real reality shows. This is provocative not only because of the nakedness but also because of the implication that Santas have sex just like anyone else, and so the private life of folkloristic beings is no longer off limits.

Some of the images have been seen before, but not to such a wide extent. The interchange between art, kitsch and advertising we now see is coloured by the society and time we live in. The representations of Christmas that are conveyed are part of the ongoing revitalisation of the Swedish Christmas celebration, where folkloristic beings and religious themes are used to mirror the sexualisation seen in daily life. What is commonly regarded as traditional, even holy, is provocatively presented as worldly. Religious symbols, that for thousands of years have been at the heart of artistic development, are here devalued to high tech kitsch, and like the models and mannequins of the fashion world, Santa too is disrobed down to the last garment.[1]

Note

[1] This article was inspired by the work and exhibits on the subject of taste of Eva Londos, First Curator at Jönköpings läns museum. A Swedish version, with illustrations, can be found in Charlotte Hagström, Marlene Hugoson, Annika Nordström (eds.) *Nu gör vi jul igen* [Making Christmas Again] (Gothenburg 2006).

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ULMA 39347 (documentation of Hennes & Mauritz' advertisements 2002-2006).

ULMA 39333-39338, 39179-39182, 39339-39346, 39348-39363 (documentation of Christmas 2003-2005).

Television:

Kanal 5 [Channel 5]

Julbocken, 2002 [The Christmas Goat, double connotation of 'the dirty old goat'].

Tomtar på loftet, 2003 [Santas on the Loft, double connotation of 'bats in the belfry'].

Vem vill be tomtens fru?, 2004, 2005 [Who wants to be Mrs Claus?].

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Green Christmas – Black Midsummer

To Tell the Weather after the Ritual Year

In the folklore collection at the Institute for Dialectology, Onomastics and Folklore Research in Gothenburg there is a great deal of information on all kinds of weather signs and predictions tied to different festival days and name days, some of which have survived up to the present whilst others have disappeared. This article represents my initial findings in a study which I intend to develop further. It is based on empirical studies, where I examine predictions and people's thoughts concerning weather in early folklore records in relation to people's thoughts of today in new records. I have used my own experiences of media speculations in my work as a folklore archivist, and also the experience of just overhearing everyday talk about the weather when people are queuing in the supermarket.

Among the index cards in the systematic catalogue at the archive one can find material on weather and weather signs under those headings as main titles, but also under different subtitles, for example, Farming, Christmas, Ascension Day, Midsummer, Easter and Lent and the Annunciation Day of the Virgin Mary. Then there is The Calendar, which is full of rhymes, proverbs, and sayings that people used as a tool to help them remember the right time to begin sowing and harvesting, the beginning and the ending of different seasons etc (Svensson 1945:126). For example, on the day of Anna (December 9), you were supposed to start brewing Christmas beer to get it ready in time for the holiday, and the rhyme for this is "Anna med kanna" [Anna with the can]. May 17, the day of Rebecca, was the day to sow the flax in western Sweden, but in the south of Sweden this was to take place on Carolina's day (May 20). The longer a woman's name was, the longer the flax would grow.

The Calendar index cards begin with an alphabetical order in general, from Alrik to Ursula, and then continues with Advent, All Saints' Day, Ambrosius, Anna, Anders, April, April Fool's Day, April signs, August, Bartholomew and so on – all the way to the connection between Urban and Beda. The prediction says that the three days between the 25th and the 27th

of May – Urban, Vilhelmina and Beda – will lead the summer. Many of the days in the old calendar that were used for predictions are the days of old saints, and even if those are removed from today's calendar, and replaced with more modern names, they have lived on in many people's minds for a long time. The predictions might not always come true, but they are a part of our oral history, and an important part of the Swedish cultural heritage (af Klintberg 1996:9).

I have chosen to present a small collection of weather signs connected to Christmas, Easter and Midsummer and also to show how important the Christmas weather was to predict the year generally. Weather is, and has always been, a very important phenomenon in people's lives. In the old peasant society it was common to use the festival days to predict the work days. Many of the old weather predictions are based on *Bondepraktikan* [The Farmers' Practice], a handbook for farmers, which was first published in Germany in 1508 and was translated into Swedish in 1666 (*Nationalencyklopedin* 1990:165). Here one could, for example, study how to predict what the weather would be like throughout the twelve months of the year based on the twelve Christmas days – from Christmas Day to Epiphany. The weather on Christmas Day showed what the weather would be like in January, the weather on Boxing Day showed what the weather would be like in February etc. Our old collections also refer to *Sibyllans hemligheter* [The Secrets of the Sibyll] and, according to this book, one should be able to predict what the weather would be like during the year to come based on the day of the week when Christmas Day fell. If Christmas Day fell on a Sunday, then there would be a good winter, a windy spring, a dry summer and a beautiful autumn. If it fell on a Monday, there would be a mediocre winter, a good spring, a summer with storms and bad weather, the autumn would be good with plenty of fruit, but bees and cattle would not be satisfied and many men would die. If it fell on a Tuesday, there would be a big storm, kings and many women would die and ships would be destroyed. If it fell on a Wednesday, there would be a hard winter, an evil spring and summer and a tough and trying autumn. If it fell on a Thursday, there would be a good winter, a windy spring, a good summer, great abundance and good peace. If Christmas Day fell on a Friday, there would be a variable winter, a good spring, a good summer and overall a satisfying year. And if it fell on a Saturday, then there would be a dreadful winter, a windy spring and all the fruit would ripen early, many old people would die and also the farmer's poultry would go hungry and live in peril (IFGH 76).

The fact that there has been a shift in the importance of the weather, and a change of emphasis from work day to festival day is not surprising

since most of the Swedish population no longer live in a peasant society. In Swedish contemporary society we rather tend to predict what kind of weather there will be for big festivities, and today The Farmers' Handbook and other methods of weather prediction are more likely to be simply quoted for fun and used by journalists in the run-up to Christmas, Midsummer or the summer holidays (cf. Eskeröd 1971).

One example of this is the rhyme that is most commonly known throughout the whole of Sweden, and which still is very much alive. This is the one about Anders [St Andrew's Day], November 30: "Anders braskar, julen slaskar" which says that "If Anders is frozen, then Christmas will be rainy and slushy" and vice versa. In the old folklore records I have found variations on this rhyme. One of those is about Mårten [St Martin's Day], November 11. "Då Mårten gås dansar på isen, dansar julabocken i skiten" [When Mårtens goose on the ice is dancing, then the Christmas goat in the mud is dancing] (IFGH 2376:38). Around Christmas time, the newspapers are full of predictions about the weather and they all talk of the same thing – will there be a white Christmas or is it just, as Bing Crosby sings, something that we have to dream about?

