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RITUAL YEAR 7



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GLASBENONARODOPISNEGA INŠTITUTA ZRC SAZU

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RITUAL YEAR 7  
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*V mislih na dami, ki sta letos praznovali okrogli jubilej in katerih raziskovalni fokus so folklor in ritualne prakse, je nastajala knjiga o uprizoritvah, izvajalcih in raziskovalcih.*

HELENA LOŽAR - PODLOGAR (Ljubljana),

*raziskovalka na Inštitutu za slovensko narodopisje ZRC SAZU. Odlikuje skrb za natančna razbiranja pomenov, procesov in podob ritualnih praks, tako tistih, ki so žive, kot tistih, ki jih lahko razumemo in rekonstruiramo le z velikim smislom za vse mogoče vire in njihovo natančno reprodukcijo. Zanja je značilna temeljna zvestoba viru, zvestoba glasu izročila, kakor ga posreduje informator. Hkrati gre za nenehen dvom o tem, kako informator razume in poustvarja tradicijo, in o tem, kako jo v resnici razume in interpretira raziskovalec. Tudi zaradi tako premišljenega položaja raziskovalke so njene raziskave življenjskega cikla neogibno izhodišče za nadaljnje ukvarjanje s fenomenom ritualnosti. Helena Ložar - Podlogar je živa enciklopedija ritualnih praks letnega in življenjskega cikla ne le v slovenskem, temveč v širšem srednjeevropskem prostoru.*

EMILY LYLE (Edinburgh)

*je že veliko postorila za raziskovanje škotske folklore, balad in pesmi, ko se je v svojih zgodnjih sedemdesetih odločila za ustanovitev mednarodne delovne skupine, posvečene raziskavam ritualnega leta, pri mednarodnem združenju za etnologijo in folkloro (SIEF). Od takrat je na srečanjih skupine vsako leto predstavila imenitne raziskovalne dosežke, v katerih se je ukvarjala z vprašanji dualnosti, koledarskih sistemov in arhaične kozmologije. Veliko nas je naučila s tem, da je pritegnila primere z vsega sveta, pri čemer uporablja Dumézilovo ali Lévi-Straussovo strukturalno teorijo. Emily Lyle v svojih letih ni le "vztrajna raziskovalka", kakor je bilo zapisano v enem od posvetil; lasten ji je poseben dar, da pomaga ljudem in spodbuja njihovo samozavest. In tako je nimamo radi le zaradi njenih akademskih dosežkov, temveč prav zato, kar je.*

*Obema želiva  
Ad multos annos*

Jurij Fikfak in Laurent Sébastien Fournier  
Raziskovalke in raziskovalci iz Inštituta za slovensko narodopisje  
Člani delovne skupine Ritualno leto pri mednarodnem združenju SIEF

*This book on performances, performers, and researchers was created with two ladies in mind that have celebrated significant birthdays this year and whose research focuses on folklore and ritual practices.*

HELENA LOŽAR - PODLOGAR (Ljubljana),

*is a researcher at the Institute of Slovenian Ethnology. She excels in detailed identification of the meanings, processes, and forms of ritual practices—not only practices that are still living, but also those that can be understood and reconstructed only through having a special feeling for all possible sources and their accurate reproduction. What distinguishes her is her fundamental loyalty to the source and the voice of tradition conveyed by informants. At the same time, she continues to question how informants understand and recreate tradition, on the one hand, and how researchers really understand and interpret it on the other. Because of this reflective position, her life-cycle studies are also inevitable bases for further research on the phenomenon of rituality. Helena Ložar Podlogar is a walking encyclopedia of ritual practices that mark the year and people's life cycles, not only those in Slovenia but also elsewhere in central Europe.*

EMILY LYLE (Edinburgh)

*had already done a great deal for the study of folklore, ballads, and songs in Scotland when she decided in her early seventies to launch a SIEF international working group devoted to the study of the Ritual Year. Each year since then, she has presented outstanding papers at this group's conferences, all of them dealing with duality, calendrical systems, and her views on archaic cosmologies. Using examples from across the world and commenting on them through the sharpest structural theories of Dumézil and Lévi-Strauss, she has taught a great deal to all of us in this group. At the age of eighty, Emily Lyle is not only a "persistent scholar," as somebody put it in an earlier tribute—she also has the very special skill of contributing to people's self-confidence and happiness. For this reason, we love her not only for her academic achievements, but precisely for who she is.*

*We wish both  
Ad multos annos*

Jurij Fikfak and Laurent Sébastien Fournier  
Researchers from the Institute of Slovenian Ethnology SRC SASA  
Members of the SIEF working group Ritual year

PERFORMANCES,  
PERFORMERS, RESEARCHERS

UPRIZORITVE, IZVAJALCI,  
RAZISKOVALCI



# PERFORMANCES AT FESTIVAL PERIODS IN THE YEAR AND THE “AS IF” CONCEPT

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EMILY LYLE

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*While a researcher may be actively involved in fieldwork, the full understanding that both researcher and performer desire is bound to involve a theoretical dimension, which becomes especially vital when reference has to be made to the past. Performances at festival periods in the year are explored in terms of the relationship between an actual “as is” world and an “as if” world of the imagination.*

Keywords: *as if, imaginary, festivals, calendar, play*

*Ko se raziskovalec aktivno ukvarja s terenskim delom, je popolno razumevanje, ki si ga želita tako raziskovalec kot ustvarjalec, neločljivo prepleteno s teoretsko dimenzijo. Ta postane še posebej pomembna, ko se navežemo na preteklost. Izvedbe v prazničnih obdobjih skozi leto so raziskane v smislu razmerja med dejanskim svetom »kakor da« (as is) ter med svetom domišljije »kakor da« (as if).*

Ključne besede: *kakor da (as if), imaginarno, prazniki, koledar, igra*

The researcher and the performer may both have enquiring minds and wonder about the “why” as well as the “how” of a seasonal performance but the researcher, ideally, has unlimited opportunities for enquiry and is called upon by the academic community to bring the fullest possible insights to the understanding both of current practice and of the practices of the past so far as they can be known today. Sensitivity of interpretation is required so as not to force any particular performance into a preconceived conceptual mould. The performer is responding on each occasion to the performance milieu. This varies on each occasion but one of the variables is the extent to which value is placed on conserving the practice of the past, and so we have performances that are radically new alongside performances that show very little change, although all must vary to some degree. We cannot step twice into the same river.

Whether in the present or the past, a seasonal performance by definition occurs at a particular time of year, which may be subject to wild fluctuations in the light of the exigencies of modern times. One instance of a total change is the annual ball game played in the town of Duns in Scotland (Hornby 2008: 132–137). Like other similar customary ball games throughout the area, this was played at the beginning of Lent and took place in February or March. When it was revived in the 1940s after more than half a century of disuse it was attached to the town’s annual week-long celebration in early July. By this time, an association with the town’s identity took priority over an association with the period before Easter in the Christian year.

The performers are “the same” as in the past, that is, they are still the men of the town divided into opposing halves. Any researcher is well advised to stay clear of this performance which is a rough-and-tumble game of handball played in the town square

and the surrounding streets during which the players mingle with spectators and passing traffic. My credentials as researcher were proved one year by a camera-shaped bruise on my chest after a scrum of players had moved rather faster than anticipated in my direction and knocked me down. One of the players took time out to make sure I was not hurt and I was kindly invited into a neighbouring house for a restorative cup of tea.

All that closeness did not bring me to the heart of the meaning that a contest between the halves of a community might once have had (Lyle 1990; 2008) although it was certainly a way of preventing my making uninformed statements about the present situation in a specific place. The field researcher is not necessarily a different person from what has been called an “armchair” researcher. Both an active and a theoretical engagement with a custom, or with a range of customs, is likely to be the ideal, although that ideal is not attainable when customs are no longer current. In this article, I am taking a theoretical approach and aim to explore the “as if” concept in relation to the performance of seasonal customs.<sup>1</sup>

“As if” is half of a dichotomy of which the other half is “as is”. The “as is” world is the real, factual one while an “as if” world is an imagined, fictional one. The “as if” concept relates to many fields of study but we will find it a particularly useful tool for an understanding of the ritual year. Arnold van Gennep observed (1943: 106), for folklore in general, that the concept is valuable in showing the researcher that questions of the type “Why do you think that?” and “Why do you do that?” cannot expect to receive rationalistic answers relating to the real world if, as may often be the case, the responses are premised on an “as if” world.

At the root of the enquiry being opened up in this article is the matter of how to assess and define the truth value or validity of statements. This question has been of vital importance to anthropologists in the field and one often quoted instance relates to a study of the Nuer of East Africa where E. E. Evans-Pritchard put forward the claim that for the Nuer twins are birds. Dan Sperber points out that the Nuer do not believe that twins are birds in the real sense.

*Evans-Pritchard reported that the Nuer hold “that a twin is a bird as though it were an obvious fact, for Nuer are not saying that a twin is like a bird but that he is a bird”. But, then, Evans-Pritchard warns that we should not take Nuer statements about twins “more literally than they make and understand them themselves. They are not saying that a twin has a beak, feathers, and so forth ...”.*

*Well, there is no such thing as a non-literal fact. Hence if we pay close attention to the whole of Evans-Pritchard’s report, we can no longer maintain that for the Nuer it is a fact that twins are birds. It is, rather, a commonplace representational belief of semi-propositional content. (Sperber 1982: 176, quoting Evans-Pritchard 1956: 131)*

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Léon van Gulik for supplying me with a number of references to studies of this concept, which we had both touched on in our presentations at the SIEF Ritual Year Group conference held in Tallinn in June 2010; I would also like to thank Laurent Sébastien Fournier for drawing my attention to the comments of Arnold van Gennep mentioned in the next paragraph.

Sperber comes to the following general conclusion:

*That beliefs reported by anthropologists are representational is rather obvious: they are “cultural” beliefs, i.e. representations acquired through social communication and accepted on the ground of social affiliation* (Sperber 1982: 175).

This is helpful but “belief” can be a rather inexact term that is always calling for explanation (cf. Needham 1972) and we can steer clear of it by positing the “as if” framework.

A statement can be valid within the “as if” framework, without being factually true. As Sperber says, *Hamlet saw the ghost of his father* is stored in the context of *In Shakespeare’s play* (1982: 172). The statement is true within that imaginary framework. It is not intended to be a statement about the real world.

### THE PHILOSOPHY OF “AS IF” AND ITS DESCENDANTS

The “as if” terminology was introduced by the German philosopher, Hans Vaihinger, in his book called *Die Philosophie des als ob* which was published in 1911 and was made available in English translation in 1924. After speaking of the formation of *artificial thought-constructs*, he goes on to say:

*The “As if” world, which is formed in this manner, the world of the “unreal” is just as important as the world of the so-called real or actual (in the ordinary sense of the word); indeed it is far more important for ethics and aesthetics. This aesthetic and ethical world of “As if”, the world of the unreal, becomes finally for us a world of values which, particularly in the form of religion, must be sharply distinguished in our mind from the world of becoming.* (Vaihinger 1924: xlvii)

The translator of this book, C. K. Ogden, points out that, although Vaihinger’s ideas were independently arrived at, some similar concepts on fiction had already been articulated in the early nineteenth century by the English philosopher, Jeremy Bentham (Ogden 2000: xxxi–ii). However, the “as if” and “as is” terminology stems from Vaihinger, and it is this that has been found fruitful in a variety of disciplines throughout the century since his book was published.

William E. Smythe, while looking at a broad spectrum of uses of “as if” thinking studied in the field of psychology, finds a place for *mythological fictions* and comments on an aspect that is relevant to study of the ritual year, saying:

*Myths are imaginative constructions . . . (They) are typically cast in narrative form, although this is not an essential feature, as mythological themes may also be expressed in rituals . . .* (Smythe 2005: 295)

A recent study of religion called *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*, that addresses itself to clarifying misunderstandings and translating concepts among the world’s religious traditions (Seligman et al. 2008), gives a central place to the

distinction between the “as is” and the “as if”. In religions of the book, notably Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the religious scope covers the “as is” world and attachment to the religion is marked by sincerity. When the religious world inhabited is an “as if” one, the attachment is a matter of participation in ritual.

While literate societies have moved in the direction of “as is” religions with an absolute claim to truth, the prior oral cultures had an “as if” view which allowed different societies to have their own religions without conceptual conflict. They were not “relatively true” but operated on a different plane from that of the “as is” religions. Although we are often concerned in historical expressions of the ritual year in Europe with input from the “as is” religion of Christianity, I am focusing in this discussion on the prehistoric “as if” structure on which hybrid forms that incorporated Christian concepts were based.

The aesthetic creations of literature and art are also “as if” worlds that have been the focus of attention and here I can instance the work of Kendall E. Walton (1990; 2008). We have already seen from Sperber’s example that the play of *Hamlet* is a self-contained fictional world and fictional writings are discussed by Walton in this way. Walton also treats the world of art and can again, of course, demonstrate that we are able to make statements about a painting, such as *The ship is in a stormy sea* (2008: 66–70) while remaining outside in the real world of the art gallery. However, Walton also suggests that the involved person reading or looking may be considered to enter into the imaginative space of the aesthetic creation (1990: 271–274). Works of literature vary in the degree to which they invite the direct involvement of the participant. Sometimes, for example, the reader may be told at the beginning by a narrator that the story about to be presented has been found in an old journal. This has a distancing effect and can make direct involvement less likely. We could speak of the observer who is really engaged as in a warm relationship and the more detached observer as in a cool relationship. Differences between the impacts of different researchers observing rituals on the performance of such rituals may well turn on a difference in the degree of empathy with the imaginative activity going on.

Children’s make-believe play demonstrates in a highly interesting way the formation and use of “as if” worlds that are particularly appropriate to an understanding of the ritual year since both have live performers contained within the play areas where “as if” worlds are created (Seligman et al. 2008: 70–73, 88–89). Johan Huizinga finds that one of the most distinctive characteristics of play is “its spatial separation from ordinary life” and notes:

*A closed space is marked out for it, either materially or ideally, hedged off from the everyday surroundings. Inside this space the play proceeds, inside it the rules obtain. (Huizinga 1998 (1949): 19) ... Formally speaking, there is no distinction whatever between marking out a space for a sacred purpose and marking it out for purposes of sheer play. (1998: 20)*

He is also aware of the temporal dimension saying that play “is an activity which proceeds within certain limits of time and space” (1949: 132).

In study of the ritual year, the temporal aspect calls for special attention.



## PLAY AREAS IN THE YEAR

Children's games may take place within a designated "play space" and there is certainly a "play time" at the end of which they are forced, reluctantly, to come back to the real world. Spatiotemporally, we may speak of "play areas". Each ritual point in the year can be taken to be a "play time" of a day or longer, and eight main play points can be located in a model of the Indo-European year.

And here it may be helpful if I recap some points about the design of the ritual year. We have a wealth of material that comes from various parts of our Indo-European heritage and, in the way that there was a common language, it is postulated that there was a common calendar. Although a calendar is not quite as intricate as a language, it still has many components to handle. In a count of days, for example, the lunar period between the first visible crescent and the next visible crescent is not a simple one but varies between 29 and 30 days. The count of the year days is only approximately 365 and allowance has to be made for an extra day every four years. And then the period of the year is not divisible by the period of the month so forcing the use of a system with an intercalary month at approximately every two and a half years. In the face of the intricacy of the facts, people took control of the calendar and made it an artefact that drew on features of the natural world but was a fresh creation. And so we have natural features that can be observed and can act as signals to indicate the arrival of a play period and we have a cultural creation with marked points which can also act as signals. The ritual calendar could be produced by marking special points on an object but it could also be held in memory. In either case, it is a temporal sequence with a series of physical or mental markings.

It is worth bearing in mind that major festival times involving whole communities derive part of their specialness from their rarity. The annual round is convenient to us in having its celebrations at the quite long interval of twelve months. So, to take an extremely familiar example from the "as is" religion of Christianity, Christmas comes only once a year and it falls reliably on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December. But we can accommodate considerably more of a festive life than one point in the year. There is no absolute number of festive times but it would be an important issue in making comparisons between cultures to determine how many there are and when they fall. If there is a controlling religious body, the main festivals will be quite clear-cut, although there will be the option of having many minor ones which may exhibit more variation. Within the folk calendars of Europe, there is wide diversity and it is essential to consider such matters at the village level as well as at the level of the nation. Typically, the timing of folk festivals is not the subject of legislation and so there is scope for flexibility. If we reach beyond the contemporary, as I think any deeply based theoretical approach is bound to do if we intend to engage with every aspect of seasonal customs, we have to ask ourselves how many major festivals there were in the year in the pre-Christian era when the only religion was an "as if" one. It was an object of importance in an oral society to keep the ritual sequence running, and throughout the year there were set times

that can be regarded as “play areas” where adults took on ritual roles in the way that children adopt roles in games of imagination. There would, of course, have been diversity even in the pre-Christian period for there would have been no absolute controls but, by comparing the different cultural traditions carried within the different language groups, we should be able to arrive at an approximate sequence that will then allow us to see something more of the concepts that once drove the celebration of a series of ritual periods.

In Figure 1, I have indicated the hypothesised Indo-European calendar and shown eight possible play areas, of which some are more salient than others, so that there is scope for arguing that there were fewer than this set of eight in the basic Indo-European pattern. However, for the moment I include them all.

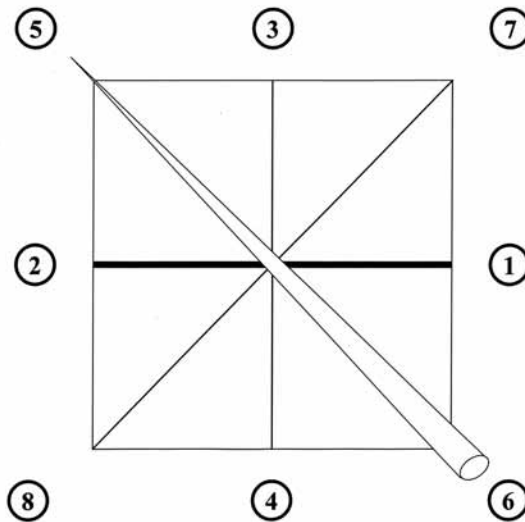


Figure 1. “As if” circumscribed areas are represented at eight key points of the posited Indo-European ritual year. The heavy horizontal line marks the division between winter (above) and summer (below) while the expanding diagonal line indicates the division between the waxing and waning halves of the year with the winter solstice at the top left.

**1** marks the beginning of summer and **2** the beginning of winter. These points are well represented in the Icelandic calendar with its transition festivals in mid-April and mid-October (Árni Björnsson 1995: 7, 14–17, 59–62). The starting points in the halves of the year can also be clearly made out in Celtic and Slavic sources (Rees and Rees 1984: 84–92; Lyle 2009; Mencej 2005). We can see that there is a strong connection with the movement of animals from near or inside to far or outside at the beginning of summer and the reverse at the beginning of winter. In the real “as is” world the cattle leap joyously out of their winter confinement at the beginning of summer and this transition is made the subject of ritual activity, and there is a similar ritual marking of the transition to winter. And here it will be useful to turn to Walton’s idea of “props” in relation to the “as if” play world.

## PROPS AND PLAY AREAS

The prop (or support) is an “as is” object that is imaginatively transformed in the “as if” play context. One of Walton’s instances (1990: 37) is a tree-stump which is transformed in the children’s imaginative play into a bear (Figure 2).

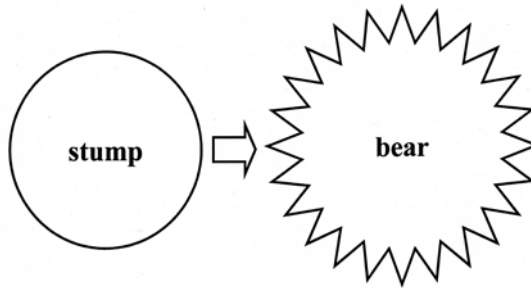


Figure 2. The “as is” stump is a prop that is transformed in imagination into an “as if” bear.

Similar instances are when some shaped mud is designated a pie that can be eaten, or a stick becomes a sword or some coloured water is agreed to be medicine – all within the confines of the children’s game. The children who imagine these things are themselves props and are also transformed; for example, the child who picks up the stick that has become a sword has become a soldier (Figure 3).

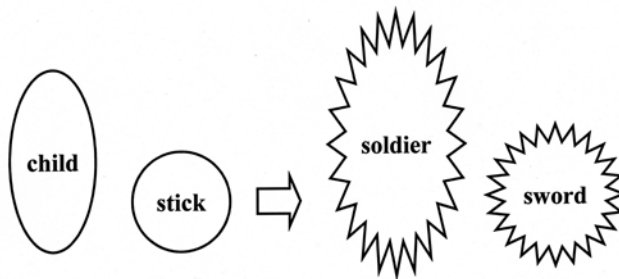


Figure 3. The “as is” child who does the imagining is a prop that is transformed in imagination into an “as if” soldier when the “as is” stick prop is transformed into an “as if” sword.

In the ritual context, we may consider the end-of-summer transition mentioned above, which can be marked by a custom like that recorded in Austria:

*At dusk on St Martin’s Eve the boys set off making a wild din and yelling throughout the village, and banging on lids, ringing bells and yelling, they stop at every house and shout “The wolf is free!” The older youths force their way inside, wearing masks of skins or white sheets and cloths. They imitate wolves and attack the children. Those who “set the wolves free” and the “wolves” perform wild antics around the village. (Mencej 2005: 82, from Grabner 1968: 73)*

There are boys who are wolves and there are boys who set them free. These characters are living props who imagine themselves into different identities that are either other humans or animals. The humans are performing the action of the Master of the Wolves, who is often identified as a saint. The concept of which this ritual action forms a part is a dual one, according to which the Master of the Wolves sets the wolves free or unmuzzles them at the end of summer but confines or muzzles them at the opening of summer so that they cannot do harm to the animals out at pasture. Mencej gives as one instance: “In Estonia, on St Michael’s Day St George removes the muzzles of the wolves which he had put on on his name day (i.e. on St George’s Day in spring)” (2005: 84). If this action of “opening the mouths of the wolves” is enacted, we have two animate props, performer 1 (the saint) and performer 2 (a representative wolf), and a cord of some kind which is an inanimate prop for a wolf muzzle.

In a custom that was found in Ireland at the beginning of spring on the eve of the 1<sup>st</sup> of February (point 3 in Figure 1) a doll-like effigy is carried from house to house and is welcomed as St Bridget, who has a clear connection with the goddess Brigit (Ó Catháin 1995: ix). Walton comments:

*A doll directs players of the game not just to imagine a baby but to imagine the doll itself to be a baby. So it generates fictional truths about itself; it represents itself.* (1990: 117).

The doll in this Irish custom is also a prop, but not in this case for a baby similar in size to the doll but for an adult woman. Kevin Danaher notes that this spring custom of carrying about a symbol of the saint was known over a large part of Ireland and he describes this particular object.

*Most commonly this (symbol) was an effigy supposed to represent St Brighid herself, made with more or less care as local custom demanded. Sometimes this was a nicely dressed doll borrowed from a little girl; often such a doll was re-dressed or decorated for the occasion. More often the image was specially made; a sheaf of straw might be pushed into shape and suitably dressed or garments might be stuffed with straw or hay to approximate to a human figure. The foundation of the figure might be a broom or a churn-dash, or some sticks or pieces of lath fastened together, and the whole padded and dressed. The churn-dash was widely used, as it could be stood upright on the floor. The head and face might be made from a mask or a carved turnip or a piece of white cloth suitably painted or coloured. Sometimes care was taken to represent the saint’s figure with some reverence; other effigies were deliberately grotesque.* (Danaher 1972: 24)

However it was shaped, it served equally well as a prop

At each ritual point of the year there is a play area which is marked out in time and potentially has its own delimited space as well. A Scottish house-visiting custom that occurs both at the beginning of winter (point 2) and about the time of the winter solstice (point

5) requires a special kind of space since it is itself a dramatic performance (Lyle, ed. 2010). The acting space is often a room in a house where the spectators are the members of the family being visited by the actors, but the entire ritual space for the “game” the actors are involved in is the whole area that they include in their travels from house to house. The “play time” is either tightly defined as a single day or as a broader period of up to a few weeks in length, but in either case the action begins after dark. The actors both use props and are props themselves in the sense that two boys are transformed into warriors and fight with sticks transformed into swords while a third boy is transformed into a wonder-working doctor who produces a cure with water transformed into a magic potion with the power to resurrect that one of the warriors who has been killed by his opponent. The dramatic illusion in itself seems to be the same as is found in a theatre, and to give rise to what could be called a secular rather than a ritual experience. The setting within the house-visiting custom, however, which involves a blessing and the receiving of gifts, lends the whole event a ritual resonance and the play can be felt to symbolise a death and revival appropriate to the time of year. But even when one of the boys is a prop for the great king, Alexander of Macedon, the boy is still a prop for a mortal and not a god. We have met St George who stands in for the Master of the Wolves and St Bridget who stands in for the goddess Brigit, so perhaps we can faintly see the outlines of pre-Christian supernatural combatants behind the heroes like Alexander of Macedon and Sir William Wallace whose roles are played by the boys.

#### THE WHOLE YEAR IN RELATION TO AN “AS IF” WORLD

So far, we have considered specific points in the year, and now we can turn to the year as a whole. Walton’s discussion of the stump prop (1990: 36–43, 209–213) may be helpful in making a connection with a time sequence. Movement in space takes a period of time and Walton points out that, once it has been mandated in the game that stumps are bears, the children playing come across unexpected “bears” as they run about and they react accordingly. Rather similarly, if people “move” through the year with the passage of time they come to that play point that has been designated as transformed and transfer into ritual mode. In a world that is understood to correspond totally to an “as if” world, there is no one who is not playing the game and transformation is complete.

When the “as is” world is correlated with an “as if” one, there are specific links between the two. Thomas G. Pavel in his book *Fictional Worlds* lists several one to one correspondences between real and imaginary items and activities, such as: globs of mud = pies; small black pebbles = raisins; children manipulating the mud and pebbles = cooks preparing the raisin pies. He speaks of the “as is” and “as if” worlds as primary and secondary:

*Since the really real world enjoys a definite ontological priority over the world of make-believe, we may distinguish between primary and secondary*

*universes within dual structures, the former constituting the foundation upon which the latter is built. In our example, the world of the children playing in the mud functions as the primary universe, while the world of cooks and pies is assigned the place of secondary universe. As we saw, the two universes are linked by a relation of correspondence, which in our example yields an isomorphism, since to every element in the primary universe the relation “will be taken as” assigns one and only one element in the secondary universe.* (Pavel 1986: 57)

In a dual structure like this, each relevant item in the “as is” world has a corresponding item in the “as if” world but, as Pavel points out (1986: 57), there may in addition be freely developed elements in the imaginatively created secondary world that have no corresponding element in the primary world.

The “as if” world contains “culturally postulated superhuman beings” (Lawson and McCauley 1990: 123–124), and it also has locations and times at which these beings enact their roles. We can say: “The fairies move between their summer and winter residences at Halloween and Beltane,” and the statement can be valid within this fictional framework. And, interestingly, it is possible to make invalid statements and to be “wrong” in terms of the fictional system. Much energy must have been expended in oral societies in the training of specialists who would know their way about in the “as if” world and would be able to make authoritative valid statements concerning it. People’s everyday “as is” world existed without support, but the imaginative “as if” world that they also inhabited needed the upkeep of well-informed ritual enactment if it was to remain in place.

I have been arguing that correlation is of the first importance when we attempt to explore the meanings of the ritual year. A point in time relates to the day, the month, the year, the human lifespan, as, e.g. midnight, dark moon, winter solstice, birth. These all rest on the correlation of sequences within the real “as is” world but an additional “as if” correlation would point beyond that to a postulated further sequence in an “as if” world.

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## UPRIZORITVE V PRAZNIČNIH OBDOBJIH LETA V POVEZAVI S KONCEPTOM "KAKOR DA"

*Raziskovalci imajo več priložnosti za raziskovanje teoretskih razsežnosti ritualnih dogodkov kot izvajalci/ustvarjalci, čeprav imajo morda oboji enako zanimanje. Avtorica želi umestiti ritualne izvedbe v specifični teoretski kontekst »kakor da«. »Kakor da« je polovica dihotomije, ki jo dopolnjuje »kot je«. Svet »kot je« je resničen, dejanski, medtem ko je svet »kakor da« zamišljen ali izmišljen. V jedru teoretskega premisleka je vprašanje, kako oceniti in definirati resnično vrednost ali veljavnost trditev. Terminologijo »kakor da« je prvi uporabil nemški filozof Hans Vaihinger v delu *Die Philosophie des als ob* (1911). Otroška igra pretvarjanja prikaže ustvarjanje in uporabo svetov »kakor da«. Njihove igre se dogajajo znotraj določenega »prostora« in nedvomno tudi »časa« igre. V okviru kronotopa lahko govorimo o »področjih igre«. Vsaka ritualna točka leta lahko postane »čas igre« za dan ali dlje: osem osnovnih točk iger, ki jih lahko zasledimo v modelu indoevropskega leta, je ilustriranih na sliki 1.*

*Kendall L. Walton je raziskal uporabo rekvizitov, torej predmetov in ljudi, ki se v procesu »kakor da« transformirajo, drevesni štor se lahko v otroški domišljiji preobrazi v medveda, otrok s palico pa v vojaka z mečem. Na podoben način se v ritualnem dejanju, povezanim z zapiranjem in odpiranjem volčjih gobcev v začetku poletja in zime, lahko pojavita dva živa rekvizita, izvajalec 1 (za svetnika/gospodarja volkov) in izvajalec 2 (za volka), ter nekakšna vrva, ki je neživi rekvizit za volkov nagobčnik. Punčkasti portret, ki ga v irskem ritualu z začetka pomladi (na predvečer 1. februarja) nosijo od hiše do hiše, predstavlja rekvizit za sveto Brigito, posredno pa za boginjo Brigit. V začetku zime in v času zimskega solsticija na Škotskem izvajajo igro Galoshins, ki ima kot rekvizite tri dečke, preoblečene v dva bojevnika in čudodelnega zdravnika, ter dve palici in vodo, ki se preobrazijo v dva meča in magično zdravilo. Ti rituali so povezani z določenimi točkami v letu, leto pa si lahko razlagamo kot »kakor da« svet, v katerem žive nadčloveška bitja. V tovrstni dualni strukturi ima predmet iz primarnega sveta »kot je« svoj ustreznik v sekundarnem svetu »kot da je«, hkrati pa se lahko v slednjem razvijejo tudi elementi, ki v primarnem svetu nimajo opore. Točka v času se poveže z dnevom, mesecem, letom, npr. polnočjo, mlajem, zimskim solsticijem, rojstvom. Vse to temelji na zaporedjih v resničnem svetu »kot je«, dodatna soodnosnost »kakor da« pa pokaže prek tega na pričakovano prihodnje zaporedje v svetu »kakor da«.*

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# STEWARTSHIP AND EVOLVING FIDELITY IN A SCOTTISH FIRE FESTIVAL

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THOMAS A. MCKEAN

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*This paper looks at a Scottish fire festival, the “burning of the Clavie” at Burghead in the North East of Scotland, and its practitioners in relation to external authorities, particularly the police and regional political administrators. Internal and external pressures for change and stability are examined and author explores the negotiation between insiders and outsiders that co-create the ritual as it is practiced today.*

Keywords: *Tradition, Negotiation, Calendar Custom, Creativity, Stability.*

*V razpravi avtor najprej tematizira škotski praznik, “kres Clavie” v Burgheadu na severovzhodu Škotske, izvajalce in njihovo razmerje z oblastmi, posebej policijo in regionalno politično upravo; nato obravnava notranje in zunanje pritiske, ki vplivajo na ohranjanje ali spreminjanje rituala, ter raziskuje pogajanja med notranjimi in zunanjimi akterji, ki so-ustvarjajo današnjo podobo rituala.*

Ključne besede: *tradicija, pogajanje, koledarski ritual, kreativnost, stabilnost.*

This paper looks at a Scottish fire festival, the “burning of the Clavie” at Burghead in the North East of Scotland, and its practitioners in relation to external authorities, particularly the police and regional political administrators. Cultural tradition, as Regina Bendix says, does not exist, it is made (2009: 255). In fact, it is constantly *remade*, with change being a crucial part of reiterated practice. I use the phrase “*evolving fidelity*” to describe the idea that preserving a tradition, through enacting it, often involves changes designed to retain or improve an event’s “traditionality”. This change comes from several sources, from within and from outside, and it is usually conceived of in relation to a notion of stability – tradition – which derives from the accepted way that things are done, and are perceived to have been done, for (sometimes imagined) centuries.

Burghead lies on the north coast of the cold shoulder of Scotland, around seventy kilometers east of Inverness. Each January 11 – Aul Eel (Old Yule), New Year in the Julian calendar<sup>1</sup> – a half barrel filled with burning staves and creosote is carried by a team of men – the Crew<sup>2</sup> – on a fixed route around the village before being immolated, in showers of diesel and creosote, atop the ancient Pictish fortification at the top of the town. The ritual is a longstanding one, with written evidence as far back as the seventeenth century, but with a local oral narrative that takes it much further back; several Burghead locals

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<sup>1</sup> While a papal bull decreed the ten-day shift to the Gregorian calendar in 1582, this was not adopted in Great Britain until 1752 (McNeill 1957, III: 15), by which time it was necessary to shift by eleven days. Hence, the burning of the Clavie takes place on 11 January.

<sup>2</sup> I am defining this community – the Crew – using their own criteria, neatly sidestepping Dorothy Noyes’s caution as to who has the right to decide who the “authentic guardians” of a tradition are (Noyes 2006: 28, 32).



Figure 1. The Clavie in flames at the top of Doorie Hill, 2011. (Photo: T.A. McKean)

have cited Pictish or Roman origins.<sup>3</sup> The first written evidence, from the Records of the Presbytery of Elgin, 11 January 1655, describes the use of fir torches, rather than a barrel and the word “clavie” is not used (Banks 1939, II: 35). It is frequently mentioned in the Kirk-Session records of nearby villages Drainie and Duffus (cited Banks 1939, II: 35), but custom was not exclusively coastal and many other villages in Scotland also used to have similar events, featuring burning barrels, boats, torches and bonfires (McNeill 1957, III: 100). Throughout these records, the practice is referred to as “old” and later writers on customs regularly cite these seventeenth and eighteenth century sources (e.g., Chambers 1869; McPherson 1929). Today, the Clavie is one of a number of fire festivals found around the British Isles, from Shetland’s Up-Helly-Aa at the end of January to the shoulder-borne burning barrels of Ottery St Mary in Devon in the south of England.

Over the years, some of the fine points of the Clavie’s practice have evolved as it has adapted to contemporary needs, capabilities and circumstances, but beneath these adaptations and changes lies a deep community loyalty to tradition, continuity and stasis. It is important to its practitioners and participants that the Clavie as an ancient custom and is seen as such. This lends it cultural capital, helping to protect it against incursion and dilution.

<sup>3</sup> Information from Burghead residents derives from more than twenty years of conversation in the community. Later quotations from Dan, Danny and Lachie Ralph are drawn from interviews recorded for the Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, cited in the reading list as Dan Ralph 1998 and Lachie Ralph 1998.

Dan Ralph, the current Clavie King, leader of the Clavie Crew, connects Burghead's history with a powerful Pictish settlement of more than a thousand years ago, and with a later Viking community. The Clavie's stopping point at the end of its procession through the town is on Doorie Hill, inside the ramparts of the ancient fort. Dan's son, Danny, also a prominent member of the Crew, is a stone carver who draws upon Pictish and Celtic symbols and art for his work, linking his current practice to the area's cultural past. Visitors are often shown to the village's ancient well, carved out of the rock at the upper end of the village, near the remains of the Pictish fortress. In its present form, the well probably dates to the Dark Ages, but the carved steps and cistern may have been used by the Picts; it is also, sometimes, said to be Roman). The lighting of the Clavie is performed from the "aul manse dyke", the wall of the historic home of Provost Jeffries, the same place each year; the route around the village taken by the Clavie Crew is always the same (noted in the Edinburgh *Evening Dispatch*), and has been as long as anyone can remember. The Clavie stops at "certain houses" and "certain street-corners" (*Evening Dispatch*; cited Banks II, 32) to deliver a burning or burnt stave for luck.

I cite these narratives not for their individual content, but for their nature: they are about continuity, the deep rootedness of the tradition in the area's historic past. The Crew members look to their oral legacy, of which they have a wide-ranging knowledge, and which has been of great benefit to academic and journalistic researchers over the years. But they also actively reach *beyond* this resource, to historians, books and archives, to Dan Ralph's extensive collection of ephemera related to the Clavie, and to connections with academics such as Emily Lyle, Margaret Bennett, me, and local man, the late Ian Shepherd, who became the regional council's archeologist. Danny Ralph has written up a narrative of the Clavie's history and origins, both out of his own interest and as a response to outsiders asking questions.

Community is as important as history in anchoring the Clavie custom in traditionality. Simply put, to be a member of the Crew you must be born in Burghead.

*They're greatly the envy of their peers, who would like tae be part [of it], but they've no real connection an they've got tae stand an watch, [...] But it can't be a free for all; it must be kept for real Brochers.<sup>4</sup> [...] If ye didn't observe this, ye wid have outsiders creepin in. [...] Not that we have anything against ootsiders, but we don't want tae dilute the tradition in any way. Keep it fairly pure. (Dan Ralph)*

The born-in-Burghead criterion is used as a means of keeping the Crew relatively homogeneous and the practice within the control of locals (but compare the Berga fire festival in Spain, where officials have begun awarding points for, among other things, being born in the town, which is seen by some as divisive and contrary to the festival's historically integrating nature; Noyes 2006: 40). Carrying the Clavie, as a member of the Crew, is a

<sup>4</sup> Burghead's local name is the "Broch", based on the common pronunciation of the "burgh" element; Fraserburgh, 110km to the East has the same byename, for the same reason.



Figure 2. Dan Ralph refueling the Clavie, 2011. (Photo: T.A. McKean)

lifetime's privilege and duty. "There must come a time in every Crewmember's life when he has tae stop carryin," says Dan. "I dread that happenin."

The Crew take their cultural stewardship of the event seriously. The kingship of the Crew is passed down in families, unless there is no successor, in which case the king is voted in from among the Crew. Dan maintains that he was elected because he could keep a cool head at the burning itself, but his choice of words is telling:

*I try tae keep a cool head all the time, a clear head tee. That could be the reason, bit I think really they know that I'm a stickler for tradition, steeped in tradition. They knew I wouldn't allow it tae alter in any way, or be modernized. [...] It's got tae be tradition an nothing else. It's so important. Important not jist tae Burghead, it's important tae the whole of Scotland and all ower the world, really, that these traditions are kept alive and unchanged.*

*It's of great importance tae be involved in, tae make an attempt tae keep it traditional.*

This sense of traditionality extends, of course, to the making of the Clavie itself. "Unwritten but unvarying laws regulate all their actions", according to a report in the *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch* of 16 January 1889 (Banks 1939, II: 32), unwritten, but well-understood rules. The upright stake used to support the Clavie is a "salmon post", so called because it used to come from the local salmon fishermen, who used them to stake out their coastal

nets. There have been no (legal) salmon fishermen in Burghead for many years, but the post is still referred to as a “salmon post”. The large, hand-wrought nail used to attach the Clavie to the post is the same one each year. The “hammer” used to knock the nail in is said to be a “Pictish throwing stone”. “The Clavie wis always built right next tae the hoose here,” notes Dan, “on the salmon green” (which is no longer there).<sup>5</sup>

Clearly from these narratives, and the choice of words, the *idea* of history, the *idea* of connectedness, is just about as important as any actual historical continuity. The nail, for example, was actually always a *new one* until the village blacksmith died in the 1930s and there was no one to make one. Thus, a new accretion of tradition and continuity has quickly grown up around the reused nail.

With membership of the Crew comes a great responsibility, not just for the event’s traditionality, but for the safety of the carriers, the general public and property along the route. For example, the Clavie used to be carried across the fishing boats gathered in the harbour, and each blessed with a charred splinter, but according local history, a boat was set on fire over a century ago and the practice discontinued. Dan, as King, is always greatly relieved when the Clavie – carried full of burning and boiling tar – is safely finished, with no accidents, but, in fact, responsibility lies with the entire Crew. Lachie Ralph, Dan’s son, reflects on his likely succession in this light:

*In a way I don’t want tae [be Clavie King], cause everybody thinks ye’re in charge of it, if ye know what I mean, but in actual fact, it’s the whole Crew.*

So, the whole Crew bears responsibility for the safe enactment, a fact which is key in relation to pressure brought in recent years by the police authorities and the regional council, concerned over public safety.

No traditional practice is static; indeed, though change is often not volitional, customs evolve in order to retain vitality and relevance, usually in a fairly conservative way, but they alter nevertheless. For the Clavie, change is mostly due to simple variation over time, but it can also come from within the Crew itself. Some Crewmembers wear fireproof gloves, for example, and coal-tar-derived creosote took the place of pine-based “Stockholm” tar for the final hilltop conflagration some years ago. Even before 2003, when the sale of coal-tar creosote was made illegal in Britain (Health and Safety Executive 2012), the Crew was already using diesel as a fuel. It burns hotter and has damaged the stone altar atop the hill, but its use continues. So while they are “stickler[s] for tradition”, they also feel a responsibility to the community and to the onlookers. “We don’t want tae reduce the spectacle, either,” says Dan. One fundamental change – the makeup of the Crew – is due to the fact that few if any children are actually born in Burghead. There is no village hospital and there are few home births. Eligibility for the Clavie Crew is therefore – matter-of-factly – extended to those born of Burghead parents in the City and Royal Burgh of Elgin, 13km away, a town of some 90,000 inhabitants.

<sup>5</sup> See Chambers 1869, “December 31st”, for a full description of the Clavie’s construction, little changed from that narrated in 1998 by Dan and Lachie Ralph (Bold and McKean 1999).

Perhaps the most obvious change in recent decades has been in the barrel itself. An extensive nineteenth-century article in the *Banffshire Journal* (Chambers 1869), reports on the making of the Clavie, and calls for an Archangel tar barrel, a wooden cask, bound with wooden hoops historically used to ship pine tar from the White Sea port of Arkhangelsk. Of course, even the Archangel tar barrel must have been an innovation at one time. Pine tar has been used for centuries in maritime contexts and the highest grade came to be called “Stockholm”, or “Archangel” tar after the Norrländska Tjärkompaniet (the Wood Tar Company of North Sweden) was granted sole export privileges by the King of Sweden in 1648 (Kaye 1997). The Archangel barrel itself would have evolved, so the form used by Brochers is fairly recent in historical terms. Previously, different types of barrel were probably used, or perhaps even an entirely different container. The point is that the Archangel tar barrel is *seen* to be the correct type by the Crew and community. It is the type *used before*, and *within living memory*. Its introduction extends back to *before living memory*, which makes it *ancient*, primary, and therefore *correct*.

The last Archangel tar barrel was burned in the 1950s:

*We, as children, drove everywhere looking for an Archangel tar barrel, remembers Dan.*

*We got the last one around fifty year ago, at Findhorn, where they used it for the salmon fishin trade. Bit that wis the last one. I can remember, [...] I wis perhaps fifteen or sixteen an too young tae make any comment. We'd been asked at the time tae provide a replica Clavie for a museum in Edinburgh an I thought tae maself, since this is the last Archangel tar barrel, this has got tae be the one that'll go tae the museum. I stood back while they made two Clavies an someone said, "Which ane's goin tae the museum?" An ma father said, "The whisky barrel, cause the Clavie's mair important than any museum," he said. So sadly they burned the last genuine Archangel barrel.*

The Brochers had no option but to alter the tradition, not its practice, but its materiel. There have been other such points of forced evolution: In the 1930s, young people carried small Clavies around the town, bringing them to the center where they threw them together to create a large bonfire. The blackouts during World War II put paid to such large-scale fires and even the carrying of the full size Clavie for a time (Neilly and Shepherd 1992: 91).

After the last tar barrel was used, a heavy oak whisky barrel served for many decades, but about ten years ago, Dan, a joiner by trade, took it upon himself to reintroduce the Archangel barrel.

*We had nothing tae refer to, except a few old photographs. We had tae judge the scale according tae who wis standing beside it in the photo an he wis only five feet three. [...] We've got the scale jist about right. It wis good fun anyway. An it wis great tae get the sceptics going.*

This kind of deliberate innovation adds a layer of complication. The conscious attempt to re-create past forms which are perceived as having authority is a testament to the Crew's *need* to have the event anchored in the pre-remembered past. It is a “way of synchronizing

the heritage clock with the historical clock” (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 2004: 60), though it comes from within a living tradition, rather than being imposed from outside by a “heritage” organization. Such direct connections to origins give the event the aura conferred by authenticity, even if that authenticity is a (re)created one. So, in this instance, the best way to maintain the tradition was, ironically, to change it, albeit towards a past that, in the Crew’s eyes, has been stable over a several hundred year period, well beyond living memory. This medium-term stability is, in effect, what we mean by “tradition”.

There are also pressures for change within the wider community itself. The Church’s relationship with the Clavie over the centuries, for example, while too involved to go into here, has varied from condemnation in the Kirk Session records of 1704 as a Pagan ritual – “a great and gross scandal and Idolatrous custome” (quoted Banks 1939, II: 36) – to the current minister’s embracing of it as a community event; he even offers a “Clavie service” on the Sunday nearest January 11. In acquiring a stake in the ritual, the Church gains the approbation of those who take part, but also basks in the event’s reflected glory, a kind of partial co-option the Church has been using to absorb and control non-Christian practices for centuries.<sup>6</sup>

Another example of internal community pressure came in the 1890s, when the so-called “New Stylers” wanted to move the event to December 31, New Year in the newfangled Gregorian calendar, which only came to Britain in 1752. An extract from a local poem of the time sums up the conflict:

<i>They tried fu’ hard to change the nicht,</i>	/ full; night
<i>But losh! it wis an awfu’ sicht,</i>	/ Lord; awful sight
<i>The natives ran wi’ a’ their micht</i>	/ might
<i>And broke the barrel;</i>	
<i>New “stylers” ran in such a plicht,</i>	/ plight
<i>Man, didn’t they snarl!</i> <sup>7</sup>	

Dan notes, “They were unsuccessful, which is *great* because I think along wi the Shetland isle o Foula, we’re the only ones celebrating anything on Aul Eel, the 11th o January.” It is important to Brochers – and to many other practitioners of tradition – to be *exceptional*, to be *different*, different from other communities round about (for example through *blason populaire* with neighbouring Hopeman, in Burghead’s case), but also to demonstrate their sense of belonging and rootedness, their *ur*-Scottishness.<sup>8</sup> Uniqueness is part of the Clavie’s appeal, then, but it is also a *protection* in modern times, and a selling point in relation to the authorities, as we shall see.

<sup>6</sup> In a fairly recent example, Edinburgh’s Beltane/May Day dawn ritual of face washing in the morning dew on Arthur’s Seat now features a church minister who blesses the event and its participants. Such Christianization phenomena are complex, however and in the case of holy wells, for instance, the mediaeval church practically created their associated cults, albeit drawing on pre-Christian traditions (Rattue 2001 66).

<sup>7</sup> Courtesy of Dan Ralph collection.

<sup>8</sup> I take on board Dorothy Noyes’s caution against casual ethnocentricity and “presentism” (2006: 33) and view traditional practices as being about drawing outside attention to a community as well as defining identity and exclusivity.

One internal pressure, notable by its absence, is the notion that women could take part in the making or carrying of the Clavie. This is never really spoken about and appears, simply, not to be on the agenda. “It’s traditional, in a way, for it jist tae be men. [...] Aye it’s jist a all man thing. The women do the cookin for the cèilidh afterwards, bit that’s as *far* as it goes” (Lachie Ralph). The fact that the Crew is all male is mentioned, but I have hardly ever heard any woman, even the King’s own daughters, say that they would like to carry it. Outsiders frequently say that they would like to carry it, but the non-inclusion of women seems to be broadly accepted. Women have a part to play in their traditional roles of providing hospitality before and after the event, and nowadays also as marshals during the Clavie’s procession around the village.

Thus far, the “rules” and practices discussed have come from within the village and the Crew itself. But there are also exoteric factors that influence, drive, or steer the event, leading to tensions between modernizers and “traditionizers”, and between the internal and the external. “We’ve had a wee bit of crowd control forced upon us by the authorities”, notes Dan, reflecting the growing pressure towards regulation and containment from the police and local government, who see the practice as too dangerous and unpredictable for the UK’s safety-conscious, litigious world. In a post UNESCO environment, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett notes, the authorities are “supposed to promote awareness, dialogue, and respect through such valorizing devices”, such as their list of Intangible Cultural Heritage (55). Burghead’s local authorities, coming from a local perspective, are less invested in this big picture and more concerned with their remit for public safety.

Over the past ten years, the changes requested have varied from adding a number of marshals in high-visibility jackets walking just outside the circle of Crewmembers (usually Crew wives), keeping the crowd back one more layer, ambulance staff walking with the Crew, a fire engine atop Doorie Hill and barriers around the hill to prevent the crowds getting too close, or having the burning barrel rolling down the hill into them at the end of its life.

“All heritage interventions – like the globalizing pressures they are trying to counteract – change the relationship of people to what they do,” writes Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004: 58) and the political interventions related to the Clavie, though framed in terms of public safety rather than the preservation of tradition, are no different. The Crew meets several times a year – designing their heritage anew – in preparation for the next Clavie and, over the last decade, these meetings have largely been taken up with addressing these *outside* pressures for change. In annual negotiations with the authorities, the Crew tries to retain control of the shaping of the event, ensuring that its character is preserved. In doing this, they rely on *insider* knowledge – “the (mental) competence of those who have traditionalised the practice” in the first place, in Bendix’s terms (2009: 263) – the idea, as Lachie Ralph noted, that they know more about how the thing burns, how the crowds move and how to protect themselves, other people, and the built environment, than any other group. Not only do the Crew naturally act as a kind of marshalling team themselves, urging the crowd back when the Clavie turns or is on the move, but the Crew wives form



another informal layer, whether uniformed or not, and they, in turn, are surrounded by community members who also know how it works. There is, in effect, a multi-level shield wall around the Clavie itself.

The police and the council, of course, have absolute power here and could shut the event down completely, if they chose to do so. It is to their credit that they have negotiated each season and that they have not become entrenched in a single, fixed position, or routinely increased regulation year upon year. Such flexibility means, however, that each and every year there is a serious and high-stakes negotiation as to whether the event will happen and in what form. Other UK fire festivals have faced similar issues, of course. In Ottery St Mary, for example, the *Daily Telegraph* reported in 2010 that the “Centuries-old Ottery tar barrel race [is] at risk after insurance rose 1150 per cent.” So far, compromises have been reached and the event has, broadly speaking, gone ahead as the Crew would have wished.

Outside authority has a positive face, too, and Dan has also called upon it in support. In 2007, I was asked to write a letter addressed to the regional police authority, on the basis that academic endorsement of the cultural importance of the event to the community and the region would be of some use in resisting pressure, particularly in terms of public safety versus the shape of the event. Thus, the Crew was able to draw on the *external authority* of a university and, by extension, UNESCO’s Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture (UNESCO 2003), which I cited in the letter, to underscore their natural, emic cultural convictions. Though secure in their own knowledge, the Crew was not afraid to reach for an appraisal that they knew would play as “high status” to the police.

Over and above the pressure from the authorities, there is huge outside influence from the media and from tourism promoters. The event has seen as many as four professional camera crews, including one from Japan. These can become a bit much, especially when directors ask for second takes. Some concessions are made, during the building of the Clavie, which is a very much more controlled and controllable setting than the burning, but not elsewhere. In general, the Crew response is,

*Ye’ll have tae take us as ye find us an we’ll do our own thing. I’ve got mixed feelins about the media. It’s fine, but ye’d have tae watch an not let them dominate.*

There is an influx of people from Scotland and around the world – a weekend Clavie can draw around 3000 people, a weekday one usually fewer. The local and national newspapers also cover it and despite locals’ ambivalence, one of the Crew’s first jobs the day after is to get the newspapers, with an eye to assessing the coverage and the crowd’s satisfaction.

The natural follow-on from all this attention is, of course, actual marketing of the event as a tourist destination by local organizations, authorities, and enthusiasts. It appears on numerous websites both from an informational perspective (like Wikipedia) and a promotional one, like Burghead’s own Headland Trust (which, oddly, labels it a “bizarre” fire ritual), or [welcometoscotland.com](http://welcometoscotland.com): “Ancient traditions are rekindled at this ancient

fire festival.” The event even has its own facebook page, BurningOfTheClavie. Curiously, though, the “This is Moray” information portal, while featuring an extensive page on Burghead and its history, makes no mention of the Clavie whatsoever.

The Clavie has clearly made the transition from “accumulated communal experiences” to commodified heritage, in Robert Peckham’s formulation (cited Bendix 2009: 253), but has not reached the stage of being a “mode of cultural production that gives the *endangered* or *outmoded* a second life as an exhibition of *itself*” (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 2004: 57, italics mine). It is thus still a living cultural expression, in no danger of dying out through community neglect. As such, it has no need of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage listing, which despite its positive intent still derives from a preservation paradigm predicated on fragility. While the Clavie is vulnerable to periodic pressure from outside authorities, the participants pretty much exist in their own world. Outsiders are welcome, but they are not particularly acknowledged. To Lachie Ralph, the crowd is

*all a blank, really. Jist the Crew an the Clavie. Everythin else is forgotten about. Ye’re all there, ye’re all helpin one another. It’s somethin else, like. Families are carryin it, rather than jist Brochers themselves.*

Dan Ralph adds,

*A doctor friend, who’d seen the Clavie for the first time, said tae ma wife, “I’ve certified people for doin less than that!” [...] That sort o sums it up! They think we’re primitive here, [laughs] but I think that’s what we really want them to think. [laughs]*

Again, a sense of the extra-ordinary is used as an enfolding protective device. Nevertheless, the numbers attending, the media profile, and the event’s potential as a tourist destination immeasurably strengthens the Crew’s case that the Clavie be allowed to continue in its present form. These internal and external pressures, and the community’s and Crew’s resistance to them, show that the basic understanding of the practice as held by the two groups – the Crew and the authorities – is quite different.

- The Crew sees the Clavie as a *cultural practice*, part of the fabric of community life, something that has “always” been done, a part of the natural environment, almost not worthy of remark;
- The police and council see the Clavie as a *public event*, and therefore part of a longstanding *public event paradigm*, complete with its assumptions of the need for structure, controls, regulation, external authority, and formal (recorded) planning steps (see, for example, the Burghead and Cummingston Community Council minutes for 3 November 2011; BCCC 2011).

These two paradigms, coming as they do from almost opposite perspectives, are bound to conflict. The Crew does not recognize the police’s authority to control, alter or affect the practice, or even the need for them to do so. They are well aware, too, that the police do not fully accept the extensive emic knowledge, control, practice and safety structures that the community has built up over many years’ experience.

Such internal and external forces for continuity and change allow us to see the direct tensions between, say, Crew-directed safety monitoring and the authority’s introduction of barriers and a police presence.

**Internal Forces**

Continuity

*Crew – annual practice*

Change

*Crew – monitoring safety*

*Crew – making more traditional*

*Crew – dealing with media*

**External Forces**

Continuity

*Media/University/UNESCO – valorization*

Change

*Authority – safety planning, policing*

*Authority – contain, regulate, regiment*

*Authorities, enthusiasts – marketing, publicity*

Likewise, the impulses towards containment, stasis and expansion come from various sources:

**Containment**

Council

Police

Insurance needs

Church (formerly)

New Stylers

**Stasis**

Crew

Academics

**Expansion**

Community support

Media attention (TV, news, web)

Academic publication

Tourism

Change, whether from inside or out, is thus both enemy and friend to “authenticity” and “traditionality” and is both to be welcomed and resisted.

	<b>Continuity</b>	<b>Change</b>
<b>Internal</b>	Ensure event’s stability and perpetuation  <i>to be welcomed</i>	Anchor current practice more firmly in the past, <i>but</i> New Stylers wanting to change date reduces exceptionalism  <i>to be welcomed / resisted</i>
<b>External</b>	Valorizing academic study and tourism, for example, can be seen as reinforcing the event’s cultural capital, <i>but</i> can suppress the natural organic change and adaptation necessary for the event’s long-term survival.  <i>to be welcomed / resisted</i>	Undermine continuity, stability, and the Clavie’s internal regulatory mechanisms and practices.  <i>to be resisted</i>

Together, these perspectives outline a modern, flexible and creative concept of what we mean by “tradition” and show the influences that impact upon it.

Positive:	<i>internal continuity</i>
Ambivalent (shaded):	<i>internal change / external continuity</i>
Negative (hatched):	<i>external change</i>

In fact, these different kinds of pressure *co-create* the ritual as it is practiced today. I think we may assume that – while the players and the particular content of their aspirations differ – a very similar process has been going on for much of the Clavie’s life. In former times, it was the Church which aspired to eradicate it, on moral and religious grounds. In opposition, early practitioners would undoubtedly have looked back to their *own* “more authentic” times, just outside the reach of remembered history, looking for continuities and links to their ancestors’ sense of tradition and, ultimately, to the authority of the past. Today’s situation, therefore, is perhaps little different from any time in the Clavie’s 400 year (or more) history. While each performance is intangible and evanescent, the tradition is not disappearing. The struggle between modernizers and traditionizers, between external and internal influences, between change and continuity, between past history and the future to come, in fact encapsulates the process of tradition as it really works – constantly evolving its fidelity to an *idea* of stable tradition. The tensions, friction and energy between these multiple binaries yield the energy and ownership that ensures true cultural continuity.

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## UPRAVLJANJE IN VZPOSTAVLJANJE ZVESTOBE V ŠKOTSKEM PRAZNIKU CLAVIE

*Članek obravnava ritualni zažig soda oz. Clavieja, kakor mu pravijo v Burgheadu v severovzhodni Škotski. Gre za novoletni festival, ki se vsako leto odvija 11. januarja, torej še po julijanskem koledarju. Clavie je polovica soda, pritrjenega na debel drog, ki ga prižgejo, podkurijo z dogami in kreozotom ter nosijo naokrog po ulicah po ustaljeni poti. Najstarejši ohranjeni zapisi so iz sedemnajstega stoletja, sam ritual pa naj bi bil starejši, morda še iz rimskih časov. V ritualu zažiganja soda lahko sodelujejo le tisti, ki so rojeni v Burgheadu ali v bližnjem Elginu.*

*Avtor analizira povezave izvajalcev z oblastmi, posebej s policijo, pa tudi z lokalno in regionalno politično administracijo. Ritual zažiga soda je javni dogodek. Tradicija in kontinuiteta sta za skupnost ključnega pomena in ekipa, ki nosi in zažge sod, jemlje svojo službo zelo resno; a kljub temu se je ritual razvil in se tudi prilagodil sodobnim potrebam. Sodelujoči so uvedli številne spremembe, npr. nove materiale; zaradi zunanjih pritiskov so okrepli in poostriili varnostne ukrepe. Izvajalci in zunanji akterji vplivajo tako na spreminjanje kot na ohranjanje ritualne prakse. Avtor na kratko predstavi tudi vplive globalizacije, različnih režimov zaščite dediščine in izvedbe rituala primerja z angleškimi praksami. Današnje podobo rituala soustvarjajo avtentičnost, tradicionalnost in zvestoba na eni in spremembe in menjave na drugi strani.*

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# AN INVESTIGATION OF THE TRADITIONAL MUSIC SESSION IN IRELAND'S SHANNON REGION

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NANCY C. MCENTIRE

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*Irish traditional music acquisition used to be restricted to specific regions and focused on personal instruction. Now that the individual player is being replaced by larger, less-personal groups of musicians, the question of how traditional learning is being accomplished becomes more critical.*

Keywords: Ireland, traditional music, sessions, repertoire, tune.

*Seznanjanje z irsko tradicijsko glasbo je bilo v preteklosti omejeno na specifične regije in se je opiralo na individualno poučevanje. Danes, ko posameznika nadomeščajo večje, manj osebne skupine glasbenikov, postaja vedno pomembnejše vprašanje, kako poučevati tradicijo.*

Ključne besede: Irska, tradicijska glasba, učne ure, repertoar, napev.

Ethnomusicologists who head out into the field are often warned beforehand that the music they hope to document is dying out; at best they will find survivals of a once-vibrant tradition. In some cases, those who issue the warnings are right, and the researcher will return with half-remembered fragments from community elders. In the case of traditional musical performance in Ireland, however, those who speak regretfully of a moribund culture are wrong. The Irish traditional music “scene” is thriving. From intimate gatherings of local residents in village pubs to packed sessions in larger cities, music flows well into the night. At the end of the evening the musicians are tired, yet curiously energized, staggering not so much from the drink as from the wealth of tunes they have heard and shared, tunes that are still rolling through their memory, savored in a low whistle, in a rhythm tapped out on a table, or in a spontaneous dance step across the kitchen floor the following morning.

This article draws on fieldwork that I conducted as a Fulbright scholar, from January through June of 2010 at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance in the University of Limerick. My project was to examine traditional tune acquisition in Ireland's Shannon Region. Shortly after my arrival at the academy, the faculty, staff, and students began a long-awaited move from the County Limerick side of the university campus into new quarters on the County Clare side, across the Shannon River. The director of the Academy, Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, noted with pride that the academy would be relocating in the county best known for traditional music performance. As I came to know musicians in both counties, I found talent everywhere, but the common perception was that traditional music performance was stronger in County Clare. “You should go to the sessions in Doolin,” one woman advised. “They play fast.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Doolin, in County Clare, is noted for sessions that are popular with young players, with lots of reels, played at breakneck speed.

What would I be finding in the Shannon Region of Ireland in the early months of 2010? First, there was an overwhelming abundance of sessions. By this I am referring to informal gatherings in public houses (“pubs”) for the purpose of sharing tunes and songs. In a relatively small geographic region surrounding my apartment in the village of Annacotty, near the University of Limerick, there were at least three or four traditional music (“trad”) sessions in progress every night of the week—all of them held in pubs. Some of them were large, hosting twenty or thirty musicians, and others were relatively small, with a core group of four or five musicians and occasional visitors who pulled up chairs, unpacked their instruments, and joined in. The instruments played were standard for the current Irish traditional music scene: fiddles, concertinas, accordions, Uilleann pipes, tenor banjos, flutes, tin whistles, guitars or bouzoukis, and a bodhrán (Irish drum) or bones. The sound was acoustic, not amplified. In one rare exception, a session included a small electric piano, used only for melody. The players typically formed a circle in a corner or the side of an open room. Sometimes a table where they assembled would have a hand-written sign on it, “musicians,” which was a signal that pub-goers who were not going to perform would have to sit elsewhere. According to



Figure 1. The musicians’ circle at Nancy Blake’s pub, Limerick City, County Limerick, Ireland.



Figure 2. Leaders of Nancy Blake’s session: Cathal (fiddle) and Mick (bodhrán). (Photos by N. McEntire)

well-established custom, musicians engaged in the ritual of an Irish session were expected to form their own subgroup within the larger social and cultural context of the pub. As the pub patrons came and went, drinking and talking, the musicians held their own, playing exclusively for each other and ignoring the swirl of activity around them. However, sometimes the musicians would attract the attention of those around them with an especially lively tune or a poignant slow air. There were also times when a band member would invite an acquaintance to join the musicians to sing, play an instrument, or even to dance. According to musician and scholar Scott Reiss, “The pub session is an arena in which symbols, both concrete and aural, define the boundaries of the traditional music community.” He further defines the session as a “. . . ritual of sharing in which the values of the community are enacted.” (Reiss 2003: 148). As both a participant and an observer in Irish sessions in the Shannon Region, I was able to understand firsthand the boundaries and the ritual sharing that Reiss defines.



One thing that was obvious at first glance was that the structure of the session was relaxed. The musicians seldom organized themselves according to their instrument, as more formal musical ensembles might have done. Fiddle players would be scattered here and there, as would flute or whistle players. The tunes were played in unison, with no harmonies. During the repetitions of the tunes there were no solo “breaks,” as there are, for example, in bluegrass music. Although there was individual ornamentation, it was not emphasized to the point that it interrupted the general flow of the tune for the entire group.

The goal of the session, understood by those who participated but was seldom articulated, was the joy of shared music, with an emphasis on group performance. This goal shifted, of course, if someone decided to sing a solo, in which case the room would be “hushed” in order for an unamplified voice to be heard beyond the clinking of glasses and the peripheral hum of conversation.

Most of the evening, however, was devoted to groups of tunes, called sets. If the initial tune of a set was a reel, the next tune would also be a reel, continuing the rhythmic pattern that had been established. The types of tunes that a musician could expect to hear would be reels, jigs, slip-jigs, hornpipes, polkas, waltzes, or marches. Most tunes were performed in the standard AABB format, in which an eight-bar melodic theme was played and repeated; this was followed by another eight-bar melodic theme, which was also repeated. Then the entire tune was played again, but usually no more than once or twice. As a tune moved through the repetition of its B section, musicians often looked to the person who had started the tune for a subtle cue regarding its conclusion. A nod or a glance or even a vocalized exclamation (*whop!*) would be enough to signal to the entire group that the ongoing tune was about to end and that another tune would be taking its place, continuing or rounding out the set. At the conclusion of a set of tunes, the musicians would take a short break, welcoming a chance to drink, talk, and tell jokes. In public houses, this pattern of playing and singing, drinking, storytelling, and joke telling would continue throughout the evening until closing time. Depending on the strictness of the proprietor, the session would either come to an end and the musicians would have a last set of tunes or a final song, such as “The Parting Glass,” or it would continue unofficially after the ostensible closing of the pub. In this case, the blinds would be pulled down and the main door locked. Snug and companionable, the musicians would play on, often for hours. At the end of this late session, the remaining guests would leave through a side door, darting into an alley, supposedly to avoid the watchful eye of the police as they made their way home.

As the weeks passed, I visited sessions regularly—early and late, occasionally joining in on the whistle or singing. I took advantage of the breaks between sets of tunes to talk to nearby musicians. In some cases I made arrangements to interview them at a later date. During the sessions themselves and in subsequent interviews with individual players, I learned that patterns of seating and of interactions during the sets and during the breaks between sets provided useful ways of understanding the session as a dynamic social event as well as an informal musical performance. Paying close attention to these behaviors

helped frame isolated music performances within a larger ethnographic context (Knetia 1990: 82-83).<sup>2</sup>

The scope of what is described as Irish traditional music has expanded greatly since Sean Ó Riada's early description of it as ". . . untouched, un-Westernized, and orally transmitted." Times have changed—and they continue to change. Following the advice of Ó Riada's famous student, Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, who noted the impracticality of talking about Irish music in its ". . . narrow tribal sense," scholars have continued to rework their definitions of Irish traditional music.<sup>3</sup> The music has not remained untouched, with world-music, rock, country and western, and electronic-music influences continuing to make significant contact with Irish traditional tunes. Similarly, tunes are learned orally, but they are also learned from sheet music, from Internet communications, from YouTube videos, and from widely distributed MP3 files. For those who have access to the Internet, popular websites for learning Irish traditional music abound. All of them provide electronic "shorthand" transcriptions, sheet music, Midi recordings of tunes, and opportunities for on-line, virtual discussions about Irish music.

Similarly, the process of tune acquisition has changed significantly in recent decades. It was, in the past, ". . . a matter of listening closely to a well-regarded player, or a small collection of players, and then using those examples as guides for proper forms of expression, techniques, and repertoire" (Smith: 118). It emphasized education through listening and imitating the style of a master player, someone who lived nearby or even in the same household. Whereas Irish traditional music acquisition used to be geographically contained within one region and more private in its method of dissemination, it is now widely accessible and public. The individual performer is being replaced by the group, and regional style, especially in urban areas, is evolving into a uniform, fast-paced music session, packed with performers.<sup>4</sup> Trad sessions are now a familiar component of Irish-themed bars and restaurants throughout the world.<sup>5</sup>

Within my own scope of the Shannon region in Ireland, as the months passed I found that despite the emphasis on uniformity and speed, quite a bit of learning was going on in Irish sessions. Although it was not rote learning—a process often associated with music

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Kwabena Nketia notes that the word context can refer to many frames of reference: historical contexts, ethnographic contexts, musical contexts, etc. "Indeed," he writes, "every discipline seems to have its favorite contextual frames of reference" (1990: 81).

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of both of these definitions, see Vignoles, Julian. "What is Irish Popular Music?" *The Crane Bag Book of Irish Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1984): 70–72; see also Kinsella, Thomas and Ó Cannain, Tomas. *Our Musical Heritage*. Mountrath, Ireland: Fúndúireacht an Riadaig and The Dolmen Press, 1982.

<sup>4</sup> Speed is also a highly politicized parameter of style. The age-old paradigm of many musics, that young people play too fast, occurs here [in discussions of Irish traditional music] (Keegan 88).

<sup>5</sup> It is widely believed that the first known of these modern pub sessions took place in 1947 in London's Camden Town at a bar called *The Devonshire Arms*. (Some researchers believe that Irish immigrants in the United States may have held sessions before this); the practice was later introduced to Ireland.

acquisition—the player who attended a session often approached it as an opportunity to hear new tunes and to improve his or her performance of known tunes. Furthermore, a player who was new to a session had much more to assimilate than a rhythmic arrangement of notes. The learning process was as much social as it was mental. The ritual behaviors, seating arrangements, selections of tunes, and acceptance or, in rare cases, rejection of musicians, were based on “understood” yet unspoken behavioral cues. Galway accordion player and piper Eamonn Costello had this to say about the session:

*A lot of it [session playing], I suppose, is about knowing your position. Knowing your place. That means that you don't try to play on every tune. You don't want to ruin a tune. Generally speaking, I'd say that most people would feel that it's better to have a certain amount of tunes before you come in [to a session]. Even if it's only ten tunes that you can play. It isn't good for your own development to come to a session too early, for a number of reasons. One, if you start making a lot of mistakes, you might get very discouraged. You might start developing a pattern of nervousness. On a second level, you might get negative feedback, which could make you think, "These people aren't nice." You might have a bad experience. On the other hand, a good experience at a session can be uplifting, and the player will want to come back or even to attend regularly. (Costello, Interview, March 29, 2010)*

Further examinations of the process of tune acquisition revealed more about the social dimensions of informal music learning. For example, players who knew each other well and were comfortable playing together tended to form more of a circle, whereas players who were not familiar with each other tended to group themselves less intimately, sometimes sitting in lines, with less chance for face-to-face contact. The stronger players were at strategic positions, always maintaining eye contact with each other, and sometimes seated close to each other. Less-secure players tended to sit in the outside edge of a circle or would form



Figure 3. Master flute player Paul Smyth (*upper right*) leads a session at Liam o Rian's pub in Ballina, County Clare, Ireland.

outer circles around the core players. If a newcomer played well during the evening, he or she might eventually move into the core circle of players, and most certainly would be offered a drink—another clear sign of acceptance.

The outer fringes of the session might continue to sustain less-secure players, but too many of them could have a negative effect on the musical quality of the group as a whole. Eamonn Costello offered further observations of session dynamics:



Figure 4. Fiddle player Noel McCarthy is an honored guest at the musician's circle, Guerin's pub, Castleconnell, County Limerick, Ireland. Note the variety of instruments.



Figure 5. A newcomer, playing the fiddle, (*right*), is welcomed to the circle at Nancy Blake's pub in Limerick City. The bodhrán player, Mick, is inviting him to join.



Figure 6. Hughes' pub, Dublin, Ireland. Two whistle players are seated "outside" the circle.

*A friend of mine was talking about this phenomenon—it happens, where someone plays in sessions, and their ability to play alone might not be great, but they can kind of hang on to the other musicians. . . . We call them "chancers." They want to play, and they say to themselves, "Well, it's loud enough, I can play this now." (Costello, Interview, March 29, 2010)*

Too many chancers could bring down the general level of musicianship, resulting in a dull or uninspired session. At the lowest end of the session behavior were players who played out of tune, out of rhythm, or played wrong notes so consistently that they were disruptive. Eventually these players might be asked to put away their instruments, although that was considered to be a drastic action.

Based on my observations during my Fulbright research in the Shannon region of Ireland, Irish sessions are welcoming and energetic. People of all ages participate, from children to grandparents. In some cases, children sit next to a parent, watching, listening, and imitating. In these cases, the session is truly a learning experience. The process of listening and acquiring tunes orally and informally continues with remarkable success. Visitors to an Irish session can witness this for themselves: A new generation of players is being trained as a natural part of community life. These young musicians are absorbing and acquiring culture within the context of a well-established ritual of listening, absorbing, and imitating. They may be listening to tunes on an iPod® or watching and listening



Figure 7. Father and son, Miltown Malbay, Co-  
 unty Clare, Ireland.



Figure 8. Mother and daughter, Miltown Malbay,  
 County Clare, Ireland.

to other musicians on YouTube, but the fact is that they are still imitating what they see and hear, and that they bring this knowledge to a session, where it is “tested” within a community of musicians, face to face.<sup>6</sup>

No two sessions are alike, even if the same musicians gather week after week in the same pub and often repeat favorite tunes. The pace will vary; new musicians will show up and add their own tunes to the mix; one tune will spark a memory on the part of one of the players, resulting in a new variant of a well-known tune or a fresh tune altogether. A quote from Ciaran Carson’s tantalizing book, *Last Night’s Fun*, evokes the joy of a good session. In a pub called The Bear’s Lair, he has met a fiddle player named Fred Lail, and the two of them pass a joyful evening of “kinship” through the discovery of a shared repertoire. Carson writes:

*At the end of the night we play “The Mountain Road” about twenty-something times for the sheer joy and hell of it, and because it’s a good, well-constructed tune that bears playing again and again. Each time round we find another nuance, another way of going off the metronome while keeping to the wavy underlying beat, and after so many times you lose count of them. There is no chronological time, because the tune invents its own dimensions. The mountain road winds up and up in ornamental gradients, each twist with yet another view: so many zigzags, till you hit the plateau and you see how far this road extends; now you’re on a steady rolling level, it’s as if the road is taking you, not you taking it. (Carson 74–75)*

In her recently published article, “The Inner and the Outer at the Time of Performance of the Scottish Folk Play ‘Galoshins,’” Emily Lyle refers to the physical inner and outer spaces

<sup>6</sup> Although much learning of tunes occurs informally, with a young person listening and imitating an older family member or a talented neighbor, the founding of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCÉ) in 1951 has led to competitions and classes for thousands of young people throughout Ireland and a widespread recognition of the importance of traditional music and dance (see Williams 2010: 228-229).

for the ritual performance of a traditional guising tradition, with the house that the guisers visit serving as a temporary “theater,” and the door of the house serving as a threshold between the inner world of the performance and the outer, nonperforming world (Lyle 2011: 313—317). Lyle extends her interpretation to include less-tangible, imagined spaces, in which the performer’s inner world exists “... in contrast to the outer world of the everyday” (Lyle 2011: 321). In the case of the Irish session, a similar dichotomy presents itself through the physical separation of the musicians from the pub-going audience. A separation also occurs within the circle of players: The core players constitute the inner space, and players who sit outside of the circle inhabit a less-intimate, outer space in which to perform. Finally, when considering the imagined, inner world of the session performance, musicians often mention that playing with others can be a transforming experience. The sensation of being outside of time is often mentioned. The evening hours will seem to fly past, the worries of the everyday world will not penetrate the inner world of music, and a sense of shared enthusiasm will lift the spirits of everyone who is involved. This non-tangible realm is magical. It is created within the ritual of the Irish session, separated from the outer world of ordinary life.

In an interview at the University of Limerick, Irish musician Charlie Piggott recalled an extraordinary experience that he had shortly after a lively session:

*I remember playing with this girl that I recorded a CD with one time. We weren't particularly drunk or anything. We were . . . getting into playing reels, and getting in on this thing where you are just moving, you know. And suddenly she began to play reels that I'd never heard in my life before. And I played them along perfectly. I mean note for note. And I remember being really surprised by this myself, saying, "Where is this coming from? I don't know these tunes at all." I never knew them. I played them perfectly. I wasn't following her, but playing with her, you know. And it really frightened me. I think there's some other level there that we're not connected with in normal thinking. Definitely there's some sort of an area where—that whole music thing, it's sitting somewhere else. Lots of people talk about music having a life force of its own. We don't know, I suppose, really. It's quite amazing, isn't it? Incredible energy. I remember I'd often go to a session, and I'd be so tired, I wouldn't even feel like going out. [It would be] 9 or 9:30, but the playing would be incredible. This wouldn't be 'normal' playing; this would be, oh, you could tell. You were just saturated with the energy. You're completely energized by one or two o'clock. You'd wake up the next morning and you'd be fresh. Amazing! Music has a very powerful effect, doesn't it? (Piggott, Interview, April 9, 2010)*

In this example, the ritual of the session has led to a music “bond,” and the two players continue to move into an inner realm of communication together, playing reels late at night. This leads to a startling discovery, an awareness of a mysterious inner world that is accessible through a rare and seemingly mystical shared musical experience. Piggott

also mentions the remarkable power of a good session to provide the musicians with an unexpected gift of energy. Not everyone will have Piggott's experiences, but for many who participate in Irish sessions, the act of sharing melodies, enjoying lively conversations,<sup>7</sup> and renewing a sense of community are essential to its success. Although some sessions certainly are livelier than others, the basic values of the session remain "understood" by performers and audience members alike:

- 1) Musicians may congregate in a pub for the purpose of sharing tunes and songs.
- 2) They may sit at a certain table or in a certain section of the pub that is traditionally "reserved" for sessions.
- 3) Key players, forming an inner circle, will guide and control the session, establishing both physical and aesthetic boundaries.
- 4) Less-experienced players may sit on the periphery of this inner circle.
- 5) Tunes are played by ear; sheet music is neither necessary nor desirable.
- 6) The music itself will consist of sets of specific tune types, such as a set of reels, or jigs, or hornpipes.
- 7) Tunes are played in unison, and are repeated as desired by the players.<sup>8</sup>

These core values, although they are seldom articulated, serve as traditional guidelines: They control the pace and structure of the session; they establish boundaries between the core musicians and those outside of the core, allowing both aural and social learning to take place. Under most circumstances, the ritual of the session provides a positive experience for all players, no matter how far from the circle they might be.

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<sup>7</sup> Irish session participants often refer to a lively evening of witty conversation and general fun as good "craic," further distinguishing the event as being better than (or outside of) everyday life.

<sup>8</sup> The ending of a tune (and how many times it is repeated) is usually controlled by the player who has initiated that tune, although this also can be decided by one of the key players in the session.

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## RAZISKOVANJE POUKA TRADICIJSKE GLASBE V IRSKI REGIJI SHANNON

*Izvajanje irske tradicijske glasbe danes cveti: tako pri tedenskih srečanjih lokalnih prebivalcev v krajevnih pubih kot pri učnih urah v večjih mestih so irski glasbeniki pogosto obkroženi z mladimi instrumentalisti, ki jih željno poslušajo in se učijo njihovega repertoarja. Kako se danes izvaja učenje tradicijske glasbe? Kateri vrsti stila, če sploh, sledijo novi instrumentalisti? Razprava temelji na pogovorih s številnimi glasbeniki v okrožjih Limerick in Clare na Irskem in dokumentira nekdanje in sedanje načine učenja in izvajanja irskih napevov. Avtorica ugotavlja, da je bilo seznanjanje z irsko tradicijsko glasbo v preteklosti geografsko zamejeno znotraj posamezne regije, njegova metoda razširjanja pa bolj osebna. Tradicijski glasbenik je zrasel v specifičnem glasbenem okolju in si postopoma – skozi proces, ki ga je eden od glasbenikov opisal kot osmozo – osvojil tako repertoar kot stil. Danes je skoraj vsak napev dostopen na spletnih straneh. Namesto posameznika, instrumentalista igra skupina; namesto individualno, regionalno obarvanih izvedb slišimo enotni stil, ki ga izvajajo številni izvajalci s širokim naborom instrumentov.*

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# THE SCHOLAR VERSUS THE PAGAN ON GREENCRAFT TREE WALKS: ATTUNEMENT, IMAGINATION, AND INTERPRETATION

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LÉON A. VAN GULIK

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*This article offers an ethnography of a tree walk ritual of the Belgian Greencraft Wicca movement. The description is employed to discuss the notions of reflexivity, reactivity, and the double hermeneutic. By interpreting the data, the author concludes that the double hermeneutic is a problem of different contexts rather than between different groups. Attunement and suspension of disbelief are singled out as means to overcome misunderstandings between the scholar and the researched.*

Keywords: contemporary Paganism, Greencraft, double hermeneutic, reflexivity, reactivity

*Članek predstavi etnografijo rituala hoje okrog dreves belgijskega gibanja Greencraft Wicca. Opis služi kot pomoč za razpravo o pojmih reflektivnosti, reaktivnosti in dvojne hermenevtike. Na podlagi interpretacije podatkov avtor ugotovi, da je dvojna hermenevtika problem različnih kontekstov in ne toliko različnih skupin. Prilagoditev in razrešitev dvomov sta izpostavljeni kot načina preseganja nesporazumov med raziskovalcem [scholar] in raziskovanim. Ključne besede: sodobno poganstvo, Greencraft, dvojna hermenevtika, reflektivnost, reaktivnost*

*“Use human means as though divine ones didn’t exist,  
and divine means as though there were no human ones.”*

St. Ignatius of Loyola

## INTRODUCTION: TO SEE THE WOOD FOR THE TREES

When I was discussing possible approaches to the theme of what ultimately became the “Researchers and Performers Co-Designing Heritage” conference with the organizers, the mere mention of the place of the scholar in fieldwork set me off in the direction of Ronald Hutton’s (2004) discussion of the reflexivity/reactivity dichotomy in his own work on the history of modern Pagan witchcraft. Somewhat later, in an e-mail correspondence with Emily Lyle, the president of the Ritual Year Working Group (personal communication, 30 July 2010), I was asked to follow up on my brief remarks on the notion of as-if worlds that I made in the context of my research on religious creativity in contemporary Paganism (see Van Gulik 2011). Automatically assuming that I would combine the two, I quickly found myself at loggerheads as to how I would string together a theoretical exercise with my empirical research, and my personal and professional concerns as a scholar with the transitional world from which I understand the identity-driven motives and actions of the participants of my studies.

My big break came with participating in the so-called tree walks that are held each month by a Belgian Wiccan organization named Greencraft. Not only were neither Greencraft nor their tree walks as yet documented in the academic literature, the walks included meditations that required me putting the notion of transitional (or as-if) worlds to good use and, most importantly, were very insightful to my take on the reflexivity/reactivity dichotomy. This article, then, serves three interrelated goals: (1) to contribute to the discussion on the mutual influence between the researcher and the researched from my own perspective as a fieldworker, (2) to offer an overview of Greencraft and a short ethnography of the tree walk, and (3) to briefly introduce the concept of the transitional world that will act as a theoretical backdrop to support and help interlink these aims. In a future article I will treat the notions of the transitional and as-if worlds more fully.

Before moving on to the ethnographic material that is at the heart of this article, I must explicate the concepts associated with what Andrew Sayer (2010: 49) has termed “the interpenetration of the frames of reference of observer and observed.” Let me then set off from a brute fact of the natural sciences that any measurement changes the observation. Putting a thermometer into a beaker holding a liquid will, as far as the temperature of the thermometer differs from that of the liquid, have a slight impact on that of the liquid, and thus result in a minor error of measurement. Depending on the required precision, one may need to correct for this.

#### THE RESEARCHER

Analogously, as a psychologist by training, I am conditioned to be aware of *reactivity*—a term that, after all, originated in psychology: the often unacknowledged impact of one’s presence in a research situation. Ranging from the well-known but contested Hawthorne effect, where workers under study increased their production by merely knowing they were observed,<sup>1</sup> to the emotional entanglements in psychotherapeutic settings called countertransference, reactivity has caused the psychological researcher to try to recede from the scene of his own studies altogether. This attempt can be observed in the practice of removing as much of one’s identity as possible from written reports too (cf. Wolcott 2009: 16–17). The written accounts of psychological studies are phrased in a manner that any scholar could have undertaken them, and would have arrived at the same conclusions had he done so.

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<sup>1</sup> The Hawthorne effect was named after a factory where a series of studies were conducted that are most often remembered as seeking to establish the relationship between productivity and lighting conditions. During each of the studies, productivity briefly went up as soon as any alteration to the working condition was made (in addition to lighting, other variables were also manipulated). Yet productivity dwindled to the old level as soon as the observation ended. A generation later, when other psychologists started to reassess the studies, they concluded that the mere presence of the scientists in the experiments had caused production to rise simply because, knowing they were studied, the participants improved their performance. Later, doubts arose whether the effect really existed (see, e.g., Adair 1984), but the Hawthorne effect has proven to be too good a story to burden with such reservations.

Replicability in terms of reproduction is considered a criterion of sound reporting, whereas replicability in terms of results adds to the reliability of the initial study's findings.

Conversely, as a fledgling anthropologist conducting fieldwork, I gradually became aware of the influence of the researched on the researcher—and, after I starting doing deskwork, of the influence of the reflective turn in the humanities! Even if I feel that due to the reflective turn some studies escalated in rampant relativism, anti-naturalism, and favoring political correctness over rigorous scholarly enquiry and a sound methodology, trying to understand cultural expressions from the inside out is bound to have an impact on one's personal system of convictions, beliefs, and interpretational habits. The gradual shift of literally coming to terms with a new cultural environment ought to be monitored closely in order to be able to sufficiently appreciate the tension between two sense-making systems when one returns home from the field. Reflexivity as a deliberate introspective effort, then, is an indispensable activity to appreciate this inherent complexity that has been referred to in the literature as the double hermeneutic.

#### THE FIELD

First coined by Anthony Giddens (1987), the double hermeneutic refers to the idea that in the social sciences the scholarly interpretation of a specific field is doubled by the interpretation of the field itself (Sayer 2000: 17). That is, laypeople make assumptions about their motivations, beliefs, cognitions, and so forth, and these may be different from the scholarly understanding of these. I would like to note, however, that there is a subtle difference between the *scholarly interpretation of observable cognitions and behaviors* on the one hand, and *the scholarly interpretation of the lay interpretation* of these cognitions and behaviors on the other. Whereas the (what I would call) weak version merely suggests an alternative explanation of the unreflected data, the strong version explicates the “why” of the laypeople's different interpretation. Even if the double hermeneutic proper has always been considered to be about issues of the interpretation of interpretation (see, e.g., Hollis 1994: 146), the weak version needs to be taken into consideration as soon as scholarly interpretations start to become known in the field studied. As observed by Gildemeister (2001), for instance, the analytical tools with which scholars understand specific behavior are slipping into the language and self-understanding of the researched.