Another prediction of which there are many variations is the one that says that if Christmas is green, then there will be snow for Easter: "Julesommar och fåglasång, ger påskavinter och slädagång" [Christmas summer and birds singing gives Easter winter and sleigh riding] (IFGH 76), "Jule tö och påske snö ruttet hö och fruset brö" [Christmas thaw and Easter snow, rotten hay and frozen bread] (IFGH 2276), and "En vit kyrkogård om jul, gör en svart på påsk" [A white churchyard at Christmas will make a black one at Easter] (IFGH 4037:34). Then there are the sayings that go from Christmas or Easter to Midsummer, like the "Green Christmas – black Midsummer" saying (IFGH 2485:12) that I have used in the title of my paper: "Den vind, som blåser påskdan om morron, den blåser sedan ända till midsommar" [The wind that blows on Easter Day morning will blow until Midsummer] (VFF 1827:79), "Så många tödagar före jul – lika många regndagar före midsommar" [As many days as it thawed before Christmas, so many days will it rain before Midsummer] (IFGH 1478:46) or "Så djupt oxen trampar i dyn om jul, så djupt går torken vid midsommar" [As deep as the ox treads in the mud at Christmas, so deep goes the dryness at Midsummer] (IFGH 2481:17).

Weather is an always current and common frame of reference. When you talk to someone that you do not know well – a neighbour, a colleague, a relative or maybe just a stranger in the supermarket – it's not unlikely that you will discuss the weather. For example, one rainy Monday morning

in April I met one of my neighbours in the elevator on my way to work. As we do not know each other at all, but wanted to have a little conversation, we started to talk about the fact that it was Monday morning and pouring down with rain. Just when we were about to part, my neighbour said: "But we should actually be pleased that it is raining now, because lots of rain before Midsummer means that there will be a beautiful summer." Then she added: "At least that's what the old people used to say." To use the phrases "the old people said" or "people say" is very common when it comes to proverbs and sayings because in this way they can be quoted without making the person who speaks them responsible for the contents (Arvidsson 1999:96). When later on I was going through the folklore records on old weather signs, I came across a record where a woman born in 1864 said: "When the frog spawn lies high, almost on the surface of the water, then the early summer will be wet. And that's a good sign, because one could never have too much rain before midsummer" (IFGH 2427:12).

One of the issues that has been discussed a great deal in the last couple of years is the drastic change in the climate. This issue invariably brings up horrifying stories, rumours and predictions about what the future will look like and what's about to happen with the world. In Sweden there are stories about moving the date of Midsummer because, with the change of the climate, the strawberries or the new potatoes won't be ready by then – or they might even be ready long before. And what about the summer holidays? Will we have to move them too? Until now it has mainly been four or five weeks in July/August, but with the weather changing we might have to move it to the end of August, or perhaps even September because statistically there is much more sun during those months. But when it comes to the summer holidays, the reason that people might postpone their holiday until later is more likely to fall into line with the rest of Europe and their holiday time. July and the time for the summer holiday have always been a topic for weather predictions. Today the archive gets phone calls as soon as it gets close to Ladies' Week or The Day of the Late Riser. For example, the saying goes that during Ladies' Week (July 19-25) it is always raining, and that if it then rains on the July 27, The Day of the Late Riser, then there will be rain for the next seven weeks. These speculations and anxieties about rain during this period has its origins in the fact that this was the period for harvesting the hay – and rain could ruin everything (Svensson 1945:109p). Today people in general just want to have sun, a blue sky and warm lakes to swim in during the holiday so that they will have the strength to put up with their work during the cold, snowy and dark winter. But of course there are still those who very much have to depend on the weather in their way of living.

In developing my study of weather proverbs and sayings, I would like to research and record the methods farmers use today to predict the weather, for example whether they still look at the old weather signs, and, if they still use them, how much they rely on them and if they perhaps have new signs to predict the weather by. I'm also interested in finding out what people in general think about the weather, if they have any predictions of their own? For example, when discussing this, a friend of mine said: "The first snow always used to come on my sister's birthday, the 18th of November, without fail." And then we have my neighbour at the summerhouse on a small island in the Baltic Sea, who scratched his head, looked up in the sky and thoughtfully said: "There is definitely more rain and thunder since they began to allow all these airplanes to fly over here." Allegations, stories and ideas about the weather and the drastic change in climate, engender rumours and half-baked ideas that, for example, can be seen as scaremongering. As I see it, this makes it a part of contemporary folklore.

I would now like to present some newly collected archive material that touches on weather. Last November the archive sent out a request for stories about memories of storms, thunderstorms and bad snowstorms. We received a great many answers, several of them long stories with whole life stories remembered through different stages of bad weather. The idea of asking our writers to do this came from a record that was sent by a woman to the archive in 1971. She had on her own initiative written down her life in terms of storms – from 1921 to 1971 (IFGH 6384). This is an amazing story and we are so pleased to have received responses from other people who have now done the same. One woman has for example written about twelve different periods of bad weather, starting with the 22nd of September 1969, the day they buried her mother-in-law, and ending with the 13th of January 2007, when her husband had to go to the hospital with a irregular heartbeat (DAGF 489). One man who used to work as a dentist has written down his memories about filling a tooth during the bad storm in 1969 (DAGF 493). Another woman wrote this about the horrifying storm in January 2006:

> Late at night. The wind was blowing with big roars outside and the electricity had gone around four o'clock in the afternoon. My husband and I decided to go to bed despite the bad weather. There was nothing we could do. To be outdoors could mean mortal danger. The weather forecast had been warning about the storm. I looked outside the window towards our plantation of spruce which lies below our garden. The silhouette of the forest did not look as it usually did. There was

> something strange about the forest. The next day I understood that the trees had been falling as I watched. A plantation of about one and a half acres had fallen (DAGF 488:2).

And finally, one woman actually mentions climate change in her account. She wonders what will happen to her grandchildren in the future, if it will be possible to live on this planet and worries that this will mean the end of the world (DAGF 497). I think that this material shows that we have a long tradition of predicting weather, and that we continue to talk and worry about it, in spite of several changes throughout time.

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VFF (Västsvenska folkminnesföreningen) 1827

4.

The Czech and Slovak Ritual Year

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Calendar Rituals of the Czechs and Slovaks

As with every folk calendar, the calendar of the Czechs and Slovaks can be divided into summer and winter. The borders between the seasons differ according to each territory and its climate, but within each local tradition they are connected to a definite date. Summer begins with the increasing force of the sun, usually in March – on one of the Sundays in Lent. Winter begins with the first snow and the start of indoor jobs, usually on 1.11. The central points of summer and winter are very stable because they are fixed astronomically. These are the days of the summer and winter solstices – nowadays the festivals of Christmas, 25.12 and St John's day, 24.06.

I shall now try to produce a schematic outline of the whole calendar cycle – the circle of the year – among Czechs, Moravians and Slovaks, whose calendars are very much similar because of the genetic closeness of these peoples and their shared history and religion.

November

1 and 2 – *All Saints' day* and *All Souls' day*. 1.11. – is the day for remembrance of souls. Besides going to the cemeteries and lighting candles, women baked special buns and gave them to children and beggars.

This is the time of year when usually women would begin to gather in one house to work (spin or weave).

11 – *St Martin's day*. In Slovakia shepherds distributed birch twigs, called *marcins* and pronounced good wishes. In many parts of Czechia the end of harvesting was celebrated by the whole village. The young wine was tasted. An obligatory element of the festive meal was the grilled goose. Its bones were used to foretell the weather during the rest of the year.

25 – *St Katherine's day*. In Czech tradition there are few rites to mark this day. In Slovakia it is the first of the so- called "witch days", when demons become especially dangerous. For this reason people protected themselves by observing bans and restrictions (for example, a woman should not be the first person to enter someone's house) and with magic actions (making a loud noise etc.). Girls used to foretell their matrimonial future on this day.

30 – *St Andrew's day* is one of the significant days for love divination.

December

Advent – the 4-week fast before Christmas. During the last week of Advent the singers of Christmas carols would stroll up and down the village performing actions based on Gospel and Bible themes (the so-called walking "with the Star", "with the Snake", "with Bethlehem" etc.).

4 – *St Barbara's day*. Mummers disguised as "Barbaras" would walk from house to house, asking children to pray and giving gifts to obedient children. They were sometimes accompanied by people dressed as the Devil or as a She-Goat.

6 – *St Nicholas' day*. Mummers would walk through the village disguised as St Nicholas, Angels, the Devil, Death, The Mother of God, the terrible Mare, a She-Goat.

13 – *St Lucia's day* was believed to be especially dangerous because on that day the devils ran about freely. People protected themselves by eating garlic, by giving some garlic and specially baked bread to the cattle, by drawing crosses with garlic on all the boundaries – on the windows, doors etc. In Slovakia they believed that Lucia was a witch, who later repented of her deeds and prayed for forgiveness for her sins, while she sat in her cave, spinning all the time. According to other beliefs Lucia herself could drive away witches.

This day is strongly connected with spinning and other women's work. Those disguised as "Lucias" used to check if the interdictions on spinning were being observed and would examine the girls' work; in Czechia they spun themselves while walking from house to house, carried spinning instruments.

Between St Lucia's day and Christmas Eve, these 13 days, people were making or building by small portions of job, every day, certain objects. As a result of this work these objects acquired magical properties – with their help one could reveal (identify) a witch.

21 – *St Thomas' day*. In Moravia young girls would fortune-tell about getting married. In Slovakia, boys and young men went from house to house with a piece of iron or stone and pronounced good wishes. This action was considered to be protective because of the iron, which, as was believed, drives away the demons and everything bad and brings in health and wealth; also they sometimes brought with them a heavy stone. This action was designed to promote a good crop, 'as heavy as a stone'.

23 or 31 – in Slovak tradition – the *Overeat day* – the day when people prepared abundant meals, cooked many rich dishes, with obligatory meat, otherwise, as they believed, "God will punish and the cattle will

not breed". Scholars suggest that this day was formerly Christmas Eve and that it was moved to another date because of the fast.

24 – *Christmas Eve*, which is called in these traditions *Lavish evening*. As in most Slavic traditions, it is believed that at this time water becomes wine, cattle acquire human speech and can foretell the future. The sex of the first visitor points to the sex of the future offspring of their cattle. People tried to do only such things as they would like to do all the year round – to laugh, to eat, to say kind words. They did not work. They foretold the future. Ritual actions included the following:

1. Ritual feeding of cattle and their magic protection from witches; 2. Bringing some straw into the house (or an un-threshed sheaf); 3. Organizing the festive table and inner decoration of the house; 4. Dinner, with offerings to the souls of the dead; 5. Magic actions with fruit trees (binding them with straw, "waking" them up, "feeding", shaking, threatening etc.); 6. Offerings to the forces of nature (water, fire, wind, earth/field); 7. Protecting from witches and revealing of witches.

The central moment of the day was Christmas dinner. It was strictly regulated – from the manner of laying the table, the quantity and composition of dishes, objects used, to the ritual actions; Czechs also regulated the quantity of persons sitting at the table, which had to be an even number.

After the dinner there was often wassailing, disguising, walking "with the Star, the Snake, the Bethlehem, the She-Goat, the Urus" and others.

25 – *Christmas day*. A "new" fire was made in the fireplace. People did not work, visit other houses or lend their things. There was an interdiction on crying, quarrelling, making a noise, banging. In Moravia it was believed that the sun, when it rises, "jumps" and "shakes".

In the morning young, healthy men or boys would go house-visiting to bring happiness, success and health into the house.

26 – *St Stephen's day*. St Stephen was the master and protector of horses. Oats were consecrated in the church and people threw oats at one another. Horses were washed and bathed. Slovak girls washed their faces, hands and feet in the river. In Moravia, girls washed the faces of their sweethearts in the morning, and brought them their trousers and shoes (as did wives for their husbands).

27 – *St John's day*. According to legend, his enemies wanted to poison St John with wine, but the wine caused him no harm. In commemoration of this episode people consecrated wine, drank it themselves and gave some to the cattle, believing it was miraculous. They preserved it

at home as a medicine and a substance which would protect them from witchcraft and cure snake-bite.

28 – *The slaughter of the innocents in Bethlehem*. According to folk etymology the day begins to grow younger from this time on. This is a holiday for babies and children. Parents whipped their children with fresh twigs, young boys whipped their girlfriends, husbands – their wives – in order to make them fresh, young and healthy.

31 – *St Sylvester's day*, also called the "women's evening" or "Small Christmas". Few rites marked this day. Groups of well-wishers and disguised people would walk about the village.

January

1 – *New Year's day*. People tried not to visit each other's houses. However, if somebody would come and the first visitor was a child or a girl it was believed this would bring happiness. In Slovakia, it was believed to be a favorable sign if the first person met that day was a Gypsy or a Jew. (real Gypsy and real Jew – nationalities).

6 – *Epiphany*, also known as *The Three Kings* because of the Gospel story about the three wise men who came to greet God's son. People consecrated water in the church (or straight in the river), salt and chalk, the Slovaks also consecrated garlic, a candle and a piece of wood, the Czechs – bay leaves. These items then served all year as objects which protected from diseases, natural elements and devilry.

February is known as a month for danger and diseases, in the first place nervous and mental illnesses. These may occur as the result of ignoring certain prohibitions.

2 – *Candlemas Day*, or *Feast of the Purification*. The Czech and Slovak name of this festival – *Hromnice* – is connected with the word "thunder", which is the main feature of the holiday. Needlework was prohibited in order to prevent finger-ache or to avoid being killed in a thunderstorm. People would consecrate a candle in the church. It was then lit near a person who was seriously ill or dying, or near a woman in labour, before and during the thunderstorm. The wax from this candle was mixed with the seed during sowing to ensure the harvest would be protected from the thunderstorm. The Slovaks carried out numerous actions "for the high flax" (i.e. so the flax would grow tall).