This “proto-professionalization” is especially evident in Wicca (or most contemporary Paganisms for that matter) because many make active use of Jungian psychological theory in their practice and rationalizations thereof (for prominent emic sources see, e.g., Crowley 2003; Farrar & Farrar 1981; Starhawk 1999), or at least put the more eclectic psychological strands and techniques to good use, not unlike what happens in various New Age traditions (Hanegraaff 1998: 482–513). In turn, the formation of the Wiccan movement is also much indebted to both academic works of history (e.g., Leland 1899; Murray 1921) and anthropology (e.g., Frazer 1922). Refutations of these classical studies and newly proposed alternative interpretations of both history (e.g., Hutton 1999) and practice (e.g.,

Luhmann 1989) have rendered the relationship with the contemporary incarnations of these disciplines highly ambivalent (Tully 2011). In fact, even more than ten years after its publication Hutton's *The Triumph of the Moon* received a very critical response in the form of the book *Trials of the Moon*, written by amateur historian and Alexandrian High Priest Ben Whitmore (2010). These continuous tensions go to show that, even if the academic world and the Wiccan world sometimes share the same the ideas, they hardly ever do so for long or at the same time to begin with.

As a fieldworker, then, I have to tread a fine line. Yet I am in good company. The complexities that come with fieldwork among Pagans have not gone unnoticed, and thus already culminated in the book *Researching Paganisms* (Blain et al. 2004). A belated response to the concerns raised by some of its contributors, my story here is an impressionist tale in John van Maanen's (2011: 101–124) rendering of the term: sketching introspective material attached to tangible episodes in the fieldwork that mark transformations in the self-understanding of the scholar. The tree walks I walked with Greencraft were the impetus for just that. In my presentation of this fieldwork, then, I emphasize my personal experiences and reflect on their meaning in terms of the observer versus the observed.

## A SLICE OF ETHNOGRAPHY: GREENCRAFT WICCA

### BACKGROUND AND PERSPECTIVES

Greencraft Wicca originated in the Alexandrian tradition: a branch of Wicca that emphasizes ceremonial magic. Its “spiritual leaders”—for lack of a better term, given its democratic nature—Arghuicha and Hera were the high priest and high priestess of Greencraft's mother coven, Corona Borealis. Greencraft soon became the dominant form of Wicca in Flanders after Arghuicha and Hera moved from Amsterdam to a small town near the Belgian border. Established 21 years ago, and acquiring legal status as a foundation only six years later, Greencraft Wicca became a tradition in its own right, and eventually branched out to the Netherlands and the U.S. (Greencraft Creations 2012a). In the U.S. they are best known for their association with Sacred Well, a Wicca organization with the formal status of a church and strong presence in the U.S. military (Adler 2006: 119–121). Even if Greencraft is sparsely mentioned by the chroniclers of Wicca (Adler 2006 and De Zutter 2003 are rare examples), it developed steadily into a large movement, while also introducing various new elements to its version of Wicca that set it apart from the rest.

The most important impulse of renewal was born out of Arghuicha's perceived lack of nature—both cosmologically and in basic awareness—in the Alexandrian tradition. In one of my interviews with him, he stated:

*Frankly, the aspect of nature religion was limited to the fact that [I and other traditional Wiccans] all liked to watch those terrific documentaries on National Geographic. [W]hen we wanted to do something in*

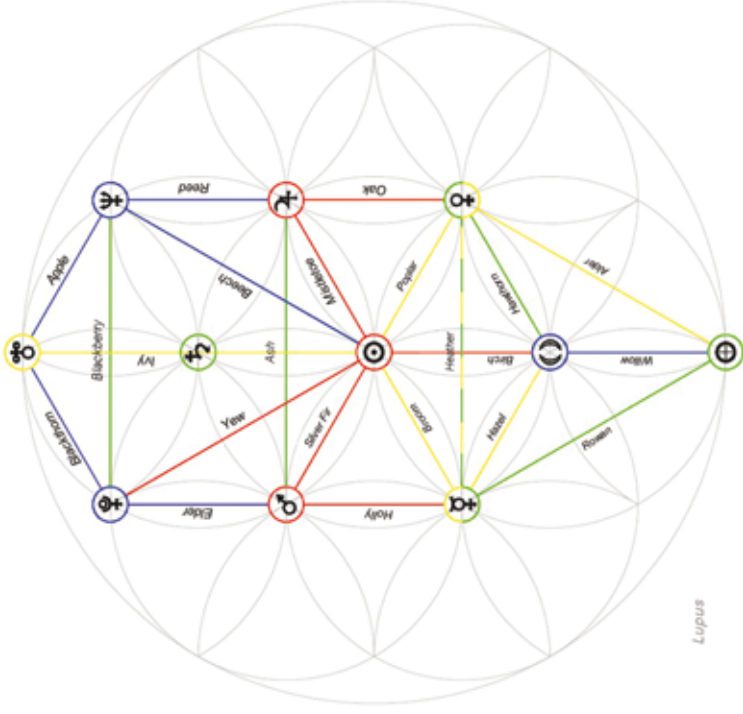
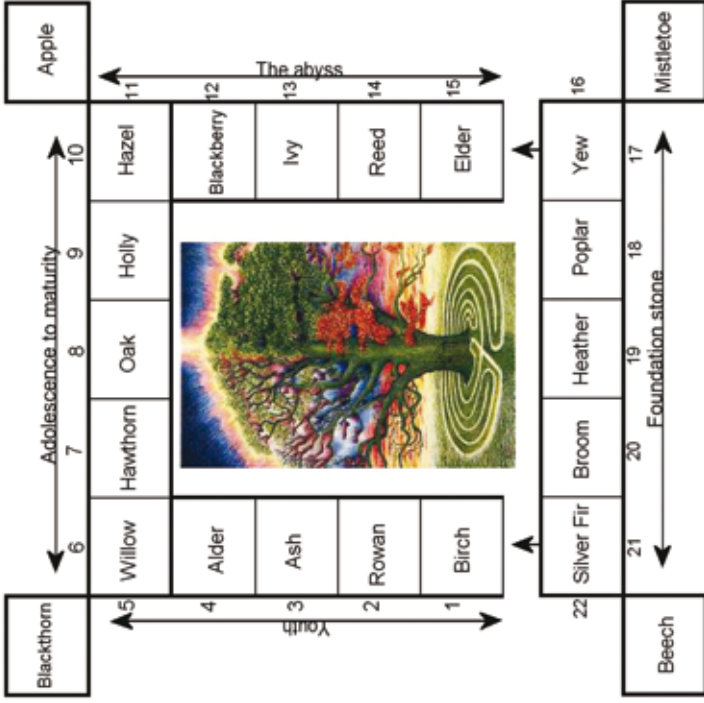


Figure 1. The tree calendar represented as a triliton (left), and superimposed on the Qabbalistic Tree-of-Life (right). Source: Adapted from *Greencraft: Handling boomwandeligen*, © Greencraft Creations, 2005. Used by kind permission.

*nature—because everyone wanted to do a ritual in nature—off we would go, packed like mules to do exactly the same as we would have done in a temple. We had to haul along all our attributes and paraphernalia. I thought that all was very weak and unsatisfactory. . . . Light[ing] torches at Ruigoord (an artistic colony near Amsterdam) with a force nine wind is not always successful, but rather than sitting behind your TV set, at least you're in the middle of a storm and experience something [first hand]. But there was no structure . . . . If [Wicca] really is a nature religion, then there have to be elements of that very nature embedded in the tradition itself. . . . From [those thoughts] Greencraft emerged.*

Dubbed the “ecological principle” (Greencraft Creations 2012b), Greencraft seeks “to build a religion in which respect and care for Nature are central.” Even if this first part of the “third aim” of the Greencraft Manifest pretty much echoes well-known Pagan ethics concerning nature, the second part hints at the intimacy with nature that Greencrafters seek, and set it apart from the other traditions: “Humans, plants, animals and megaliths are all Gaia’s children and the Sacred Landscape is Her body.” The interconnection between Gaia’s children and the adherents of Greencraft are worked out along two lines: one cosmological and one experiential.

Greencraft’s most notable addition to the Wiccan cosmology is the Celtic Tree Calendar. This element originally was constructed with obvious poetic license by Robert Graves (1948) in his book *The White Goddess*. In the calendar, the year is divided into thirteen months of twenty-eight days each which each are ruled by one tree. The consecutive months can be projected onto a representation of a trilithon. The year is broken down into three periods of four, five, and four “months” that correspond in terms of a human life with youth, adolescence to maturity, and the abyss (Hera et al. 2005; see Figure 1, left side). When one adds a foundation stone to the trilithon, and counts the corner stones as doubles (that is, count the sides of the blocks of the trilithon, rather than the blocks themselves), one ends up with the twenty-two trees that make up the Greencraft alphabet. The tree calendar can thus also be related to the Sepiroth—the system of spheres that make up the Qabbalistic Tree-of-Life—where the trees correspond with the twenty-two paths between the sephirah (Delaere 2010; see Figure 1, right side). The thirteen-month tree calendar is also featured in the experiential aspect of Greencraft’s quest for reconnecting with nature: the ritualistic tree walk.

#### THE TREE WALK

Various groups in Greencraft have their own walks, which are open to both members and nonmembers. In most cases, the participants in the tree walk will gather at a pub half an hour before the walk starts. The walks I have participated in ranged from five to fifteen persons. I noticed that, the open invitation notwithstanding, most participants are already members of Greencraft, but there are always the odd few people that are either guests of

one of the participants or even complete outsiders that want to learn about the tree walks. Regardless the status of newcomer, old hand, or even participatory observer, the welcoming is always very warm. No hands are shaken, but everyone is instantly hugged and kissed, irrespective of gender. Strictly at eight o'clock the party will leave the pub and soon a column of cars will be on its way to nearby woodland—which may be the edge of a village—where enough trees of the particular month grow.<sup>2</sup>

On my first walk, which is featured here, this was the alder. After arriving at the edge of the woodland and parking all the cars, we are all asked to take a pebble from the trunk of the vehicle of one of the elders and carry it with us. Like experienced hikers, most attendants have furnished themselves—literally—with walking stools and small backpacks. And thus, with the elders leading, we set off for our stroll. The first bit of the route is typically filled with small talk, until we are told by the leader that from a certain point the walk will continue in silence. We are also asked to attune to the natural environment, perhaps starting to ponder the significance of the esoteric meaning of the tree of the month. The alder, the featured tree, stands for self-realization.<sup>3</sup> Briefly mentioning this fact, our guide makes our minds wonder with the possible scenarios of how this characteristic is meaningful in the here and now, and without having a reference at first.

After some five to ten minutes, we stop at an open area. Here we settle on the ground. Some open their stools and others take blankets from their backpacks. The leader of the tour starts talking about the biological properties of the alder, and during his talk slowly changes from fact to traditional uses, and to folklore and fiction: what legends are attached to the alder. To give an impression of the multitude of facts and fictions: we hear of the linguistic relationship between alder and bee, of Goethe's *Erlkönig*, of Bran the Blessed, of scarecrows made of alder twigs, about its protection against witches, but also learn of its prevalence near water, its white wood and blood-red sap, and the fact that male and female fruits grow on the same tree. To the average participant, all of this information is undoubtedly too much to process in a coherent way, but this overkill seems to be exactly what the leader is aiming for.

After finishing his lecture, our guide asks us to find a nearby alder and try to make contact with it. This is perhaps the main episode on the ritual tree walk: to meditate on the tree. Some will try to find its aura, others just sit still underneath. Some have their

<sup>2</sup> From the descriptive account of my specific fieldwork onwards, I use the present tense as a mode of presentation. Although its usage has been criticized (see Sanjek 1991), I feel that my emphasis on the tree walk as a lived experience of a particular episode warrants the present tense. The tree walk is also a practice that exists in my own culture, and owes its very existence to being an attempt to distance oneself from one's social role, to partake in another. So, the problems of conventionality, predictability, and being rule-determined are, at least at this micro-level of observation, less relevant.

<sup>3</sup> Given the fact that in the Celtic Tree Calendar of the Greencraft Tradition the Alder belongs to the first pillar of the triliton, which corresponds with youth, self-realization refers to what Corsini (1999) has described as "a process or a goal of fulfilling personal potentialities, including aptitudes, goals, and capacities" (p. 879) and should not be mistaken for understanding as the attainment of the 'higher self' that the act of realization ideally strives towards.

back against the tree. Others embrace it. Some sit, some stand. Quite quickly I find “my” tree. My mind starts to race. Here I am standing near the water’s edge at a double-trunked alder. Why did I pick this tree—or did it pick me? I feel there is a significance to the double trunk: it seems to resemble my double agenda. Am I self-realizing myself as a scholar? Or am I getting involved in this particular group as a Pagan? Arghuicha’s words ring in my mind: “Beware that you might be self-realizing someone else’s self.” So integrity is an issue. Are the unwary people in the group actually pawns in my academic power game? It takes quite some time to release my thoughts, but slowly I feel more at ease with the trees. My consciousness now seems to slowly drift from these fears clad as rationalities—towards appreciating the feeling of being there, of standing against a tree, embracing it, feeling embraced by it. In my mind the rational thoughts recede and I start having hypnogogic experiences: first phosphenes emerge, and then geometric shapes in shifting colors. Eventually, moving pictures of great detail appear, of which an image of a pulsating cloud that switches between photo-negative and positive particularly strikes me, especially as it changes into an opening white rose that seems to slowly turn around its axis. Although less and less effort is required to stay in this trance-like state, there always seems to be the ability to return to the waking world.

After an unspecified period of time, I am called back to the group. Apparently I took more time than the rest, but in fact one can decide for oneself when one’s meditation is finished. The group now settles down in a circle, in the middle of which a fire is burning in a small cauldron. In the next episode, called the talking stick, we are all invited to disclose the contents of our meditation: what we saw, felt, experienced, or learned. Each in turn tells his or her story, while the others listen in silence. Now some of the elements of the myths and folklore told about the trees resurface in specific relation to certain aspects of the personal lives of the participants. One witch stated that she felt that the particular shape of her very crooked tree resembled her feeling of having to bend over backwards to avoid some negative issues that threatened her normal life. On another walk, dedicated to the oak, which stands for contracts and commitments, one attendant spoke of signing a contract that very week for his new job, while another spoke of dedicating herself to the craft. In turn, the High Priestess of another coven called Eburon, which offers its own walk, emphasized that contracts should not only be made or signed as an act of intention, but need to be lived up to as well. Seeing contracts as a social engagement, the message in her meditation was apposite to her position as the coven leader, who seeks to safeguard the collective interest.

After the stick has gone round the circle, the second “stony” leg of the tree walk starts. The various walks I participated in all varied with respect to the next episode: sometimes this will only start after another stroll, sometimes it will start directly. All participants are now asked to produce the pebble they received at the beginning from their pockets and form a standing circle. The pebbles are to be kept in the left hand, with the palm facing downwards, while they need to keep their right hand open, with the palm facing upwards,



as to be able to receive the stone from their right-hand neighbor. Then the leader starts singing the song “Faya Siton,” and soon everybody sings along.<sup>4</sup> The rhythmic accents are accompanied by handing over the stone with the left hand, while simultaneously receiving another stone with the right hand. The passing of stones is briefly interrupted each time the song comes to the refrain. Then each participant will hold the stone between the left and right hand, which are held together as if in prayer. With each stressed vowel, the participant briefly and slightly bows, as in paying respect. After that the handing-over of stones is resumed. The whole process is repeated indefinitely, but will always result in one getting one’s original stone back. “The magic has worked again!” someone will typically exclaim. Still it is common knowledge among the Greencrafters that the number of attendants is always counted beforehand, so that the required number of refrains can be sung for the stone to return to its original bearer.

Directly after “Faya Siton” we start the episode of stone singing. Each participant brings the stone to his or her mouth and starts vocalizing a single tone, altering the pitch and the distance between pebble and mouth, until the stone starts to reverberate, and the sound is no longer ours. Now the stone sings using our bodies as a resonance box. Together with this reversal in direction all the individual sounds start to attune to each other, until an undulating group intonation emerges. Arghuicha later told me that the spiritual significance of this practice is establishing contact with all the stone circles across the globe, of which the present circle now in effect is a portable version. It dawned on me that people in a circle holding stones literally *are* a stone circle. In addition to relating people to trees, then, people are also related to stones. All are thought to be the living children of the Earth Goddess, with stones being the firstborns, but the people are their midwives who delivered them from the womb and gave them their individuality.

After the stone singing, the party starts walking again, and after some fifteen minutes we reach a spot on the very edge of a residential area, where for the last time we form a circle to dance around the fire singing chants very similar to what traditional covens would do,<sup>5</sup> and eventually settling down and sharing food and drinks that pass through the circle. After an hour or so, the party heads back to the cars. The stones are returned to the leader and, after saying goodbye to each individual participant in much the same way as we were welcomed, everyone goes off into the night. Tree walks often last until after midnight!

<sup>4</sup> The original lyrics of this Surinam children’s song are as follows: “Faya siton no bron mi so, no bron mi so. Ayden Masra Jantje kiri suma pikin” (‘Glowing stone, don’t burn me, don’t burn me like that. Again Master Johnny is murdering the children’). Although the lyrics reflect the slave history of the former Dutch colony, in Greencraft the song was merely adopted because of its rhythmic quality and the fact that the lyrics are nonsensical to the average Dutch-speaking person, merely keeping one’s conscious engaged, without offering specific content. The song might have been available for adoption because it is used in some anthroposophic schools in the Netherlands, and thus known by the odd Wiccan.

<sup>5</sup> Chants like “Earth my body,” “Horned one, lover, son,” “Isis, Astarte, Diana,” and so on.

## HOW TO MAKE SENSE OF MAKING SENSE: BEATING ABOUT THE BUSH

The tree walk can best be understood as a ritual with both an *oversized and underdetermined* spatiality compared to the average Wiccan ritual, where all the action takes place in a magically drawn circle. The routes of the walks may differ given the conditions of weather and terrain, and even the location depending on the prevalence of the trees of the month. In addition, the tree walk's extraverted activity is alternated with introverted<sup>6</sup> activity more than once, while separately the focus is shifted back and forth from the natural to the social. I take the stone-singing as social-introverted, and the themed meditation as natural-introverted. The former is performed in (or better: supported by) the group, but the exclusive focus is on the personal relationship with a stone and the changes in awareness that come with the singing. The thematic meditation is performed alone and constitutes the establishment of a personal link with a tree in terms of which some of the mentally represented aspects of one's life are reassessed, reconstructed, and/or reformulated. The tree, then, acts as a transitional space between the mundane and the otherworld. For the participant, this encounter is embedded within a framework of cosmological meanings and religiously inspired codes of conduct. For me, it was a place of instant reflexivity.

## THE PLACE OF THE RESEARCHER IN THE FIELD

My musings at the water's edge, then, present a lived-through and mentally represented double hermeneutic. Somehow the meditation triggered I-positions<sup>7</sup> of both my role as a researcher and as a performer, and alternately identified me as being a researcher and doing the performance, and vice versa. This self-encounter can be contrasted with an experience of a similar ambiguity, but this time between myself as a participant observing my inner self, while knowingly being observed by outsiders. The happened on another tree walk that was radically different from all the others in terms of it being held in a built environment, and focusing on a tree not present in the calendar. In June, the month that roughly coincides with the oak, Arghuicha chose the bastions of Hulst (a Dutch town near the border with Flanders) as a very specific location for our walk. Rather than with oaks, the bastions were all lined with linden trees standing along the paths that are laid out on these bulwark's very edges. Bound to these paths, our route took an angular shape, while the pointed projections of each consecutive bastion made us face the parts we had already passed before once again turning away while walking towards the next bastion until eventually we ended up where we started: we had literally made a full circle. The juxtaposed centripetal and centrifugal movements in our walk coincided with both outlooks of myself: first as

<sup>6</sup> I understand introverted/extraverted here in the original Jungian sense as referring to attentional preference to inner, subjective states and the outer, objective world of fact, respectively (Jung 1971).

<sup>7</sup> The term "I-positions" refers to the affect-laden perception of oneself in a specific context (see Hermans 2001), whereas "social role" merely refers to the behavioral pattern that a given situation with others requires.

my own observer and then as the observed by others. Socially, I alternately turned from scholar to Pagan and back.

Even if linden trees have a similar folkloric meaning to oak, related as they are to justice (see, e.g., Thorpe 1852), and often could be found in the center of villages as the places where contracts were made, rather than following that thread of the story as a way to enter the introspective state, the notion of gossip took hold. Even if I once again had trouble focusing, that trouble in turn became a motif around which my story spun itself. Although certainly not entering in the trance state I had experienced with the alder, my rather effortful contemplations produced a feeling of exposure. Because the linden trees originally stood in the hearts of the villages and were present at all the happenings and dealings of importance, they were bound to know a lot. At times when they would have been “out of office,” merely affording shade to the villagers, they would undoubtedly overhear many stories of broken vows, adultery, petty theft, and other dirty little secrets. When a new contract was to be sealed at their trunks the next time, would they raise their proverbial eyebrow? Analogously, perhaps again my integrity as a scholar eavesdropping on these Wiccans became active in my mind again. However, for the first time seeing myself being observed by others, it then dawned on me that I had crossed a line. If there was a conflict in interpretation, it was a conflict between the tree-walkers and the locals from Hulst. The barrier was a social one—one’s role determined one’s perspective, and obviously social roles were as much cast by others as appropriated by oneself. Eventually, mainly because of the constantly alternating perspective between observer and observed, and extraverted with introverted action, my self-exposure turned into this feeling of belonging. Here I was, perhaps not going native altogether, but still rather enjoying these tree meditations, that incidentally culminated in a barbecue that day – a social-extraverted activity if ever there was one—the invitation to which felt like being accepted as a congenial spirit.

Two notions that come to mind here are Graham Harvey’s notion of guesthood, and the idea of method of compassion as coined by Jone Salomonsen (2004). The first refers to a “third” position between the dichotomy implicit in the term “participatory observation” (Harvey 2004, p. 253):

*“[G]uesthood” can label a truly phenomenological approach, acknowledging that the researcher engages with particularities, makes a difference by just being there, and should accept the responsibility entailed in dialogue and relationships. . . . It recognizes that while guests are not “natives” (or “family,” “insiders,” etc.) they are already involved and will be expected to say something respectful. . . . Guesthood research, then, does not “walk in the shoes” of the “other”; it sits across a fire and engages in mutually enlightening conversation.*

The barbecue setting provided me with the opportunity to talk about my research activity, but also stressed the commonality between fellow countrymen and neighbors, not in the least because I speak the same language. Outside the ritualistic setting, then, the differences

between my outlook on the world and theirs seemed smaller, even if I experienced differences in social distance between myself and some core members of the group to each other. In terms of sociability, then, I succeeded in the base requirement of Salomonsen's method of compassion: genuine social interaction. Resembling Harvey's take on one's position among informants, Salomonsen argues that "[c]ompassion in this context does not refer to a wholesale positive embrace, nor to passionate criticisms and arguing, but somewhere in between: to honesty. It designates an attitude in which belief is taken seriously, both cognitively and emotionally" (p. 50). In contrast to Harvey, Solomonsen advocates full magical involvement, although she states that both engagement for understanding and holding a distant view for recording are equally important.

### CONCLUSION: BARKING UP THE RIGHT TREE

Because they deal with the integrity of the researchers, these propositions suggest that the fieldworker needs to come as close as possible to the people he or she observes, without "going native." Furthermore, they call upon the responsibility of the researcher after the return from the field. Implicit in these commentaries on fieldwork is the belief in continuity of perspective, hermeneutic preference, and theoretical rigor. Although I sympathize a great deal with these reflexive outlooks, I feel that they neglect the intra-individual heterogeneity of perspective of any one person moving from one social setting to the other, and back. By sketching two impressions of my fieldwork with Greencraft—the hypnogogic experience and the feeling-of-being-watched experience—I suggest two interpretations of requirements in the tree walk setting, which seem to hold for Wicca in general and are informative regarding the character of the mutual relationship between the observer and the observed, both in the immediacy of the fieldwork experience and the ensuing relationship between the scholar and his or her informants.

#### TOWARDS ATTUNEMENT AND THE SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF

First, I would like to draw attention to the *need for attunement*. The tree walk is full of exercises and tacit rules that help make the shift from our mundane, profane, troubled, and professional selves to our sacred, cleansed, lifted, and spiritual alter egos. These techniques are hardly exclusively Greencraft's; in Wicca the ceremonies are nearly always preceded and succeeded by ritualized procedures of grounding and centering, and in a broader sense acts of secrecy and initiation obtain their significance by demarcating the sacred world within from the mundane world without (Van Gulik 2012). Wicca, then, is as much about connecting as it is about dividing and transformation. What sets the tree walks apart from the traditional rituals—in which Greencraft also engages—is that attuning to the Otherworld and returning to the mundane sphere happen two or three times during the walks. In my own case of attuning, I experienced the last vestiges of rationality receding during

my meditation at the waterside alder tree. In a sense, then and there I became “my own informant” in the words of Salomonsen (2004), even if I would argue that the associated “method of compassion” was triggered by the specific environment and helped mostly by adopting a passive, receptive stance, rather than actively pursuing honesty. In fact, the extent to which integrity became an issue equaled my initial incapacity to follow suit. Eventually, when integrity was sublimated as detached learning material resurfacing in the meditation, I was able to come to grips with it.

Attunement here touches on the second requirement, the *need for suspension of disbelief*. Although such suspension may be argued to be integral to the attunement process, I feel its significance warrants a separate discussion. A complex term, the exhaustive explanation of which is beyond the scope of this article, suspension of disbelief in the specific context of the tree meditation refers to the willingness or motivation of any participant to accept that engaging in tree meditation may produce a conversation with the tree, or with an external agent by means of the tree. More broadly, I take the term to refer to the uncritical acceptance of an interpretation as being the truth, either born out of repressing critique or not reflecting on that interpretation. The notion of the suspension of disbelief has an interesting connection with Ludwig’s Wittgenstein’s “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent,” in that logic has no place in domains of value and the meaningful (1922: 90). That is, not the truth of stories, in terms of the relationship between them and the realm of fact is important, but the message they convey. We may read Nietzsche’s (1983) “On the Use and Abuse of History for Life” on a similar note. In this essay, Nietzsche argues that history needs to have instructive quality for one’s present life, rather than suggest objectivity or a true rendering of how things originally came to pass.<sup>8</sup> Analogously, the happenings at the tree trunks, then, serve a purpose of gaining insight in one’s own life. Neither the technicalities behind communication nor any naturalistic explanation are in the interest of the meditating person; any critique such as “trees can’t talk” misses the point. Just as Terry Pratchett’s term “lie-to-children” describes, teaching is aimed at creating a basic understanding of what is happening in terms of the religious outlook, and that is eventually sufficient, in turn, to explain the technique to others, without standing in the way of remaining receptive to experiencing communication (Pratchett et al. 2002).<sup>9</sup>

#### THE DOUBLE HERMENEUTIC

Where does all this leave the problem of the double hermeneutic and the mutual influence between the researcher and the researched? In retrospect, I feel the double hermeneutic poses less of a threat than is often suggested. When studying religious groups in a Western context, the researcher and the researched have gone through comparable enculturation

<sup>8</sup> Such a take on history as a discipline can be linked to the justification of poetic myth (see, e.g., Graves 1948).

<sup>9</sup> The use of Pratchett’s work to understand Paganism in general, or trace some of its sentiments, beliefs, and practices, has been noted earlier (see Harvey 2000).

processes. Even if they do not share all cultural values, rules, and tacit knowledge, their sensitivity to these is arguably similar. These commonalities are often seen as a methodological threat to proper ethnographic observation, in that one is likely to miss potentially important details that are too easily taken for granted (Wolcott 1994: 177–178). Yet the very embeddedness in a common culture of both researcher and informant makes divergent subcultural characteristics and contexts all the more notable, especially when these contexts are elaborately set apart from mundane life. That is, both the participating researcher and the adherents are going through the same phase of transformation each time one partakes in ritual activity. Reservations, reluctance, and perhaps even concentration problems are part and parcel of the stubborn nature of the postmodern individual, so overcoming these are not uncommon tasks for any high priest or priestess. The double hermeneutic, then, may be a tension between social roles, which is theoretically present in both researcher and adherent, rather than primarily between them.

Tanya Luhrmann (1989) was the first to observe this tension, when she asked herself why rational westerners would believe in magic. To answer the question, she used Leon Festinger's (1956) cognitive dissonance theory. This theory states that people seek to reduce the incompatibilities between one's attitude and one's behavior. Even if she appreciates the fact that adherents seem to offer different explanations of the experiences and magical results, depending on their audience (Luhrmann 1989: 270–271), she misses the point that these people on the whole will not always look upon themselves as “magicians.” By exclusively relying here on data in which Wiccans are talking among themselves about the borders between the mundane and the magical, she introduced a level of self-consciousness that is the exception rather than the rule. She thereby muddled the internal heterogeneity of individuals in terms of the differences in cognitive styles, beliefs, motives, and so forth, depending on the demand characteristics of the social setting in which they are embedded.<sup>10</sup> The only place where the double hermeneutic may rear its ugly head is when the suspension of disbelief extends to the world outside, where others do not agree with the belief system. The clashing worldviews there, however, need not be those of the researcher and the researched—that is, as long as the scholar is neither aimed at reductionism to explain away the system of belief, nor is going native and turning the research process into an apologetic exercise. The only way to avoid these dangers is to adopt a stance of *radical methodological agnosticism*, which might be considered the deskwork version of the *suspension of disbelief* that is required during fieldwork.

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<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that some social settings require more than one role being played at a time. This is sometimes referred to as “divided consciousness,” which for instance allegedly occurs in trance states, where there seems to be an inner self that remains vigilant. In one of my interviews, a high priestess told me that even when the Goddess is invoked in her she would keep an eye on all the participants to see if everyone was concentrating and if anybody needed any help.

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## ZNANSTVENIK PROTI POGANU PRI OBRAVNAVI HOJE OKROG DREVES V OKVIRU POGANSKE TRADICIJE »GREENCRAFT«. SPOZNAVANJE, PREDSTAVA IN INTERPRETACIJA

*Avtor v besedilu poskuša: (1) prispevati k razpravi o medsebojnem vplivu med raziskovalcem in raziskovanim s perspektive raziskovalca; (2) ponuditi pregled Greencrafta in oblikovati kratko etnografijo njihove ritualne hoje okrog dreves; (3) na kratko predstaviti koncept tranzicijskega (ali kakor-da-bi) sveta. S tem avtor zasnuje teoretsko ozadje za podlago in pomoč pri povezo- vanju naštetih ciljev. Pojma reflektivnost in reaktivnost, skupaj z dvojno hermenevotiko, nas – še posebej v kontekstu religioznih študij – opozarjata na vprašanje, kako naj se raziskovalec poveže z raziskovanimi. S pomočjo impresionistične pripovedi, ki raziskovalca umešča v polje med akademskim in poganskim svetom, poskuša avtor prikazati, kako je dvojna hermenevotika bolj težava posameznika in ne toliko obeh skupin. Ritualna hoja okrog dreves, njen opis je jedro raziskave, prikaže, da se tako raziskovalec kot pripadniki vsakokrat, ko se prestopijo iz posvetne v sveto sfero in nazaj srečajo z enako tranzicijo. Avtor reflektira svoja doživljanja in občutja; o razmerju med raziskovalcem in raziskovanim so prav ta doživetja največ povedala. Ob primerjavi svojega dela z delom drugih raziskovalcev poganstva razpravlja o pojmu gostovanje in postaja sam svoj informator. Ob upoštevanju lastnih izkušenj meditacij ob drevesih avtor sklene, da sta prilagoditev in razrešitev dvomov nepogrešljivi zahtevi, ki veljata tako za raziskovalca kot za raziskovane, tj. pripadnike gibanja.*

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Leon van Gulik - Narrating the Dutch migration of Wicca through an in-depth interview with Morgana Sythove. Plovdiv 2012. (photo: j. Filčák)

# PERFORMERS AND RESEARCHERS IN NEO-PAGAN SETTINGS

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KAMILA VELKOBORSKÁ

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*In neo-pagan and magical settings, the traditional distinction between the anthropologist and the “others” disappears due to the fact that researchers and performers tend to have the same ethnic background, social position, and level of formal education. Author has identified main approaches towards magic used by anthropologists.*

Keywords: neo-pagan, magic, unverified personal gnosis, secrecy, participation, ritual

*V novopoganskih in magičnih okoljih ni več tradicionalne razlike med antropologom in »drugimi«, saj imajo raziskovalci in izvajalci pogosto enako etnično ozadje, družbeno pozicijo in stopnjo formalne izobrazbe. Avtorica je izpostavila osnovne antropološke poglede na magijo*

Ključne besede: novopogansko, magija, nepreverjeno osebno, spoznanje, tajnost, udeležeba

Seeing magic as delusion is a legacy of the Enlightenment. It is based on the claim that only the physical world is ontologically real and that magic, “the purported art of influencing the course of events through occult means” (Barnard & Spencer 2002: 340), is characteristic of “primitive” people. The general understanding of magic as delusion lasted until the 1970s and 1980s, when a number of anthropologists began to open up to the phenomenon and to focus on the emic perspective and participation in their research.

Until that time, magical practice was hidden from the sight of the general public. High magic, also called ceremonial magic, belonged to the domain of the elite, whereas low magic, also called witchcraft, was practiced by members of the agricultural populations of the rural areas of Europe. The 1970s and 1980s saw an explosive spread of magical practice among the middle classes in the West. These newly emerging magic-practicing circles of city dwellers constituted a new field for anthropologists, who had to adapt to completely new circumstances.

The first thing the field researcher of contemporary Western magic has to face is the fact that he or she is indistinguishable from his or her field. (see Luhrmann 1989; Evans & Green 2009) Apart from having the same ethnic and social background, practitioners of magic tend to have a high level of formal education and hold professional jobs (very often in secondary education or university positions or professions connected with information technologies), but they are also very well self-educated in history, religious studies, and anthropology, the researcher’s own field. Some have degrees in or are students of anthropology or religious studies. They write articles and books, they organize conferences, participate in symposiums and talks, and so on.

The “others” are traditionally described as the people observed by anthropologists and not really knowing what they are doing. Usually they seem to be more or less blindly

following a tradition they were born into. In neo-pagan and magical settings, this is not the case. The contemporary Western practitioners of magic know very well what they are doing and why they are doing it. As a result, in a meeting between a beginner anthropologist and an experienced magician, the balance of capacities and knowledge of the subject may lean towards the magician. The informant becomes a consultant and advisor.

Another problem to be faced by an anthropologist trained to become a participant observer is that magic is a mental process and therefore it is invisible. Moreover, magical practice tends to be private and often secret. Privacy, secrecy, and the inner, hidden nature of magic make the phenomenon non-observable by a common anthropologist (there is nothing much the anthropologist may see) even if he or she is lucky enough to be allowed to observe the magical ritual—and that is not very likely. Participant observation—with the emphasis on participation—is the only way to gain relevant data.

The third problem causing the intangibility of magic is the fact that there is very little dogma or no dogma at all surrounding magical practice. The practitioners are familiar with ancient and recent grimoires as well as books written by eminent magicians and anthropologists, and many (but not all) use them in their magical practice. The core of magical practice today, as I have come to know it, lies in so-called UPG, or unverified personal gnosis. UPG is achieved in altered states of consciousness such as meditation, trance, or direct insight. The very nature of UPG makes grasping it from a rational scientific perspective impossible, but at the same time it claims to be authentic.

Apart from these problems—the absence of difference between the researcher and practitioner, invisibility and non-observability of the phenomenon studied, and its claim of authenticity based on UPG—there is one practical but no less significant problem. The willingness of anthropologists to gain relevant data through participation may be limited or blocked by their fear of losing their academic position by appearing irrational, or losing the trust of the subjects when portraying *them* as irrational and as a consequence making the situation difficult for other anthropologists to come. To put it simply, the uneasy position of the anthropologist studying magic in the academy reflects the uneasy relationship between magic and science.

#### FOUR PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS OF MAGIC

Before moving to the four possible ways to deal with magic, I would like to present four main philosophical concepts of magic, elaborated by Josef Veselý in his book *Magic* (2008 [2001]), which I find very useful. It shows that what practitioners of magic claim to do— influence or manipulate reality—can be done in four distinct ways. Some of these ways are incompatible with the scientific approach, but some are more compatible and go to meet the anthropological researcher halfway. Needless to say, these approaches rarely occur in their pure form; they are constructs, or conceptual tools to be used in works such as this one.

## 1. THE DEMONOLOGICAL CONCEPT

As explained by Veselý, the demonological concept of magic is the oldest and at its core is the assumption that the surrounding world is inhabited by real beings such as spirits, demons, and so on. The magician's task is to gain access to this world and make contact with these beings, to learn about them, and to make them into friends or servants. Entry is only possible in altered states of consciousness, such as meditation or trance. The world is ruled by its own laws, so anyone wishing to enter and control the entities and powers inhabiting it must master these laws. Such a connection is not without risks, "as anyone familiar with Dr. Faust's story knows" (Veselý 2008: 21).<sup>1</sup>

This concept was highly regarded during the Renaissance and a number of occultists of the twentieth century grounded their work upon this concept.<sup>2</sup> It is also characteristic of shamanism.

The demonological concept is incompatible with the scientific approach because it acknowledges the existence of a separate and independent world inaccessible in the everyday state of consciousness. A scholar cherishing objectivity and safe distance and lacking personal experience can do nothing but speak about irrational beliefs and illusions.

## 2. ENERGETIC CONCEPT

This concept is based on the idea of the invisible *life force*. The teaching of life force in Europe has two different sources. Around 1800, there was the reemergence of the belief that body and soul are not strictly divided and attention turned again to the energies and processes inside human body. The teaching about life force also came to Europe from the East in the form of teaching about chakra and prana. The energetic concept reached its greatest popularity in the 1960s in the English-speaking world due to depth psychology, which spread all around the world after the Second World War (Veselý 2008: 22).

In its purest form (which is rare), the energetic concept does away with spirituality. As expressed by Veselý: "The magician is no longer a conjuror of demons, but rather an artist working with energies" (2008: 22). He or she has to be able to perceive subtle energies, and polarize and direct them. The techniques of working with energies have also been used by magicians working within the demonological concept. They are also embraced by systems where the ritual circle is created within which the practitioners generate and send energy; for example, Wicca. To give another example, the energetic concept is employed by magicians that become involved in magical battles. As my informant explained to me, the winner in these battles is the energetically stronger magician. Technically, this means either sending destructive energy to the enemy (e.g., martial energy) or drawing the energy out of him or her, "eating him out energetically."<sup>3</sup> Needless to say at this point, energy is claimed to be morally neutral; it can be used in both black magic and healing.

<sup>1</sup> All quotations originally in Czech are the author's translation.

<sup>2</sup> For example, the Czech magician Franz Bardon, the English Hermetic order of the Golden Dawn, and the German order O.T.O. (Ordo Templi Orientis; Veselý 2008: 21).

<sup>3</sup> Male, 26 years old, professional artist and independent magician.

Working with energies is also too intangible for the scientific approach based on objectivity and observation.

### 3. PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCEPT

At the core of this concept is the idea that the spirit is capable of having an effect on the body. The roots of this concept are linked with the names of Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung. In fact, this concept stands between demonological and energetic. Like the energetic concept, it is homocentric but it works with demons too. The difference is that these demons are not endowed with outer, objective existence, but with an existence that is inner and subjective. In other words, magic is still magic and works on the basis of the same mechanisms—only it is placed inside the human psyche (Vesely 2008: 24).

This concept is based on the assumption that within our psyche there operates a kind of undefined mechanism responsible for achieving desired results in the outer world. Almost all contemporary writers on magic, including anthropologists, use this model. As noted by Vesely, no one really explains why and in what way our subconscious performs these “miracles,” but they are taken for granted. In other words, this is a pragmatic approach. It does not aim to explain magic; it only points out to the fact that “manipulation with the psyche yields results” (Vesely 2008: 24).

The advantage of the psychological concept of magic—in the form of speaking about *the powers of the subconscious*—is that it is much more comprehensible and acceptable for contemporary Western people (including anthropologists) than belief in spirits and demons or “playing” with energies. As such, it stands between rigorous science and magic, and that is why it is frequently employed by anthropologists studying magic. The disadvantage, however, as shall be seen shortly, is that it is merely a compromise. Because it does not really explain magic, such writing is not approved of by rigorous science.

### 4. THE INFORMATION CONCEPT

The core of this concept lies in the idea that “energy acts only through information which in a certain way ‘tells’ it how to behave” (Vesely 2008: 25). Information is unlimited by time and space because it has no matter or energy. The foundations of “cybermagic” were formulated in the 1980s and developed in a close contact with chaosmagic.<sup>4</sup>

Within this concept, the magician does not need to maintain a good relationship with spirits, have a substantial energetic capacity, know about the “powers of the subconscious,” or master the techniques of visualization. All he or she needs is to “master the techniques of raising and transmitting information” (Vesely 2008: 25). As an illustration of the information concept, one can use “sigil magic.” Sigil magic claims to be one of “the most effective and economical magical disciplines” (Fratr V.D. 2010: 25). Without the need for complicated rituals or magical props, the magician formulates a wish and on the basis

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<sup>4</sup> For more information, see Peter J. Carrol’s *Liber Null & Psychonaut: An Introduction to Chaos Magic* (1987).

of this formulation he or she creates a kind of a seal: the sigil. This sigil then works as a password, as a gate to the entrance. This technique resembles programming languages with addresses of systems and web pages. Both computer icons and sigils lead to the desired goal and only need to be activated by the user or magician. The magician is not familiar with the processes at work between the activation of the sigil and achieving the desired goal. All he or she has to do is to create an appropriate sigil and activate it accurately.

The operations of cyber or information magic are not acts of imagination in the sense of mental magic; they merely deal with information (Vesely 2008: 25). Unsurprisingly, the users of the information concept tend to be the IT experts. There are not many anthropological works dealing with this concept yet.

#### FOUR SCHOLARLY APPROACHES TO MAGIC

I decided to include such a lengthy introduction and to present Vesely's philosophical concepts of magic to show the great complexity of magical practice, which is well known in the magical community but not obvious from anthropological articles and books on magic, where the picture of magical practice is often reduced and simplified and based on selected information. The reason is the lack of relevant data because traditional accounts of magic tend to deal with second-hand information about the magical practices of the "others." These are based on the premise that magic is a delusion and will be dealt with in subsection 1, whereas subsection 2 will deal with more recent research based on participant observation and first-hand data combined with the magic-as-delusion premise.

The accounts of magic that offer a more favorable portrayal of magic, however, are not representative of the ideal way to deal with this uneasy topic; on the contrary, going through their "teething pains," they have to face new limits and problems. Trying to portray magic using scientific means, these approaches tend to be selective in their choice of field. As shall be seen in subsection 4, practitioners of the philosophical concepts of magic incompatible with science are usually ignored. One of the interim solutions to the problem is to not try to solve the problem at all and to deal with magic and science as two authentic but incompatible ways of seeing the world (subsection 3).

The four main scholarly approaches to magic can therefore be divided into two groups. One group is traditionally conceived studies dealing with either second-hand or first-hand information about magical practices, focused on the etic perspective and seeing magic as a delusion. The other two work with first-hand data gained through participation and personal experience; the focus is on the emic perspective and magic is seen as real.