14 – *St Valentine's day* – was celebrated only in Czechia. The Saint was considered to be the patron of horses, so people did not ride their horses or make them work. Spinning, sewing and knitting were prohibited, otherwise both the working person and the person who would wear the garment would get epilepsy. The cattle could catch

"Valentine's disease". The child conceived on that day would face diseases, mutilation or abnormality (such a child was called a "*Valentine child*"). In Slovak tradition the same beliefs were connected with St Matthew's day.

24 – *St Matthew's day*, was considered to be unlucky. In Czechia and Moravia the children would jump out of bed and run to the garden to "wake up" the trees. The Slovaks did not sew on that day for fear they might "sew up" the cow's birth canal. They also did not spin or wash clothes. People tried to avoid beginning a new piece of work. Eggs laid this day were not put under the hen to be hatched, for the chickens would be abnormal (geese also, cf. "*Matthew's goose*"). All the animals and people born that day were considered to be defective.

February–March

Shrovetide, or Pancake week, a time of fun, gluttony and riotous behaviour. Many people dressed up as the Mare, Horse, She-Goat, Aurochs (Urus), Bear, Death and Man of straw.

The young men played rough tricks: they removed tools from passers-by, disguised themselves as smiths and spoiled girls' shoes. Groups of young men would take a log and tie it to the leg of some girl, who had not married that year. They also performed various rites containing funeral symbolism: they "buried" Shrovetide, a bass-viol (symbol of fun and music) or a bottle of alcohol. In Czech tradition the symbolic ritual of "ploughing" was known. Magic actions to produce "the high flax" were performed.

A very specific Shrovetide feature was the performance of martial dances in which wooden weapons were carried by the wassailing teams. There were skirmishes between teams from different villages; sometimes blood-letting took place.

On the last day of Shrovetide there was a concentration of rites involving "death" or "funeral" themes. This last day was called *Ash / Crooked* (*Curved*) / *Ugly Wednesday*. It was strictly forbidden to spin, sew, shoe horses or put eggs under the hen.

All day long the wassailing teams and people in disguises would stroll about the village. In Czechia and bordering Slovak territories a strange rite called *pohřeben* and apparently connected with the dead was known.

Here I should briefly mention Lent, during the 7 weeks before Easter, with its characteristic ritual involving the removal of a straw figure called *Marena* (a symbol of winter) and the bringing back into the village of a young tree, the "*may*".

April

23. *St Vojteh*, 24. *St George* and 25 – *St Mark's days*. These represent a complex of spring holidays connected with different beliefs about snakes, salamanders, lizards and frogs, about the opening of the earth and the coming of spring. On these days the cattle were first turned out to grass, an event which was accompanied by special protective rites for the herd. People would walk round their fields, consecrate their fields, roll bread on the ground and roll on the ground themselves. In Slovakia they played rough tricks (took away household equipment, broke it, put it up in the trees or on the roofs of houses). Also making bonfires was known.

May

30 April – 1 May – *St Philip and Jacob's night* was the night when demonic forces were abroad, especially witches, who gathered dew from the fields and by this action took away milk from the owners' cows. In order to guard against witches they used green branches (a symbol of life), sand, poppy-seeds (too many for the witches to count), consecrated water, fire, smoke and noise (to chase them away), and the ritual action of ploughing a furrow.

Young men placed green trees (the "*mays*") in front of girls' houses – in order to declare their love and as a promise of marriage. In Moravia and Slovakia rough tricks were known.

June

Whitsun, the Saint Spirit holiday – the 40-th day after Easter. All the buildings, cattle and people were decorated with greenery which, as was believed, protected from devilry, as did thorns and the noise of cracking whips.

Young men stuck green trees in front of girls' houses, as well as in the middle of the village and in front of the church.

Very significant was Whit Monday. In Moravia whole families went to the forest and fried eggs there.

In Czechia and Moravia the so-called "*king celebrations*" were very popular. In Slovak tradition there were girls' games involving a 'princess', the girls were strolling about the village, singing songs. Long ago in this region there was also a rite which involved choosing a king, dancing and disguising. This rite disappeared during the 19th century.

24 – *St John the Baptist's day* is the day of the summer solstice. According to folk beliefs, grasses and plants gathered on that day acquired medicinal and magic force. They could protect from witches and thunderstorms. Young people made bonfires beyond the villages. People believed that the fern flowered on that night and that its flowers had

magic power. In August and September there are almost no major festivals except for 5.08 – "Dedicatio St Mariae ad Nives", in the Czech and Slovak tradition – *the Snow Lady Mary* and 8.09 – *Our Lady's birth.*

The main corpus of calendar rituals and their terminology is common to the Czech, Moravian and Slovak traditions. They also share aspects of their worldview, religious influences and new influences from abroad.

Differences in rituals and their terminology arise from the historical destinies of these peoples, from the waves of ethnic migrations and the cultural and linguistic influences of neighbouring peoples, for example Czechia's (Bohemia) links with Germany, the influence of the Ukrainian, Polish and Hungarian populations in Slovakia and the German population in Moravian Silesia etc. These differences tend to be mostly terminological. By and large there is much similarity between the calendar rituals of the various Slavonic peoples. This idea was confirmed by the materials of the Dictionary "Slavonic antiquities", edited by academician Nikita I. Tolstoy (Tolstoy 1995, 1999, 2004).

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Slovak National Museum in Martin

Ways of Presenting Calendar Customs in the Museum of the Slovak Village

Ethnographical open-air museums based on research, compiled collections and adequate documentation and archiving of the exhibitions make ideal conditions for storing and presenting the artefacts and re-enacting the activities of traditional folk culture. In general we can talk about traditional productions and manufacturing, crafts, fine or folk arts, customs and folklore presentations.

This paper deals with ways of presenting Slovak rituals in The Museum of the Slovak Village – the largest ethnographical open-air exhibition in Slovakia. The Slovak National Museum has been gathering exhibits for this open-air collection since the 1960s as part of its efforts to make it a nation-wide exhibition of traditional rustic folk architecture, housing and ways of life in Slovakia from the latter half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century.

Stationary Presentation of Folk Culture in the Museum of the Slovak Village. The idea of building an open-air exhibition as part of the Slovak National Museum in Martin was something that already existed in the early plans of the Slovak Museum Association – the first institution in Slovakia devoted to collecting and preserving the cultural artifacts of the Slovak past, and maximizing their educational and cultural use. These progressive intentions, however, were not acted upon either at the inception of the Slovak Museum Association nor later in the 1930s when this idea surfaced again. It was originally intended to bring together not only specific house types from all over Slovakia, but also dwellings of Slovaks living abroad, gypsies' huts and dwellings of other ethnic groups living in Slovakia.