##### 1. MAGIC AS DELUSION: OBSERVATION WITHOUT PARTICIPATION

The first approach emphasizes objectivity and the etic perspective. Magic is seen as a delusion and a survival from less-developed times, and as such it is sharply contrasted

with science and it is believed it will become extinct soon. Instead of participant observation, mere observation or no observation is used. The data gained in this way are distorted and superficial; usually they include a careful description of the reported ritual behavior. If the inner working of magic is described, it usually reflects the pre-held theory of the author.

The best-known representative of this approach is the British classical anthropologist James George Frazer (1853–1941). He saw magic as occupying the bottom position of the evolutionary ladder, to be replaced by religion and eventually by “true” science. Needless to say, despite his lack of fieldwork and the bias shared by most scholars working in his time and thinking within the evolutionary paradigm, his understanding of sympathetic magic, especially his description of magic as similar to science, is largely compatible with magic practitioners’ view of the matter.<sup>5</sup>

The remnants of this approach can be distinguished in the growing number of theses by students of anthropology and religious studies whose work is a result of desktop study, including sophisticated work with on-line sources, such as web pages of magic groups (those that have them) combined with quantitative research (sending out questionnaires) or limited qualitative research (interviews with a small number of informants). Very rarely do they come to the field and meet their subjects or even participate in a ritual.<sup>6</sup>

The position is also held by anthropologists with interests more tangible than magic. For example, one of my gender-studies colleagues is truly terrified by what (she imagines) I do: “Be careful, these people might try to convert you!” she warned me on one occasion.

The positive aspect of such an approach is the high level of objectivity and clarity. The negatives are the lack of core data and emphasis on the outer (describable) side of magical phenomena. A patronizing tone is typical of such works. The practitioners themselves talk about such authors as about scholars who “do not really understand.”

## 2. MAGIC AS DELUSION: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

This magic-as-delusion approach is most valued in the academy, despite the risk that their proponents might end up on the black list of the practitioners and the anthropologists that follow them. They win prestige in the academy because they manage to combine the emic and etic perspectives well: to play the role of the insider while remaining an objective outsider. This approach fulfills the ideals of modern anthropological research.

The best-known example of this approach is a widely debated book by the American psychological anthropologist Tanya Luhrmann: *Persuasions of the Witch’s Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* (1989). Over the span of fourteen months of her fieldwork in London in the 1980s, Luhrmann was initiated into four secret groups, most of them

<sup>5</sup> For example, Gareth Knight, a distinguished authority on Western mystery tradition and Qabalistic symbolism, claims that the “mystical is practical *religious* experience of an inner nature, and magical is practical *scientific* experience of an inner nature” (Knight 2010 [1975]: 9–10), my italics.

<sup>6</sup> One reason is obviously a lack of time.



Wiccan, and became a member of a great number of others. From the point of view of the amount of fieldwork material collected and the quality of its theoretical background, Luhrmann's book is an impressive and unique ethnography deservedly appreciated in the academy. The problem comes with the formulation of the research question. As described by Luhrmann:

*[t]his study looks at ordinary middle-class English people who become immersed in a netherworld of magic and ritual, and asks a classic anthropological question: why do they practice magic when, according to observers, the magic doesn't work? (Luhrmann 1989: 4)*

The question is answered by a description of a process of gradual shift from the "normal" to "abnormal," called *interpretive drift*. When apparently normal (which is supposed to mean middle-class, rational and well-educated) people become involved in magic they start a process of gradually becoming used to abnormality and thus becoming deluded. The idea of interpretive drift presupposes that the magic practitioner comes to magic as a kind of magical *tabula rasa*, ready to be "reprogrammed" from the scientific paradigm to the magical paradigm. It certainly fits well with Luhrmann's own history (1989: 318–322) and it seems to harmonize, although more loosely, with Luhrmann's informants' stories as she describes them, but it certainly cannot be applied generally.<sup>7</sup>

Another problem common to all academic writing about controversial topics and dealing with people is that it may raise controversial reactions in the people dealt with. Although some practitioners that are knowledgeable of the character of academic writing accepted the book as it was and appreciated its undeniable achievements,<sup>8</sup> some practitioners Luhrmann came into close contact with felt betrayed by being portrayed in such an unfavorable light and suspicious of any "sympathetic" outsider. For example, the anthropologist Joanne Pearson, when trying to obtain access to magic groups in the 1990s, had to face these kinds of reactions: "you're not going to do another Tanya [Luhrmann] on us are you?" (Evans & Green 2009).

Research of this type is impossible today, at least in the context of central Europe and particularly the Czech Republic, which I am familiar with. Magical practitioners both organized in covens and as individuals are much more secretive and closed today, and some also tend to be suspicious of anthropologists. Many are simply uninterested in cooperation. Moreover, speaking about traditional Wicca, it is no longer possible to receive training in more than one coven simultaneously, and gaining access to this group or even being accepted for training is lengthy, difficult, and uncertain.

<sup>7</sup> For example, the idea of interpretive drift cannot be applied to the life stories of my informants, who were magicians practicing in the Czech Republic at the beginning of the twenty-first century, usually unorganized and whose practice is not based on external knowledge gained at courses (which they rarely attend) but rather on personal gnosis developed since early childhood, combined with reading and magical experiments.

<sup>8</sup> Wouter Hanegraaf, professor of the history of hermetic philosophy (personal conversation, 20 March 2012, Nijmegen, Holland).

When I asked my British informants about this shift, I was told that the 1980s were still early days and the practitioners were open and eager to share some of their beliefs and practices, desiring the approval of mainstream society. Today, after the popularity of magical practice and witchcraft has grown in recent years, the practitioners are much more confident and do not seem to feel the need for approval anymore. The magicians tend to be tolerant, knowledgeable, and friendly people but there are moments when one perceives an air of superiority over the “other people” (including anthropologists) who “do not know.”

In the context of contemporary witchcraft and magical practice, as I have come to know it in the Czech Republic and partially in Austria, the performers and researchers have swapped positions.<sup>9</sup> Being an anthropologist does not open doors; on the contrary, anthropologists must first prove credible and worthy, and in many cases even prove “magical skills” before they are allowed to enter—and even then entry should not be taken for granted. Before they begin their participant observation, anthropologists find themselves in the uncomfortable position of being observed, tested, and evaluated, and very carefully at that.

### 3. MAGIC AS REAL: PARTICIPATION

At the core of this approach, which is rare among anthropologists, is a simple assumption that magic deals with the transcendental and as such it stands beyond the limits of everyday and scientific experience. The representative of this approach is Milan Nakonečný, a Czech professor of psychology, who has published a number of books on magic and hermetism. In his book *Magie v historii, teorii a praxi* (Magic in Theory, History, and Practice) he claims that “the transcendental cannot become the object of science” (2009: 15) and that the theories formulated by cultural anthropology, for example, drew on a distorted conception of magic (e.g., from the system of superstition)<sup>10</sup> and do not speak about magic per say, which cannot be squeezed into the scientific (physicalistic) conception of reality.

*Reality as conceived by science is based on the imaginary postulate of perceptivity of objects, which is determined by the well-known senses, possibly equipped with devices such as microscopes and telescopes . . . and logical thinking within precisely demarcated concepts determined by scientifically recognized modes and principles such as the principle of causality. . . . Reality as conceived by science is only a consensus achieved by means of strict rules about what the outer world looks like.* (Nakonečný 2009: 17)

The attempts to explain magic by science are therefore doomed to fail as the magic world transcends the world construed by empirical science (Nakonečný 2009: 16). It is not a mere

<sup>9</sup> It is important to point out, however, that I am speaking here about magical activities performed by closed working groups and covens. Obviously it is not a problem in the least to attend public courses or open rituals.

<sup>10</sup> By the *systems of superstition* the magicians practicing “high magic” commonly mean the “low magic” of witches (witchcraft), which they tend to set themselves apart from.

hallucination, but the world inaccessible by conventional forms of knowing. The magical and scientific view of the world are two distinct cognitive structures that represent two distinct worlds (Nakonečný 2009: 19). In other words, magic and science are like two sides of one coin: one can see one or the other, but not both at the same time.

Nakonečný claims that all attempts by science to penetrate the essence of the magical world using its methods of learning are vain because they were developed to study only the “reality” as construed by science and not the worlds beyond. The only exception is the analytical and depth psychology of Carl Gustav Jung or transpersonal psychology, disciplines whose scientific authority is often questioned by more rigorous sciences (Nakonečný 2009: 18–19).

However much I respect and share this conception of magic, it creates more problems than solutions and it offers no opportunities to the fieldwork anthropologist. Following this logic, an anthropologist wishing to study magic using the common tools of the social sciences is told that it is not possible at all. An anthropologist able to enter the magical world can do so only using means quite unscientific. So the problem remains: how to transmit that knowledge to the scientific and public audience? Is there any bridge to cross the deep chasm between the two visions of the world?

#### 4. MAGIC AS REAL: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

A number of contemporary anthropologists claim to have found such a bridge, among them the British anthropologist Susan Greenwood, who has published a series of books on the topic: *Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld* (2000), *The Nature of Magic* (2005), and *The Anthropology of Magic* (2009). Her method of bridging the gap between the subjective experience of magic and the anthropological observation is to become a translator between these two (as she says) seemingly incompatible and incomprehensible languages (Greenwood 2009: 2).

According to Greenwood, with modernity came the opportunity to study magic from the position of a scientist that is a magical practitioner at the same time. The revival of witchcraft, paganism, and the practice of magic is one of the evident processes of modernity and as such it must be dealt with in a completely novel way: no longer as an activity performed by less developed “others” or our own ancestors in pre-modern times. As expressed by Greenwood herself, “it is now increasingly being employed as a counterpoint to liberal understandings of modernity’s rational progress” (2009: 2).

The bridge Greenwood is employing is psychological and she does this by claiming that “magical processes of mind are fuelled through emotion” (Greenwood 2009: 3). To illustrate her point, she summarizes a well-known psychological experiment in which students are asked to stir sugar powder (from a commercially labeled sugar box) into two glasses with clean water and then to attach to one of them the label *sucrose* and to the other one *sodium cyanide – poison*. The participants then have very negative feelings toward the glass labeled poison and many are reluctant to drink out of it. There is no logical reason for such

a feeling. What happens is that an association is created. The word labeling the glass seems to be linked to the nature of the content of the glass (Greenwood 2009: 45). Associative thought stands at the core of sympathetic magic; this “mistaken association of ideas” (as Frazer put it a century ago) as the “fatal flaw of magic” (Frazer 1998: 49) is commonly used by contemporary Western people, Greenwood claims, whether they believe it or not.

Greenwood’s strategy is not to explain the inner working of magic, but to show that it “is a universal aspect of human consciousness; it is inherent in the mind . . . Magic is alive” (Greenwood 2009: 4). She follows this statement with the introduction of the term *magical consciousness*, a term that she uses “to describe a mythopoetic, expanded aspect of awareness that can potentially be experienced by everyone” (Greenwood 2009: 4). By claiming the universality of magic, Greenwood explicitly suggests nothing less than a “transformation of anthropological understanding” of magic. To achieve this goal, she insists that “magic has to be recognized as a legitimate form of knowledge” (Greenwood 2009: 4).

What Greenwood is doing is not trying to persuade readers about the efficacy of magic or explain it, but instead to show them that they have, in fact, always been using magic, and are using magic, but they do not call it magic.

## CONCLUSION

From the examples I used in this paper, it is evident that anthropologists and other scholars avoid explaining magic and, when they do explain it, they do not claim that the explanation is scientific. Writing about it, they can approach it from two basic positions. When they present it as delusion, they can describe its outer form and offer hypotheses of why people mistakenly believe in its efficacy and practice it. In this context, magic is seen as a survival from earlier stages of human evolution and a domain of the less-developed part of the population (Frazer) or of “normal” and rational people (at first sight) that become deluded in the process of getting used to it (Luhrmann). When magic is presented as a real and legitimate way of knowing and seeing the world, it is presented either as distinct from and incompatible with science (Vesely) or as universal to humanity and a feature of modernity describable by psychology (Greenwood).

Using psychology as a tool when dealing with magic is common among those writing about this topic. Obviously, this does not refer to a specific kind of psychology, but to psychology in the most general sense. This unspecified psychology dealing with emotions and processes of the human mind seems to be the best bridge over the gap between these two ways of perceiving and relating oneself to the world and reality. To do that, scholars choose subjects that either themselves work within the framework of the psychological concept of magic or they focus on the part of their practice where they employ this concept. As a result, much has been written about pagans, druids, and contemporary witches and Wiccans as using Jungian psychology. The work of chaos magicians or postmodern

experimental magicians working within demonological, energetic, and information concepts, which are much less compatible with science, as well as the Wiccan work within these concepts, remain largely unexplored.

Psychology is used by both anthropologists seeing magic as delusion and those seeing it as real. In the first case (and my example), psychology explains the way how apparently rational people may delude themselves and accept as normal that which is abnormal (from the position of mainstream society and the anthropologist) and become irrational believers in magic. In the second case, psychology is used to explain that associative thinking, typical for some kinds of magic, is common to all people, that it is in fact only another way of knowing that everybody uses and should therefore be recognized as legitimate. However, there are still scholars that believe that psychology does not explain anything and that the gap is unbridgeable because magic and science deal with two distinct and independent sections of the world and do not overlap.

To conclude, it is evident that as a consequence of the emergence of the new anthropologist's field, the anthropological paradigm for dealing with magical practice is changing. Or, perhaps better, its homogeneity is dissolving. It is still too early to predict exactly what it will look like in the years to come, but there are hints from both magical and academic circles that a more accurate bridge replacing psychology is in view. Nevertheless, it is still valid, and it is my personal direction too, to proceed in the study of contemporary magical practice from the position suggested by E. E. Evans-Pritchard in his famous study of the Azande. This position is based on the idea that there is no universally valid matrix for consideration of the validity or "truth" of what people do. Human actions and practices are seen as meaningful and "true" in their contexts: scientific ones in the context of science, and magical in the context of magic. From this point of view, the above categorization based on the belief in the efficacy of magic seems irrelevant, the change in the anthropological field only minor, and the positions of Luhrmann and Nakonečný compatible. After all, magic is not about belief but about practice. The anthropologist's task is not to explain magic, but to show how this practice makes sense in the given context, be it a context of a traditional magic-appreciating society or a context of contemporary practitioners in Europe.

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## IZVAJALCI IN RAZISKOVALCI V KONTEKSTU NOVEGA POGANSTVA

*V novopoganskih in magičnih okoljih ni več tradicionalne razlike med antropologom in »drugimi«, saj imajo raziskovalci in izvajalci pogosto podobno etnično ozadje, družbeno pozicijo in stopnjo formalne izobrazbe. Zato se pojavi nov problem: kako ravnati in razumeti tako prakticiranje magije kot tudi druge aktivnosti, ki pomenijo središče življenja mnogim sodobnim poganom, torej prakse, ki so jih tradicionalno dojemali in obravnavali kot iluzije. Avtorica je izpostavila dve osnovni dojemnji, ki ju antropologi zavzemajo ob stiku z magijo: pasivno, z opazovanjem z udeležbo, ali aktivno, s sodelovanjem lahko prakse obravnavajo kot iluzije ali razumejo in predstavljajo kot resnične. Ob iskanju odgovora na vprašanje o magičnih praksah avtorica poudarja, da v teh primerih ne gre toliko za verovanje kot za prakse same. Antropologova naloga ni razložiti magijo, temveč razumeti, kako so te prakse smiselne v določenem kontekstu, naj gre za družbo, ki take prakse spoštuje, ali za skupine sodobnih izvajalcev v Evropi in Ameriki.*

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# IN SEARCH OF THE 'FOLK CHARACTER' WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN FOLK, THE PROFESSION, AND SCHOLARSHIP

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MOJCA KOVAČIČ

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*Public Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for Cultural Activities (JSKD) is the main actor of the current cultural policy in the field of folklore activities in Slovenia. Guidelines of reinterpretation of dance and music traditions are formed by amateurs dealing with folklore, as well as scholars are invited to participate. After the historical review of the cultural policy in Slovenia, the article, based on interviews with performers of musical tradition, reveals the adjustments that musicians are making for the performances organized and supervised by JSKD. It also shows their attitude towards the given guidelines and reveals how much the competitiveness or actual desire for 'authentic' interpretation of folk music heritage influence such adjustments.*

Keywords: folk musicians, cultural policy, folk music criteria, researchers.

*Javni sklad RS za kulturne dejavnosti (JSKD) je danes glavni akter kulturne politike na področju folklorne dejavnosti v Sloveniji. Smernice za poustvarjanje plesne in glasbene tradicije oblikujejo tako amaterji, ki se ljubiteljsko ukvarjajo s folklorno dejavnostjo, kot tudi raziskovalci ljudske glasbe in plesa. Članek po uvodnem historičnem pregledu delovanja kulturne politike v Sloveniji, na podlagi intervjujev z ljudskimi godci, odkriva, kako se glasbeniki prilagajajo smernicam, kadar nastopajo na prireditvah, ki jih organizira Javni sklad. Prav tako je predstavljen in interpretiran njihov odnos do danih smernic in vpliv konkurenčnosti oziroma dejanske želje po »verodostojni« interpretaciji ljudske glasbene dediščine na tovrstne spremembe.*

Ključne besede: ljudski glasbeniki, kulturna politika, kriteriji ljudske glasbe, raziskovalci

## THE IMPACT OF RESEARCHERS: A HISTORICAL VIEW

In Slovenia there has always been significant relation between folk-music performers and folk-music researchers, and it is hierarchically weighted toward the researchers. One could say that researchers were and still are today the important shapers of cultural policy regarding folk-music culture. The beginning of this synergy can be traced to the time when France Marolt was active as an ethnographer, choir director, composer, and the founder of what is today the Institute of Ethnomusicology. Marolt had a significant impact on shaping the public perception of Slovenian folk music, both through his intervention in dance-group activities (which were beginning to form into folklore groups during that time) and through his arrangements of folk music. As early as 1935 Marolt held a "Carinthia Day" and the next year a "White Carniola Day" in Ljubljana, two public folk dance festivals. He continued this work with the Maribor Folklore Festival in 1939.<sup>1</sup> However, his intentional preservation of folk music and dance tradition also led to forgery of 'original' materials due to the "emphasis on Slovenian authenticity at all costs" (Kumer 1991: 16). At the same

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<sup>1</sup> The origins of dance folklorism reach all the way back to the second half of the nineteenth century, when organized dance groups performed at various events such as the fortieth and sixtieth anniversaries of Franz Joseph's rule (cf. Kunej 2004: 181).

time he rejected traditions that he considered ‘un-Slovenian’ (primarily from the German-speaking cultural realm).

After the Second World War one can trace a more systematic approach to cultural policy, which had an indirect impact on folklore activities in Slovenia. From the historical perspective, cultural policy in Slovenia following the Second World War can be divided into four periods according to the establishment or reorganization of the governing bodies involved in shaping amateur cultural activities among Slovenians, which includes folk music and dance:

Developmental stages in Slovenian cultural policy (adapted from Čopič 2008)	Organizations in charge of amateur activity policy
– <b>Up to 1953:</b> Partially managed cultural policy when cultural policy was part of the communist government’s propaganda;	– People’s Education and Culture Society (1947–1955) and the Liberty Association of Work and Education Societies (1952–1955);
– <b>1953 to 1974:</b> State-managed cultural policy marked by territorial decentralization (municipalities carry out state-mandated tasks);	– Association of Liberty and Education Societies (1955–1964) and Slovenian Association of Cultural and Educational Organizations (ZKPOS; 1964–1977);
– <b>1974 to 1990:</b> Self-management period, during which the management of cultural policy is transferred to cultural organizations;	– Slovenian Association of Cultural Organizations (ZKOS; 1977–1996);
– <b>1990 to the present:</b> Parliamentary democracy; that is, the return of cultural policy to the public authorities and their cultural administration system.	– Republic of Slovenia Public Fund for Cultural Activities (1996–pres.).

The postwar rise in interest in folklore was characterized by a growth in the phenomenon of staged folklore presentations<sup>2</sup> and “its penetration into cultural policy” (Rihtman-Auguštin 1988: 17). In the first period (up to 1953) interest in folklore still did not show itself because in those times the authorities “repudiate[d] all signs and rituals deriving from former social formations and their agents of power” (Rihtman-Auguštin 1988: 16). It was more noticeable in the second period; that is, the time “when political democratization was accompanied by economic reforms” (Rihtman-Auguštin 1988: 18) and also “the time of tourism development” (Ceribašić 2003: 255). In the realm of amateur and also folklore activities, the

<sup>2</sup> Stage presentations of folk music and dance can be understood as a contemporary ritual practice “that fulfills some of the same folk and social needs as those well-rooted, broadly accepted, and professionally approved customs” (Cooley, cited in Ceribašić 2003: 269).



Slovenian Association of Cultural and Educational Organizations (ZKPOS) was founded at that time. The ZKPOS did not actually have a folklore division, only a professional board whose head was Bruno Ravnikar (appointed in 1967), who was himself involved in folklore as an amateur performer. His varied activities—seminars for leaders of amateur folklore groups, professionally led folklore groups (the Tine Rožanc and Emona groups), publication of a handbook for group leaders called *Koreografija ljudskega plesa* (Folk Dance Choreography; 1969), and publication of the folklore journal *Folklorist* (1978–1987)—can be considered an important professional contribution to unifying guidelines for folklore activities. Cultural policy at the time was more active in the area of folk dance, but folk singing and instrumental music followed the same progression a few decades later.

In 1970's the ZKPOS leadership was taken over by Mirko Ramovš, a researcher at the Institut of Ethnomusicology. In the areas of dance and musical folklore, he and his research colleague Zmaga Kumer contributed the most over the next decades to shaping cultural policy guidelines for public presentations of folk music and dance culture. During this period the Yugoslav Folklore Festival in Koper (first held in 1960) flourished under the leadership of Croatian folklore specialist Ivan Ivančan, who stated that “all other similar events in Yugoslavia were based on the model of the Koper festival” (Ivančan 1970: 273). The festival was divided into three parts: in the first ‘original’ groups performed (according to Ramovš this included groups that presented tradition from their local environment; Ramovš 2011). The second part featured amateur dance groups and the third part professional dance groups (Slovenia did not participate in this third category because it did not have any professional ensembles). In 1970 Slovenian scholars actively participated in preparing the ‘Slovenian Day’ for the first (‘original’) part of the festival, for which they specified the guidelines for “making the program of groups characteristically fit the needs of the Koper setting” (Ivančan 1970: 273). This was also the first time vocal groups performed, selected by members of the Institute of Ethnomusicology based on their fieldwork as suitable examples for presenting Slovenian musical tradition at this type of event. At that time also Ramovš took over as head of the folklore committee at the ZKPOS (later ZKOS) and so the annual public stage presentations of folk music and dance in organization of ZKPOS began.<sup>3</sup> At first these were festivals of folk singers, musicians, and dancers, but later “separate events for singers and musicians and others for folklore groups were established” (Šivic 2007: 27). In 1984 a committee for folklore activities was established at the ZKOS, led by Meta Benčina, who, when planning event guidelines and programming, and preparing educational seminars, always worked closely with scholarly members of the Institute of Ethnomusicology (primarily Zmaga Kumer, Mirko Ramovš, and Julijan Strajnar). During this period the festivals were already well enough known among the public, so the individuals and groups of folk singers and musicians applied to participate, and then professionals selected the performers on the basis of knowing the groups from the field and their suggested repertoires.

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<sup>3</sup> The first festival was held in Ribnica.

In the last part of this historical review of the cooperation between the profession and cultural policy, the main impact on cultural policy regarding folklore activities has come from the Republic of Slovenia Public Fund for Cultural Activities (the successor to the ZKOS; hereafter the Public Fund). Because its operation and influence on folk singing has already been discussed in another article (Šivic 2007: 27–41) it will only be briefly touched upon here. The organization is the successor of similar organizations whose work dates back to the eighties of the twentieth century. All the time it cooperate with scholars, who work as the jury or s.c. ‘professional consultants’ on the folklore festivals and developed criteria that determine the form of ‘original’<sup>4</sup> Slovenian folk music and dance. Using these criteria, the professional consultants recommend how leaders of folk music groups should best “approximate past musical expression” (Knific s.a.). Institute of Ethnomusicology members are still active as consultants in addition to more prominent amateur participants in folklore activities. Discussions with group leaders are not only advisory but also partially competitive because the advisors then later select the groups that will participate in regional festivals and continue on to the national festival of musicians and singers. The awareness that the musicians and singers at these festivals have various reasons to perform publically and that they come from diverse musical backgrounds (e.g., musicians from folk-pop ensembles, choirs, vocal octets, church singers, choral groups of retirees, musicians from folklore groups, and ‘original’ singers), and that they are not all ‘amateurs’ or folk singers and musicians coming from an environment with an continuous musical tradition, led the Public Fund to rename these festivals, which are now literally called *Festivals of Singers of Folk Songs and Musicians Playing Folk Tunes*.

## THE ‘PROBLEM’ OF INSTRUMENTAL FOLK MUSIC

In contrast to dance folklorism,<sup>5</sup> which is already very well established in terms of stage representations of folk-dance culture, singing groups even today perform in a somewhat more ‘original’ form, if one takes into account their repertoire and performance practice and the simultaneous inclusion of these groups in the primary context of folk music,<sup>6</sup> such

<sup>4</sup> At the beginning I must point out that certain contested terms such as “folk music,” “folklorism,” “original music,” “tradition,” “original context,” and “primary context” are considered to be technical terms in this article because problematizing individual terms would interrupt the flow of the article. With the use of terminology as is it is used in the discussed context it is also easier to understand the processes of cultural policy regarding folk music from the inside perspective.

<sup>5</sup> In this context, “dance folklorism” means “a change in the social context of dancing (most often as a stage production), as well as changes in the text” (Kunej 2004: 181). This “text” also includes the music.

<sup>6</sup> This form of presentation also belongs to the concept of folklorism according to some criteria, by which any faithful performance of the folk is seen as folklorism (Šmidchens 1999: 54). But vice-versa, everything that is understood as folklorism today belongs to folklore (for more on this, see Ceribašič 2003: 264) or is a “part of the folklore process” (Poljak Istenič 2009: 74), and so this division makes no sense.

as being part of rituals and customs in the local environment. Instrumental musical performance has long been seen as more problematic in terms of performing 'original' music. Since 1950, under the influence of radio, popular music, and the broad popularity of the accordion, instrumental performance has increasingly modeled itself after the example of the ever more popular folk-pop music. The establishment of numerous ensembles and their success in Slovenia and abroad has encouraged partial institutionalization of this type of music-making. Musicians, primarily accordionists, established their own music schools, courses, festivals, and competitions, and folk-pop ensembles increasingly included professionally educated musicians (primarily woodwind and brass players). Folk musicians no longer played the older dance tunes, but instead waltzes and polkas, in wholesale imitation of the Avsenik and Slak ensembles, and later other similar ensembles, both in terms of repertoire selection and performance style. Thus, according to the criteria of "popularity and variation" (Šivic 2008: 15), quite a few folk-pop tunes that have become constituent parts of folk musicians' repertoires have actually been folklorized.

The function of bearers of folk-music tradition has today been taken over by established groups, but their socially accepted folk nature is no longer determined by transfer, variation, or acceptance of musical material among wider community of people, but rather by popularity, visual and acoustic appeal, group structure, and 'folk characterized' repertoire. Information on the growth in releases of recordings of folk instrumental and vocal groups since 1991 also brings this point home.<sup>7</sup>

Groups and individuals that publicly represent themselves as folk musicians often combine vocal and instrumental music<sup>8</sup> and usually include folk songs and folk-music tunes in their repertoires (in addition to folk-pop and original compositions). They further reinforce their folk image by wearing 'rural' attire (e.g., aprons, hats, etc.). Their instrumentation usually includes diatonic accordion (formally recognized as a folk instrument) and improvised instruments that are associated with the folk and the rural countryside (e.g., washboards, gourds, scythes, etc.).

However, due to the reinterpretation of the folk-pop musical genre—that is, a newly-composed repertoire and/or adopting certain elements of performance practice from folk-pop music—this type of music-making (which by function unavoidably belongs to the phenomenon of folk music-making) is not accepted among scholars as instrumental folk-music.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> This information includes only albums that were registered at the Institute of Ethnomusicology; the actual growth in releases is probably even greater.

<sup>8</sup> In the past musical tradition, vocal and instrumental music were generally performed separately.

<sup>9</sup> Considering that even today we continue to intentionally protect folk music-making from the influence of folk-pop music, it is interesting that in 1980 a seminar for diatonic accordion (organized by the ZKOS) was led by Lojze Slak, one of the two most prominent representatives of folk-pop music in Slovenia. Obviously at that time the need to popularize the diatonic accordion among folklore specialists was the dominant need (cf. Ravnikar 1980: 18), and folk-pop music was not yet seen as a "threat" to folk music-making.



Figure 1: Group of musicians with improvised instruments. (Photo: M. Kovačič)

Thus, there are hardly any instrumentalists at these festivals; the only ensembles that are acceptable are those that come from folklore groups and play folkdance music of the past and musicians that still play some locally colored tunes or marches, waltzes, and polkas that are considered ‘old enough’. This leads to inconsistency because the Public Fund’s criteria permit “the performance of more recent songs/tunes, if they can be attributed to folk character” (Knific 2009: [2]), in which this ‘folk character’ is extremely relative and is determined subjectively. As one of the professional consultants to the Public Fund says, “there is no recipe; healthy judgment is ordinarily decisive” (Rauch 2009: 111).

That the scholars are aware of the problem can be seen from the fact that the Public Fund has been holding seminars for several years now, intended for instrumentalists, where they can get to know older techniques and repertoires that are mostly no longer a part of a living traditions. In any case, this type of work leads to the path that folk dance went down (and where the song tradition is also likely headed<sup>10</sup>) because it is not to be expected that the repertoire and older ways of playing in ‘folk style’ will once again spontaneously come to life among the people.

Lately an article appeared in the journal *Folklornik* (published by the Public Fund) in which the author and professional consultant Vesna Sever discussed her thoughts. She

<sup>10</sup> This is already partially true for today’s stage presentations by folk singers. Some of them may still use their repertoire in their primary contexts, but there are constantly more singers that perform folk songs exclusively for stage performances. The revitalized form of folk singing (including the repertoire, performance practice, social function, etc.) is increasingly removed from its real life in human society and calendar cycles.

frequently takes part in the folk music festivals and events organized by individual groups of singers or musicians. At these occasions the groups perform in a manner that generally departs from the Public Fund guidelines and only then is it “a true representation of the status and form of folk music today” (Sever 2011: 19). Although this professional consultant to the Public Fund describes the situation as “wretched” (Sever 2011: 19), awareness is the first step toward objectively understanding this phenomenon. Similarly, based on her study of a vocal-instrumental group, ethnomusicologist Urša Šivic uncovered their dual identity (Šivic 2011: 101-106). *That is, the group adapts its use of instruments and performance practices to various situations and therefore performs in line with Public Fund guidelines at the festivals it sponsors, but then performs differently in other contexts.*

### THE PERFORMER'S PERSPECTIVE, OR THE EMIC PERSPECTIVE

The articles mentioned above describe the scholarly perspective on the state of folk music today; in the remainder of this article I focus on the performers' perspective on the folklore studies discipline and their relationship to folk music. My examples cite and interpret conversations held with two group leaders, one from an instrumental group and one from a vocal-instrumental group. Both groups are members of the Public Fund and take part at festivals. My primary interest was their view of the Public Fund's cultural policy and what they think the actual effects of the Public Fund's guidelines are on the group activities.

#### GROUP DESCRIPTION

The head of the *Veseli Jožeki* (The Jolly Joes) group, which consists of 9 to 20 accordionists, cited his own need for a musical outlet as a reason for founding the group. He had spent many years as a member of choirs and vocal groups. At the same time he mentioned that he wanted to take over the “disorganized” playing of numerous accordion players in the village and create “a single concept with a head and a tail,” or that he “wanted to make something more out of this” (Hrga 2011). That this music-making “got a head and a tail” and became “something more” actually means that it became a part of the local cultural association and began giving public performances at various cultural and tourist events with programs prepared in advance, and the group members began meeting for regular weekly rehearsals. This organization also means that the group does not operate within the local rituals and customs but only in the form of public stage performances. The group has also self-published an album on which they perform folk music and their own newly-composed music.

Similarly, the other musician, who leads the vocal-instrumental group *Stari prijatelji s Kicarja* (Old Friends from Kicar), also stated that his own need for a musical outlet was the reason he put the group together. He missed music-making after he bid farewell to his many years of participation in a folk-pop band: “if you play for 38 years, it isn't easy to

just drop it all at once” (Kocmut 2011). This group of folk musicians and singers includes three married couples, among them two sisters, a brother, and two sisters-in-law, so it is a family ensemble. The group’s leader plays piano accordion and the other members play improvised instruments, which their leader made or adapted himself. These include a homemade bass, a washboard, a hunting horn with a metal kazoo inserted into it, an oven fork (a metal tool for moving pots inside a wood-burning oven), a rake, a wine thief (an implement for taking wine from the barrel), and a friction drum. The group performs three ways: only vocally, vocally and instrumentally, or only instrumentally. They have issued four self-released albums of their own newly composed music and folk music.

#### THE PUBLIC FUND CRITERIA AND MUSICIANS

Both groups are members of the Public Fund and take part in the festivals it holds. However, due to the criteria mentioned above they both depart from the established professional view of folk music and are therefore always criticized for this after their performances by the professional consultants at these festivals. With regard to the Public Fund criteria, the group *Veseli Jožeki* is reproached for having many accordions play together because this practice was not known in the past musical tradition. Because most accordionists (primarily young ones) come from the folk-pop musical environment, their music, their style of playing, and the way they bring together playing and singing is reminiscent of folk-pop performance, despite the fact that they (also) perform repertoire that fits the Public Fund criteria. The group’s leader also takes part in professional seminars and discussions with Public Fund professional consultants, but he does not adapt to their criteria. In order for this to happen he would have to add new members that play other instruments (primarily woodwinds and brass) and exclude current members (accordionists) from the group. He does not concern himself with the professional comments from the Public Fund consultants and thinks that “they don’t need that” (Hrga 2011). He views the professionals’ work as limited because they supposedly “would all like to have a button box, one old bass, and a clarinet, but they don’t want anything else” (Hrga 2011). His group will still be taking part in the festivals, even though he considers them pointless, and also because they are poorly attended. He claims that the performers already all know each other, and that the rest of the people are not interested in such events anymore: “It bothers me that we ourselves are our only reason to be there. We’ve already been meeting at these festivals for thirty years. People don’t want to come see us anymore” (Hrga 2011). As an example of a successful public event he cites his own event, which he holds every year on St. Joseph’s Day (19 March) and is attended by at least 500 people. The ‘recipe’ for this event’s success is its rich program and ongoing selection of new groups. It is interesting that at the beginning he himself also set out some criteria that were in accord with those of the Public Fund: that the older, folk repertoire should be played, and that performers should not be dressed uniformly.<sup>11</sup> Today in his

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<sup>11</sup> The Public Fund rejects groups that are dressed uniformly, especially when their clothes are only partial reconstructions of ‘old-style’ clothing.

selection of repertoire he allows other genres, and so the event is mixed largely with the folk-pop repertoire, and one can also see performers dressed uniformly (including the *Veseli Jožeki* group itself). Items of clothing such as hats and aprons are a means of awakening nostalgia for the past and are today a component part of the performers' identification with the Slovenian folk music.

In addition to accordion, the group *Stari prijatelji s Kicarja* also uses improvised instruments, which is a new development in stage presentations of folk music. They are mostly used as rhythmic accompaniment (except for instruments such as the comb and the kazoo) and are tools in their basic form (e.g., for drawing off wine, mowing hay, doing laundry, etc.). The Public Fund rejects these kinds of instruments because they were supposedly only included in folk music tradition in cases when there were no 'proper' musicians available or when they were celebrating the evening before someone's name day or a newlywed couple after their wedding night. At those times they would make noise with various objects and tools, an activity referred to in Slovenian as 'cat music'<sup>12</sup>. Just like rural clothing, these instruments are used to create the illusion of authenticity and contribute to the musicians' identification with the folk, the past, the old ways, and so on. This kind of music-making may be understood as part of an invented tradition because its visual and acoustic form gives it legitimacy in the context of preserving ethnic heritage.

The *Stari prijatelji s Kicarja* group has performed at some festivals as a vocal-instrumental group, although later the professional consultants advised them to drop the instrumental part at Public Fund events and so today it only performs as a group of folk singers. This apparent submission to the Public Fund's criteria has not really changed the leader's opinions, however; he does not agree with the Public Fund's criteria but merely follows them in order to be able to participate in the events and potentially make it to the regional level: "I'm alive, I have my own goals. I don't want to follow those rules any more, those strict ones, except when we go to their festivals. There we sing well, one hundred percent perfectly" (Kocmut 2011). The *Stari prijatelji s Kicarja* generally perform onstage as part of various cultural and tourist events, where they adapt to the aesthetic criteria of their broader audience:

*But I have to say that I don't want to follow those strict rules about this folk stuff any longer. We have lots of songs where we stick to the rules, but we also have other songs because if you want to have a full hall and if you want to get somewhere, you also have to have some of that stuff ... these are things that people like ... if you just play in order to be seen onstage that doesn't mean anything. Those are the rules I follow.* (Kocmut 2011)

<sup>12</sup> Today such instruments are a component part of many folk music groups, usually played by women. Their rapid spread among groups can be ascribed to their simplicity of use because this kind of instrumental playing does not require a lot of musical skill. Groups that play this way also impress their audiences, either with their appearance or with their pronounced rhythmic playing, which encourages a cheerful atmosphere.

Their group leader also holds an annual event called *Kicar poje in igra* (Kicar Sings and Plays), which he presents as a festival of folk musicians and singers. Compared to other similar events in the vicinity this event is very successful; each year around 300 people attend. Just like the *Veseli Jožeki* leader, he also believes that the Public Fund events are poorly attended and that some groups even shun them: “People—some of them don’t even want to go to those events because they say it’s pointless: you can’t play this way, you can’t sing that way...” (Kocmut 2011).

The concept of original Slovenian folk music is based on field recordings from the second half of the twentieth century. For most performers this is not an imaginary time that we can only read about in books and scholarly articles, but rather a real time that they lived through. Thus their experiences are also legitimate for determining the appearance of the tradition being reenacted onstage. It is precisely here that complications arise because often these two images do not match. One such example is the fact that professional consultants at festivals promote the separations of vocal performance of songs and instrumental music performances, whereas the leader of *Stari prijatelji iz Kicar* takes into account the tradition of his own environment, where he believes vocal-instrumental music has always been present:

*They [the Public Fund] don’t want the accordion to be there ... they say instruments [ought to be] 150 years old. How should I know what those musicians had or what, how should I know. But wait, the accordion is the Slovenian national instrument ... I know, once upon a time we were doing something, and people did sing, God forbid ... but when the accordion came, then the real fun began. And everyone sang, even those who maybe didn’t know how to sing. They listened to the melody and then just caught on to it.* (Kocmut 2011).

Likewise, he believes that improvised instruments were used because he remembers it himself: “When they were husking corn, I took my accordion, everyone brought something, they quickly grabbed it and picked up the beat” (Kocmut 2011).

Doubt arises at the question of how the profession should promote its viewpoint when it is actually the performers that are legitimate creators of the form of their own musical tradition. And what about when their viewpoints are different?

*The Public Fund, they stick to the rules as though their lives depend on it . . . They feel differently about that. Now they follow some old tradition, which they got from I don’t know where, I don’t know how it came to that. The bottom line is they see it differently from those of us who actually experienced it fifty years ago.* (Kocmut 2011)

The other contradiction lies in the fact that the profession is basing its opinion regarding the incompatibility of singing and instrumental performance on the general impression gained from numerous field recordings, but at the same time the professional consultants’ instructions mention encouraging the preservation of “special features that are known only



in individual areas, including special features that arose within individual groups” (Knific 2009: [3]). Which special features are acceptable, then?

Contradictions could also be found in the interpretation of the Public Fund guidelines, but it is enough to conclude that the main problem with the guidelines is their focus on musical products (e.g., songs, tunes, clothes, and dances), whereby they forget about other equally valuable elements such as transfers, uses, contexts, and the social environment (Ceribašić 2003: 259).<sup>13</sup> These are important shapers of folk features, but they are the most difficult or even impossible to recreate.

## CONCLUSION OR SOLVING PERSONAL DILEMMAS

Doubts about the legitimacy of the profession’s interference in folk music discussed here exist on both sides. Thus a dual identity arises among performers and researchers that are included in cultural policy processes. I myself had considerable difficulty coming to terms with my relation to the Public Fund and its guidelines. From the professional point of view I support and understand the Public Fund’s work, but it is also necessary to understand that this type of presentation does not preserve the original Slovenian folk music tradition, but only one of the forms of its contemporary life, which most often wants to conjure up “a momentary feeling of the past” (Rauch 2008: 53). This involves revitalizing old folk tradition, which is certainly not ‘original’, ‘right’, or ‘authentic’, but merely past (and in some cases also present), and at the same time this is only one possible interpretation of the past. The Public Fund’s task is to professionally support one of the older forms of life of folk music and its revitalization, and to educate both musicians and the general public in connection with this. Thus it is understandable that it must “set out some criteria that legitimize the existence of activities” (Rauch 2009: 111). But because folklore phenomena as aesthetic phenomena necessarily also include “the folk aesthetic and aesthetic ideals of individual bearers of folk heritage” (Pisk 2008: 105), we must not judge or even negate the existence of folk music alive today. Thus it is self-evident that the Public Fund criteria will also have to be continuously adapted to the real situation, and above all that researchers must have an objective view of the musical situation. It is precisely instrumental music that has already indicated for several decades that, if we preserve old concepts, we will gradually dedicate ourselves only to revitalizing music-making by folklore instrumental groups. It is necessary to observe contemporary phenomena with the same distance we have today with regard to musical phenomena of fifty years ago. I would like to conclude with the

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<sup>13</sup> Musical products can most easily be preserved in ‘original’ form, while musical processes, such as the manner of performance changes alongside musical abilities, knowledge, and performers’ interaction with other musical environments. Musical transfer is increasingly often written, learning is becoming systematized, the repertoire is becoming canonized, and in line with the changing context the function is becoming merely performative.

thoughts of ethnomusicologist Jerko Bezić, who already understood the essence of elements of tradition back in the 1970s: “it is not enough that the musician simply be aware of the great value of tradition; it is also necessary for a particular traditional phenomenon to be a life necessity to that musician: this way it will definitely be maintained and preserved” (Bezić 1973, cited in Ceribašić 2003: 270).

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## ISKANJE LJUDSKOSTI, KI BI SI JO ŽELELI SLIŠATI, ALI RAZPETOST MED LJUDSKIM , STROKO IN ZNANOSTJO

*Dejavnost kulturne politike na področju ljudske glasbe in plesa se je v Sloveniji pričela v šestdesetih letih 20. stoletja, njeni akterji pa so poleg stroke in ljubiteljev vseskozi tudi raziskovalci glasbene in plesne dediščine. Spodbujanje odrske reprezentacije ljudske glasbe in plesa je vključevalo tudi njeno usmerjanje v ‚pravilno‘ poustvarjanje. Ustanova, ki danes vodi, usmerja in podpira ljubiteljsko kulturno dejavnost, je Javni sklad RS za kulturne dejavnosti; delovanje ljudskih pevskih in godčevskih ter folklornih skupin pa ureja njena sekcija za folklorno dejavnost. Ta je v letih svojega delovanja skupaj s selektorji oziroma t.i. strokovnimi spremljevalci odrskih predstavitev ljudske glasbe (srečanj) izoblikovala merila, ki določajo podobo ‚izvirne‘ slovenske ljudske glasbe. Na podlagi teh meril strokovni spremljevalci vodjem skupin, ki predstavljajo ljudsko glasbo, svetujejo, kako naj se čim bolj približujejo »preteklim glasbenim izrazom« (Knific). Pri svetovanju sodelujemo tako sodelavci Glasbenonarodopisnega inštituta kot tudi aktivni ljubitelji folklorne dejavnosti, ki so se na tem področju že vidneje uveljavili. Tovrstno svetovanje pa se v zadnjem času predusem za raziskovalce odstira kot problematično, bodisi z vidika poseganja v dejavnost, ki jo raziskovalec primarno opazuje in raziskuje, bodisi z vidika definiranja meril. ‚Pretekli glasbeni izraz‘ se je izkazal za neoprijemljiv pojem, ki ga je tako časovno in geografsko kot tudi stilno težko definirati (glej tudi Šivic 2007: 27-41).*

*Največ težav pri prezentaciji ljudske glasbe stroki in raziskovalcem že dalj časa predstavlja godčevstvo, ki je v pričujočem prispevku tudi izpostavljeno. Ljudsko godčevstvo se je tako v repertoarju*

*kot v stilu igranja začelo po drugi svetovni vojni močno prepletati z narodnozabavnim žanrom, kar pa je v okviru pojmovanja ljudskega za kulturno politiko nesprejemljivo. Zato se danes na prireditvah, ki jih organizira Javni sklad, z godci in godčevskimi skupinami zelo redko srečamo. Izključevanje ‚sodobnega‘ godčevstva in okvirov kulturne politike (in raziskovalnih okvirov) po eni strani predstavlja protislovje v pojmovanju koncepta ljudskega godca in godčevstva (prim. Kumer 1983: 127-178), po drugi pa vodi do pojava navideznega prilagajanja godcev smernicam kulturne politike. V pričujočem prispevku so na podlagi pogovorov z vodji godčevskih skupin Veseli Jožeki in Stari prijatelji s Kicarja predstavljeni in interpretirani: pogledi godcev na delovanje kulturne politike Javnega sklada; vplivi, ki jih ima Javni sklad na njihovo delovanje; protislovnost nekaterih meril in smernic Javnega sklada. Dvomi o upravičenosti omenjenih posegov stroke v ljudsko glasbeno podobo so na obeh straneh, tako pri izvajalcih kot raziskovalcih, če so neposredno vključeni v procese kulturne politike. Razumevanje, da tovrstna prezentacija ne ohranja ‚izvirne‘, ‚prave‘ ali ‚aventične‘ slovenske ljudske glasbene tradicije, temveč je le ena izmed oblik sodobnega življenja ljudske glasbe, pa lahko te dvome do neke mere pojasni in omili napetosti med izvajalci, stroko in raziskovalci.*

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# THE PROBLEM OF PERFORMANCE TYPOLOGY: THE CASE OF SERBIAN MOURNERS

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OKSANA MYKYTENKO

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*This paper analyzes the performance process of Serbian mourning songs (tužbalice) and various ethnic and folklore conditions of the functional process of this genre.*

Keywords: *mourning songs, performance, ritual folklore, epic tradition*

*V prispevku avtorica analizira postopke izvajanja srbskih žalostink (tužbalice) glede na različne etnične in folklorne okoliščine funkcionalnega procesa v tem žanru kot tudi glavnih značilnosti žanra.*

Ključne besede: *naricalke, uprizoritev, ritual, epska tradicija*

Funeral lamentation continues to be a creative genre of traditional ritual folklore that is still part of the living folk tradition in some South Slavic regions that is organically included in modern life and maintains a special existence and continuity within folk tradition.

Using available examples of contemporary funeral laments, it is interesting to retrace the interaction and interdependence of genre indicators as a specific manifestation of their uniqueness in the historical and folk process. Proceeding from the definition of folk genre as “a whole set of works that are characterized by a community of poetic system, life purposes, form of performance, and musical harmony” (Propp 1964: 58), it is possible to define the typological features of performance of these folk lyrics.

In the living heritage of mourning traditions, the presence of creatively gifted performers that express their individuality is naturally determined. The lyrics of mourning songs are marked by distinctive structural and morphological indicators and have appropriate functional and semantic features, and so they depend on the performance skills of the mourner. Taking into account the psychological traits of mourners, the nature of performance of the work, and the creative capabilities and life experience of the performer, it is possible to determine several types of performers and, accordingly, several categories of lyrics.

First, there are lyrics that are created during the ceremony at the time of the highest emotional stress, when feelings are given the most complete form of expression. Later, the consciousness of the performer retains only commonplace details, sometimes little related to one another. The next day, she often forgets what she sang the day before, or, as asserted by Karadžić, she cannot recall “even every tenth word” (1977: 192). Such laments are created mainly for those that perform them and have an exclusively everyday family purpose. Their meaning is literally embodied in their performance; in general, the lyrics may be very short or very long, but in either case they consist of clichéd formulas and phrases that are

repeated. Such is, for example, the mourning song by a four-year-old girl for her father, as reported by Vukanović (1972: 191).

Second, there are lyrics that are created by the performers, whose repertoire is broader and more stable and is also associated with personal emotional experiences. In this case, mourners try to fill the traditional pattern of motifs with autobiographical facts. In these songs of sorrow only female family members can praise the deceased. In performing these touching laments, the mourner “then mentions other dead relatives, then the family and homeland, and finally godparents, friends, and acquaintances” (Šaulić 1929: 17). These laments are “songs of pain of heart and pride, through which the deceased is protected from death, non-existence, and oblivion” (Šaulić 1929: 16). Such works do not require an audience as an obligatory prerequisite, although they are ordinarily directed to those present. The lyrics of such lamentations are monologues by those that deeply and sincerely suffer, and here the traditional compositional outline is filled with specific content. In recording such lyrics, Šaulić noticed that, depending on individual characteristics, some mourners improvise their laments, whereas others at first consider and create the lyrics in silence. The function of psychological comfort is the main factor for such lyrics: “When I’m alone, I retreat into my sorrow and grief and begin to mourn for hours, and do it until someone interrupts me”. If the mourner does not “communicate in such a way” with the dead, “she could not stand it”; if she does communicate, she begins to feel better, Šaulić notes. No wonder that people have long said *kukam da muku oteram* ‘I cry to drive the pain away’. Third, a separate group forms the lyrics of those mourners whose skills are generally recognized and well known. The power of their poetic talent in creating laments is equal to the praise of heroes by “gusle” players. The aspiration for objective representation and the desire for greater social significance are manifested in the breaking of the purely weeping tradition, when motifs of struggle and revenge or tones of irony or sarcasm are added to the lyrics. Performers of such works realize the independent artistic value of their laments, and a spirit of competition can occur among them. In this living tradition of mourning and teaching mourning, there is a general recognition of lyrics created by mourners whose skills are widely known. According to Vukanović,

*some mourners [were] offended if they knew that somebody else mourned for me, someone from a lower social stratum. After that they only occasionally agreed to mourn. ... Someone said to me “Do not confuse them with other persons because they do not want to be like others.” (Vukanović 1972: 17)*

Such mourners are also able to mourn without seeing—by feeling—that is, without knowing the deceased during his or her lifetime.

Traditional perceptions in this case regulate the correlation between traditional and improvisational elements, and this acts as a factor that supports the continuity of tradition with inherent performance standards. Thus, if for a mourner mourning is all that comes to mind, it is said that she began to “wag her tongue.” In mourning it is also not allowed to mourn without desire, without feelings (*premizgivanje*), because then people say that the mourner is just making a racket (*dandara*). Poetically expressive lyrics find response among

the audience, even if the mourner has no special vocal talent. The skills of the mourners are shown in such cases when traditional genre norms and devices are inadequate, and the circumstances require changes in the conventions of mourning (Kilibarda 1980: 95).

There have been many poetically gifted performers among young heroes and “gusle” players. The people’s “oral poets,” as they were called by Šaulić (p.c.), bemoan the departed “with a feeling of love and heroism,” creating highly emotional laments, brilliant in artistic and picturesque images. Each of them, for an only son, or for a brother, or for heroes, maintained pride for the fallen as well as grief. In their works, these “oral poets” not only supported the living but also preserved the memories of the fallen. It was said about such mourners that “to listen to them is lovelier than any gusle player: they glorify miracles” (Šaulić). The culmination of such lyrics celebrates the name of the hero and expresses pride in him. Even after many years, these mourners are filled with vivid memories about the deceased and create impressive, strong mourning songs, citing the names of living heroes. These mourners are not just creating a conversation, the usual ceremonial mourning, but with the mourning “they aggravate wounds on their hearts” (Šaulić) and assert the glory of the brothers of their nation. The main body of such laments is related to the principles of collecting activity (and not only in Serbian folklore studies), which is mainly aimed at recording the best performers. However, as noted by the Russian researcher Kharitonova, who analyzed genre variations of East Slavic traditions of mourning, “material recorded from this type of informant is on the periphery of actual folklore” (1987: 147).

Systematizing the lyrics cited by Šaulić, Đaković, Vukanović, Kilibarda, and others is very important and interesting. The images of mourners that arise, especially in the articles by Šaulić, elucidate the ways the laments are created and psychological characteristics of the performers. Šaulić was born in Montenegro and was personally acquainted with many of the performers. In the early twentieth century, when he started his collecting work, he announced his democratic objective to record the creative heritage of ordinary illiterate women, and he remained faithful to this principle throughout his research activities. The best recognition of this work, to which he dedicated his life, are the words of the seventy-year-old mourner Đurđa Lakušić, as reported by the researcher: “She met me with cold and dignity and said that I had come to her for nothing because ‘her sorrow had died out long ago.’ But when she heard my name (she knew many of my relatives and she was aware that I record laments), she said: ‘Even if I were dead I would rise from my coffin to mourn the grief of my heart and my sorrow for heroes. It is sad for me that I did not know the brother and the son, who come to me, a poor old woman’” (Šaulić 1959: 375). It should be added that Šaulić’s collecting activities were known among the people, and the mourners were proud that their songs were saved for their descendants. It should also be noted that, even in our time, mourners are “largely half-educated or illiterate women.” Thus, according to some, old Savka Stojković (who died in 1998) entrusted a relative to mourn for her because her daughters were educated and “cannot mourn me” (Zlatanović 1999: 105).

Fourth, among the creatively gifted performers, researchers have repeatedly distinguished professional mourners. Talented masters are not isolated and are mentioned in various Serbian and Montenegrin regions. Thus, Marko Miljanov wrote about “Neda, the wife of Jura Martinov from Medun,” stressing that people were gathered around her like a good gusle player (Đorđević 1938: 186). Šaulić tells about “one of the best,” Krstina Krstajić from Javorje (Šaulić 1953: 317). Vukanović identified “the profession of mourning” in Kosovo (1972: 14). Often the performers of such lyrics also skillfully perform epic songs that are by rule exclusively male affairs. The number of recognized mourners seems to increase on the basis of the developed epic tradition of the region.

Such poems of lamentation create a certain tradition or school and later become an example to follow. If a known lament for Batrić’s sister from *The Mountain Wreath* by Petar Njegoš has become a literary and folk model, then the actual folklore lyrics of mourners of different social status at different times (e.g., laments for the Montenegrin Queen Consort Milena Petrović Vukotić or for her daughter, Princess Zorka Karađorđević) became familiar songs and existed in many variants. In addition, some fragments of these lyrics were memorized and performed independently. So far these examples are not numerous, but they are considered especially valuable and demonstrate the genre transition from mourning to epic poetry. In drawing parallels between laments and epic songs, one inevitably moves away from the ritual dominant in mourning. However, it is those that differ from traditional mourning within the ritual that have features that attracted the interest of almost all researchers of mourning songs. Thus, a contemporary of Karadžić, Vuk Vrčević, who brought folk mourning to the attention of the outstanding scholar, noted that they “grieve only for men and boys,” and the rest of the laments he called *jekavice* or *naricanje* ‘lamentations’ because of the lack of the motif of “glory.” In his collection of folk mourning songs, Šaulić stresses that mourning songs and epic songs are associated through a joint plot. Interestingly, Vrčević noticed the same thing much earlier: “The poetic spirit [of mourning songs] in any case is not inferior to heroic folk songs, with the only difference that the women mourning, and the men accompanying on the gusle, glorify the fallen heroes. The first is a real folk chronicle, and the second is history”. (Pešić 1967: 186)

The figure of folk gusle players and artists is now in the past, although often their performances can be found during folk holidays and at festivals. In contrast, mourners can be heard in almost every region even today. Previously, with the “circle” of mourners at folk festivals, especially at dedication days, there were gusle players in the vicinity of the circle, and the mourner and the gusle player competed in poetic skill before a wide audience.

However, it should be noted that, according to many collectors and researchers, mourning songs were not exclusively a women’s domain. Šaulić repeatedly encountered men performing mourning songs. Describing such cases in detail, he stated that women very rarely sing to the accompaniment of the gusle, but it is even rarer that men mourn because it is believed that it is not good for men to do so.



Matija Murko discusses women as performers of epic songs (1951: 193–203). In contrast, Vukanović writes about laments in men's performance beyond their existence in ritual. In 1967 Dušan Nedeljković recorded a mourning song for his only son from a gusle player, the folk singer Milutin Vuković from Šćepan-Polje (Nedeljković 1967: 189). It is significant that one family could be proud of their recognized gusle players and their talented mourners. Thus, Šaulić writes about the family tradition of poetic skills, whose mourner Milica Obradović was the daughter of a “good” gusle player and the granddaughter of a “great” gusleone. From Milica's father Radovan, Šaulić recorded the epic song “The Death of Smail-aga Čengić,” which was played and sang earlier by Milica's grandfather, Šaban.

The heroic and patriotic performance of traditional mourning songs naturally also became the point of reference for this genre for gusle players. Šaulić illustrates this point: when a famous gusle player that had recently lost his son was asked to sing to the accompaniment of the gusle, instead of the expected heroic song, he poured out his sorrow in a mourning song. Interestingly, in such cases, when gusle players turned to the poetic form of a mourning song, it proceeded differently from the weeping form of the epic introduction, and only after a set of initial 10/12 syllable lines did such song-lamentation proceed into the consecutive traditional measures of a mourning song in an eight-syllable style.

On the other hand, some mourning songs in women's performance often can be considered epic songs rather than laments, the category to which they belong emotionally, artistically, and thematically. In this case, only the eight-syllable style defines the genre of the lyrics. The question of mourners' imitation of gusle players contains many mysteries, such as Šaulić's statement about the “transformation of a mourning song into a small epic song,” in which a measure of verse (iambic decasyllable) and a formulaic composite construction create a set specific to the genre epithets and other poetic devices that are typical features of heroic songs.

Understanding the performing nature of folk art strengthens the awareness of the direct dependence of artistic qualities of the lyrics and their content on the special features of the performance (Britsyna 2006: 180). Historical, national, artistic, and poetic traditions in the development of epic and ritual folklore in Serbian and Montenegrin traditions led to the development of laments—mourning songs—as a distinctive genre of folk song creativity that has certain features of content, poetics, and performance. Song-laments as a historically conditioned form of art and poetry reveal regularities that are inherent to the genres of folklore in this Slavic ethno-cultural region, with definite parallels to other Slavic and non-Slavic traditions. However, this is a topic for another paper.

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## VPRAŠANJE TIPOLOGIJE IZVAJANJA. PRIMER SRBSKIH NARICALK

*V prispevku smo analizirali postopke izvajanja srbskih žalostink (tužbalice). Različne etnične in folklorne okoliščine funkcionalnega procesa v tem žanru kot tudi glavnih značilnosti žanra smo analizirali glede na štiri glavne kategorije besedil in štiri glavne vrste izvajalcev. Mojstrstvo žalujočega pri izvedbi, v katerem se kaže močna epska tradicija regije, zaznamuje proces prestopanja meja rituala. Omenjeni žanr predstavlja izjemen ljudski pojav, ki se nanaša na dve ravni ljudske poetične ustvarjalnosti: petje in žalovanje.*

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# RESEARCHER-PERFORMER RELATIONS IN CROSS-CRAFTING RITUALS IN LITHUANIA

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SKAIDRĖ URBONIENĖ

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*The article<sup>1</sup> presents the relationship between researchers and performers (woodcarvers) from the nineteenth century to the present in Lithuania. It discusses the role of the researcher in a woodcarver's creative work when creating a cross as his own. It examines what kind of help the carver expects from the researcher and what actual help is provided. The researcher's requirements from the master that can be observed during the cross-making process are highlighted, as are indirect performer-researcher relations when the performer himself studies ethnographic and iconographic material.*

*Keywords: researcher, woodcarver, blacksmith, cross-crafting, devotional monuments*

*Članek obravnava razmerje med raziskovalci in ustvarjalci (rezbarji) v Litvi od 19. stoletja do danes. Avtorica razpravlja o vlogi raziskovalca in mojstra v kreativnem procesu rezljanja križa ter o tem, kakšno pomoč od raziskovalca pričakuje rezbar. Raziskovalčeve zahteve do mojstra je moč opazovati skozi proces rezljanja križa; posredne odnose med ustvarjalcem ter raziskovalcem pa v primeru, da se rezbar sam loti študija etnografskega in ikonografskega materiala.*

*Ključne besede: raziskovalec, rezbar, kovač, rezljanje križa, votivni spomeniki*

## INTRODUCTION

“Cross-crafting” refers to the widespread tradition of creating devotional monuments of small-scale architecture (such as crosses, roofed poles, poles with shrines, roadside chapels, and miniature shrines on trees), sculptures of saints and iron cross tops, the entire process of making them, and certain associated rituals (including consecration, decoration with plants, offerings, praying by the cross, meetings held by the monument, and so on).

*Cross-crafting, a unique branch of Lithuanian folk art, was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2001.<sup>2</sup> Crosses were, and still are, built as memorials to the dead or as signs of spiritual protection, or erected at certain places to plead for grace or to express gratitude. Traditional Lithuanian devotional monuments combine elements of architecture, sculpture, blacksmithing, and sometimes even primitive painting. (UNESCO 2001)*

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<sup>2</sup> Formerly the List of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

Crosses and other devotional monuments were erected in large numbers at farmsteads, in villages and townships, within cemeteries and churchyards, along roadsides and crossroads, and by rivers, lakes, and areas renowned for miracles. The range of intentions of monument building was very broad: from individual wishes, pleas, and facts of life to commemorative dates in the life of the community or nation, and for special occasions such as natural calamities, epidemics, and war.

*Even when cross-building was prohibited or restricted by the occupants, the Russian Empire (the second half of the 20th century) and the Soviet Union (in the 1940s through to the 1970s), crosses were nevertheless being tenaciously erected all over Lithuania.* (UNESCO 2001)

The Soviet period was characterized by the planned large-scale destruction of devotional monuments and a prohibition on building new ones or repairing old ones. Only the most artistically designed objects, which monument-preservation specialists managed to include on the list of protected cultural monuments, were left untouched. However, despite the restrictions, the cross-crafting tradition also lasted through the Soviet period. People mostly built monuments on their farmsteads or in remote places where the local authorities rarely came. Of course, during that period the extent of cross-crafting was very limited in comparison with previous times. Now, after the restoration of independence (in 1990), an abundance of newly built crosses and other types of monuments all over Lithuania is evident.

This article presents the relationship between researchers and performers (woodcarvers) from a historical perspective and focuses on issues of safeguarding the contemporary living cross-crafting tradition. In the case of the cross-crafting ritual, which consists of several stages, I focus on the initial stages; that is, making the monument. In this phase, woodcarvers or craftsmen act as performers.

In Lithuanian historiography, proper attention has not yet been dedicated to the relationship between the creator/performer and researcher. A few references should be noted. In a book based on her dissertation, the ethnologist Aušra Zabielenė deals with folkdance ensembles in Lithuania. In one chapter devoted to the clothing of the ensemble members, the author discusses folk costume researchers' impact on the picturesque clothing of the ensembles (2010: 116–140). The brief mention of the relationship between woodcarvers and researchers is traced in the article on making copies by Alė Počiulpaitė (2008: 172–192). Some indirect relations are also mentioned in published interviews with woodcarvers (Tumėnas 2009: 42–59). Therefore, this article is the first attempt to examine the cross-crafting process from the perspective of relations between the researcher and the woodcarver.

The research was carried out on based on published and archival material referring to the performer-researcher relationship from a historical perspective. The research on the contemporary situation is based on the author's own experience while working at the National Museum of Lithuania (until 2010) and on fieldwork in 2011. During fieldwork in various districts of Lithuania, twenty woodcarvers were interviewed about their creative

work; questions about their relationship with researchers (museum workers, art historians, and ethnologists) were also asked.

## RESEARCHERS AND WOODCARVERS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The tradition of building devotional monuments is rather old in Lithuania, dating back to the sixteenth century, but researchers became interested in cross-crafting rather late. The first observations about wooden devotional monuments appeared in the mid-nineteenth century (Gadon 1846; Jucewicz 1839, 1840, 1842, 1846; Połujański 1859; Römer 1860). Real research work on this phenomenon can be seen at the very beginning of the twentieth century. Throughout the twentieth century, wooden monuments and religious sculptures were generally the most popular themes for Lithuanian scholars and local ethnographers.

The nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century was the time when cross-crafting was studied in detail and valuable material on this phenomenon was accumulated. During this period, attention was drawn to various forms of devotional monuments, their ornamentation, their decoration, and a main feature of monuments: sculptures of saints. Interest in this phenomenon was shown by Polish-speaking and foreign researchers—Michał Brensztejn (1906), Casimir de Danilowicz (1919), Bronisław Ginet-Piłsudzki (1916), Franciszek Krzywda-Polkowski (1909), Józef Perkowski (1929a–b), and Wandalin Szukiewicz (1903)—as well as Lithuanian scholars: Jonas Basanavičius (1912), Klemensas Čerbulėnas (1938), Marijona Čilvinaitė (1938), Paulius Galaunė (1930, 1932), Antanas Rūkštelė (1929, 1931, 1941), Kazys Šimonis (1923a, b), Adomas Varnas (1925), and Mikalojus Vorobjovas (1939). At that time, museums began to accumulate collections of folk sculpture and iron cross tops as well as iconographic collections of photos and drawings. These collections reflect a variety of forms of wooden monuments and represent regional features as well. The earliest photos date from the beginning of the twentieth century. Three researchers that were also photographers and devoted their leisure time to recording crosses and other devotional monuments should be mentioned: the artist Varnas, and the local ethnographers Balys Buračas and Ignas Končius. They accumulated large collections of photographic material on cross-crafting. These historical photos depict old monuments built as far back as the nineteenth century and also show their surroundings, master craftsmen, and rituals—from the creation and installation processes to consecration and related traditions (decoration with plants and visits on various occasions). At present, these collections are distributed among several museums in Vilnius and Kaunas.<sup>3</sup> This iconographic material offers unique material for researchers, and also for the performers (i.e., craftsmen) for their creative work.

<sup>3</sup> National Museum of Lithuania, Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis National Art Museum, Vytautas the Great War Museum, and Lithuanian Art Museum.

In general, in the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century, researchers only collected and documented the products of cross-crafting. The relationship between researchers and creators during this period could be described as one-sided. Woodcarvers (in Lithuanian, literally ‘god-makers’) and cross-makers did not expect any real help from the researcher, and, in fact, they did not need it. At that time, the researcher-performer relations were limited to recording the carvers’ biographies and photographing them. The majority of these biographies were written by the local ethnographer Buračas and the artists Vytautas Bičiūnas and Kazys Šimonis. Several master craftsmen’s biographies were published in periodicals in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s (Bičiūnas 1928, 1929; Buračas 1939a–d, 1942, 1944; Šimonis 1923b).

However, properly speaking, the weak direct relations between the researcher and performer in the cross-crafting process can already be seen in the first half of the twentieth century.

In 1928, the War Museum in Kaunas (now named the Vytautas Great War Museum) launched a campaign to encourage people to build crosses and other devotional monuments for the tenth anniversary of Lithuania’s independence. For this purpose, the artist Varnas created thirty-six projects involving crosses and other monuments. He created these projects based on his rich photo collection on cross-crafting (consisting of more than 2,000 photos and negatives). Varnas carefully studied his collection, selected typical



Figure 1. Ethnographer Juozas Petrulis’ interview with cross-maker Jonas Remeika in 1959, Trivalakiai village, Pakruojis district (The National Museum of Lithuania).

examples of the devotional monuments of certain areas, and based on this he created generalized monuments for several districts of Lithuania. These projects were distributed throughout the country by the War Museum. Based on these projects, many devotional monuments were built (some of them are preserved to this day).

The master craftsmen that were commissioned to make monuments for Varnas’ project worked on them very accurately. The photos of these completed monuments show that the carvers executed the objects precisely according to the dimensions shown in the project; they carved exact decorative details and sculptures, made exact representations of the iron tops, and so on. In this case, the master craftsmen already used the investigative work of the researcher Varnas, and worked according to his requirements shown in the drawings.

During Soviet times, the researcher-craftsman relationship was also one-sided. Woodcarvers of that time made crosses secretly due to prohibitions by the Soviet authorities. The researchers mostly documented tradition, questioned living old masters, and collected material, part of which was published. Mentioned should be made of the museum worker and ethnographer Juozas Petrulis and the art historian Zita Žemaitytė, who compiled many cross-crafters' biographies and published some of them in cultural journals of the Soviet period (Petrulis 1943, 1960, 1963, 1964a–b, 1965, 1968, 1986; Petrulis & Žemaitytė 1966a–b, 1969, 1971; Žemaitytė 1970, 1981). The greatest work was done by Petrulis (Figure 1), who collected the biographies about seventy craftsmen (living at that time or already deceased). His material and photos are kept in the Rare Book and Manuscript Department of the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania in Vilnius and often are used for research by ethnologists and art historians.

## RESEARCHERS AND WOODCARVERS IN THE PRESENT

It is possible to speak about a direct relationship between researchers and woodcarvers only from the beginning of the twenty-first century; that is, since 2001, when cross-crafting was included on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Heritage. What has changed in this period?

Primarily, in comparison with Soviet times, more active research on the phenomenon is noticeable. The research work has been carried out not only in museums, but at academic institutions as well. These research institutions have organized three conferences on cross-crafting,<sup>4</sup> and two dissertations have been defended on this topic (Urbonienė 2009; Zabulytė 2007). Numerous articles are regularly published in popular and academic journals. National and regional museums have set up exhibitions of the phenomenon, and temporary exhibitions on the subject are also held almost every year. Through conferences, publications, catalogues, and exhibitions, researchers disseminate knowledge about the cross-crafting tradition, they introduce this tradition to the younger generation, and at the same time they provide valuable information to the creators of this tradition: modern cross-makers and woodcarvers.

Workshops and lectures for master craftsmen are also held throughout the country in order to safeguard this tradition. This work with woodcarvers is mainly carried out by specialists from the Lithuanian Folk Culture Center and the Lithuanian Folk Art Society. They themselves, or invited researchers from academic institutes and museums, give talks

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<sup>4</sup> The conference *Lithuanian Cross-Crafting*, held by the National Museum of Lithuania and Lithuanian Catholic Academy of Science in 2002; the conference *Lithuanian Crosses in a Worldwide Context*, held by the Art Institute of Vytautas the Great University and the Lithuanian Artist Society in 2005; and the conference *The Phenomenon of Cross-Crafting in Folk Culture*, held by the Culture, Philosophy and Art Research Institute and Lithuanian Folk Culture Centre in 2006.

for craftsmen, present archival material to them, and interpret the regional ethnographic characteristics of devotional monuments. Woodcarvers attend these seminars and talks in order to learn more about the characteristic features of monuments of certain areas. Educated customers (who often want to have a monument characteristic of where they live) and folk art competitions encourage them to create in line with tradition.

Mention should be made of the annual Golden Wreath competition, held by the Lithuanian Folk Culture Center since 2005. During this contest, the best folk artists in various folk art fields are awarded, including the best cross-maker. Another competition, the Best Blacksmith, is devoted to cross-making blacksmiths and has been held by the Lithuanian Folk Art Society since 2007. These are prestigious competitions and folk artists prepare for them seriously. First they have to go through the selection for the region where they live, and the best from the region attends the national competition, where an expert committee selects the winners.

These competitions have clear evaluation criteria: the master craftsman must demonstrate not only the artistry of his creative work and his technical skill, but his creative work must also correspond to traditional Lithuanian folk art and ethnic cultural traditions (Ašmonaitienė 2009: 5). One of the main goals of these contests—maintaining and refreshing vanishing folk art traditions—requires the creator to know the creative roots of the nation very well. One requirement is not to copy old monuments, but to develop the master craftsman's own style by seeking harmonization between tradition and innovation.

To enter these contests, artists must have a good understanding of local traditions. Therefore they attend seminars and study material themselves. During fieldwork, most of the master craftsmen said that they study albums from the Folk Art series and museum catalogues. Such material available in their libraries includes *Lietuvių liaudies menas: Skulptūra* (Lithuanian Folk Art. Sculpture; Galaunė 1963, 1965), *Lietuvių liaudies menas: Mažoji architektūra* (Lithuanian Folk Art. Small-Scale Architecture; Čerbulėnas et al. 1970; Šešelgis 1990; Stravinskas & Sakalauskas 1992), *Lietuvių liaudies menas* (Lithuanian Folk Art; Bernotienė et al. 1993), and issues of the journals *Liaudies kultūra* (Folk Culture; published by the Lithuanian Folk Culture Center) and *Tautodailės metraštis* (Folk Art Chronicle; published by the Lithuanian Folk Art Society).

Overall, a majority of Lithuanian museums present some aspects of the cross-crafting phenomenon in their permanent displays, mostly folk religious sculpture (Figure 2) and the iron tops of crosses. However, the exhibits represent only a small part of the traditional heritage. There are only a few examples of large-scale monuments such as crosses, poles with shrines, roofed poles, and chapels in the museum exhibits. I have noticed that the material on the cross-crafting tradition shown in Lithuanian museums dedicates too little attention to woodcarvers.

This is why woodcarvers often turn individually to researchers, usually museum specialists, for assistance. In most cases, this relationship is limited to an initial consultation, when a researcher selects particular items (exhibits or photos from a particular region or





Figure 2. Cross-crafting display in the National Museum of Lithuania. (Photo: S. Urbonienė, 2009)

vicinity) at the master craftsman's request. When material is collected, the woodcarver works individually, no longer contacting the researcher, unless he invites a consulting researcher to participate in the monument installation and consecration rituals.

The following is one example from my experience. I regularly give consultations to the local woodcarver Adolfas Teresius (Figure 3). He is a well-known woodcarver that receives commissions from all over Lithuania. He not only studies literature, catalogues, and albums, but also collects material on cross-crafting (old sculptures and iron cross tops), and so he himself could be defined as a researcher. However, sometimes he needs specific information. A few years ago, he received an order to make a roofed pole with a sculpture of St. Apollonia. However, the carver did not know how this saint is depicted in traditional folk sculpture because he failed to find sculptures of her in published albums. I sent him material prepared for publication in my article discussing the iconography of women saints in traditional Lithuanian folk sculpture.<sup>5</sup>

In 2011, Teresius was commissioned to make roofed pole with a sculpture of St. Cecilia, the patron of music. St. Cecilia is an extremely rare image in Lithuanian folk sculpture, but there are a few examples in archival material that is unknown to carvers or difficult for them to access. So my article (already published) helped him again. After completing the monument, he invited me to participate in the events connected with installing and consecrating the monument.

<sup>5</sup> This article has been published; see Urbonienė (1997).



Figure 3. Woodcarver Adolfas Teresius in his workshop in Garliava town, Kaunas district. (Photo: S. Urbonienė, 2004)

Incidentally while setting up this monument, I was directly consulted as a researcher. The question arose which direction St. Cecilia's statuette should face. The local cultural society involved in setting up the monument wanted to turn the sculpture towards the village, but Teresius insisted on the statuette facing the road because it is the traditional way of placing statuettes in roadside monuments. And he was quite right. In traditional monuments the main holy images were placed on the most important side of the monument, and this side of a roadside monument is to face the road. So I had to intervene and support the carver's opinion, giving a brief introduction to the tradition of roadside monuments. This monument was built along a pilgrimage route to the famous Lithuanian shrine of Šiluva, and so pilgrims and other passersby going that way have to see the main iconographic feature of the monument: St. Cecilia.

A slightly different situation is noticeable with blacksmiths. Blacksmiths usually study ethnographic and iconographic material themselves without going directly to researchers. This is easier to do for them because almost all museums display metal crosses, and many museums have published catalogues of their collections on the metal cross-making tradition (Bernotaitė-Beliauskienė 2003; Kontrimas 1991; Kynas 2005; Laučkaitė-Surgailienė 2003; Miliauskienė 2005; Mockutė 2003; Petrulienė 2003; Šakienė 2008; Spudytė 2005; Urbonienė 2002). Therefore, in this case, the blacksmiths have material collected and

published by the researchers and thus the relationship between the blacksmith and researchers can be described as indirect.

As was shown above and through other examples from fieldwork, a creator that purposely studies traditional heritage (in museums or from specialized literature) becomes a special investigator, one that can both advise and consult his client, his apprentices, and his followers, or sometimes he may provide the researcher with certain valuable observations.

So far, I have focused on cases in which the carver is working on his own original project. However, carvers also make copies of old monuments. Copies are one conception of heritage protection. In Lithuania, copying devotional monuments began in the last decades of the twentieth century (Počiulpaitė 2008: 177). The point of this method is to preserve the most valuable examples of surviving heritage by moving them to museums or other special places (churches or cemetery chapels) and placing an exact copy on the site. Copies preserve the function and meaning of the surroundings of the original monument.

Making copies is initiated by cultural institutions involved in heritage protection: museums and national or regional parks. These projects are sponsored by the local authorities, the Department of Cultural Heritage (under the Ministry of Culture), the Culture Support Foundation, and others. Making copies is based on comprehensive research and is supervised by researchers. The first step usually belongs to a researcher, who has to decide and select which monument is worth being copied. The researcher also gathers iconographic material to supplement details of selected monuments when they are in very poor condition. Sometimes a copy is made based solely on iconographic material if the original object has completely deteriorated. The second step is to find a woodcarver. This is also done by the researcher or by the local cultural institutions that commission the copy. When the master craftsman is found, he is provided with the material gathered by the researcher. Later his drawings are confirmed by specialists; the master craftsman is also monitored and consulted during the entire creative process. The last step—installing the copy—is also supervised by the researcher. In this case, the performer (the woodcarver) is passive, and the researcher is active throughout the creative process and even during the monument installation and consecration rituals.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it should be noted that today the creator always has a connection with the researcher in the cross-crafting process.

Making copies and original commissions should be distinguished. The researcher's role dominates in the process of making copies. In other cases (not copies), the role of the supervisor belongs to the woodcarver or performer, and the researcher has an advisory role. The most common indirect relationship between the performer and researcher is observed when the performer himself studies the researcher's work summarized in published material.

The phenomenon when the creator of the monument himself acts as a researcher, gathering material about crosses or other types of monuments in a certain area, is observed as well.

The old master craftsmen of the first half of the twentieth century had no direct relations with researchers and did not seek them out. They themselves were experts in the tradition. It was the researchers that were looking for contacts with cross-carvers in order to learn about the cross-crafting tradition. After the Soviet era—when the tradition was suppressed and the old master craftsmen, the experts in the tradition, died out—the situation changed. Now the carvers need the knowledge that researchers can provide.

The new generation of master craftsmen does not know the tradition. The ancient cross-makers learned from one another, or a master craftsman passed the secrets of his trade to his son or grandson. Now there is no such continuity. Thus, the new woodcarvers, often young, require knowledge not only for the technology itself—which they learn at creative camps and craft schools—but also for knowledge of the cross-crafting tradition; in particular, forms of crosses and other monuments, special decorative features, sculptural themes, and especially regional characteristics, originality, and differences between monuments. During the last decade, the relationship between performers and researchers has strengthened, and these relations have become important for maintaining the vitality of the cross-crafting tradition in the present. At this point, however, a question could be posed: does the researcher's interference in the creative work of the woodcarver harm the natural vitality of tradition? There are two possible answers. On the one hand, masters have to know tradition quite well in order to safeguard the living tradition. For this reason they must have contact with researchers and follow their instructions. On the other hand, overly strict regulation of woodcarvers' work may suspend the natural development of tradition. The last remark on these two answers is that the role of the researcher in the contemporary living tradition process should be advisory and consulting, rather than prescriptive and commanding. Finally, it can be concluded that, in any case, safeguarding the living tradition of cross-crafting today is impossible without a relationship (direct or indirect) between performers (woodcarvers) and researchers.

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## RAZMERJE MED RAZISKOVALCEM IN IZVAJALCEM PRI RITUALIH REZLJANJA KRIŽEV V LITVI

*Članek obravnava razmerje med raziskovalci in ustvarjalci (rezbarji) v Litvi od 19. stoletja do danes. Prve omembe lesenih votivnih znamenj so iz srede 19. stoletja, prve raziskave pa iz začetka 20. stoletja: lesena znamenja in verski kipi so postali ena najbolj priljubljenih tem za litvanske znanstvenike in lokalne etnografe.*

*Ob prelomu stoletja in v prvi polovici 20. stoletja so raziskovalci večinoma le zbirali in dokumentirali rezljanje križev. Za enostranski odnos je bilo značilno, da so bili rezbarji sami eksperti za izročilo, raziskovalci pa so se v stiku z njimi poučili o tehnikah in stilih rezljanja; njihovi medsebojni odnosi so bili omejeni na pisanje biografij in fotografiranje. Tudi v sovjetskih časih je bil odnos med raziskovalci in rezbarji enostranski; raziskovalci so dokumentirali tradicijo, spraševali stare mojstre in zbirali gradivo.*

*Intenzivnejši stik med raziskovalci in rezbarji je značilen za čas od leta 2001 naprej, ko je bilo rezljanje križev sprejeto na Unescov seznam nesnovne kulturne dediščine. Danes se rezbarji opirajo na znanje raziskovalcev; v stiku z njimi obnavljajo in ohranjajo živo izročilo rezljanja križev. Raziskovalec je odločilen pri procesu izdelave kopij; v drugih primerih pa najpomembnejši ustvarjalec sam, raziskovalec pa ima vlogo svetovalca.*

*Nova generacija umetnikov ne pozna tradicije, zato se mora opirati na raziskovalca. Včasih so se izdelovalci križev učili drug od drugega, saj je mojster skrivnosti rezljanja predal sinu oziroma vnuku. Danes takšne kontinuitete ni več. Rezbarji, pogosto mladi, potrebujejo ne le tehnološko znanje (tega pridobijo v kreativnih taborih in rezbarskih šolah), temveč tudi znanje tradicije rezljanja – oblike križev in drugih znamenj, oblikovne posebnosti, teme kipov in še posebej regionalne značilnosti. Sodobni raziskovalec je tako pri poustvarjanju izročila predvsem svetovalec. Varovanje živega izročila rezljanja križev je danes brez (neposredne ali posredne) komunikacije med ustvarjalcem (rezbarjem) in raziskovalcem nemogoče.*

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# THE “MORAL CODEX” OF A RESEARCHER AS A BEARER OF CULTURE

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TATIANA MINNIYAKHMETOVA

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*All researchers have their own methods of conducting fieldwork and making available information on the culture they have studied. However, a researcher that is simultaneously a bearer of culture must follow at least three principal ethic rules: First, there is knowledge or information that could be available to anyone. Second, there is knowledge or information that the researcher is initiated into, but the researcher is not allowed by the informant to make it available to anyone. Third, there are prohibitions against sharing certain knowledge or information. My research object is a diaspora group and it therefore requires a special approach to fieldwork.*

Keywords: *researcher, fieldwork, ethic codes, diaspora.*

*Raziskovalci na številne načine in z različnimi metodami opravljajo terensko delo in omogočajo informacije o raziskovani kulturi. V vsakem primeru pa mora raziskovalec, ki je tudi sam nosilec kulture, slediti vsaj trem osnovnim etičnim pravilom: nekatere informacije so lahko dostopne komurkoli; določena znanja ali informacije lahko raziskovalec le selektivno objavi; nekaterih znanj ali informacij pa ni dovoljeno širiti. Avtorica raziskuje diasporo, ki zahteva poseben terenski pristop.*

Ključne besede: *raziskovalec, terensko delo, etični kod, Diaspora*

The object of research is the primary and most basic starting point for any researcher. An object being studied with a close relationship to the conceptual framework demands a complex of knowledge and activities from an anthropologist that fall within the interests of the object. This object is an ethnos.

The main object of my scholarship is one of the diaspora groups of the Udmurts living outside of Udmurtia (in Russia); that is, outside of the main ethnic group. The fact that it is a diaspora must always be borne in mind; it must be treated as a diaspora, as another structure and system representing a bordering zone and possessing its own liminality. In this case, the diaspora under consideration is a group of Udmurt migrants from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries that left the main group and settled in forest belonging to Bashkir landowners on the left bank of the Kama River next to the Urals in the Russian Empire. In the new lands, they found themselves among Muslims and Orthodox Christians, “in the context-generating dimension of neighborhood” (Appadurai 1996: 184). Over time, this context influenced the regional and ethnic formation of this group. This diaspora group, referred to as Trans-Kama Udmurts, was not absolutely isolated from the main group. Since the twentieth century it has maintained a close relation with the main ethnic group. Nevertheless, “a diaspora, like a water drop, does not simply reflect in itself what is going on in the main ethnos. In the entire ethnic process a diaspora has its own special role, which is connected with accentuating certain value dominants, which correlate with an ethnic

culture” (Lur’e 1998: 382). Such a phenomenon is possible because of the diaspora’s liminal status. Liminality “means a state or process which is betwixt-and-between the normal . . . . Liminality is full of potency and potentiality” (Turner 1979: 465–466). Liminality favors processes, advancement, and progress; here, in the bordering zones, it is happening more than in the center. Notwithstanding, diasporas “should not be seen as islands isolated from one another but in relation to one another and to the main culture” (Siikala & Ulyashev 2011: 18). The borderline position of ethnic groups allows the researcher to consider them as specific communities (Shabayev & Sharapov 2011: 101) whose differences can be seen at a social and cultural level. In the process of exploring diasporas, it is necessary to choose the correct or right method of approach to research, at both the complex and individual level.

The fieldwork experiences of prominent anthropologists and educators are well known, and so it is not necessary to discuss them here. I would like to discuss my own field-based research experiences among the Udmurt people, mostly among the Trans-Kama diaspora group, in the region where I was born and grew up. I therefore consider myself to belong to this tradition and culture.

In my preliminary research, I found that there were no systematically collected archival materials about this ethnic group. I could only find some short notes and publications from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the Soviet period. Hence, it was necessary to undertake regular and methodical efforts to organize effective field research. In my opinion, one of the most complicated issues in anthropological studies is field research, which includes all preparation activities, the actual investigative work, analysis and interpretation of the material collected, and transferring this knowledge to others. From the beginning and in each case, we have to consider the research findings for the researcher and for the people examined.