The creation of the planned exhibition of folk architecture and the way of life associated with it actually began after 1964. This was when the National Council of the Slovak Republic confirmed its decision to build a nationwide open-air exhibition as one of the prime goals of promoting evidence of the Slovak national heritage. A working-group of ethnographers and architects was created. On the basis of a uniform questionnaire research into folk architecture and the traditional way of life was conducted in all Slovak regions. In the 1980s, according to the revised plan for the Museum, it was decided to

concentrate on two main regions (Krištek 1986:31-45) The 1st group included the Danube River area in the south-west and the area of the Tisa River in the south-east part of Slovakia. This "Danube – Tisa" area included the lowlands and hills of southern Slovakia. The 2nd group of houses came from the Carpathian area and included representative house types from the hilly and mountainous parts of the north-western, north-eastern and central cultural regions of the Slovak Carpathian area.

The foundation stone of the museum was built into the foundations of the inn from Oravská Polhora on 5 November 1968. Work then began on construction of the sector of the museum devoted to the north-western cultural section of the Slovak Carpathian area, including buildings from the regions of Orava, Liptov, Turiec and Kysuce-Podjavorníky. The Orava section of the museum was opened to the public in 1972. Nowadays there are ten rustic households, technical buildings like the blacksmith's forge and oil pressing workshop, social buildings like the forester's house and the inn, granaries and potato pits, sacred buildings like the chapels, and seasonal houses. The most valuable exhibits from the Orava region are the inn from Oravská Polhora, dating to 1811, and the yeoman's homestead from Vyšný Kubín from 1748. The sector devoted to Liptov consists of eight rustic households, six farm houses, one yeoman's mansion, a bell tower and a seasonal dwelling. The Kysuce-Podjavorníky region exhibition includes eight rustic homesteads, three seasonal dwellings and one social building. There is an elementary school from Petrovice and a seasonal dwelling called "bačov" from Papradno open to the public. According to Igor Krištek's conception of the Museum of the Slovak Village, the exhibition of buildings from the Turiec region is not yet complete. Up to the present time seven rustic homesteads, six sacred buildings, two craft workshops and four buildings of a social character have been constructed. The most valuable exhibit is the Roman-Catholic church from Rudno village dating to 1792. No less interesting is the garden-house from Slovenské Pravno dating to 1731, which preserves the paintings of a very talented local painter Liborius Lazar, who came from Nitrianske Pravno. Others buildings from the museum's collection, such as the wagon house and shop from Moškovec, the draper's and hatter's workshops from Veľký Čepčín, the homestead from Nolčovo and fire station from Laskár, all of which are now open to the public, complete the exhibition of Turiec region as it stands today.

The cultural area of north-west Slovakia in the Museum of the Slovak village is concerned with the specific events of everyday life. The professional and social stratification of the region's inhabitants are demonstrated in exhibitions of extensive forms of agricultural work, cattle-breeding, sheep-breeding, the work of the blacksmith, shingle making, the manufac-

ture of cloth and hats, oil pressing and so on. This type of exhibition enables the preserving and re-animation of types of work, crafts and other traditional activities now extinct. Thus the exhibition helps Slovak visitors to understand their cultural identity.

Stationary Presentation of Calendar Customs. Apart from the previously-mentioned presentation of traditional architecture, calendar customs are also represented in the museum with exhibitions explaining the use of certain objects connected with particular customs, such as the magic practices that took place on the pre-Christmas "witches' days". In the Slovak calendar, St Catherine's, St Andrew's, St Nicholas's and St Lucia's days, as well as Christmas Eve and Christmas day were all known for their magical practices. In the Orava region part of the museum, for example, there are houses from Vyšný Kubín, Jasenová, Veličná and Hruštín with exhibitions of customs. Visitors can see exhibitions demonstrating various aspects of love divination. These rituals in particular had to be conducted in secret. On Christmas Eve single girls, for example, would foretell the name of the boy whom they would marry in the future by boiling "haluskas" (throwing small dumplings made of potato dough into boiling water) or they would write 13 boys' names on 13 pieces of paper and then draw the names one by one each day, starting from St Lucia's day and continuing up to Christmas Eve (13 days). In almost all parts of Slovakia there were fortune-telling activities made on Andrew's day. The traditional way of laying the Christmas table for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day is shown. This includes the tradition of hanging a Christmas tree over the table. A selection of all types of cultivated food products had to be served on the Christmas table in order that the following year would be rich in crops and a healthy harvest. As far as traditional kinds of ritual food are concerned, honey, poppy seeds, grains, peas, beans, lentils, garlic, onion and wafers were eaten, all having some link with the rituals that took place during the Christmas supper. Under the table some straw was placed to indicate fertility, together with an iron chain symbolizing the family's well-being and unity during the coming year.

Easter customs and rituals are presented in a short-term stationary exhibition called, depending on the event, "Easter is coming", or "Easter in the countryside". There is a special exhibition drawn from the Slovak National Museum's collections in the house from Oravské Veselé. Visitors can see children's toys, whistles and rattles, used during the Easter period. There is also an example of the ritual doll known as Morena, which symbolizes the cold of departing winter. Also shown here are Easter customs connected with the need to provide a year rich in crops and to protect cat-

tle- and sheep- breeding from the magic power of witches before they are sent out into the fields for the first time from their winter quarters. Easter week itself is illustrated by showing the preparation of traditional Easter foods and their consecration during the Easter mass in Roman Catholic regions of Orava. Also shown are ritual washing, the painting of Easter eggs and family rituals during 'green' Thursday, on the Friday and Saturday of Easter week as well as on Easter Sunday and Monday. There is another exhibition during the programme of events marking 1st May. In an outdoor presentation of May customs 'May trees' are collected from in front of the inn from Oravská Polhora, the house from Novoť and house from Nolčovo.

Active Animation Programme Presentations. Efforts are made to make The Museum of the Slovak Village a 'living' museum. It is regularly enlivened by numerous folk song and dance programmes performed by folk groups and ensembles. In addition, traditional crafts, techniques and methods are demonstrated. Agricultural and farm rituals are shown as well as the presentation of the way of life of social, professional or ethnic groups from the north-west of Slovakia. Since 1991 whole-day programmes have been taking place in the museum throughout "The Ethnographical year". There were also 44 types of events and more than 150 presentations. Some of these became a regular part of the museum's calendar. Events like "Picking up a May tree", "Children's Sunday", "St Michael's fair" or "Christmas in the countryside" take part in the museum every year. In all cases the programmes were drawn geographically from the north-west Slovak cultural region.

Let me turn your attention again to the Calendar Customs presented in the Museum of the Slovak Village. In the past, most of the customs designed to preserve and secure a rich yèar in crops and health belonged to the Christmas period. Presentations of the pre-Christmas and Christmas 'walk-about' and carol-singers, of Mikuláš (St Nicholas) with the angel and devil, the making of traditional Christmas decorations, baking wafers and decorating honey-dough cookies all take place in the programme called "**Christmas in the Countryside**". This programme has taken place in the museum since 1991. Since then it has become a traditional event every year. Other customs relate to Shrovetide traditions in Slovakia. Shrovetide customs are connected with the agricultural and magic rituals of the Slovak people. They also have connections with the carnival culture in Europe. There is a demonstration of the Shrovetide 'walk-about' when traditional masks of animals and various weird characters are presented. Visitors can join in the entertainment and enjoy the fun during the procession of masks. There are anthropomorphic masks – the old woman with a face on her

back, the half-man–half-woman, the harvest-man, the straw-man, the gypsy woman and zoomorphic masks like the bear, ox/urus (Turoň), goat (Chriapa), and many others. The ritual 'burying of the contrabass' is a very important part of the Shrovetide customs. It symbolizes the end of the revelry and fun before the long period of the 40-day fast. This fast lasts up until Easter. The Shrovetide customs and rituals evoking an "up-side-down world" refer to a magic time when the winter has not yet ended and the spring has not yet arrived. It serves as a preparation to the fast, when fun and music is prohibited and strict fasting must be observed. This programme is called "**Shrovetide will be over soon**..."