All researchers have their own methods and ways to make available the information of the culture they have studied. However, a researcher that is also a bearer of the culture has to follow at least three codes of ethical principles: First, there is knowledge or information that could be available to anyone. Second, there is knowledge or information that the researcher is initiated into, but the researcher is not allowed by the informant to make it available to anyone. Third, there are prohibitions against sharing certain of the informant’s knowledge or information.

In the 1980s, at the beginning of my own ethnographic study of the Udmurts, I visited all of my relatives and almost all of the local groups within this diaspora. Because of this familiarity, this initial fieldwork was more or less comfortable and effective at the same time. I could “interview” people that I knew; furthermore, they supported me and accompanied me to their neighbors and villagers. They helped me greatly because they were introduced to my research goals and interests. They were thankful that I paid them the honor of visiting them, and they were very glad that my parents advised me and referred me to them, and so on. I was content with the success of my connections and research experience during this period. Nevertheless, I could not note all of the information about private or family life, past and present.

There were a lot of settlements where I did not have any relatives and I also planned to research and explore them. I continued to expand my ongoing "geography of exploration" and conduct new journeys and new fieldwork. In these subsequent travels it was not easy for me to gain my informants' confidence. People were afraid of my interests and aims and frightened about why they were being questioned and what kind of consequences could follow. It is not without reason that my questions resulted in such a reaction and behavior of the informants; it was not long ago that these people were subject to Stalin's regime and suffered various needless punishments, imprisonments, and so on. I had to apply to the local intelligentsia, if any such person had ever existed there. I accepted help from everybody and I never chose my helpers. Furthermore, I never was refused an interview and I also never demanded any information. Every time, I first declared what I was doing, why I was there, and I tried to explain that I was interested in their life in the past. The females that were older than me referred to me as "my daughter" and the males called me "young sister." In each case regarding my questions about their lives in the past I received the same answer: "It was very hard." I could not get any more information. I tried to tell them what my grandparents and people from the same village had done in the past, so they could join the conversation more easily. In this way I could collect ethnographic material in general, but I still could not note their names as I had with my own relatives, and in some cases I was restricted to recording musical folklore and not verbal lore. However, in due course I met numerous people and made the acquaintance of both old and young people. Often I was surprised at somebody's willingness to talk, especially if they told their life stories. They used these interviews as opportunities to speak about private life and very confidential matters. It is true, a "researcher is often the only person interested in the informants' lives" (Fikfak 2004: 77). At the same time I also had a chance to know more; those stories revealed different aspects of life. Some of my informants were interested in my private life, and we "exchanged" information. Sometimes they asked me to provide them with recent laws and rules concerning human or social rights, pensions, inheritance, and so on. Many of the elderly females that became closer and more intimate asked me to think of them after their departure in commemoration rituals.

The political situation in Russia changed dramatically in the 1990s. After perestroika, some researchers, ethnographers, and folklore specialists from Udmurtia and other academic institutions of Russia conducted expeditions in this region. Furthermore, foreign Finno-Ugric scholars from Estonia, Finland, Hungary, and other non-Finno-Ugric countries carried out fieldwork among this diaspora and collected materials. In this period people became more open and frank; they wanted to talk. However, if someone wanted to guard private secrets and not disclose confidential information or hidden forms of rituals, he or she would say: "You did not hear it, you did not see it" or "I did not see it and you did not see it." If it was absolutely forbidden to talk about some things, the informant said, "You do not know it." In this way I could learn more clearly and comprehend the informants' wishes.

Today some collections of myths, folk-poetry, and religious, ritual, and everyday life have been published as a result of those field studies by Udmurt, Russian, and foreign researchers.

Over time I also published some articles about my field research, and I participated in various local TV and radio programs. The role that my field research played there is stated 1999 in the Udmurt newspaper *Oshmes*. Most reports were given in the local dialect of this Udmurt diaspora, and this newspaper was devoted to this ethnic group. The editorial staff of this newspaper asked me to write articles on my subject, which I did. As a result, I became increasingly welcome in the villages, and my name was known by almost every family.

Next let me briefly consider some behavioral problems of scholars in the course of field research, and the problems that may arise during fieldwork. While I was observing people, I found that I should look and behave very carefully according to each new situation. The outward appearance of a researcher has great significance, especially when the researcher is observing religious ceremonies and rituals, but also in everyday situations. Here I describe one example of this from my fieldwork. In 1989, I participated in a fieldwork expedition organized by the National Museum of Udmurtia. Some colleagues were accompanied by their children. Usually those children stayed near their parents, but sometimes they were left on a street, waiting for the end of the interview. One day, two girls about ten years old stayed out without their parents and discovered a boat on the river not far from the village. Of course the children wanted to row, so they sat in the boat and the boat took them downstream. They tried to draw the boat up to the river bank, and one of the girls fell into the water. Fortunately, nothing serious happened to them. The girl was wet and she had to change clothes, but there were not any clothes for her to change into. However, I had my ritual costume in our bus. I used it when our group performed in Udmurt folk costumes for the villagers in the clubs. So, very quickly I took my clothes off, put on the ritual costume, and gave my dry everyday clothes to the girl. Soon an old woman passed by us and she said, "Look at this, all dressed up. Now the weather will become worse!" I realized what it could mean and the villagers could be hurt because of my ritual costume, which did not correspond to everyday life. I decided to stay in the bus and not stick my head out. Through my action, we discovered that something wrong had been done. It is true what a Russian scholar said about field research: "Even a gesture can be risky!" (Chesnov 1999: 3). Researchers need to be aware of their own behavior as well as their colleagues' behavior, especially if there is a need for the research to continue with trust and cooperation. "Research in the field can never follow a set of rigidly defined procedures; it must always remain flexible" (Brickhouse 1989: 7).

Any researcher has to learn to catch the meaning of a moment. This is not easy, and anybody can be in a good or a bad mood or state during the researcher's visit. So, we have to learn to thoughtfully probe feelings and to adapt to the conditions of each situation. However, each effort made to not destroy a moment is ineffectual because the presence of a researcher changes everything in the familiar and habitual atmosphere of a family or the entire village. Hence, we never can observe the real and genuine situation; in some sense everything is playing and performing in the life of the society observed. A researcher will never experience the natural course of things. Even in my village, where I belong to the

same religious group, I cannot observe the natural course of rituals. As a researcher, I am now the outsider, and my presence changes the usual atmosphere. The most that I can do is treat all cultures with respect as viable religions and spiritualities in their own right.

The researcher's next task is to analyze and interpret the authentic information and to publish it—to bring to light meanings and content that can be understood for others and will not hurt the informants. After it is published, it is important to consider the reaction of the people being studied. I experienced various cases when I conducted fieldwork with my colleagues or accompanied those that asked me to help make a trip to the Udmurts. Except for genuine scholars, some of them were just searching for the seamy and negative side of life, and others were trying to discover some sensational events and cases. It also was interesting for me to look through their publications. For my own publications, when I visited my informants after my articles were published, I asked them, "Did I write this correctly? Should I do it another way?" People also talked about publications by others, and sometimes remarked that one or another visitor had understood them in a different way, but they did not say that it was not correct or that it was false; they were discreet and brief. People are also very interested in what foreign visitors think of and write about them. I told them that the foreigners thanked them for the hospitality; the hospitality of the ordinary people is great and invaluable.

Today scholarly publications are readily available worldwide. This means that for any researcher the results of their activities will be appreciated positively or could result in a low opinion. An anthropologist should "glance back" while doing his or her own work, both fieldwork and analysis of collected materials. In any case, it is not easy to predict what will happen.

There are many instructions and publications on the importance of ethical considerations in field research. I agree that "a radically different approach to ethics that focuses on particular human relationships may be more useful than general principles in making ethical decisions in research" (Brickhouse 1989: 4). The researcher is dependent on his or her informants' reactions to the research; this plays a role in both fieldwork and publication of the collected findings.

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## “MORALNI KODEKS” RAZISKOVALCA, NOSILCA KULTURE

*O pomenu etičnih vidikov pri terenskem delu so napisane številne razprave, prav tako je objavljenih veliko smernic. Pri tem se je mogoče strinjati s trditvijo, da »je lahko radikalno drugačen pristop k etiki, ki se osredotoča na določena človeška razmerja, pri etičnih odločitvah v raziskavi uporabnejši od splošnih načel« (Brickhouse 1989: 4). Raziskovalec je odvisen od informatorjevih ali informatorkinih reakcij na raziskavo; tako pri terenskem delu kot pri izdaji zbranih odkritij imajo zelo pomembno vlogo Avtorica, raziskovalka, hkrati nosilka kulture, na primeru domačega, izvornega okolja premišlja o tem, kako je mogoče slediti osnovnim etičnim pravilom, katera znanja ali informacije lahko objavi, da so dostopne komurkoli; katere informacije, ki so mu kot nosilcu kulture dostopne, naj selektivno zadrži in za katere informacije so tabu in velja zanje prepoved objave, saj so namenjene izključno skupnosti, iz katere izhajajo.*

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CO-DESIGNING PERFORMANCES,  
CO-DESIGNING HERITAGES

SO-OBLIKOVANJE UPRIZORITEV  
SO-OBLIKOVANJE DEDIŠČIN





# THE RUSSIAN RITUAL YEAR AND FOLKLORE THROUGH TOURIST ADVERTISING

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IRINA SEDAKOVA

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*This article analyzes the ritual year in modern Russia as reflected in tourism spam letters circulated between 2005 and 2012. These texts are the main source of data for this study because they illustrate major tendencies in governmental, commercial, and individual attitudes towards Russian traditional customs and official holidays. They also demonstrate how local heritage is being maintained and reconstructed, and how new myths and customs are appearing and developing to suit the needs of domestic tourism, a special ethnographic calendrical type.*

Keywords: *Russia, ritual year, carnival, advertising, tourism anthropology, semiotics.*

*Članek analizira praznično leto v moderni Rusiji, kot ga odsevajo turistična oglasna sporočila med letoma 2005 in 2012. Tovrstna besedila so glavni vir podatkov za to študijo, saj odsevajo pomembnejše tendence vladnih, komercialnih in individualnih pogledov na ruske tradicionalne šege in uradne praznike. Prikazujejo tudi, kako se obranja in rekonstruira lokalna dediščina in kako se pojavljajo in razvijajo novi miti in rituali, kot jih zahtevajo potrebe domačega turizma.*

Ključne besede: *Rusija, praznično leto, pust, oglaševanje, turistična antropologija, semiotika.*

## INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on the revitalization and re-invention of calendrical ritual celebrations in modern Russian provincial cities as a reciprocal process introduced by local authorities and tourist developers to motivate domestic tourists. This study touches on many sub-disciplines within anthropology, folklore, and linguistics. The topic partly fits into the anthropology of tourism, an academic discipline well established in Europe and the U.S. (core works are published in Smith 1989, Nash 1996, and Nash 2007 et al., but not yet presented in Russian academic investigation and teaching<sup>1</sup>). Since the 1990s, tourism has been a booming industry in post-Soviet Russia. It started with international destinations, such as vacationing in Turkey and Egypt, and culture-based trips in Europe, whereas domestic tourism as such was not very popular. Now, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, domestic tourism is rapidly burgeoning and has become very fashionable even among young people that ten years earlier would have preferred to go abroad on vacation instead of staying in Russia and being a domestic tourist. The major types of tourism as designated by Valene Smith (1989: 4–5) are ethnic, historical, cultural, environmental, religious, and recreational. During the last decade, of course, many subtypes have developed

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<sup>1</sup> For some notes on the anthropology of tourism in Russia, see Gurin (2004).

(sport, culinary, etc.) and also an umbrella type: heritage tourism (Dallen & Boyd 2003; Dallen 2011). In modern Russia I speak of combined types of domestic tourism, which includes diverse tourist activity, but the program almost obligatorily has an ethnic event, when the trip is timed to coincide with a particular date in the ritual year. I refer to this type of tourism as ethnographic calendrical tourism.

The reasons for choice of a calendrical feast from the ritual year (the Christian calendar, state holidays, and other celebrations) and giving local flavor to it as a means to attract tourists have never been studied in Russia. Tourism discourse is a small part of a larger trend of rearranging time in space in the country, erasing the dominant Soviet past, reevaluating historical and religious facts, self-identification, and economic development. Touristifying pilgrimage, commercializing culture, and creating a seasonal aspect for advertising (Santino 1996) are processes that are well known in the West, but are comparatively new in post-communist countries. The forms of Russian tourist advertising that often arrive as spam letters are also very specific and unique.<sup>2</sup>

### SPAM LETTERS FROM TOURIST AGENCIES

This article is a limited study, and so I limited the material I used. I analyze only one genre: the advertisements that I have received as e-mail spam letters. Occasionally I refer to the internet sites that the e-mails refer to and to other sources, but I do not take them into account on the whole because the stylistics of a spam letter and official information are very different.<sup>3</sup> Another restriction concerns geography: I mostly look at central Russian cities.

In 2005, spam letters with an invitation to visit a Russian city or village started arriving by the dozen. The first letters I received offered a potential visitor the opportunity to make a cultural trip to a local area in central Russia known as the Golden Ring (the cities of Vladimir, Suzdal, Novgorod, Yaroslavl, etc.). Even during Soviet times, these cities were known for the beauty of their Russian ecclesiastical medieval architecture and were the main attraction for Russian and foreign tourists. The first tourist spam advertisements accentuated the outstanding architectural heritage:

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<sup>2</sup> I would like to thank the organizers and the participants of the conference of the SIEF working group “The Ritual Year,” which took place in Ljubljana 11–13 November 2011 with the title “Researchers and Performers Co-Designing Heritage.” During the discussion many questions arose, and they helped me draw parallels and clarify theoretical and practical reasoning for this article. Not a single researcher in the conference hall had received or seen tourism spam letters in their countries. Even other former Soviet Republics such as Ukraine and the Baltic states do not have such letters, which is unusual because, as Arūnas Vaicekuskas puts it, the tendency of these young countries is to copy many trends that are taking place in Russia.

<sup>3</sup> The question of correlation between the spam letters and corresponding Internet sites also arose in the discussion at the conference in Ljubljana.

#### Example 1. Bell meeting in Suzdal

*We invite you to take part in a magnificent one-day trip to Suzdal, which long ago was the capital of the kingdom of Rostov-Suzdal. Today Suzdal is widely known as an open-air museum that preserves medieval architecture.*

Other spam letters offered the opportunity to visit religious sites, emphasizing the key notions of Russianness (Orthodoxy, the soul, etc.):

#### Example 2. Sergiyev Posad: Chernigov's hermitage.

*Sergiyev Posad is the soul of Russia!*

*The city is famous firstly for its Trinity Lavra of Saint Sergius (Troitsko-Sergievskaya – the seminary), thanks to which it is often called the capital of Russian Orthodoxy, or the Russian Vatican. You will visit the Lavra, the gem of the Golden Ring. You will see the famous sacred objects: icons, churches, old monuments. An excursion is organized to the Chernigov hermitage: a secluded active hermitage with underground cells and churches, the center of strict spiritual monasticism, established in the middle of the nineteenth century.*

#### Example 3. Zvenigorod: New Jerusalem

*A unique excursion to the most beautiful region near Moscow, the city of Zvenigorod: the Russian Switzerland. We will visit Golgotha, the Garden of Gethsemane, and the Church of Resurrection on the Holy Sepulcher. You do not need to apply for a visa and to buy an airline ticket to see the sanctuaries of Palestine and Jerusalem. This is all included in our excursion.*

Apart from cultural, religious, and ecological tourist trips, other excursions were offered. Increasingly more local features started to appear in these letters, sometimes having to do with folk religion. The importance of these texts can be proved by the case of the city of Murom, which shows how the local cult of saints Peter and Theuronia has grown into a national celebration (see below):

#### Example 4. We invite you to ancient Murom

*You will be welcomed by the hero of the folklore bylinas, Ilya Muromets, who will tell you the old legends of Murom. You will hear the story of the patrons of the families of Saints Peter and Theuronia and will see their relics in the monastery. Thousands of people come here looking for a real miracle. You will be surprised yourselves to find out that the atmosphere in your family has changed for the better, love and understanding will come back to your house. Somebody will come back with his/her "other half."*

In 2005 and 2006 the variety of trips started to grow, and increasingly more ethnic elements began to appear in the spam letters and correspondingly at the tourist sites. For example, a letter offering pre-Christian rituals and recreation in natural settings sounded very attractive:

Example 5. Ancient Slavic magic tour

*This is a three-day trip to Smolenskoe Poozerje national park, including a visit to Lake Sapsbo, which is only three hours by car from Moscow. Since childhood we have been tempted by the undiscovered. How many secrets and mysteries are in the land we know? Here you will definitely find inner tranquility, a deep understanding of nature, and harmony with our world. Every participant in this trip will have the chance to approach a real secret, to sit in a tent dressed in deerskins, to meet a kind shaman, to go for a walk in a nature reserve, to drink tea with herbs from the forest, to relax in a steamy Russian sauna, to show one's talent by singing along with a guitar near the fire, and simply to have a rest, while your body and soul relax in harmony with nature.*

The stylistics of the spam letters also vary greatly. In addition to short informative texts, there are longer poems, like this one, describing the May tour Chéz Baba Yaga in Uglich:

Example 6.<sup>4</sup>

<i>Эй, весёлый друг турист!</i>	<i>Hey, my dear tourist friend!</i>
<i>Съезди в Углич, оттянись!</i>	<i>Go to Uglich and relax!</i>
<i>Что за жизнь без приключений?</i>	<i>What's life like without drive?</i>
<i>Просто скука, а не жизнь...</i>	<i>It is boring. It's not life!</i>
<i>Познакомишься с Ягой,</i>	<i>You will meet up with Yaga</i>
<i>будет там и Домовой,</i>	<i>And the Domovoy himself,</i>
<i>дядька Леший с бородой</i>	<i>Uncle Leshiy with a beard</i>
<i>пообщается с тобой.</i>	<i>Will entertain you a lot.</i>
<i>Оглядишь монастыри</i>	<i>You will visit the monasteries</i>
<i>и снаружи и внутри,</i>	<i>From the outside and inside,</i>
<i>древний Углич всё откроет,</i>	<i>Ancient Uglich will open everything for you,</i>
<i>Мышкин с "Мышью" познакомит</i>	<i>Myshkin will acquaint you with the Mouse</i>
<i>и устав от тех трудов</i>	<i>When you get tired of sightseeing</i>
<i>- на пикник в лесу готов?</i>	<i>Are you ready for a picnic in the woods?</i>

I have presented several types of tourist spam letters that I received in 2005 and 2006. At that time, my major research project was aimed at investigating quotations in modern Russian discourse and, because I discovered some interesting cognitive and axiological points

<sup>4</sup> The Russian is retained here.

in these texts, I decided to keep saving them. With the passage of time and the quantity and quality of the spam letters growing, I realized that the texts I was receiving were modified according to the ritual year and offered local versions of ethnographic calendrical tourism. Every new year and festive circle brought in information about new loci and new seasonal celebrations, depicted in an increasingly sophisticated style (on the improvement and impressive creativity of the copywriters of Russian internet sites, see Sedakova 2010).

Thus, apart from the value of the spam letters as a genre, these texts proved to be important documents that reflect the entire process of rearranging time and space in modern Russia. The significance of such a text was emphasized by the late academician Vladimir Toporov, who studied not only many ancient texts but also small contemporary notes such as street graffiti, short texts on the grave of the Russian Saint Xenia of Saint Petersburg, and so on. He called these texts *odnodnevki*—texts that survive one day—and pointed out: “The short period of their life is opposed to the fact that time not only wipes away the texts, but also produces new ones, according to the old patterns. Not a single ethnological piece of research can pretend to be a broad enough study if it does not take into account such texts. Moreover, they create myths themselves . . .” (Toporov 1992: 252). This idea is supported and complemented by many scholars and is also very valuable for sociolinguists. The language of tourism (on this concept, see Dann 1996, 2002), which is at the core of my research, consists of such texts, based on precedent texts and new myths. Through pictures, brochures, and other media, the language of tourism attempts to seduce millions of people into becoming tourists and subsequently to control their attitudes and behavior (Smith, Waterton, & Watson 2012).

## CALENDRLICAL TIME AND PLACE, OR PLACE AND CALENDRLICAL TIME: CARNIVAL

Investigation of the spam letters proves the idea of reciprocal influence of time and space, and it also shows the remembrance of the old and formation of new chronotopes in modern Russia. Many cities had to start from the very beginning: with the name, which is the key to historical memory and culture, and also an important source for inventing ritual tradition and mythology.<sup>5</sup> Since 1990, a process of renaming cities (giving them old

<sup>5</sup> To give just two examples of the correspondence between the name and the local developments aiming partly to attract tourists: the city of Myshkin (resembling the Russian word for ‘mouse’) was one of the first to play with its name, establishing a private mouse museum. Local entrepreneurs also used the image of the mouse (produced in the city in all forms and of all materials) to invite tourists to come to the city and buy souvenirs for the coming Chinese year of the rat. Another example is the city of Tambov. Due to the Russian saying “Tambov’s wolf is your friend” as a reply to addressing somebody as “friend,” tourism developers organized a wolf museum. All of these examples were taken from the spam letters and then double-checked in the official tourist information. For more examples on development of mythology and folklore in the provincial cities as part of the project Folklore Map of Russia, see below.



Figure 1. Internet-advertisement of the Shrove-tide (Crepes) week in Moscow. A commercial remake of the well-known Soviet poster by Irakliy Toidze (1941). The author of the remake is unknown. 2004.



Figure 2. Figure of Maslennitsa (the Carnival) in Pushkin Square, Moscow. 2011. (Photos by I. Sedakova)

pre-revolutionary names) has been taking place: Leningrad became Saint Petersburg, Sverdlovsk became Yekaterinburg, Gorky became Nizhny Novgorod, Kuybyshev became Samara, Kalinin became Tver, and so on. Along with the process of renaming, the process of developing the local identity started, and one of the many sources for remembering the past and presenting it as a living tradition is the ritual that is an important part of many traditional spheres (be it calendar holidays with performances and carnivals, or folklore with its heroes, music and dance, crafts, etc.).

Tourist spam letters show how the tours have been adjusted to the major and minor points in the ritual year, offering the specific attractions of the tourist destination. Meanwhile, the local ritual system met the needs of tourism and local people and transformed the ritual and mythological systems as well.

The ritual year as such in the spam letters I have been receiving started with Shrovetide week, known as *Maslennitsa* in Russian. This feast was not abolished in the USSR, even in the cities. Whereas in rural areas the entire week kept the names of the days and specific rituals—games, songs, and dances with the final burning of the figure of *Maslennitsa*—in the cities the dominating idea was a gastronomic one: eating crepes. After perestroika, carnival turned into a must. Now there is entertainment and crepes, the figure of *Maslennitsa* appears<sup>6</sup> on time in the centre of each city, the crepes are served on the street even in

<sup>6</sup> Crepes for carnival, and bread and cheese for Easter are very important basic culinary components, which proved to be very stable, having survived during the atheist Soviet era. An impressive use of the well-known poster redone for *Maslennitsa* (Figure 1).



Figure 3. Street bill-boards in Moscow. 2011.



Figure 5. The figure of the Maslenitsa (the Carnival) before being put on fire in Nikitskaya street, Moscow. 2011.



Figure 4. Street performance by folk group Nikitskaya in Nikitskaya street, Moscow. 2011.

Moscow (see Figures 2 and 3), and there are many street performances, some of them really authentic (see Figures 4 and 5).

Carnival gives the tourism entrepreneurs a very good opportunity to attract visitors: each tour includes some local specific form of the feast, mostly interactive entertainment, whereas crepes are the main culinary point of attraction. In 2006, I counted three dozen spam letters that were invitations to carnival tours in various places. In 2012 there were several hundred.

I exemplify the most important ideas about the local tourist celebration that the spam letters present. Some of the letters simply change the title of the text and insert bits of ritual information into the usual “out of season” content.

Example 7. Wild carnival in the amazing region of Karelia

*This corner of nature and resort does not need to be advertised. The winter will give you the most exclusive feast of the year. Russian carnival is famous for its charm. You will meet primordial inhabitants of the Karelian woods in their natural environment: bears with bear cubs, northern deer, elks. You'll be breathing the incomparable air of the Karelian woods. You will visit daughter-in-law parties and you'll try national Karelian food. A visit to the unique Doll's House private gallery is included in the price. Relax and enjoy.*

Others emphasize carnival and give substantial information about it, but also keep the main historical program for the vicinity as such.

Example 8. Carnival is coming!!!!!!! Vologda, Kirillovo, Ferapontovo

*We invite you to say goodbye to winter and to welcome the spring—the Beauty in the very heart of Russia, in the ancient Russian cities of Vologda, Kirillovo, and Ferapontovo, which used to be the gates to the north. Tsar Ivan the Terrible used to choose these lands for his recreation. Many important historical and cultural events are connected with these cities. Vologda lace-making is known worldwide. These cities are famous for their Shrovetide festivities.*

Nowadays, when interactive tourism is booming, special carnival performances turn into the main tourist attraction. The text below shows a specially written fake-lore scenario that includes authentic features of carnival such as games and crepes, but also mentions some evil spirits that have nothing to do with the traditional feast; they are “just added for fun”:

Example 9. Adventurous carnival in Kirov

*The demons from the woods have stolen the poor carnival lady. Maybe it does not sound too scary, but the spring will not come before carnival is over. Today our guests will become brave heroes. They will have to fight kikimora (the spirit of the house) and to struggle with leshiy (the spirit of the woods) and prove their courage. There are many battles, games and competitions in the program: a sack race, tug-of-war, funny basketball, and running with crepes on your head. Skomorokhi (folk comic actors), will entertain you and make jokes, and you will enjoy a cup of tea in a warm tent. All day long you can ride a sled and horses as long as you want.*



Another type of theatrical celebration is put into Saint Petersburg settings:

Example 10. The Empire Carnival in Saint Petersburg

*You will spend three days in a splendid city where each corner is admirable. In addition to an excursion to Pavlovsk, the eighteenth-century gem, the Empire Carnival is waiting for you. We'll see and try the emperor's fun. You'll ride a troika, and then there will be a carnival feast in a hut, which will give you a chance to learn the details of this happy feast—the way peasants used to celebrate it. A meal cooked according to ancient recipes including crepes and a musical competition is waiting for you.*

There are also tourist destinations with authentic carnival performances maintained up to the present day, exactly as they are advertised in the spam letters inviting people to the Honey Carnival in Kolomna, the Souzdal street carnival, Vologda, Veliky Novgorod, and others:

Example 11. Shrovetide in Veliky Novgorod

*We invite you to celebrate carnival in one of the oldest towns of Russia: Veliky Novgorod. The Novgorod area will offer you a magic celebration you will remember forever. You will make a fire and burn the figure of Maslenitsa, you will dance and fight. You will eat crepes and drink herbal tea. You will be served alcohol.*

On 23 February 2012, during Shrovetide week I accepted an invitation in a spam letter and went to Pereslavl. I had a combined tour with excursions to two monasteries and three churches, to Lake Pleshcheyevo, where Peter the Great tried out his first fleet, and to the blue stone connected with many local legends, magic practices, and beliefs. The major attraction was the carnival performance in a specially constructed “House of Berendei.”<sup>7</sup> The performance



Figure 6. The Shrove-tide entertainments in The House of Berendei. Pereslavl' Zalesskiy. February, 23, 2011.

consisted of very traditional ritual acts and entertainment, compiled by experts in folklore and performed by professional actors and some local people. We played games, listened to spring calendar songs, danced, and at the end burned the figure of carnival (*Maslenitsa*; Figures 6 and 7). Some didactic elements were incorporated the performance, such as explaining the terms and the ritual acts of each day of the Shrovetide week, teaching some games, and so on. This is an important issue for such ethnographic tourism because

<sup>7</sup> Folklorists do not regard Berendei as a hero of the Russian mythological pantheon, but he is still very popular in literature and modern folklore. For more, see <http://dom-berendej.ru/>.



Figure 7. The figure of Carnival on fire. The House of Berendei. Pereslavl' Zalesskiy. February, 23, 2011.

Russian urban culture has forgotten the traditional feasts, and not only children, but their parents and even grandparents have (and are eager) to study folk heritage.

Apart from traditional seasonal performances of carnival, other types of entertainment are offered in the spam advertisements. The joy of eating crepes is always stressed in the letters, and tourists can choose the scenery for this culinary experience according to their interests, time, and means. Carnival can be celebrated in Shakhmatovo, the ancient country estate of the writer Alexander Blok, in the city of Klin, the birthplace of the composer Peter Tchaikovsky, and so on. Here is a letter inviting participants to celebrate carnival in Pushkin's memorial places, which offers cultural and informative tourism along with ethnographic tourism:

Example 12. Shrovetide in the lands of Pskov: Pushkin's memorial places

*We will visit Pushkin's memorial places, the Pushkin family estate. We will visit the house of Pushkin's nanny Arina Rodionovna, the estate of the forefather of Alexander Pushkin, Abram Hannibal, and the core of the expedition will be the Shrovetide celebrations in the city of Old Izborsk.*

With the development of tourism sites, the array of offers to celebrate carnival is growing in number and detail. Some of them involve very foreign ideas, alien to Russian popular tradition, such as a carnival with crepes in an Indian village for children, and so on.

## THE RITUAL YEAR IN TOURISM ADVERTISING

Apart from carnival, the church and the folk religious versions of Easter with its specific culinary treats (special cakes and cheese), games with painted eggs, and competitions offer a lot to a creative tourism entrepreneur. Almost all the tourist destinations have adjusted their programs to place the Easter celebration into the local setting, which I could see in the spam letters I received.<sup>8</sup> In 2005, after Easter a long period of non-seasonal and eth-

<sup>8</sup> The spam letter depicting the Easter tour to the city of Murom (example 4) adds one sentence: "On Easter you will receive some holy water in the old chapel and eat Paskha food."

nographic letters followed, until New Year 2006 and then “the gender month” came: St Valentine’s Day, 23 February (Defender of the Motherland Day, or Men’s Day) and 8 March (International Women’s Day). Marked dates with socialist associations, such as 1 May and 7 November, have not been used to attract tourists for celebrating, but only for cultural, ecological, or religious trips. Consequently I documented filling in the gaps in the course of the ritual year. Every year brought some new calendrical developments, which aimed to fill in the lacunae, adapting the traditional and new calendar feasts to the needs of tourists.

This process went in two directions. On the one hand, many church holidays were “privatized” by tourism agencies and destinations. On the other hand, the former Soviet holidays regained their popularity, partly out of nostalgic feelings in society and partly through the interest of the younger generations.

The church celebrations have been popular in pilgrimage tours, which followed the Christian calendar. For the other types of tourism, such as ethnographic and culinary tourism, not all the Christian Orthodox feasts were regarded as “convenient” or “interesting.” Ethnographic tourism needs action and performance, and one can find these features in the folk version of the Christian calendrical feasts. Thus my e-mail inbox received advertisements for tourist trips on Midsummer Day (the Nativity of John the Baptist, 7 July, new style). In Russia this is known as *Ivan Kupala* (from Slavic \**kup-* ‘to bathe’) and is a rich ritual complex connected with water, fires, herbs, games and flirting for young people, and so on.

Example 13. The night of Ivan Kupala (Midsummer). The night of love

*The most fashionable weekend of this summer. A night full of love games and entertainment. We guarantee shows and fun until the morning. Mermaids and leshij (a forest demon), the Tambov wolf, and the witch will celebrate with you. You dance around a fire surrounded by feasting and the southern night. You take the Neoplan bus on Friday evening and by nighttime you reach the Tambov forest hotel with comfortable rooms, looking at the pine forest’s clear air, you’ll have meals in a summer restaurant. You’ll have excursions to the Tambov Wolf museum and the Spaso church, a trip to the village of Trigulyay, Ataman Antonov’s homeland. You’ll visit Saint John’s monastery, the chapel, you’ll bathe in the holy spring and have a picnic near the Tsna River. We promise you relaxation and swimming and a night full of love and fun. On Sunday evening you will return to Moscow beloved and surrounded by new friends.*

Another celebration that includes games and can be placed in the natural environment is Whitsunday, whose date changes according to Easter. In 2009, I received a spam invitation to visit Tver for Whitsunday. I made an internet enquiry, which led me to an article titled “Tourism in Tver Can Be Saved by Folklore, Whitsunday’s Folk Entertainment” (<http://www.rusculture.ru/?p=thview&id=287>). This proves the idea that the development of tourism destinations greatly relies on folklore and rituals while making the calendar of excursions more condensed.

The month of August, which used to be an “empty” period for ethnographic calendrical tourism, provides another example. The study of folk rituals probably gave entrepreneurs ideas to insert August celebrations into the development of tourism as well. In the Russian vernacular religious tradition, the three August church calendar celebrations are known as the First (Honey) Feast = the Savior (The Day of the Holy Cross, 14 August), the Second (Apple) Feast (Transfiguration, 19 August), and the Third (Rye, Bread, Nuts) Feast (The Savior on Canvas, 29 August, the day after the Dormition of the Virgin, 28 August). As can be seen from the names, the feasts allude to the fruit of nature and, because food is well exploited by ecological and culinary tourism, these feasts started to be included in the ritual tourism year.

An exclusively interesting example of the reciprocal influence of tourism entrepreneurship and governmental policy on the basis of the Russian Christian Orthodox calendar and folk religion is supplied by the case of a local church feast in Murom. I have already quoted a spam letter inviting tourists to visit this city to venerate the relics of the saints Peter and Theuronia, regarded as family patrons that can guarantee luck in romance and family life. A local legend and feast developed into a national myth and state holiday established in 2008 (the Year of the Family) as the Day of Family, Love, and Fidelity (for more on this holiday, see Sedakova, in press). The idea of using this local celebration for a Russia-wide holiday was coined in the Russian State Duma (the lower house of the Russian Parliament), and the scenario for the festival was officially launched by Svetlana Medvedeva (the Russian first lady) with huge support from mass media and governmental structures. It became a success, unlike the other important innovations in the modern Russian ritual year: 4 November and 12 June (Sedakova 2007).

The second trend making the tourist ritual year more diverse is the revitalization of the Soviet celebrations and their adjustment to tourism demands. The process of erasing the communist past has been replaced by a trend to accept Russians’ nostalgic feelings. The spam letter below offers an unforgettable 1 May celebration, which combines Soviet and post-Soviet joys.

Example 14. What is the best way to celebrate 1 May

*The cruise ship will welcome you with the poster “Peace Labor May.” You will be captivated by a whirlpool of fun and colors, just as in your childhood. Every guest will receive a personal “1 May 50 g vodka shot” and a very tempting herring appetizer. The tour’s hour-long ride will include a boys’ spy competition. Anyone can volunteer to beat the drums or play the horn. We will remind you how to tie a pioneer tie and will teach you how to do the Yablochko dance. There will be other competitions not very Pioneer-like, but rather original, such as tossing peanuts into a beer mug, poetry competition for the best holiday slogan, and a poster-making competition. You will be able to recall all of it and perhaps your children will see what it was like for the first time.*

Some of the excursions offered by the tourist agencies through the spam letters are really exclusive and deal with the postmodernist humor about Soviet ideology and heroism. The

text below timed for 23 February, the Day of Men, alludes to the legendary Russian hero Ivan Susanin, who led Polish enemy troops into the marsh near Kostroma and died with them in the seventeenth century. The Susanin route as advertised in the spam sounds very suspicious, but, of course, it is just a game, adjusted to the local nature and historical and folklore facts. The major theme is expressed in other attractions of the tourist destination that do not have a “seasonal” touch. Thus the plan of the excursion illustrates the mixture of attractions of a historical, cultural, religious, and culinary character.

Example 15. 23 February: The Day of Russian Men

*The most important man of the country, Ivan Susanin, is expecting you to join him for the celebration of the 23 February. This is an adventure tour to walk the path of Ivan Susanin.*

*We've prepared a sightseeing program for you. These places are connected with the great history of the Russian state. In glorious Yaroslavl you will witness the great architecture of the Posad churches. Visit the Spasov monastery and also spend some time in the famous “Music and Time” museum owned by famous Yaroslavl hypnotist John Mostoslavsky.*

*You will spend the second day in Kostroma, guided by Ivan Susanin himself to the marsh where the Polish enemy drowned. On our way we will be stopping by the famous villages where the future Mikhail Romanov once lived. The Issupov Swamp, into which Susanin led the Poles. In Susanin's village of Savrasov, a famous artist has painted the famous landscape *The Rooks Have Arrived*. We will be staying in the unique place Karabikha next to Nekrasov's country estate in the modern Yaroslavl park hotel, Eurostandard bus.*

The new post-Soviet state holidays 12 June (Independence Day, or Russia Day) and 4 November (Day of National Unity) have not added any interesting content to the tourist calendar. The red days in the calendar allow tourism entrepreneurs to use the longer weekends for the commercial needs of the business. In modern Russia these state festivities fall into the range of “empty,” meaningless festivities that are purely ideological. Most people in the Russian Federation do not remember the precise names and the historical reasons for them, and always have a nice surprise when, for example, on 12 June they realize that they do not have to go to their offices.<sup>9</sup> Thus the old meaning of a holiday (Russian *prazdnik*) ‘empty, not busy day’ (Toporov 1980) is restored to its literal meaning.

<sup>9</sup> The beginning of November has been marked as a festive period because the day of the October Revolution, 7 November, has been celebrated for many decades in the USSR and is well remembered by many generations. This is, by the way, one of the strategies of restructuring the official ritual year in post-Soviet countries: to more or less keep the date of the communist holiday, but fill the celebration with new ideological (historical) content (Sedakova 2008).

## FOLKLORE, THE RITUAL YEAR, AND TOURISM

I use the case of New Year tourism as reflected in spam letters to analyze a sub-theme and to illustrate how a calendar feast can initiate a new strategy for attracting visitors to new destinations and also to renovate known tourism sites. The New Year marks a very specific place in the seasonal calendar of the Russians celebration. In the USSR it replaced Christmas, which was officially forbidden in the atheist country (on this topic, see Dushchikina 2012). During those seventy years, Christmas faded as a celebration, but with the re-Christianization of Russia in the 1990s Christmas in its folk version started to come back, both on the modern (25 December) and Russian Orthodox (7 January) dates. Here the difference in the Russian church calendar and the international one plays a decisive role. I am restricted here from describing it in detail, but in modern Russia the Christmas period starts on 24 December (under European influence) and lasts until 7 January—the date for Christmas in the Russian Orthodox Church. We also have two New Years: 1 January and the 13 January (old style). Of course, this long period (Russians have official holidays from 1 to 11 January) provides a vast field for celebrating and touring.

The most typical personages the Russian New Year is associated with are Grandfather Frost (*Ded Moroz*) and his “granddaughter” the Snow Girl (*Snegurochka*). One of the first ideas of using folklore images for tourism purposes was to find a homeland for Grandfather Frost. Again, I discovered this fact in a spam letter. The homeland of Grandfather Frost was declared to be Veliky Ustyug (copying the Finnish Santa Claus). This development is ascribed to the former mayor of Moscow Yuri Luzhkov, who was visiting the city of Ustyug, and he and the local mayor decided to declare this city the homeland of Grandfather Frost. Thus in 1999 the New Year hero obtained his place and the on-site works started. Now this place has attained the status of Grandfather Frost’s homeland and various trips and cultural, ethnographic activities are being inspired by this idea ([http://ipaatravel.narod.ru/velikijustug\\_main.htm](http://ipaatravel.narod.ru/velikijustug_main.htm)). Thanks to this innovation, Veliky Ustyug is rapidly becoming one of the most popular tourist destinations, and not only during the Christmas season.

Many provincial cities followed this example. The first fairy-tale hero used as an attraction for the tourists was the famous picturesque Baba Yaga. In 2006, I received a spam letter which invited me to visit Yaroslavl, Poshekhonye, and Kukoboy:

Example 16. The most mysterious and unforgettable trip in your life

*We invite you to come with us to Baba Yaga’s house in the very middle of the woods, the homeland of Baba Yaga. She will welcome you with pirozhki, and you will drink tea served from a samovar. You will buy good souvenirs: Baba Yaga’s hut, and so on.*

In 2004, the village of Kukoboy declared itself the homeland of Baba Yaga, but there are other places that compete for this privilege, like the village of Staritsa in the Tver region,

Kuban' (ataman') and others. The explanations for the choice of the native place of a hero, a demon, or an evil spirit vary a lot. The homeland of the famous heroes of the Russian fairytale, the sister Alyonushka and brother Ivanushka, for example, has been declared to be the village of Ryabovo—the native place of Mikhail Vasnetsov, the Russian artist and creator of the well-known illustration of these heroes. *Kolobok* (a small round loaf of bread) was “born” in Ulyanovsk because, as local dialectologists insist, there are such words in the local dialect. The pseudo-mythological personage Kostroma (the spirit of nature and spring) undoubtedly comes from the city of Kostroma, and so on. Sometimes there is no reason at all; just the rule “First come, first served” works; thus Kirov turned into the native place of Kikimora<sup>10</sup> (a female spirit of the house), *vodyanoy* (the spirit of the water) is said to live in Poshekhonye, and so on.

Folklore and tourism is a vast subject, rich with material, still under construction, very appealing for further research. What is important in this article is that whenever a fairytale hero or a spirit obtains a native place, it starts to develop a personal ritual year that is immediately used in tourism advertising. Thus on the last Saturday of June tourists are invited to join Baba Yaga's birthday party, Kikimora celebrates her birthday on 2 March and her wedding anniversary with Domovoy (the male spirit of the house) is on 15 May. There is a special date in the ritual year of Vodyanoy: he wakes up on 16 April and a special performance is given for tourists.

The images of the Russian folktales and mythology used as local brands give the advertising agencies and municipal authorities excellent opportunities to develop the city, to create its local identity, to provide the local people with work (for crafts, catering, accommodation, etc.), and to attract growing numbers of tourists. The process of privatizing the heroes and the demons moved to the state level when the project Fairytale Map of Russia was launched in November 2010, and a special network of tourism and other advertising agencies and municipal authorities was established.<sup>11</sup>



Figure 8. The Fairy-tale map of Russia in the corner of thematic ritual souvenirs in The House of Beredei. February, 23, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Some local historians insist that there are some toponyms with the name of Kikimora near Kirov.

<sup>11</sup> The participants in this huge project come to visit each place of folklore tourism and discuss plans. Each participant comes with a thematic gift; these are collected and then displayed in a special corner of a museum, as in Pereslavl (Figure 8).

## CONCLUSION

Analysis of the spam advertising of tourism illustrates that the passage from the Soviet ideas and way of life to a very new stage, post-Soviet (which still does not have a proper name), is interesting for researchers and is vivid on a large and small scale. The spam letters show new attitudes toward time and space, toward history and memory, toward the past, present, and future, toward the idea of Russianness, and toward serious and entertaining issues.

One can also see that the values of folk culture and heritage as a whole have regained their power and served as a very important tool in commerce and in the ideological formation of identity and Russianness. The observations of European and American anthropologists (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983; Boissevain 1992; Lowenthal 1998; Fournier 2008) that analyze the processes of (re)inventing tradition are now very topical for Russia and for other post-socialist countries [Habinc 2008; Volarič 2008], which are going through the complicated process of regaining national identity after several decades of being in the communist bloc and are now facing globalization. The process of commercializing rituals and assigning them to seasons, as has been seen, also has partly positive outcomes because it suggests didactic, archival, and research activity.