After Shrovetide and the long, 40-day fast the customs of spring are enacted. In the past, young people especially – girls and boys – presented most of the spring rituals, as they symbolized bringing new life and fertility to the village. Young girls used to remove from the village the so-called "Morena-women" (female ritual dolls), symbols of cold winter and death, and on the other hand they would bring flowered tree branches into the village as a symbol of a new, warm spring and life. These customs probably go back to pagan times. There are many rituals utilising green tree branches, eggs and water as the symbols of spring, fertility and new life. The folk dance groups of the Turiec region depict tradition rituals in which young boys bathe young girls in water and beat them with willow whips so they will be fresh and beautiful all through the year. All these customs are presented in the programme called "**Easter is coming**..." From the beginning of May there are other spring customs relating to spring farm work and the work of the shepherds. Most of the rituals practised in connection with work in the field and on the farm may be found in the programme called "**Picking up a May tree**". The name of the programme derives from the special custom practised on 1st May when young boys used to pick up the 'May trees' in front of the house of girls they were in love with. Many others rituals of love magic are also presented in this program. It is this event which opens the main season to the public. "**Saint John Sunday**" is a calendar custom which used to take place on June 24th in Slovakia and which is now re-enacted in the museum. Rituals of this time of year date to pagan times, to the celebration of the summer solstice (21st June). Because of the influence of Christianity it became linked to the celebration of Saint John's birthday (24th June). Almost two weeks before this day young single boys and girls and also married men and women used to come together somewhere outside the village where they would entertain themselves with bonfires and dancing. The bonfire, as a symbol of protection and purification, was the main element of this ritual. It should also strengthen the

power of the sun and by this means ensure a year rich in crops. These rituals are also connected with the practices of love magic. The opportunity for fun and dancing connected with this custom is provided by the museum. Visitors join together especially in the dance workshop called "dance yard", where they can learn the traditional steps of folk dance. Dancers from the folk dance groups of Fatran and Turiec are their teachers. Special folk songs are sung near the bonfire until it burns low.

There is another programme event called "**The Harvest festival**" during which many customs connected with farm work customs are presented. Thanksgiving rituals as well as the celebration of people's work during harvesting were part of the harvest festivals all over Slovakia. Celebration of a successful harvest must be confirmed by good food and drink. Special cereal cakes "posúchy, bialoše" are therefore prepared on a stove in the house from Hruštín. Honey liqueur (mead), bilberry and walnut liqueur as well as many kinds of herbal teas, young and old hot wine are served to refresh both participants in the event and visitors. Other events in the programme "**When the winter asks you**" show the storing of food products, cutting cabbage, ways of drying fruits, storing pork and use of meat products from the 'hog-killing'. Craftsmen and folk-artists also have their own customs and celebration. They join together at the traditional "Saint Michael fair", where they sell the products of their folk art and craftsmanship. As an analogy to the old fair songs and theatre there is a modern performance for children and visitors presented by a dramatic group from Banská Bystrica. As for "modern" or 'present-day' celebrations, there is a programme specially devoted to the Matica Slovenská anniversary in the museum. Matica Slovenská is the national Slovak establishment founded for collecting and preserving all kinds of folklore expression, texts of folk songs, notes of folk music, folk dance, folk drama and all kinds of Slovak historical literary materials. It was founded in 1863 in Martin. During this programme an old Christian mass was held to commemorate the pilgrim tradition of Cyril and Method (pilgrims who came from the Greek town of Solun in the 9th century and propagated Christianity among the Slavs), and a big procession took place in the museum. All customs presented in the Museum of the Slovak Village are based on materials preserved in the Slovak National Museum, The Ethnographic Museum in Martin and the Archive of the Matica Slovenská in Martin as well as on the researches carried out by ethnographers of these institutions.

Places/Stages of the Presentation. All the 'live' presentations in the open-air museum take place in the exhibition interiors and exteriors of the houses that form the collection. So that, for example, baking wafers takes

place in a 'black' kitchen in the house from Jasenová; Christmas carols are sung in the church from Rudno, threshing, grinding and cleaning of the grain is done in the stables from Novoť and Vyšný Kubín. Children have an opportunity to spend time inside the elementary school from Petrovice, especially in the winter, when it is heated by the original iron stove from the 1930s. Workshops in the school are mostly aimed at the various productions of traditional culture, such as, for example, painting Easter eggs, making whistles from willow wood, making various toys or decorations from wood, leather or wire, making traditional Christmas decorations from natural materials, glass painting and many others. There is also a wagon house from Moškovec which, being a multi-purpose construction, is used for various performances and demonstrations, exhibitions and conferences especially in winter or in the case of bad weather. Most of the live performances are done by folk ensembles in a natural open-air area of the museum. Also the roads and streets of the museums can be commandeered to serve as a stage. There are also other places used for performances such as in front of houses, in the yards of the houses and in social spaces (for example, around the inn or the church).

And what is the purpose of 'live' presentations in the museum? A quotation from Vladimir Kysel' may help me answer this question. Kysel' writes in general about the sources and research of traditional culture: "Visual, verbal, oral and other forms of folklore play a very important role in creating the relationship between the contemporary visitors and the traditional culture. That's why a great emphasis should be placed to the manner of their presentation" (Kysel' 1995:4).

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The Commemoration of National Saints as a Part of the Ritual Year in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

In the following paper I deal with the celebration and feasts connected with some personalities from Czech and Slovak history: St Václav (Wenceslas), Jan Hus, Jan Nepomucký and St Cyril and Method (Methodius). While the first three are linked with the history of Bohemia, St Cyril and Method belong to both Czechs and Slovaks.

Prince Václav (Wenceslas), known in the English-speaking countries mainly from the Christmas Carol "Good King Wenceslas", was born probably in 908 or 910 AD. He supported Christianity in Bohemia and also contributed substantially to the consolidation of the Bohemian Duchy. On the other hand, he accepted the sovereignty of Heinrich (Henry) I, King of Germany, over Bohemia and agreed to pay him a yearly tribute. Václav was murdered on 28 September 935 by order of his own brother Boleslav, who after that succeeded him as a Prince (Kadlec 1989:53-64).

Despite the fact that Václav voluntarily subordinated himself to Henry I, he soon became the symbol of Bohemian independence. The new Royal Crown made in the middle of the 14th Century on King Charles' order was called the St Václav's Crown, the Bohemian Hereditary Lands (Bohemia, Moravia, later also Silesia and temporarily also Lausitia) became known as "The Lands of St Václav" or "the Lands of St Václav's Crown". From the early Middle Ages 28 September was celebrated as St Václav Day. There were celebrations organised by the Bohemian rulers as well as popular feasts on that day which became part of the Czech official as well as popular ritual year. In 1660 the traditional cult of St Václav was officially recognised by the Pope and Vaclav's name was included in the list of Saints (Kadlec 1989:66).

St Václav played a significant role during the so-called National Revival period and throughout the whole 19th Century. He became the symbol of Czech patriotism. His cult was further promulgated in Czechoslovakia after 1918. 28 September was proclaimed an official National Holiday. During the German occupation the significance of St Vaclav was misused by the Czech collaborators as well as by the occupying German authorities. St Vaclav was

now newly presented as a Czech ruler who understood the necessity of close Czech-German collaboration and who brought the Czechs under German protection. This interpretation partly discredited the cult of St Václav after 1945. Otherwise, the Communist regime was ambivalent towards St Václav. After the Split of Czechoslovakia in 1992 St Václav's Day was proclaimed the Day of Czech Statehood. Today, 28 September is a National Holiday in the Czech republic but no popular feasts take place any more.

Jan Hus, the medieval religious reformer (probably 1371-1415) considered to be the "proto-protestant" thinker, was sentenced to death as a heretic at the Church Council at Konstanz and burned at the stake on 6 July 1415. His death sparked the fifteen years war (1419-1434) between the Hus' supporters (the Hussites) and the Catholic minority supported by Zikmund (Sigismund) of Luxemburg, who organised five Crusades against the Hussites. The old Hussites gradually disappeared during the 16th century. The new wave of Reformation coming from Germany did not let the cult die, however. The Bohemian and Moravian Protestants took over the cult. They gradually developed the tradition of popular celebrations on 6 July during the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century. There used to be popular bonfires on Jan Hus' day, officially for the remembrance of Hus' death at the stake. The Catholics, who formed the minority in the country, called these bonfires "the burning of Hus." When Protestants were expelled from Bohemia in 1627 (in 1628 from Moravia) by the Emperor and King Ferdinand II. (1619-1637) the bonfires were formally forbidden.

In 1781 Emperor Joseph II (1780-1790) passed the Act of Tolerance according to which the Protestants were to be tolerated in Bohemia and Moravia again. Only about 60,000–80,000 people converted back to Protestantism, however. Despite the fact that the absolute majority remained Catholic, the tradition of Jan Hus' Day reappeared at the beginning of the 19th century, during the period of the so-called National Revival. The ceremony was no longer connected with Protestantism and obtained new significance. Jan Hus was now considered a Czech national hero and was introduced into the Czech Pantheon together with St Václav. He also became a symbol of the Czech struggle for freedom and independence (Čornej 1987:198-199). Because Hussitism scarcely affected the border areas inhabited by the German-speaking population and because the Crusaders fighting against the Hussites came mostly from the German lands of the Holy Roman Empire, the Hussite wars could be now presented as wars between the Czechs and the Germans (Čornej 1987:307).

On 28 October 1918 the independence of Czechoslovakia was proclaimed. In the new republic the cult of Jan Hus became part of the official state ideology – together with St Václav. The parole of the Hussites "Truth prevails" (*Veritas vincit*) became also the official parole of the new state and was put in

Czech under the official Coat of Arms of the President. 6 July was proclaimed the National Holiday.

The Communist coup of 25 February 1948 opened the period of active "atheisation" of the country. For the Communists the religious part of Hus' ideas was not important, but they tried to use some social ideas explicit in them. In the 1950s, Professor Zdeněk Nejedlý presented the Hussites as proto-communists, who had already pronounced at the beginning of the 15th Century the theory of social struggle and revolution (Nejedlý 1951:20-21). On the other hand, Jan Hus' day was abolished as a National Holiday in 1951 and the annual celebrations were gradually abandoned.

Jan Hus' Day was reintroduced together with St Wenceslas' Day as a Public Holiday in 1993. Today Jan Hus' Day is celebrated as a religious holiday only by the Protestant minority but it is considered simultaneously an important day for the whole population, which still regards Hus one of the most prominent personalities in Czech history. There are no popular feasts any more. Jan Hus remains the stable part of the Czech Pantheon and the parole "Truth prevails" is still part of the Coat of Arms of the Czech President.

The cult of Jan Nepomucký (in the Catholic world known also as Nepomucen or Nepomuceno), has rather different roots from the previous ones. St Jan (Johann) was born probably in 1340 in the borough of Pomuk near Zelená Hora (literary: Green Mountain). Later this place was re-named Nepomuk and even the name Jan of Pomuk (*Iohannes de Pomuk*) was after his death changed to Jan of Nepomuk (or Nepomucký, which in Czech is an adjectival form). Jan Nepomucký was a vicar who became the victim of the conflict between King Václav (Wenceslas) IV (1378-1419) and the Archbishop of Prague. He was arrested on 20 March 1393, tortured and finally by order of the King thrown from the Charles Bridge into the Vltava River and drowned. His body was found on the bank of the river one month later. In 1396 he was buried in the St Vitus Cathedral at Prague Castle. Soon the legend appeared that Jan of Pomuk was executed because he did not want to reveal to the King the secret of Confession of Václav's wife (Kadlec 1989:209-210).

Václav Hájek of Libočany, the author of the renaissance Bohemian Chronicle from the first half of the 16th century mistakenly transferred Jan Nepomucký's death to 1383. According to Hájek, there were two persons – Jan of Pomuk, who was executed because he did not want to betray the secret of Confession and Doctor Johánek of Pomuk, who was drowned in 1393 because of the conflict between the Archbishop and the King. The wrong year 1383 was in the 16th century also put on Jan Nepomucký's tombstone in the St Vitus Cathedral. (Vlček 1993:27). Jan of Pomuk, as a martyr of the Secret of Confession, became already in the 15th century a popular personality among the Catholics. The Catholic Church used the popular cult of Jan of Pomuk during

the period of re-catholicisation in the 17th century as a substitute for the older cult of Jan Hus. The traditional bonfires were transferred from 6 July to 16 May, the official Day of Jan Nepomucký. According to tradition, many miracles happened near the tomb of St Jan Nepomucký. The tomb was opened on 15 April 1719 by a special commission led by the Archbishop of Prague Ferdinand Khünburg. This commission found something that was described by Dr Jan František Löw of Ersfeld, Professor of Medicine, as Jan Nepomucký's tongue (Vlček 1993:33). During the beatification process the supposed tongue was one of the main proofs that Jan Nepomucký was executed because he did not want to betray the Secret of the Confession. Pope Benedict XIII beatified Jan Nepomucký in 1721. Eight years later, in 1729, he proclaimed Jan Nepomucký the saint. The traditional annual pilgrimage to St Jan Nepomucký's new silver tomb first took place in 1736 (Vlček 1993:30).