When talking about folklore, the ritual year, and tourism, special attention has to be paid to notions of entertainment and relaxation, which have turned into the key slogans nowadays. Some scholars define entertainment as the epidemic of our days (Odinokova 2006). The Russian is sometimes seen as *Homo feriens*, the ‘celebrating person’ (determined by the semiotician Vladimir Toporov, 1980). Russian society is trying to fill in the vacuum and gaps that formed as a result of de-ideologization and looking for new rituals, faith, and restoration of heritage. David Lowenthal commented on a similar situation: “The creed for heritage answers needs for ritual devotion, especially where other formal faith has become prefunctionary or mainly political” (1998: 1–2). Russia has not reached the state of “craze for heritage” at the official and individual levels, but the craze for folklore and ritual, especially calendrical feasts that bring joy and relaxation, is in the air.

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## RUSKO PRAZNIČNO LETO IN FOLKLORA V TURISTIČNEM OGLAŠEVANJU

*Raziskava sodi v sfero antropologije turizma in upošteva različne kulturne, religiozne, politične in delno tudi ekonomske procese v moderni Rusiji. Osnovni vir podatkov za raziskavo so turistični oglasi, ki so kot nezaželeni elektronski pošta krožili med letoma 2005 in 2012. Izražajo namreč komercialne in ideološke težnje in vodilne tokove prestrukturiranja prazničnega leta in posovjetskega prostora. Po razpadu ZSSR so ruska folklor in koledarske ritualne prakse znova pridobili status nacionalne večvrednosti. Revidiran je bil tudi koncept kulturne dediščine, pomembne za identifikacijo in idejo »ruskosti«. Začel se je proces ustvarjanja »staro–novega« ruskega ritualnega - prazničnega časa in svetega prostora. Najprivlačnejša koledarska praznovanja so za turistične namene postala tista, ki so povezana s hrano, z zabavo in uprizoritvami. Primer »maslenice« m tj. pusta, analiziranega v tej razpravi, razkriva možnosti, ki jih prazniku ponuja lokalno okolje. Prikaže tudi raznolike variante ritualnega kompleksa – od avtentičnega do izmišljenega scenarija, namenjenega zabavnejši in bolj interaktivni zabavi. Vsak geografski prostor si želi pridobiti ritualni status in – delno zaradi naraščajoče turistične industrije – biti povezan s koledarskim praznikom, pomembno zgodovinsko ali folklorno osebnostjo ali s čim podobnim. Tako je Dedek Mraz dobil svoje domovanje v Velikij Ustiug, Jaga baba v vasi Kukoboj, Miš v mestu Myshkin (miš) itn. Razlage za izbiro prostora bivališča junaka ali demona so različne, pogosto temeljijo na lingvističnih ali samo na izmišljenih razlogih. Ko se junak spremeni v blagovno znamko provincialnega mesta, podjetniki začnejo sestavljati osebno praznično leto tega junaka, da bi privabili več turistov. Etnografski koledarski turizem pridobi tako nove razsežnosti. Decembra 2010 je nacionalni projekt »Pravljnični zemljevid Rusije« prevzel prvotno naključne lokalne dejavnosti, nadzor nad ponovnim iznajdevanjem mitologije lokalnih prostorov pa je prevzela vlada.*

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CULTURE OR COMMERCE:  
FRAMING HERITAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF  
MUNICIPAL SUBSIDIES.  
THE ANNUAL ST. NICHOLAS PARADE IN THE  
NETHERLANDS

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JOHN HELSLOOT

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*This article focuses on the practical effects of ethnology's framing of ritual. It examines the attitude of Dutch municipalities towards subsidizing the annual St. Nicholas parade. Some are in favor, considering the parade an element of tradition. Others are opposed, arguing that the parade is a commercial activity. Because the parade, and much other ritual, has both cultural and commercial facets, the author encourages ethnology to design a more fitting, encompassing concept.*

Keywords: ritual, framing, cultural policy

*Članek obravnava praktične učinke etnološkega uokvirjenja rituala, pri čemer posebej raziše odnos nizozemskih občin do subvencioniranja Miklavževega sprevoda. Nekatere so mu naklonjene, saj jo imajo za sestavni del tradicije. Druge pa mu nasprotujejo in trdijo, da je sprevod komercialna dejavnost. Ker ima parada, pa tudi mnogi drugi rituali, tako kulturno kot komercialno plat, avtor pomaga etnologiji ustvariti ustrežnejši, širše zastavljen koncept.*

Ključne besede: ritual, okvirjenje, kulturna politika

The understanding of rituals and festivals was greatly advanced in recent years by the focus on performance and performers, by investigating how these actually *work* for participants. At the same time, it is clear that this approach only highlights certain aspects of rituals. It does not (and does not claim to) tell the whole story. A festival or a ritual is an arena involving not only performers, but other more distant players or stakeholders as well. Therefore, the theme of the conference Researchers and Performers Co-Designing Heritage was well chosen, by taking a wider view and signaling the sometimes neglected or hidden role of researchers in framing and designing phenomena presented by performers as cultural heritage.

“When doing research in this area,” Regina Bendix wrote, ethnologists sometimes “encounter arguments, often outdated, from their own disciplinary history. These have been taken up as tools to legitimise the need for one or another practice to be reclassified as intangible heritage.” She advocated “[c]ase-by-case ethnographic documentation” in order to “identify specific actors, to follow how they initiate and fight for (or against) particular value additions, and denote how they deploy knowledge transfers from cultural scholarship that is usually outdated” (Bendix (2009a: 254; cf. Bendix 2008: 117, Tauschek 2009a: 77). In this respect she referred to “the constant attempts to cleanly separate idealistic from economic instrumentalisations of heritage” (2009: 259; see Klamer 2004 for such a stance). How this works in the actual practice of the “heritagization” process was recently shown, for instance, by Markus Tauschek (2010) in his study of the Binche carnival, and is also manifest in the case study I present here.

## THE ANNUAL ST. NICHOLAS PARADE

An important event in the ritual year in the Netherlands is the festival of St. Nicholas, celebrated on 5 December. Preferably on the evening of that date (but also on preceding days, or, if it fits better with scheduling, even later on) some fifty to sixty percent of Dutch people, both adults and children, indulge in giving and receiving gifts. The basic premise of the ritual is that the imaginary figure of St. Nicholas hands out presents to all children that have behaved well, and punishes those that have been naughty. This idea is expanded to the world of adults as well, who in the name of St. Nicholas exchange gifts on this annual day of reckoning in an atmosphere of benevolent charivari.

In order to uphold the belief that he is simultaneously a real person, St. Nicholas, in the company of Black Peter, his servant(s) in blackface, makes a live appearance in schools, at voluntary associations, in old people's homes and hospitals, and to those that can afford it in private homes. However, St. Nicholas does not live in the Netherlands. Children are told that St. Nicholas makes a journey by steamboat from imaginary "Spain," where he resides, for his annual visit to the Netherlands. Two or three weeks before 5 December, on a Saturday or a Sunday, St. Nicholas and his Black Peters can indeed be seen arriving. One location, preferably a picturesque "old Dutch" port-town, is chosen by national television to broadcast this arrival. On the quay St. Nicholas, dressed in the full—if somewhat fanciful—attire of a Roman Catholic bishop, is solemnly welcomed to the country by the local mayor. After that he makes his festive entry parade through the streets of the town on his gray horse. The Black Peters, all wearing similar brightly colored sixteenth century–style costumes, meanwhile dance, jest with the children in the watching crowd, and present them with traditional gingerbread cubes. The parade ends at a location where St. Nicholas is treated to various amusements and will shake hands with children and their parents. Today this broadcast is watched by between one-and-a-half to two million people.

However, and contrary to normal logic, St. Nicholas not only arrives and makes his parade in the town of the television broadcast, but, more or less simultaneously, in virtually every Dutch town and village. St. Nicholas is a bringer of gifts, but at the same time he is a national icon. Few Dutch will disagree that participating in the St. Nicholas ritual is a vital marker of Dutch identity. Every Dutch child is socialized into the ritual, at home and in schools, producing a strong emotional attachment that continues to hold sway in later life. These feelings are recharged when one has children of one's own. That is why it is considered important that children, wherever they live, can see St. Nicholas' arrival and parade with their own eyes. The ideas of the national and the local coincide here. Therefore, in almost every location of some substance in the Netherlands the festive arrival and parade of St. Nicholas are staged, lasting one to two hours and following a basic general pattern, but also allowing for permissible variations, as local circumstances demand—for instance, in the absence of a port St. Nicholas will arrive by train; if he cannot ride a horse, he comes in a carriage or by car—and as local means allow.

## FINANCING THE PARADE: THE ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES

To those watching the spectacle, parents with young children in particular, this event simply “takes place.” Because they usually seldom reflect on who is behind all this, the parade fits in well with popular romantic conceptions of folklore as a “spontaneous” or “anonymous” manifestation. It is a public event, freely accessible to anyone. There is no specific “owner” of the parade. It is only when a sense of disjunction occurs, a threat is experienced, or a fear of loss (Bendix 2009a: 254; 2009b: 187), that reflexivity—the precondition for heritagization to take off—may arise. This happened conspicuously in the capital city of Amsterdam in 2009. A large budgetary deficit prompted the organizers of the parade to announce that they would have to cancel the parade that year. Alarmed by this, members of the municipality and the town council appealed to local trade and industry to provide the missing funds. It was a golden publicity opportunity, they argued, to act as the “savior” of the parade. A few companies took the bait and the parade was duly held.

This instance of “vernacular safeguarding”—not confined to Amsterdam, but, also in later years, to other municipalities as well—raises the question of who is financially responsible for the continued public appearance of St. Nicholas. Implicit in this question (or preceding it) is the question of the nature of the parade. It is here that ethnology’s legacy comes into play. The parade is staged, on the one hand, by local bodies of shopkeepers (gift-giving is an important facet of the festival) and, on the other hand, by local committees organizing festive events and associations of St. Nicholas aficionados (cf. Helsloot 2009). In both cases, they try to raise the necessary funding on their own, and the committees are often sponsored by shopkeepers. Although many people volunteer to stage the parade, costs are necessarily incurred. The beautiful costumes of St. Nicholas and the Black Peters must be purchased, rented, repaired, and cleaned. The boat, carriage, or horse transporting St. Nicholas must be paid for. The same applies for the music band(s) and occasional floats making up the parade, as well as the gingerbread cubes, and the candy or small presents often given to children at the close of the parade. Even the man impersonating St. Nicholas, if he has a reputation of being especially good in this role, or the Black Peters will sometimes demand a fee. In the face of all these costs, which vary according to the ambitions they have in making the parade spectacular, organizers do not always succeed in making budgetary ends meet. At that moment, they may turn to their municipalities and ask for financial support.

In Switzerland, Martin Leimgruber established that “[c]ultural policy is primarily a matter for the municipalities” (2010: 182). The same holds true for the Netherlands. In order to determine how local government bodies react to such a request, in October 2009 I sent out an e-mail questionnaire to all 440 municipalities in the Netherlands, asking them whether or not they subsidized the St. Nicholas parade in their communities, and on what grounds.<sup>1</sup> A majority of 65% answered my questions. It turned out that, of these,

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<sup>1</sup> I published the results earlier in Dutch in Helsloot (2010).



Figure 1. Parade of St Nicholas through Amsterdam, 2006. (Photos by J. Helsloot)



Figure 2. Parade of St Nicholas through Oostzaan, 2006.



Figure 3. Parade of St Nicholas through Rotterdam, 2006.

57% supported the parade financially, through a subsidy ranging from tens to tens of thousands of euros, and 43% did not. Extrapolating these figures, one could say that Dutch municipalities are neatly divided on this issue. In a country that embraces St. Nicholas as a national icon, this came rather as a surprise to me.

### THE CULTURE-COMMERCE DICHOTOMY

Those municipalities sanctioning expenditure from public money basically justified their subsidy because they frame the St. Nicholas parade as a vital part of Dutch tradition, popular culture, or cultural heritage. In line (albeit implicitly) with UNESCO's Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage, at the time not yet ratified by the Netherlands, they were willing to uphold the parade—or, in UNESCO's terminology, to ensure its viability. In their view, the parade represented an intrinsic cultural value that was theirs, as local government authorities, to take under their protection. In addition, they pointed to the social benefits emanating from the parade. Bringing together hundreds or thousands of people, united in good spirits by their desire to watch St. Nicholas' arrival and presence, the ritual is framed as fostering a sense of community and solidarity, and stimulating social participation and integration—all figuring high on the agenda of municipal policy.

Other municipalities, however—those not subsidizing the parade, or refusing an appeal for financial help—took a diametrically opposed stand. One, for example, flatly denied any positive effect of the parade whatsoever on social cohesion. More importantly, their conception of the very same parade is entirely different. Sidestepping its cultural pretensions, they frame the parade as essentially “commercial.” Their plain logic seems inescapable. The parade is commercial because its organizers or sponsors (i.e., shopkeepers and local trade) are commercial agents with their own private business interests. They are indirectly economically benefitting from people’s expenditures on gift-giving, occasioned by St. Nicholas’ arrival in town. For the public, and inescapably for parents of young children, the parade signals the start of the St. Nicholas period for buying presents by 5 December. Local government, entrusted with the taxpayer’s money, is not allowed to engage in commercial ventures. Interestingly, in half of the municipalities not subsidizing the parade, this is because they were not asked to do so. In localities where shopkeepers organize the parade, this seems to mean either that they have no budgetary difficulties or that they agree with the definition of the parade as a commercial event.

This latter reasoning is partial, to say the least. The spectators, largely parents with small children, are defined one-dimensionally as potential customers and consumers. It deliberately excludes the idea that other emotions (such as those surrounding the idea of participating in a “typically Dutch” ritual, or of co-performing tradition as an audience and thereby experiencing a sense of togetherness) may be evoked by watching St. Nicholas’ arrival and parade. By doing so, municipalities are not disinterested. It is in the very nature of any government body to exclude claims on its budget by any means, especially nowadays, when resources are sparse. Framing the St. Nicholas parade as commercial—that is, beyond the range of municipal funding—is an expedient device, sanctioned by law, to effectuate this. To the contrary, framing it as heritage may be the result of the very realistic observation, depending on locally different circumstances, that its organizers are not tied to commercial interests, or are connected only in a limited, indirect way. However, I believe that such approaches would fail to grasp the real issue at hand.

In Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett’s terminology (taken from Tauschek 2009a: 75; 2010: 252–253), this is the dichotomy between non-economic valorization and economic valuation of cultural heritage. Ethnologists understand that this culture vs. commerce dichotomy is not generated at the very moment of municipal decision-making. Local politicians and civil servants are also heirs of western intellectual history, which effectuated this split from the eighteenth century onwards (Brons 2005; cf. Leimgruber 2010: 166). The conceptualization of a separate base and superstructure in Marxist theory is a prime example. It resulted in the rise of several scholarly disciplines taking culture (in ethnology’s case, folk culture) as a realm of its own, *sui generis*. Thereby they generally tuned a blind eye, both theoretically and in actual research practice, to very concrete, material, economic, or commercial aspects or dimensions of the “pure, authentic” folk culture they cherished, out of political, mostly nationalistic, motivations (Bendix 1997; Leimgruber 2010: 172;



for a recent example of redressing this balance, see Walz 2011). Even today, Regina Bendix notes, “many cultural anthropologists have grave reservations about the economic value-adding processes they observe” (Bendix 2009a: 266). It should come as no surprise, then, that laypeople, familiarized in a long process of popularization with ethnology’s teachings, take the same view when they encounter what they have learned to perceive as tradition, folk culture, or cultural heritage (Bendix 2009a: 259; Pors 2009: 156; Schouten 2009: 167; Tauschek 2010: 316; Dibbits et al. 2011: 83).

## TOWARDS FRAMING HERITAGE IN AN ETHNOLOGICALLY NEW FASHION

One could take a detached view and study the commercialization of tradition with renewed vigor; for example, as Leigh Eric Schmidt did in his book *Consumer Rites. The Buying and Selling of American Holidays*. Or, like Markus Tauschek, one could investigate how the opposed frames of traditional and commercial work out in different historical contexts. Alternatively, one could engage in a new effort of co-designing heritage, which is increasingly influenced by UNESCO policies today (Bendix 2008: 119; cf. Leimgruber 2010: 176, Van der Zeijden 2011: 378–379). Perhaps this is true not so much in concrete cases as at the more abstract level of framing or conceptualization.

UNESCO’s stand on cultural heritage corresponds to that of many Dutch municipalities dealing with the St. Nicholas parade. When “market value [is] being placed on the intangible cultural heritage instead of its cultural value,” the door will be opened to “inappropriate commercial exploitation” (*What is* [2008]: 4–7; cf. Tauschek 2009a: 67). Regina Bendix and Markus Tauschek (2009b: 447; 2010: 181, 316–318) rightly consider this view “out of date” because it presupposes the idea of a pure or authentic core of heritage that must not be contaminated or corrupted by forces foreign to its nature (Van der Zeijden 2005: 13). One could equally, and with good reason, regard UNESCO’s definitions as detrimental to its main objective, the safeguarding of cultural heritage, because in the case of the Dutch St. Nicholas parade it leads to unexpected consequences. As Markus Tauschek (2009a: 76) wrote, “scholars not only analyze but also construct the local thought through their scholarly gaze.” Precisely because the idea of cultural heritage is gaining currency in public opinion, it also comes back with a vengeance at the local level. On several occasions, local shopkeepers have declined to pay for the parade today, arguing (and possibly thereby simultaneously camouflaging their own financial difficulties) that cultural heritage is not their business, but should be taken care of and funded by local government out of public money. When the Netherlands ratifies UNESCO’s 2003 Convention, I predict that this reasoning will gain in force, thus endangering the St. Nicholas parade in the end.

However, as the Dutch cultural heritage specialist Frans Schouten provocatively wrote: “It simply cannot be denied any longer: folk culture simply *is* commercial.” He also added: “Was there ever folk culture that was *not* commercial?” (2009: 164). This is perhaps

overstating the case, but he is certainly pointing in the right direction. As already advocated by the American ethnologist Simon Bronner (2009: 138) and Markus Tauschek (2010: 318), in considering cultural heritage, in our own manner of scientific conceptualization we should overcome thinking in binary categories and analytically sidestep the culture-commerce dichotomy. Not only it is misleading to ignore the important part played by shopkeepers and businesspeople in upholding tradition or heritage, it might equally be called unfair. Interestingly, the field itself already seems to hesitate about the validity of this dichotomy. Just a few civil servants wrote to me that they had difficulties in coming to grips with the issue of whether or not to subsidize the St. Nicholas parade. They were of two minds about this and recognized that the parade's status was ambiguous, having simultaneously both cultural and commercial qualities. They struggled to decide what aspect was tipping the balance.

Instead of reducing the tensions that this ambiguity produces, in my view we should try to intensify these. This will hopefully produce a breeding place for jointly designing heritage in a new fashion. Its task is to “dedifferentiate” “institutional spheres [that have] become increasingly interconnected with each other” (Sandikci and Omeraki 2007: 612, referring to Alan Bryman). As Anthony McCann wrote, the “large commercial sector has developed ways of dealing with folklore and traditional culture that affect their production, dissemination, and preservation. These institutions must also, therefore, be brought into the process of devising and implementing policy in this area” (cited in Jacobs 2010: 41; cf. Bendix 2009b: 182). I myself still have not come up with a new encompassing concept. Traditional ways of thinking prove to be very strong. Perhaps someday, however, we will be able to transcend ethnology's legacy in this respect and reframe heritage in a new way.

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## KULTURA ALI TRGOVINA: UOKVIRJENJE DEDIŠČINE V KONTEKSTU OBČINSKIH SUBVENCIJ. MIKLAVŽEV SPREVOD NA NIZOZEMSKEM

*Po zgledu Regine Bendix in Markusa Tauscheka članek tematizira učinke, ki jih ima etnološko uokvirjenje rituala na kulturno politiko na primeru usakoletnega prazničnega Miklavževega*

*sprevoda na Nizozemskem. Sredi novembra priredijo sprevod v skoraj vsakem nizozemskem mestu ali kraju. Škof sv. Nikolaj na sivem konju, ki ga spremljajo črni služabniki, tj. črni Petri, se pokaže javnosti in otrokom dokaže, da je v resnici on tisti, ki prinaša darila. Približno 50–60 % Nizozemcev se vsako leto 5. decembra obdaruje v imenu svetega Miklavža.*

*V zadnjih letih imajo organizatorji sprevoda včasih težave s financiranjem: za pomoč se lahko obrnejo na občinske oblasti ter zaprosijo za subvencijo. Na mojo elektronsko pošto leta 2009 je približno polovica občin odgovorila, da je naklonjena subvencijam: menijo, da je Miklavžev sprevod sestavni del tradicije oz. kulturne dediščine. Druge občine pa ubvencioniranje zavračajo, saj po njihovem mnenju sprevod promovira porabništvo, je v interesu trgovcev in zato komercialni pojav. Za to razlikovanje med kulturo in trgovino, povezano s sprevodom, je soodgovorna tudi etnologija, saj je pri oblikovanju ritualov v smislu »tradicije« namenoma spregledala komercialne aktivnosti, značilne za popularno kulturo. Celo UNESCO je pri svoji konceptualizaciji nesnovne kulturne dediščine sledil tem smernicam. V primeru Miklavževega sprevoda bi lahko konceptualna pre-zrtost komercialnega vidika ogrozila nadaljnjo organizacijo sprevoda in bi trgovcem ponudilo dokaz, da nimajo nobene vloge pri vzdrževanju tradicije. Avtor zato etnologijo nagovarja, da tudi v okviru izvajanja Unescove Konvencije nesnovne kulturne dediščine (2003) zasnuje nov, širše zastavljen koncept rituala, ki bi ustrezal tako njegovi kulturni kot tudi komercialni plati.*

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# MOGY

## A VESSEL OF RITUAL IN POST-SOCIALIST HUNGARY

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ISTVÁN POVEDÁK

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*During the last five years, the calendar of Hungarian festivals has turned upside down. Along with the well-known rock festivals for the young (e.g., the Sziget festival), attended by hundreds of thousands every summer, a new type of cultural festival is gaining tremendous popularity in Hungary. The National Assembly of Hungarians (MOGY) is a patriotic/nationalist three-day event that attracts every segment of the Hungarian population, from teenagers to older generations.*

Keywords: national identity, bricolage religiosity, patriotism, invented tradition

*V zadnjih petih letih se je koledar madžarskih festivalov obrnil na glavo. Skupaj z znanimi rokarskimi festivali za mlade, npr. »Sziget«, ki vsako poletje privabljajo tisoče, na Madžarskem postaja izredno priljubljen tudi nov tip kulturnega festivala. »Nacionalno združenje Madžarov« (MOGY) je patriotski/nacionalističen tridnevni dogodek, ki privablja vse segmente madžarske populacije, od najstnikov do starejših generacij.*

Ključne besede: narodna identiteta, brikolažna religioznost, patriotizem, izumljena tradicija

There are a relatively large number of Hungarian studies on invented traditions constructed in contemporary culture, mainly to appeal to tourists. These studies, which apply a multidisciplinary approach, investigate increasingly popularized festivals that eventually lose their novel or exotic character. The focal points of the festivals usually build on local (assumed or real) heritage, and therefore the festivals are strongly connected with the idea of authenticity (Bendix 1997) and have become successful (Sziijártó 2000)—or, due to their unfavorable geographic/economic situation, lack of mass-media and internet communication channels, and superficial adaptation of the festival's content into local identity construction, some of these festivals eventually lost their attraction and devolved into local events (Pusztai 2003). The accelerated transformations of the post-communist, late modern cultural medium are resulting in continuous newly invented traditions (Hobsbawn 1983) and connected rituals. Among the changing accelerating circumstances of our times, these new festivals are increasingly tied to authenticity manifested in identity construction and the concept of “unchangingness.”

Several terminological problems arise in relation to festivals that define themselves as the bearers of authentic values. Is it possible to apply the terms “heritage” and “cultural heritage” to phenomena that may not have existed or when there is no information on their true forms? What is the result of longing for authenticity if the original object of longing can only be constructed but not justified or proven? All of these questions and the analysis are even more complicated by the fact that the participants in the ritual and various mass media products and those that reject the festival based on ideological grounds have different interpretations of the festivals' cultural/ideological claims. Whereas the first group has a

positive attitude related to manifestations of patriotism or civil religiosity, the second group views the phenomenon with attitudes ranging from the delusion of romantic nationalism to chauvinism. Amid such circumstances, scholarly investigation of the phenomenon is especially important, independent of political attitudes.

This study analyzes the media representation of the National Assembly of Hungarians (*Magyarok Országos Gyűlése*, MOGY), a national/cultural/heritage-preservation event that has attracted hundreds of thousands of people annually since it began in 2008. In addition, I compare the media representation with the participants' motivation and experience of the event. What are the similarities and differences between the two? How is MOGY represented or defined in the mass media by the organizers? Does it coincide with the participants' definitions? Are the instruments and medium of a ritual labeled "traditional" what they seem to be, or a construction deriving from a post-socialist identity crisis? The answers to these questions will not only facilitate understanding of the media representation, but will also illuminate the nationalism of Hungarians living in a post-socialist situation of continuous identity-construction.

## THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF HUNGARIANS (MOGY)

MOGY was held for the "long-term survival of the nation" in 2009 for the first time in Kunszentmiklós-Böszötrpuszta by a non-governmental organization (Alliance of Hungarians) founded in November 2008. The goal of the organizers was to create the greatest social, cultural, and heritage-preservation event with a market for Hungarian products; an occasion where "in addition to informal entertainment, it provides an ideal place for all who would like to relive the community-forming power of the community, for whom our cultural heritage matters, who are interested in learning more about our history, and for whom the future of our nation is important."<sup>1</sup> The first MOGY in 2009 attracted about 180,000 people, and in 2011 the number was about 140,000. The number of visitors is rather significant considering the remote location of the festival.

## THE ATTRACTION OF GLOCALITY

The idea that the news and events of contemporary society are generated by the tools of mass communication has been overtly emphasized, but this seems to be disproved by the information and communication development of past years. According to this view, an event can primarily become attractive to society through its successful self-representation in the mass media. It can become a well-known news item, and it can contribute to the generation of new creations and electronic folklore (Dégh 1994) if it is widely broadcast through the mass media.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.magyarokszovetsege.hu/content/az-oroszag-legnagyobb-szabadteri-talalkozojat-szervezi-boesztoerpusztan-magyarok-szoevetsege>

In today's "super-mediatized" web age, these views might be disproven. A good example is provided by the case study of MOGY. With its sudden success, MOGY became the most popular and one of the greatest festivals in Hungary without the aid of the mass media. As one interviewee stated:

*The greatest problem, and at the same time a hurtful one as well, is that no TV channels and no printed papers even announced the existence of the festival. It was as if we didn't exist. In our own homeland, the authorities and their alliance do not notice us. This fact degrades our human dignity. A significant proportion of our compatriots also do not know about us, which is unfair and disturbing . . . . We should recognize that we, the Hungarians—as opposed to other groups—are the “aboriginals” of the Carpathian basin. We feel that the leaders of this country disfavor us. They do not even respect us. Our difference, our way of looking at certain issues from a different angle, is unwanted. We are no one in our country, we are excluded. We look around and do not find our place in our homeland.<sup>2</sup>*

In the age of social networks and community portals, once again the bottom-up organizations—actions at an individual level—play a more significant role. There is a difference, however, in comparison to the folklorization process of earlier times: the dissemination and preventive community censorship occurs in a sudden wave through the communication channels of the internet and its forums. The popularity of the event cannot simply be explained by the opportunities offered by the internet, but instead by deeper social, cultural, and economic processes that are all present in the festival's self-representation.

The self-advertisement of the festival contains the following elements:

- This is an event organized by volunteers;
- It is the biggest free festival in Hungary;
- This is a festival where Hungarian people can enjoy their traditions, customs, past, present, plans for the future, and real selves;
- Only Hungarian artifacts and values of Hungarian culture can be seen;
- One of the most important aims of the event is to gather people that care about values that embrace all Hungarians.

All of these elements are synthesized by the motto of the festival: “The faith and suffering of our ancestors created and held our homeland. Come to Böszötrpuszta to see and hear what the past was like and what the future holds. Our national unity, the Fraternity of Hungarians, calls upon you to do this.”

As is evident from the description above, the development of the event is an obvious consequence of the ever-increasing crisis in the construction of identity in contemporary Hungarian society. The plural value system that appeared after the fall of the communist system, the expansion of conflicting canons, the breakdown of the social care system, the

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<sup>2</sup> All of the interviews were conducted during the 2010 MOGY festival.

strengthening of individualism, freedom of religion, and at the same time the rejection of institutional churches can all be traced behind the commercial aspects.

This transformation of society can also be traced in the character of the programs. The three-day-event offers several hundred programs for the visitors. The organizers emphasize localness, the importance of local rootedness, and special local cultural features, and therefore all of the counties in Hungary are represented by various performers and programs. The three stages offer a continuous program all day long with poetry, folk songs, and patriotic rock bands. There are also dance venues, archery, horsemanship, and *baranta* martial arts performances. In addition to the staged performances, there are a rich variety of talks about culture, history, and business, a spectacular handicrafts fair, and religious or spiritual events.

## EVENTS

All of the events at MOGY are basically organized around the idea of Hungarian national identity. The representations of broadly interpreted Hungarian cultural heritage (e.g., the handicrafts fair), the emphasis on certain real or imagined periods of Hungarian history (e.g. history talks, martial arts shows, and sacred rituals), and talks about possible ways for Hungary to be self-sufficient are also aimed at strengthening national identity.

The analysis of the battle reenactment and historical martial arts show does not substantially answer the research question that is at the focal point of this study because it provides a stereotypical representation of the image of the nomadic Hungarian in a theatrical form often used in historical presentations for tourists in which horseman, Hussars, and *baranta* practitioners are also mingled among the reenactors, which again emphasizes the syncretic character of the festival.

The organizers describe the vendors at the handicrafts fair as manufactures of traditional historical costumes; however, the actual market supply reveals a much more complex picture. Indeed, several items of traditional costumes related to folk culture are displayed (e.g., leather sandals, boots, and the folk dress of a particular ethnic or regional group), but most of the artifacts only look Hungarian-like and were never an organic part of Hungarian folk culture (such as the white linen clothing, felt hats, or most of the decorative motifs).

The characteristic features of the style include authentic folk motifs derived from Hungarian folk decoration (mainly flower motifs) mingling together with certain elements of Hungarian mythology and pre-Christian arts. A good example for the revitalization of pre-Christian religious objects is shaman drums. A large proportion of these shaman drums are decorated with symbols (e.g., the Turul bird) that are completely the opposite of the original ritualistic decoration. National and political symbols (the double cross, the Holy Crown of Hungary, a map of Greater Hungary) are also often represented on these objects.

These ornaments not only bear aesthetic characteristics, but also articulate a prominent ideological basis.

The analysis of the symbols themselves without their context should simply result in the symbolic manifestation of national identity in a material dimension. However, taking into



consideration the semiotic circumstances—where and how these symbols appear, who buys objects decorated with these symbols and why, and when and how they are used—a deeper connotation emerges. This can be seen in the use of ancient Hungarian runes, which signify much more than just the revitalization of the long-forgotten traditional writing. Certainly it has nothing to do with traditionalism when it appears on T-shirts together with irredentist symbols or on wooden plates shaped like the map of Greater Hungary, and city name plates written in runes refer not only to the history of the given settlement (Povedák 2012). Similarly, the history talks and the selection of books published by “national publishers” also reinterpret given periods of Hungarian history mostly by ambivalently interpreted, self-taught researchers. The common link between them is the prophetic role of the Hungarians (Hammond 1980), the motif of the chosen nation of God, and through various myths of origins (Szilágyi 2012) this leads to the operation of nationalism as a religion.

The events of the sacral space can be analyzed from different perspectives. First, the complexity of events and the significant number of traditional churches and religious-like organizations present makes it necessary. Based on the program’s vocabulary, language use, and interviews with the organizers, MOGY seems to be an event that reflects Christian values, but it bears rather syncretic religious characteristics. However, the traditional Christian denominations have come forward with events; the Reformed Church is especially active and also celebrates church services and weddings. In 2010 a short pilgrimage was even organized by one of the well-known prominent participants of the festival to the feast of the neighboring chapel, where Balázs Bábel, the Roman Catholic bishop of the Kalocsa Diocese celebrated the liturgy. The Christian image is also strengthened by the fact that MOGY is organized around the Feast of the Assumption (15 August) and the religious center of the event is organized around the “Tent of the Seven Blessed Women” with a double cross on top of the tent. However, looking beyond the symbolic dimension, one can trace ambivalence towards contemporary Hungarian vernacular Christianity.

Originally the organizers wanted to name the “Tent of the Seven Blessed Women” the “Chapel of the Seven Blessed Women,” but because of an objection from Archbishop Balázs Bábel it was changed from “chapel” to “tent.” The background of the conflict can best be analyzed on the basis of the official interpretation of the symbols by the builders:

*The Chapel of the Seven Blessed Women will be built next to the Tree of Life at Kunszentmiklós-Böszötrpuszta for the National Assembly. ... The blessed women will be represented on seven organic trees. The trees stand in a circle, creating a center, where the eighth tree stands with the double cross (ONE) on its top. The Sun and the Moon on the two sides of the gate greets the entrants. The chapel will be erected in the sacred, curative center of the territory of the Assembly.<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>3</sup> <http://magyarokszovetsege.hu/content/hetboldogasszony-kapolna-boesztoerpusztan>



Figure 1. The Tent of the Seven-Blessed Women. Kunszentmiklós-Böszörcpuszta 2010. (Photos by I. Povedák)



Figure 2. The Replica of the Holy Crown in the tent. Kunszentmiklós-Böszörcpuszta 2010.

It is a prevalent view among the members of the complex subculture analyzed in this study to regard the Holy Crown as a transcendent object that is the personification of the nation and the Hungarian homeland. Esoteric influences created a view that the Holy Crown has an energy that is closely connected with the fate of the nation. The crown and the double cross also represent the unity of the nation and homeland, and that the nation is indivisible. Therefore, these symbols imply an additional irredentist message: rejection of the Treaty of Trianon.

The symbolism of the tent is clearly syncretic at first sight. The figure of the Blessed Women, the tree of life, the Holy Crown, and the double cross are side-by-side in the nomadic tent and its name is a reference to the Virgin Mary. It should be mentioned that the double cross here is not only a Christian symbol, but also an ancient Hungarian rune meaning “one,” referring to the one god and the one and indivisible country.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, taking into consideration that the personified center and the term “curative territory” are not associated with Christianity, a mingling of differing religious canons can be clearly seen. This is emphasized by the rituals at the sacred place.

First, the ritual fires at sunrise and sunset are lit next to the tent framing all of the festival days. Second, the two most important sacral rituals are the Holy Crown ceremony and the Assumption of Mary. During the Holy Crown ceremony, a replica of the Holy Crown is carried to the middle of the tent by *baranta* soldiers, members of the Holy Crown Equestrian Order, and groups of participants wearing traditional-like clothes.

<sup>4</sup> This interpretation says that the double cross in the Hungarian coat of arms has a similar meaning and has no Christian content.



Figure 3. Reinterpreted Shamanic drum. Kunszentmiklós-Böszörcpuszta 2010.

The other central sacral ritual of the festival is the “Blessed women’s walk through the land,” represented by women dressed in folk-style white costumes.

*The festival starts near the “Tent of the Seven Blessed Women” with welcoming the Newborn Light with Csángó folk hymns to the Virgin Mary when the Sun wakes up . . . . Following the midday ringing of the bells—at the peak of the Light—we create a tableau with the help of the visitors. At this point the visitors themselves also become active parts of the ritual because they represent the borders of Mary’s land. The delegates from various regions dressed in folk costumes, carrying the flags of their settlements, become the body of the nation. Women dressed in festive folk costumes connect with each other and walk through the Carpathian home. The female power walking around is accompanied by folk hymns to the Mother God and by the prayers of our historical heroes. After the Blessed Women of our Heavenly Queen gather in the middle of the day, at 12:48 pm, literally dressed in the Sun in the brightest Light, they enter the Tent of the Seven Blessed Woman escorted by the unified singing of all participants. This homecoming represents the Assumption of Mary and the fact that our ancestors always returned under the protective mantle of our Blessed Women, to the land of Mary.<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>5</sup> <http://magyarokszovetsege.hu/>

Although the Blessed Woman, the land of Mary, the Assumption of Mary, and the protective mantel of the Virgin Mary are part of Christian tradition, mainly Roman Catholic tradition, the participants in the rituals did not even know the most popular Roman Catholic hymn, “Our Blessed Mother,” which had to be sung at the sacred peak of the ritual.

It is worth investigating which phenomena are written with capitals and personified. The result is a typical ethnic-specific bricolage religiosity in which certain objects of nature (the Sun, the Light) are transcendent beings alongside Mary (Jesus is never mentioned!) the Mother God (not the mother of God), the Blessed Women, and the personified ethnic spaces of Hungarian civil religiosity. This religious bricolage is especially interesting because the organizers identify themselves as Christians and had several contacts with representatives of the Roman Catholic Church.

Strengthening the bricolage feature, several “traditional therapists,” especially osteopaths, and a Hungarian yoga tent can be visited at the sacred place.

The religious characteristics of the festival are emphasized by news that “a multitude of flags greeted the *pilgrims* arriving on horseback” or the parallelism with Şumuleu Ciuc (Hung. *Csíksomlyó*), the most visited Hungarian pilgrimage site. “Csíksomlyó and Bösztörpuszta . . . the mountain and the plain . . . two places that every Hungarian has to visit! It can not only be believed here, but seen that Hungary was, is, and will be—for us.”<sup>6</sup>

#### MOTIVATIONS

Based on the face-to-face and electronic interviews, it is possible to compare the festival’s official site with the lived experience of the participants. The informants indicated what they had experienced during the three days of MOGY and why the event was significant. The answers can be categorized according to the following thematic focal points. Most of the participants experience an “experience of home,” meeting ideal or typical Hungarian people and receiving only love from them.

#### The experience of home:

*Feels like we returned home. Like 200,000 people returned home at once. Finally, I don’t see grayish-green TV-watching zombies with dripping noses all around.*

*We didn’t want to come back home because that’s where we really feel at home . . . it was great, an amazing feeling to meet such great people . . .*

#### The experience of desired Hungarianness (“Hungarian Paradise”)

*Everyone here is wearing Hungarian dress and behaves well, in a Hungarian way; they don’t litter, don’t get drunk, don’t throw away their cigarette butts . . . . Even the slouching people straighten up here and draw themselves up so they look tall and proud. You hear folk music from the loudspeakers*

<sup>6</sup> <http://magyarokszovetsege.hu/>

*. . . and the children and the well-trained puli dogs [a Hungarian herding breed] can run around freely here.*

*Bösztörpuszta becomes the middle of the world, or at least the heart of the Carpathian basin, where Hungarians dare to be Hungarians; they smile, they are open-hearted, kind, friendly and altruistic—as the Almighty created them.*

*If I am a Hungarian, at this event it is normal to act like a Hungarian in Hungary. I experienced no prejudice for belonging to the Hungarian culture. For three days I could freely and proudly be what I am. Therefore, it meant freedom for us. A miracle that lasts for three days every year.*

### **Happiness and love**

*I expected love and I received it. That's all I got: whoever loves Hungarian culture loves me.*

In addition to these feelings of comfort, informants often projected the phenomenon into a transcendent sphere. In some cases, this was indicated by a rare phenomenon of nature (rainbow, a double halo around the sun, or a sunbeam glinting in the shape of a double cross), which showed the chosen character of the event by God or some other transcendent being.

*I regard this place as a small heaven, I would never miss out on it.*

*God Bless!*

*Did everybody see that the Creator as “Double Sun” showing us that He is still with us? . . .*

*REPLY TO THE COMMENT: I'm uploading my photo now because I even saw a double cross on the sky!*

In other cases, the aforementioned “sacred character of the nation” can be observed, when participants are grateful to the “God of the Hungarians” for the ritual in which the nation—similar to the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage—can demonstrate “the sacred miracle of pan-Hungarian togetherness.” In addition, the widespread “gender character” of lived religiosity with a strong emphasis on women’s central role during religious rituals, on the Goddess figure, can also be observed. In this case, this means the reinterpretation of the figure of the Blessed Women into an ancient Hungarian Mother God.

*Bösztörpuszta and the Tent have risen up to the Sky by the faith of the people.*

*BÖSZTÖRPUSZTA was the miracle . . . and I thank the God of the Hungarians that I could take part in it. ☺*

*The National Assembly of Hungarians complements the cohesive, pan-Hungarian sacred miracles of the rising soul, the Pentecost pilgrimage to Csíksomlyó.*

*On the day of the Assumption of Mary in the Tent of the Seven Blessed Women we demonstrated how the Goddess function, which is thousands of years old, is still alive in Hungarian national traditions.*

## CONCLUSION

Finally, I interpret the phenomenon. First, it is clearly a compensational ritual for the tragedies of modern Hungarian history, including the mutilation of the kingdom at Trianon, the lost world wars, the beaten-down revolution, Soviet oppression, and the semi-successful change of the regime. These failures resulted in a nation with an injured identity that had to find a remedy for its wounds. It is also important that all of these tragedies were suppressed under the communist dictatorship, which resulted in the rebirth of the problems. Moreover, it must be emphasized that globalization, the sudden influx of western mass culture, the EU connection, and Chinese economic expansion have also had effects. Of course, all of these effects can be observed in many post-socialist countries where glocalization—a counter-effect of globalization—is also present.

However, in Hungary the phenomenon is uniquely rich in its components. Both the reinvented symbols of interwar irredentism and new invented traditions are also present. The most emphatic elements are the reinterpretation of certain periods of Hungarian history and certain national historical symbols. Even the idea of authentic cultural heritage has been redefined by the leaders of these movements.

The symbols of Hungary disappeared, and objects of cultural heritage appeared in tourism brochures: stereotypical elements such as horses, the *puszta* landscape, red peppers, Hungarian wines, and folk customs. These were replaced with elements such as the miracle stag or the Turul bird related to the earliest golden age of Hungarian history, the mythical settlement of the Hungarians. At the same time, historical heroes, the best-known figures of Hungarian folk culture (King Matthias, Ferenc Rákóczi, or Lajos Kossuth) are practically absent.

Usually the reminiscences of the distant pre-Christian era (up to the tenth to eleventh centuries) are emphasized as Hungarian “cultural heritage” (the motifs of archaeological finds are used as decorative ornaments). The memory and heritage of later ages also appear, but with less emphasis.

As has been emphasized by others regarding “selective tradition” (Ben-Amos 1984: 115), the selection of what constitutes tradition is always made up in the present, and the content of the past is modified and redefined according to modern significance (Linnekin 1983: 241). In this way, tradition can be interpreted as a needs-based construction (Bendix 1997: 212).

To make all of this much more complicated, this cultural reinvention process is closely connected to a bricolage religiosity that has components from Christianity, esotericism, and ancient Hungarian paganism all at the same time, but tries to seem to be Christian. An interesting paradoxical situation is that most participants in this bricolage religious movement are against the institutional Christian churches but they emphasize their Christian identity.