In 1749 Elias Sandrich, the Augustinian Monk, known as Father Athanasius, wrote in his unpublished dissertation (*Dissertatio historicocritica*) that Jan Nepomucký was identical with Doctor Johánek of Pomuk (*S. Joannes Nepomucenus... et Joannes de Pomuk vir unus idemque*). In 1779 the Czech philologist Josef Dobrovský published a critical essay on the legend of St Jan Nepomucký. Dobrovský proved that there was only one Jan of Pomuk, who was drowned in 1393 and that the reason for this was the conflict with the King. The struggle for Jan Nepomucký continued throughout the 19th Century. The Catholics tried to defend the original legend which was historically unjustified (Kadlec II 1991:112-116). Most of the historians of the 19th and early 20th Century rejected the idea that a legend based on an obvious mistake should serve as part of Czech National Ideology and Czech statehood.

The Catholic Church today considers Jan Nepomucký as a martyr of the Church because he defended the right of the Church to appoint Church dignitaries even against the will of the King. The Church also recognised that the correct date of his death was 1393 (and not 1383). In the first Czechoslovak republic the cult was not promoted. Bonfires on 16 May still took place in many places but the custom was partly fading. For the Communist regime Jan Nepomucký was *persona non grata.* The Communists presented the "new" thesis, that the Church in fact canonised a non-existing person (Vlček 1993: 59). The tomb of Jan Nepomucký was opened again on 31 May 1972. The new research of the remnants proved that what was originally considered to be the tongue was in fact part of the brain (cerebral) tissue (Kadlec 1989:314, Vlček 1993:54). However, all attempts to eliminate Jan Nepomucký from the national pantheon were unsuccessful. Jan remained a popular figure. Today Jan Nepomucký bonfires do not take place any more but 16 May is still celebrated in the Catholic areas of the country, mainly in South Moravia.

St Constantine – Cyril (827-869) and St Method (died 885), two missionaries from Thessaloniki, brought Christianity and the Slavonic alphabet to Great Moravia, the first state of the Western Slavs which existed on the territory of what is now the Czech republic and Slovakia. The missionaries arrived in 863 AD on the invitation of Prince Rastislav I whom they baptised. Cyril and Method introduced the liturgy in the Old Slavonic Language into which they also translated substantial parts of the Bible. For this reason they had to invent the special Slavonic alphabet (the so-called Glagolitic alphabet).

The fact that Rastislav adopted Christianity from the East had mainly political significance because by this act he wanted to eliminate possible dependence on the Eastern Germanic Kings. Pope John VIII, whom both Constantine and Method visited in Rome, agreed with the Slavonic liturgy and even confirmed Method as the Moravian Bishop. Method returned to Moravia, where he died while Constantine remained in Rome. Here, he entered a monastery where he lived under the newly acquired name Cyril until his death. After the death of St Method Svatopluk I, the new Moravian ruler, turned to the Western church and Latin liturgy. The adherents of Slavonic liturgy, the disciples of Method, were expelled from Moravia. The disciples of St Method moved mainly to Bulgaria, others probably found refuge in Croatia. The Old Slavonic language and glagolitic alphabet were gradually replaced by Latin.

In 907 AD Great Moravia was destroyed by the invasion of the Magyar tribes. The western part of the country became part of the Bohemian Princedom (later Kingdom), while the eastern part was later included into the Kingdom of Hungary. The cult of St Cyril and Method was alive mainly in Moravia while in Bohemia St Václav was in first place. The significance of both missionaries was recognised also by the Hussites and later by Czech Protestants. Catholics celebrated St Cyril and Method Day on 9 March – for no apparent reason (Kadlec 1989:25).

In the 19th century St Cyril and Method were considered as the Slavonic saints who linked the Czechs and Slovaks both with Catholic Poles and Croats and with Orthodox Serbs, Bulgarians and Russians. Cyril and Method have been for a long time Saints in the Orthodox Church while in the Catholic Church their holiness was based rather on tradition. The Catholic Church recognised St Cyril and Method officially only in the 19th century. In 1863 the big *millenium* celebrations took place in Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia. Simultaneously, Pope Pius IX transferred the St Cyril and Method Holiday from 9 March to 5 July, obviously to eliminate the memory of Jan Hus (6 July) in Bohemia (Orthodox Churches celebrate St Cyril and Method on 24 May). The massive pilgrimage to Velehrad near Uherské Hradiště, the place at which, according to legend, St Cyril and Method arrived in 863, took place for the first

time in 1863 and this tradition has been repeated every year since then. Pope Leo XIII recognised Cyril and Method as Saints officially in 1880 (Kadlec 1989: 26) in his encyclical *Grande munus*.

In Czechoslovakia the cult of St Cyril and Method was used mainly to over-bridge the religious differences (the saints were *personas gratissimas* for all churches) and also to bring Czechs and Slovaks together. 5 July was a National Holiday. After 1945 the day was first celebrated as the Day of Slavonic Brotherhood and Unity. In 1951 the St Cyril and Method Day was dropped from the list of Public Holidays. The Communist regime tried to separate the cultural significance of St Cyril and Method for Czechs and Slovaks (and the Slavs in general) from religion.

Today, 5 July is a National Holiday both in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The present interpretation of both saints is connected with the idea of Czech and Slovak participation in the European Cultural Heritage based on common Christian traditions. No popular celebrations or other similar actions take place any more. We can say that today all these holidays were transformed into some sort of political ritual serving mainly political purposes (Ferencová 2005:30). In Slovakia St Cyril and Method became part of the "national pantheon" (Krekovičová 2002:158). St Václav (Wenceslas), Jan Hus, Jan Nepomucký and St Cyril and Method remain part of the Czech Pantheon and also part of the official ritual year, partly sponsored by the state.

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THE RITUAL YEAR 3
THE RITUAL YEAR AND HISTORY

This volume contains papers from the Third Annual Conference of the SIEF (International Society for Ethnology and Folklore) Working Group on The Ritual Year which was held in Strážnice, Czech Republic, 25-29 May 2007. The papers on „The Ritual Year and History" and related topics that are presented in the book contribute to the discussion of an important direction in cultural anthropological studies of the calendric cycle(s).

This consists of four parts. Part 1 contains articles on the correlation between ritual and history, which is seen as a set of facets. The change of epochs, regimes (and leading political and religious figures) brings in new rituals, the rethinking of heritage and an inventing of tradition with a restructuring of the ritual year.

Part 2 consists of articles on transition and initiation - a cross-cutting issue of all the conferences on the ritual year. The parallels between life and calendar customs, or the correlation between personal, natural and cultural calendars, are also investigated in this part.

Part 3 discusses the ritual year from the point of view of folk religion. The days of the Christian saints, festivities, processions and calendric weather lore incorporated in the ritual year reveal the tight convergence of church and folk attitudes.

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