The question remains: is this a Christian festival, as the organizers state, or a pagan, anti-Christian one, as the opponents think? Is it authentic, where traditional Hungarian costumes and artifacts can be purchased? Or it is just an “as-if ritual” that only seems to be something? In my opinion, this is the biggest bottom-up mass movement of contemporary vernacular nationalism and vernacular Catholicism in Hungary, but it remains a simulacrum that wants to be a traditional, Christian, Hungarian, anti-globalization, anti-mass civilization festival, but in reality this is only a desire. Moreover, the identity construction itself based on these rituals also remains invented and constructed.

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FESTIVALI NACIONALNEGA ZDRUŽENJA MADŽAROV (MOGY). RITUALI  
V POSOCIALISTIČNI MADŽARSKI

*V zadnjih petih letih se je koledar madžarskih festivalov obrnil na glavo. Skupaj z znanimi rokerskimi festivali za mlade, npr. »Sziget«, ki vsako poletje privabljajo tisoče, na Madžarskem postaja izredno priljubljen tudi nov tip kulturnega festivala. »Nacionalno združenje Madžarov« (MOGY) je patriotski/nacionalističen tridnevni dogodek, ki privablja vse starostne skupine madžarske populacije, od najstnikov do starejših generacij. Za festival so značilni patriotizem, revitalizacija madžarske »ljudske kulture«, anti-globalizacija, anti-komunizem, ideologija nazaj-k-naravi, religioznost in hkrati proticerkvena drža.*

*V razpravi se avtor sprašuje, ali ti patriotski festivali resnično predstavljajo avtentično madžarsko kulturo ali zaželeno in izumljeno; ali njihova materialna/simbolična kultura predstavlja resnično madžarsko ljudsko kulturo ali alternativno »masovno kulturo« in katere vrste ritualov so v času festivalov predstavljene pod imenom »madžarski tradicionalni rituali«.*

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# RITUALISM AS A REFLECTION OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AND THE RESEARCHER'S (LACK OF) POWER

MARIJA KLOBČAR

*This paper describes various views of the Kamnik folklore event Traditional Costume and Clothing Heritage Days in order to illuminate the relationship researchers have with these cultural phenomena. It analyzes the origins of the Kamnik event, revealing its social significance, and also analyzes the reasons that this event has attained ritual status for some. Although the event still plays this role today for some people, it has gradually also gained completely different meanings. The researcher is present as an observer, but also as an advisor when asked by the organizers, at which point he is faced with numerous issues connected with the concept of authenticity. This article therefore places the researcher's role within the context of views that problematize his a priori position and call attention to the fact that the researcher should participate at the level of informer. Considering the varied meanings this event has for individuals, and considering their diverse relations to folklorism, which are recognized in both the organizers and the participants, the question is which of these views ought to be taken into account.*

Keywords: group-specific costume, ritualism, authenticity, folklorism, Kamnik

*Prispevek z upodobitvijo različnih pogledov na kamniško folkloristično prireditev Dnevi narodnih noš in oblačilne dediščine odpira vprašanja odnosa raziskovalcev do teh kulturnih fenomenov. Z analizo geneze kamniške prireditve razkriva njene družbene pomene, hkrati pa analizira razloge za to, da je prireditev v očeh nekaterih dobila pomen rituala. Medtem ko ima prireditev Dnevi narodnih noš in oblačilne dediščine za nekatere to vlogo še danes, je postopno dobivala tudi povsem drugačne pomene. Raziskovalec je ob tem opazovalec, na željo prirediteljev pa tudi svetovalec, pri čemer se sooča s številnimi dilemami, povezanimi z vprašanji avtentičnosti. Prispevek zato vlogo raziskovalca postavlja v kontekst tistih pogledov, ki problematizirajo njegovo apriorno pozicijo in opozarjajo na to, da bi moral raziskovalec stopiti na raven informatorjev. Glede na različne pomene, ki jih ima prireditev za posameznike, in glede na različne odnose do folklorizma, ki jih prispevek prepoznava tako pri prirediteljih kot pri udeležencih, se sprašuje, katerega od teh pogledov naj ob tem upošteva.*

Ključne besede: pripadnostno kostumiranje, ritualnost, avtentičnost, folklorizem, Kamnik

In early 1996, I was surprised by an angry phone call: an older woman called me without even introducing herself. She told me that she came in contact with “folk costumes” from her town<sup>1</sup> on a weekly basis and that all the members of the local folk group were awfully mad at me. The reason for their anger, which was also strongly expressed verbally, was a photograph I had published in the anniversary newsletter for the 25th Traditional Costume and Clothing Heritage Days (*Dnevi narodnih noš in oblačilne dediščine*) in Kamnik.<sup>2</sup> The woman concluded her tirade, peppered with offensive words and accompanied by a lecture on what really belonged to a traditional costume, with the following: “Do you even know what a traditional costume is?”

<sup>1</sup> I have withheld the name of the town on purpose.

<sup>2</sup> Translated as “Days of National Costumes and Clothing Heritage” on their website ([http://www.cioff.org/events-festival.cfm/en/4400/Slovenia-Days\\_of\\_National\\_Costumes\\_and\\_Clothing\\_Heritage\\_-\\_Kamnik](http://www.cioff.org/events-festival.cfm/en/4400/Slovenia-Days_of_National_Costumes_and_Clothing_Heritage_-_Kamnik), 15. 5. 2012). This is a tourism and folklore event that has been taking place in Kamnik since 1966. Initially it only included a ceremonial folk-costume procession, but over the years it has increased in size and scope; this also influenced the various changes in the event's name.

## PHOTOGRAPHS AS CHALLENGES OR REVEALED RITUALISM

I took the photograph in question at the 1994 Kamnik traditional-costume festival. After the ceremonial procession, I took a photo of a girl riding a bike while wearing a traditional costume.<sup>3</sup> However, the reason for all the uproar was not because I had violated the privacy of the person in the photo. This would have been a perfectly understandable reason, even though we did not know much about privacy protection back then. What I was blamed for was the fact that I took a photo of a traditional costume at a moment when the wearer was not acting in line with people's notions about what a person wearing clothing that signified affiliation to a particular group should be doing.

I was even more hurt by this phone call because I was not responsible for the publication of this photo in the first place: it was published without my permission. I myself was unpleasantly surprised to see the photo in the newsletter because it was completely clear to me that it conveyed messages that differed completely from those the anniversary newsletter sought to convey and, most importantly, it was published without any commentary. As shown by the anonymous phone call, the discontent with its publication was completely justified. During the telephone conversation itself I was unable to get a word in edgewise to explain anything at all regarding the photograph and its publication. The woman that called needed no explanation because she had a clear idea of how people wearing traditional costumes and those observing or writing about them should behave. During this verbal attack that did not allow me to defend myself, the following thought struck me: only believers in the sanctity of traditional costumes can act this way. My violation was a violation of the sacredness of the traditional costume, against the ritual that people were only allowed to see in the form in which it has been presented to the audience in front of an invisible altar of history. The phone call was very offensive and it hurt my feelings, but at the same time it also gave me an extremely good idea of people's expectations concerning the ethnologist's role in folklore events. Actually this viewpoint was fairly similar to one ten years before, which sought to include me in the event's preparations: the tourism society that organized the event that year needed an expert or an ethnologist to judge what belonged to traditional costumes and how people were supposed to behave when wearing a group-specific costume. Because I was already beginning to study Kamnik at the time, I did not refuse the work, but despite the organizers' expectations I maintained a dual attitude towards the event during the entire period of my observation. As an ethnologist, I followed the event as a modern phenomenon, but at the same time, in line with the organizers' request, I explained the meaning of using costumes in the past and present in special publications and in the

<sup>3</sup> This was a "group-specific costume" (Sln. *pripadnostni kostum*; Knific 2008, 2010); that is, a cultural phenomenon that is difficult to name due to its social role. From the standpoint of its bearers, this is a "folk" or "traditional" costume. Instead of using the term "folklore costume," which is currently in vogue, I prefer to use the term "traditional costume." The term "folklore" in this situation encompasses an evaluation of authenticity, which I prefer to avoid for the reasons discussed in this article.

media (Klobčar 1984, 1985, 1990, 1995). An explanatory role was also played by a special exhibition that showed the attitude towards traditional costumes by analyzing the private collection of Mara Pucelj, who was among those that founded this event (Klobčar 1992). Both the role of the observer and the role of the advisor or interpreter were interconnected: in my observations and interpretations of the events connected with Folk Costume Days I could not exclude the ethnological view. Nonetheless I retained a certain degree of self-control in conveying these views: I knew that I could not express all of my observations in my reports. However, the observation itself could not have this self-control. Regardless of the fact that the photo showing the girl on the bike was published without my knowledge, I took this photo on purpose—almost impulsively, because I did not have time to adjust the analogue camera, which is why the photo is not good quality. I was happy to see the girl riding a bike in a traditional costume because it very illustratively showed the other side of folklorism. It reflected an ethnologist's view and also relativized the view that the participants thought I was supposed to have as an expert advisor for this event.

The anonymous phone call thus forced me to thoroughly reflect on the matter, even though I had already been dealing with these issues for quite some time. By following the event and having spontaneous conversations with their organizers and participants, I gradually got to know why this event had become so popular in Kamnik. After analyzing the meanings I had identified in the procession, I concluded my views on the event in the anniversary newsletter, in which the controversial photo was also published, in the following manner: “The Kamnik traditional-costume procession is thus a special reflection of today's needs rather than the periods that ascribed individual meanings to the costumes. It is a reflection of the diversity of meanings it hides or reveals, and a special challenge to the relationship to one's own town. During Traditional Costume Days, life in Kamnik is completely different: people walk around the town without hurrying, chat with one another as if they had never become alienated from each other, and feel that Kamnik is their town. This is why during these days Kamnik speaks not only in the language of costumes, but also in a language of streets and squares filled with life again and a relaxed atmosphere” (Klobčar 1995: no page).

However, the phone call by the representative of the Kamnik procession participants had a different message: whoever reports about the event must feel the same thing as the participants. My photo thus violated their vision of the event's authenticity. Despite the offensiveness of their call, I identified an image of internalized authenticity in the message: “The question of internalized authenticity—the authentic human experience, the exuberant search for the ‘soul of the people,’ as Herder called it—is a much more complex temptation, an attractive, troubling series of attempts to pinpoint the ineffable” (Bendix 1997: 7). This raised the question of internalized images that can be so clear only because they reject any relativization. My violation was completely clear in this regard: I took a photo of an image that did not suit these people's idea of a “traditional costume.” But nonetheless there was only one call. Can we thus talk about a general idea, or are there several?

## THE TRADITIONAL-COSTUME PROCESSION IN KAMNIK AS AN URBAN RITUAL AND PERSONAL REHABILITATION

I have been identifying the complexity of images connected with group-specific costumes ever since I was first involved in the developments connected with the tourism folklore event called Traditional Costume and Clothing Heritage Days. I was invited to take part in it by the closest colleague of the event's founder. Even during my first meeting with the organizers I foresaw the dilemmas accompanying this kind of work: I arrived exactly when the members of the organizing board were arguing fervently about whether women were allowed to whoop during the procession or not. During my first closer contact with the event, this notable prejudice against whooping in particular made me have second thoughts about the deeper meanings and ideas of this event.

By getting to know the event itself, and the participants' desires and the visitors' reactions, I gradually formed my own idea of the motives for developing the event and the reasons for its preservation and increasing popularity. In an effort to feel what it meant "to be wearing a traditional costume," I put on a traditional costume myself on one of these occasions. My own experience of wearing a dress—a black costume—was very important: a traditional costume is namely not clothing, but a disguise. In this way I put on the power of the meanings that people ascribed to the clothing, and I became part of the ritual, someone else, part of a false identity—of history and its presentation. Doing this, I was aware that this experience would nonetheless be mine and mine alone, like my view of their understanding of this phenomenon: "The sense we make is 'ours', and may or may not coincide with that intended by those whose behaviour it was" (Cohen 1995: 17; cf. Geertz 1975: 5).

Working with the principle members of the board and knowing that they felt that I was trying to get closer to them by wearing a traditional costume, I also began to discover the background the organizers did not reveal to the public. During a notably personal conversation I learned about the circumstances that led to the event itself.

One of the Kamnik locals was behind the initiation of the event,<sup>4</sup> which at first was only a procession of participants wearing traditional costumes. He was among those that lost a considerable portion of their property for political reasons under communism after the war, and at the same time among those that experienced great distress during the postwar political changes. The townspeople did not know the reasons for his personal trauma, which was also visible on the outside; only his closest colleague did. She had experienced similar pressures and joined him in the initiative to organize the Kamnik traditional-costume festival.<sup>5</sup> The people promoting the event were supported by their colleagues with similar experiences.

<sup>4</sup> This event grew out of an earlier one called the Podgorje Wedding that was carried out by villagers living just outside of Kamnik.

<sup>5</sup> Specific details are not provided in order to protect personal information.

The idea of holding this event was thus a way of reaffirming its initiators among the townspeople and a way for them to seek personal peace; at the same time, the event also reflected broader social needs. Externally, these needs expressed the efforts made by the Kamnik Tourism Association; this was therefore a tourism folklore event that was intended to attract as many people as possible to Kamnik and outwardly promote it and construct their local identity. At the personal level, these needs were different: the idea of “the people of Kamnik taking their original traditional costumes from their chests and showing them to the town,” which the organizers presented to me during our conversations as the initiative for the event (Klobčar 1990: 18), had a wider social background and extremely personal features. Many other townspeople had also experienced such humiliation, which often had a political connotation.

Thus on Traditional Costume Day<sup>6</sup> the upper-class townspeople walked proudly through the town again wearing the old dresses and suits in which they had displayed their ethnic and bourgeois consciousness before the Second World War. They were joined by people from other towns, some wearing their group-specific costumes, and folkdance groups. For a while, the age of the traditional costumes or the quality of old inherited traditional costumes reestablished the hierarchy that the townspeople were used to before the Second World War. It symbolically evaluated the social powers that had lost their status during the political upheaval. The demands for authenticity of clothes were thus not merely demands that related to the group-specific costumes alone, even though they relied on the prewar efforts “for the most authentic traditional costume possible.”<sup>7</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, at the time when they began expressing their ethnic identity by wearing traditional costumes, upper-class townspeople bought well-preserved and richly decorated traditional costumes from the farmers in the countryside.

The folk-costume procession was thus primarily an event for the urban upper class. Even though it was part of efforts to revive tourism in the town, which was increasingly losing long-stay tourism due to new tourism trends, it was nonetheless also an event for the urban upper class: intentionally or unintentionally, it was used to replace the ceremonies they had lost due to the political changes after the Second World War. This included events that emphasized Slovenian identity and included “Slovenian ladies” wearing traditional costumes in order to promote the urban upper class. In addition, they replaced the church processions in which some people had worn their costumes. Because of this, even the processions before the war, especially the ones for Corpus Christi, already included features of

<sup>6</sup> The event was initially called Traditional Costume Day.

<sup>7</sup> These demands had their roots in neo-romantic trends in ethnology. Its proponents evaluated the originality of costumes before the Second World War and awarded appropriate certificates for them. In 1927, for example, in addition to the “traditional lady” Franja Tavčar, wife of the author and former Ljubljana mayor Ivan Tavčar, other evaluators included the teacher and ethnographer Albert Sič, museum director Josip Mantuani, painter Maksim Gaspari, and teacher and ethnographer Božo Račič.

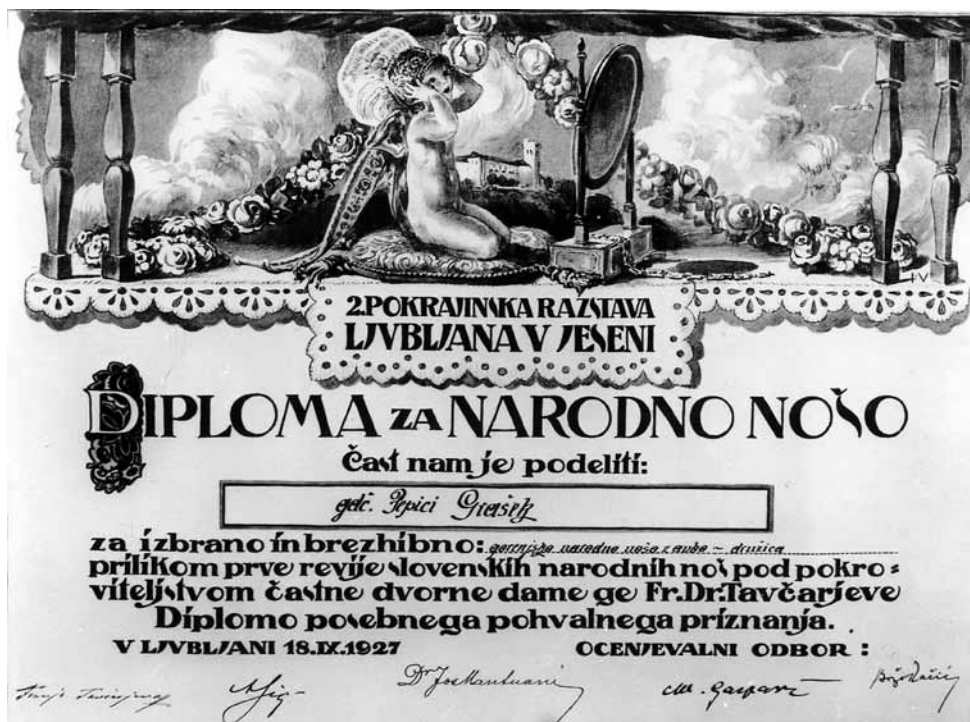


Figure 1. The demands to determine authenticity expressed by the promoters of the Kamnik event Traditional Costume and Clothing Heritage Days were shaped by the neo-romantic school of ethnography during the interwar period. (Traditional Costume Certificate, 1927, awarded in Ljubljana to a townswoman of Kamnik; original property of Mara Pucelj, Kamnik.)

folklorism. The traditional-costume procession, which from today's perspective may look like an invented tradition (Hobsbawm 1983), fulfilled the need for continuity and a safe affiliation with ethnic identity.

The ban on processions in the town did away with two things: not only the event as a manifestation, but also any expression of religious affiliation; at the same time it also did away with a form of self-promotion by the urban upper class. The role of traditional-costume festival as an unconscious substitute for the processions has decisively shaped the initial image of the event. Ritualism was present in the very behavior of participants, especially women, who not only had to act decorously but also with dignity. The demands for authenticity were thus connected with the function of group-specific costumes before the Second World War. This was precisely what gave the traditional-costume procession as a folklore event a ritual dimension at its very beginning, even though they did not know or accept this role.

However, ritualism was connected not only with taking part in bourgeois processions before the Second World War, but also with modern developments. Even the festive depiction of the past in the procession gave a greater importance to this event. The similarity

with the church ceremonies, which were usually also livened up by traditional costumes, only complemented the ceremonial and ritual character of the event. At the same time, the procession represented a politically appropriate form of relying on the traditional values for everyone that denied their religious affiliation for various reasons after the Second World War: it was an extremely suitable ritual substitute. In addition, it also replaced the modern political manifestations that did not find a suitable response among the people, such as, for example, the manifestative revival of the Partisan tradition. This aspect became more evident after the hunters joined the procession in their hunting clothes: the hunters' association also included many adherents to the regime.

The Kamnik traditional-costume festival also had strong political support: Traditional Costume Days brought together political and economic motives or, in other words, features of the East and West (cf. Poljak Istenič 2011). This therefore involved politically supported ritualism that suited both the system's political adherents and its opponents. It also offered both an opportunity to personally escape reality and, along with this, personal therapy.

Despite all the hidden meanings that gave the procession a ritual aspect, traditional-costume festival was primarily a tourism-folklore event on the outside, seeking to preserve the authenticity of heritage. At the beginning, it also sought to promote its evaluation of authenticity by organizing a competition for the best traditional costume. This very competition reflected both the expectations of the organizers, who hired advisors from the Ljubljana Institute of Ethnomusicology, and the ideas of the participants. The ideas of both differed to the extent that later on the competition was no longer held. After the presentation of the awards, one of the disappointed participants went up the jury members and said "Fuck you! You gave the award to some old costume, but ours are really beautiful and brand new!"<sup>8</sup>

## THE EVENT AS A FORM OF PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT: THE RITUALISM OF A WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

At the very beginning, the traditional-costume procession was joined by organized groups and people from nearby places, and their numbers increased strongly over the years. The local Kamniška Bistrica Folkdance Group played an important role in the event because in its own way it raised questions of originality and authenticity, the esthetics of presentation, the relations between traditional and modern values, the freedom of the creative self, and so on (cf. Ceribašić 2003). From the 1960s onwards, increasingly more people could afford to buy traditional costumes due to improved living standards and, at the same time, with urbanization personal initiatives gained increasingly more dimensions. Moving to town created new needs to replace what people had lost when they moved to town, and the event

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<sup>8</sup> Information provided by the participating ethnochoreologist Mirko Ramovš.

itself was increasingly gaining the character of a party. It was also supported by an increasing number of musicians participating in the procession and the inclusion of musicians' societies.

Increasingly more organized folkdance groups participated at the event. During communism, groups from abroad created a cosmopolitan impression and groups from other Yugoslav republics highlighted the politically supported formation of links between the Yugoslav peoples. The increasing participation by groups from various Slovenian regions illustrated the diversity and richness of Slovenian heritage. The inclusion of all these groups highlighted the folklore and tourism aspect of the event: because these involved dance groups, those in the procession generally did not feel it to be a dignified experience.

The procession was soon joined by other group-specific costumes, among which the shepherds from the Velika Planina mountain pasture stood out the most. The inclusion of individuals that people knew as folk comedians greatly changed the event's orientation: the shepherd Kati Turk, who also wrote folksongs, performed at the event with her humorous tales. Her presence in the procession thus created a festive atmosphere. In the 1980s, the procession also included a symbolic presentation of old farm chores. It was primarily dedicated to those that had moved to town and were nostalgic for rural life.

Livening up the procession by including entertaining pieces and various images of life and work distant from urbanization caused the event to move away from its former serious ritual image. At the same time, the procession provided an opportunity for the self-promotion of every individual, not just the urban upper class. For many participants, participating in the procession represented the only opportunity to be ever noticed, in which the costume also changed esthetic norms: women whose figures did not meet modern esthetic criteria were the finest examples of traditional-costume wearers in the procession. Doing various chores on the carts introduced humorous images of everyday life to the procession and triggered comments among the spectators; there was increasing communication among the participants as well as between the participants and the spectators, and the event was gaining an increasingly festive character. Communication between the participants wearing costumes and the spectators also increased. At the same time, the festival continued to grow and efforts to make a greater profit opened the door to sales at market stands. The procession was only part of the events taking place, which had a much more relaxed character in costumes than it would have otherwise had.

Thus the procession morphed into a kind of world turned upside down (cf. Fikfak 2005): by wearing costumes, people allowed themselves to do what they would not otherwise, such as whooping by women. Traditional Costume Days thus began replacing the use of costumes: for adults before the Second World War these represented an important means of expressing themselves, and after the war this was mainly intended for children. Wearing costumes was part of carnival processions. Through this, the procession started acquiring completely different ritual features.

The demands to ensure authenticity felt by the event's organizers thus gained new justifications. I was also included in the event myself as part of these efforts. As already



described, I agreed to take part in this, especially in the interpretative sense: by no means could I take on the role of a judge deciding who could participate in the procession and who could not, nor on how they should behave in the procession. Upon closer contact with people, I soon changed my initial critical attitude towards this topic, which reflected the position of ethnological studies (Ftičar 1984). I thus chose not to get involved in the discussion at the time about women whooping during the procession: I became increasingly aware that the event would express whatever people felt. I performed my role primarily by interpreting the event; by doing this I wanted to draw attention to the fact that the procession not only promoted the image of the rural culture, but also the urban culture and the image about it by reviving what had already been revived, in which people manifested themselves.

Doing this, I came to realize that the strong desire for authenticity was typical of people that had already been included in the evaluation of “true” traditional costumes before the Second World War. The certificates for authentic traditional costumes awarded at events promoting authentic traditional costumes also served this purpose.<sup>9</sup> These were also people that could not accept any behavioral changes in the procession; this mainly involved changes in women’s behavior that some of the women participating could not accept.

The demands for establishing and ensuring authenticity thus came from the ranks of the very participants or organizers—that is, the ranks of those that wore traditional costumes, which problematizes today’s view on the relationship between an ethnologist and the participants or designers of tourism folklore events: “The researchers that have examined folklorism have found it difficult to avoid evaluating it; and only rarely has it been judged from the perspective of its performers. Most often, researchers have been critical toward the phenomenon; they most highly valued the examples of folklorism that were most similar to the assumed ‘original,’ or whose reconstruction was the most ‘professional.’ It is evident that they assumed the a priori position of connoisseurs of the original, indigenous cultural phenomenon or its ‘proper form’; ethnology, or its appropriately educated and trained mediators, became the obligatory authority for ‘proper,’ ‘professional’ reconstruction and interpretation of these phenomena or acted as the necessary authority for appropriate scholarly reconstruction and interpretation of these phenomena” (Poljak Istenič 2011: 75). The lesson provided by the anonymous phone call had a completely different message.

## THE EVENT AS A LIVING MUSEUM: THE RITUALISM OF PRESENTING CLOTHING HERITAGE

Introducing a relaxed atmosphere to the procession, market stands, and performances by pop-folk groups, which complemented the program when the event expanded to several days, moved the event away from its founders’ initial plans. In the 1980s, the procession

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<sup>9</sup> One of these certificates has also been preserved in the collection of a member of the event’s organizing board, Mara Pucelj.

included a group of majorettes from Ljubljana, who performed in short skirts and coordinated their performance with music played by a group of musicians. The inclusion of the majorettes, who were soon replaced by a local group, strongly divided public opinion. Some people thought their performance was extremely offensive because they believed it completely devalued the procession; others thought the majorettes were an appropriate addition to the event.

With the political thaw that preceded Slovenia's independence, some of the initial motives for holding the event disappeared. The urban upper class regained social power and the ideological pressures loosened up, which soon resulted in permission to hold the procession in town. Under the new social circumstances, the commercial aspect of Traditional Costume Days became increasingly important, which moved the event away from the initial ideas of its organizers and numerous participants. Sharp criticism appeared in the local newsletter, aimed primarily at the market stands. For example, a 1988 review titled "Traditional Costume Days or a Gypsy Fair" read as follows: "The magnificent Sunday procession featuring hundreds of traditional costumes, ingeniously decorated carts, and accordion players really cannot compensate for all the dissatisfaction caused by intrusive peddlers." The following year they even criticized the event's name along these lines—"Folk Costume Day or Folk Misery Day"—claiming the following: "This is how we could name the event that embarrassed the people of Kamnik from 8 to 10 September. There were truly many traditional costumes in Sunday's procession" (Hieng 1995: no page).

The finding that "there were truly many traditional costumes" became the main criterion of this event. The procession was turning into an extremely colorful parade in which individuals' various motives for participation stood out in various ways. In addition to the motives that were clear in previous decades and which are continuously joined by new entertaining scenes, new impulses have sprung up. Social polarization added the aspect of a conservative political component to the locally organized traditional costumes: the traditional-costume societies, which usually liven up the church ceremonies in their local area, also supervise the authenticity as they perceive it, and the level of dignity in their performances, including those at the Kamnik event. Their performances often display the very ritual dignity that could be seen at this event at the very beginning.

The organizers or members of the Association of Cultural Organizations and the Public Fund for Cultural Activities began complementing this event with exhibitions explaining and reconstructing various images of past clothing culture, and at the Public Fund's initiative and under its professional supervision; part of the procession features reconstructions of traditional costumes that did not gain the status of group-specific costumes in the ethnic self-awareness process. This part of the procession functions as a living museum and thus primarily has an educational role; it is separated from the rest of the procession, commented on by a moderator on the stage.

However, the separation of the professionally prepared educational part from the rest of the procession, in which original Kamnik traditional costumes play a special role, is

not the only indication of all the variety in the procession. The participants in Traditional Costume Days differ greatly in the way they experience their performances: some of them are very serious and still experience the procession as a ritual, some have fun like in a Carnival procession, and some experience it as a historical show. The seemingly uniform group of traditional costumes is thus an extremely heterogeneous community with all elements of the urban character (Cohen 1995: 24–26).

However, the diversity of meanings characterizes not only the participants of the procession, but also its spectators. Some see the images of living national history in everything that is presented, some understand it as a street party or a village festival, and some consider it an extremely pleasant and colorful experience. With some, this involves bringing back memories of their childhood and their singing together, some regard it as an opportunity to buy things at the market stands, which are part of the event, and some use it as an escape from everyday life and problems—or, as one of the visitors told me at this year's event: “You know why I'm here? Because I've been at an impasse with my wife for the last thirty years!”



Figure 2. The festive parade of participants in the Kamnik event wearing group-specific costumes shows highly varied motivation for inclusion in it, as well as various understandings of authenticity. Scene from the central part of the Traditional Costume and Clothing Heritage Days in Kamnik, 2011. (Photo: M. Klobčar)

## CONCLUSION

As suggested by the conversations I had with the participants in Traditional Costume and Clothing Heritage Days, and my observation of the event, the ideas of group-specific costumes differ greatly, as do the ways of implementing these ideas. The participants share different opinions about one another, in which their views differ the most regarding the authenticity of the original. When I was condemned for taking the photo of the girl riding a bike in a traditional costume, this also condemned the girl that sat on a bike and rode along the street for fun. Her sin was the fact that she was no longer part of ritually staged history: people saw her the way she really was—that is, capable of relativizing her role in a humorous way, rather than being part of history, in which the current context cannot be seen.

The role of researchers in folklorism has long been relativized, in which their a priori position is primarily problematized (Bendix 1997; Poljak Istenič 2011). Researchers should thus step down to the same level as the informants, or as Johannsen puts it, “it is a post-modernist dictum that ethnographers should place themselves on an equal footing with informants. In order to achieve that goal, it is necessary to disperse authority, to establish a dialogue, to let the ‘natives’ voices be heard” (Johannsen 2001: 346).

In this regard, Kamnik Traditional Costume Days bring up a very interesting issue. The informants (i.e., the participants, advisors, and spectators) experience the event and its cultural phenomena very differently or at different levels. These discrepancies also (or primarily) include the views on the event’s authenticity. The informants’ opinions are thus extremely different, so one cannot talk about a simple relation between the researchers and the participants, but the interconnection of these relations and different relationships between the researchers and participants that have different opinions. There are different reasons for participating in the traditional-costume procession connected with the attitude to presenting heritage; similarly, there are also different evaluations of the role and work of researchers. For example, the organizers and many participants expect ethnologists to professionally evaluate how close both the clothes and singing or playing gets to the ideal; they want them to evaluate whether their shoes match their clothes and whether their kerchiefs are tied properly, some ask them for specialized literature and the pattern, so that they can make their own costumes, and so on. Others do not need their evaluation or think it is not necessary; they are happy with the colorful character of the event and a suitable degree of entertainment. The researchers’ presence bothers some because they feel they can make their own assessments, whereas others do not need the view of the Other because for them the event is a form of relaxation, in which observers and their cameras are nothing but a nuisance. The informants (the participants and the spectators) thus experience the event and the researcher’s role at different levels. But what level should the ethnologist descend to in order to be equal to the informants?

As can be seen from the example of the Kamnik event, the participants or the informants themselves mostly ensure that their ideas are properly implemented. In this regard, the most important role is primarily played by those participants to whom traditional

costumes and wearing them means a great deal either because of their family tradition connected with various reasons for wearing group-specific costumes, or because they could only afford to buy a new costume with great difficulty. Special meanings are also reflected by wearing costumes, which has acquired a ritual aspect for many people. Especially because of this ritual character, which creates the untouchable from tradition by adding special meanings, they can assume the moral right to judge those that observe them inappropriately in this role.

Sometimes the informants provide the researcher an opportunity to come close to them in the field for other reasons as well. For example, when I was recording the singing groups at this year's "Upper Carniolan Festival of Singers of Folk Songs and Musicians Playing Folk Tunes," as it is referred to in Slovenian (and which is part of Traditional Costume and Clothing Heritage Days), my attention was caught by a middle-aged man that kept singing along with the performing singers. While I was recording the singing, he told me about his childhood and how he used to clean the train cars at the Kamnik railway station with his mother as a child using a carbide lamp and singing to keep from feeling afraid. The songs performed on the stage reminded him of his childhood and he could not care less whether this was an event or spontaneous singing; so sang along spontaneously with the singers on stage and supplemented his singing with comments. He apparently felt he could confide in me during our conversation and, when I moved closer to the stage to make a better recording of the singers, he came by and in a somewhat lower voice said something that waitresses often hear from their tipsy guests. The formality of the event was the least of his concerns.

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## RITUALIZEM - REFLEKSIJA DRUŽBENIH TRANSFORMACIJ IN RAZISKOVALČEVE (-GA POMANJKANJA) MOČI

*Izhodišče za razmislek je konflikt, ki ga je sprožila objava fotografije dekleta na kolesu, oblečenega v pripadnostni kostum, ki sem jo posnela na eni od prireditve Dnevi narodnih noš in oblačilne dediščine v Kamniku. Izrazito negativni odziv skupine udeleženk na objavo fotografije, s katerim sem bila soočena, sem skušala razumeti kot izraz, ki odseva predstave udeležencev o pripadnostnem kostumiranju in o sami prireditvi, hkrati pa mi je ponujal izziv za lastni razmislek o sami prireditvi in vlogi raziskovalca v njej.*

*Ob lastnem sodelovanju pri prireditvi se mi je ta vloga izostrila na dveh ravneh: po eni strani raziskovalec nastopa v vlogi opazovalca in interpreta, po drugi strani pa na željo prirediteljev tudi v vlogi svetovalca. Prav neposredni stik z razhajajući pogledov tako prirediteljev kot udeležencev, s katerim sem se soočala, mi je omogočal podrobnejši vpogled v genezo prireditve in soočenje s pomeni, ki so vodili v njen nastanek, jo ohranjali, dopolnjevali in spreminjali.*

*Zamisel za prireditve, ki se je sicer delno zgledovala po predhodni prireditvi Podgorska ohcet, je bila poseben način vnovične družbene afirmacije njenega pobudnika. Oprta je bila na sorodna prizadevanja njegovih neposrednih sodelavcev, ki so s političnim preobratom izgubili družbeni*

*ugled. Povorka je pomenila simbolično nadomestilo za izgubljeni družbeni položaj tudi številnim udeležencem, predusem meščanom. V prvi vrsti je bila torej meščanska prireditev. Z njo so namreč bivši meščani nadomeščali slovesnosti, ki so jih izgubili s političnimi spremembami po drugi svetovni vojni. S povorko narodnih noš, ki je z današnjega stališča navzven morda videti kot izmišljena tradicija, je bila izpolnjena potreba po kontinuiteti, po varni pripadnosti narodnemu. Prireditev je kot nadomestilo za procesije in predvojne meščanske prireditve že v začetku dobila poteze ritualnega. Ritualnost pa se ni povezovala le s sodelovanjem v meščanskih procesijah oziroma sprevodih pred drugo svetovno vojno, temveč tudi s sodobnim dogajanjem: povorka je pomenila politično primerno obliko opiranja na tradicionalne vrednote za vse tiste, ki so po drugi svetovni vojni iz raznih razlogov zanimali versko pripadnost, saj je bila zelo ustrezno obredno nadomestilo. Šlo je torej za politično podprto ritualnost, ki je ustrezala političnim somišljenikom sistema in njegovim nasprotnikom hkrati. Enim in drugim je ponujala tudi možnost osebnega bega pred realnostjo, s tem pa tudi osebne terapije.*

*Kljub vsem skritim pomenom, ki so povorki dajali razsežnosti ritualnega, pa so bili Dnevi narodnih noš navzven predusem turistično-folklorna prireditev, ki si prizadeva za avtentičnost izročila. Hkrati je prireditev odražala širše družbene potrebe, saj naj bi kot turistično-folklorna prireditev v Kamnik privabila čim več ljudi in ga promovirala navzven. Priseljevanje v mesto so sprožile nove potrebe za nadomeščanje tistega, kar so ljudje ob priselitvi v mesto izgubili, sama prireditev pa je dobivala vedno bolj zabavni značaj.*

*V povorko so se vse bolj vključevale organizirane folklorne skupine in druge skupine pripadnostno kostimiranih udeležencev. Popestritev povorke z zabavnimi vsebinami in z različnimi podobami življenja in dela, odmaknjenega od urbanizacije, je prireditev postopno oddaljevala od nekdanje resne ritualne podobe. Hkrati je povorka nudila možnost za samopromocijo slehernemu posamezniku, ne le meščanom. Številnim udeležencem je vključitev vanjo pomenila edino priložnost, da so bili kdaj opaženi. Praznovanje se je širilo in povorka je bila samo del prireditvenega dogajanja, ki je bilo v preobleki veliko bolj sproščeno, kot bi bilo sicer. S tem je sprevod dobil tudi značilnosti obrnjenega sveta, torej nove podobe ritualnega. Prizadevanje za avtentičnost, kot so jo razumeli organizatorji prireditve, je zato dobivalo nova opravičila in utemeljitve.*

*Organizatorji - sodelavci Zveze kulturnih organizacij oziroma Javnega sklada za kulturne dejavnosti so prireditev začeli dopolnjevati z razstavami, namenjenimi razlagam in rekonstrukcijam različnih podob pretekle oblačilne kulture, del povorke pa so na pobudo in pod strokovnim vodstvom iste službe postale tudi rekonstrukcije tistih noš, ki v procesu narodnega samozavedanja niso dobile statusa pripadnostnega kostumiranja. Ta del povorke ima kot živi muzej predusem izobraževalno vlogo.*

*Udeleženci povorke ob Dnevih narodnih noš in oblačilne dediščine se zelo razlikujejo po motivih za vključevanje in v doživljanju svojega nastopa. Mnogovrstnost pomenov pa ne zaznamuje le udeležencev povorke, temveč tudi njene gledalce: nekateri v vsem prikazanem vidijo podobe žive nacionalne zgodovine, drugi jo razumejo kot ulično zabavo ali gasilsko veselico, tretjim je izredno lepo in pisano doživetje, ki se po prireditvi nadaljuje z ulično zabavo.*

*Predstave udeležencev o pripadnostnem kostumiranju so torej zelo raznolike, različni pa so tudi*

načini njihovega uresničevanja. Udeleženci imajo različna mnenja drug o drugem, pri čemer se najbolj razhajajo v pogledih na zvestobo »izvirniku«, torej v pogledih na avtentičnost. Zahteve po ugotavljanju in zagotavljanju avtentičnosti torej prihajajo iz vrst samih organizatorjev in udeležencev, iz vrst tistih, ki se pripadnostno kostumirajo, to pa problematizira današnji pogled na razmerje med etnologom in udeleženci oziroma oblikovalci turistično-folklornih prireditev. Temeljna dilema, povezana z vlogo raziskovalca v folklorizmu, namreč relativizira predusem njegovo apriorno pozicijo: raziskovalec naj bi stopil na raven informatorjev. Kamniška prireditev Dnevi narodnih noš in oblačilne dediščine v tem pogledu odpira zelo zgovorno dilemo. Informatorji – torej sodelujoči v prireditvi, njeni usmerjevalci in gledalci – prireditev in njene kulturne fenomene doživljajo na zelo različne načine oziroma na različnih ravneh. Med ta razhajanja sodijo tudi – ali predusem – pogledi na avtentičnost prireditve. Presoje informatorjev so torej zelo različne, zato ne moremo govoriti o enostavnem razmerju med raziskovalcem in udeleženci prireditve, temveč gre za prepletanja teh relacij, za različnost razmerij med raziskovalcem in različno mislečimi udeleženci. In tako kot so različni razlogi za vključevanje v povorko narodnih noš, vezan na odnos do prikazovanja dediščine, tako so različne tudi presoje vloge in dela raziskovalca. Na katero raven naj se torej spusti etnolog, da bo enak informatorjem? Kot je videti iz primera kamniške prireditve, pa za uveljavitev svojih predstav večinoma poskrbijo udeleženci sami. Pri tem je najpomembnejša predusem vloga tistih udeležencev, pri katerih je pripadnostno kostumiranje del ritualnega. Ti iz izročila z dodajanjem posebnih pomenov ustvarjajo nedotakljivo in si pogosto jemljejo strokovno in moralno pravico, da sodijo tiste, ki jih v tej vlogi neustrezno opazujejo, tudi same raziskovalce.

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# RITUAL REFORM AND RITUAL BEHAVIOR

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ARNE BUGGE AMUNDSEN

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*The article focuses on the complex question of continuity and change as exemplified by ritual policies and ritual practices during the Lutheran reformation in 16th century Denmark-Norway. Thematically the article concentrates on matrimony and funeral. A main point is that despite changes in liturgy and church organisation motivations and practices demonstrate a remarkable continuity. The most eclatant change seems to have taken place in the field of ritual entrepreneurship: The Lutheran clergy lost control thus leaving initiative and interpretation to the congregations.*

Keywords: Reformation, purgatory, wedding, funeral, entrepreneurship

*Članek na primeru poroke in pogreba tematizira kompleksno vprašanje kontinuitete in sprememb na primeru ritualov in in ritualnih praks v času luteranske reformacije na Danskem in Norveškem v 16. stoletju. Kljub spremembam v liturgiji in cerkveni organizaciji je za motivacijo in prakso značilna kontinuiteta. Najopaznejša sprememba se je zgodila na področju obrednih aktivnosti: luteranska duhovščina je izgubila kontrolo in tako iniciativo in interpretacijo prepustila kongregacijam.*

Ključne besede: reformacija, vice, poroka, pogreb, aktivnost

Large-scale ritual reforms took place during the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Lutheran Reformation in northern Europe. This is especially the case regarding funeral and wedding rituals. A central tenant of the Lutheran ritual reformers was, for instance, to avoid any references in funeral rituals to the continued existence of dead souls in the afterlife and to their stay in purgatory. Instead, the intention of the new rituals was to address the living on issues related to their salvation and Christian life.

Hence, the Lutheran funeral rituals were reduced to an absolute minimum compared to the previous Roman Catholic liturgies. However, by the sixteenth century the new rituals had, in fact, developed into rich, complex, socially distinguishing, and culturally elaborate forms. They took the perspective of the living into consideration, but also with many references to the dead, their Christian lives, and their future destiny.

A reasonable perspective on this complex and seemingly rather contradictory process is the mutual relationship between the ritual reforms as dictated by the new ideologies and church officials, and the practice and needs of the performers or users of these rituals.

This article presents and analyzes some important elements of these ritual processes with emphasis on the Kingdom of Denmark–Norway during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

## THE LUTHERAN “MIDDLE WAY”

What was the structure, ideology, and cultural practice of the Danish–Norwegian Lutheran Church with reference to liturgical rituals? The Lutheran “middle way” of the Reformation is often described as a strategy moderating between the radical upheaval of religious practice and memory on the one hand, and the traditionalist solutions to the religious challenges in Europe on the other. However, one should not close one’s eyes to the fact that in Denmark–Norway Lutheranism strove for social and religious control, and such control seldom turns out to be “moderate.” To succeed in this, it was—to put it simply—necessary to get people forget the religious past represented by the Roman Catholic Church and its interpretation of Christian history, belief, and dogma. At the same time, the Lutheran Church sought to retain an impression of continuity in rituals as far as was ideologically possible. To exemplify this, I examine more closely the rituals of weddings and funerals.

The reason for this thematic focus is rather evident. Rituals accompanying vital stages of individual life and the annual cycle were also of central importance to the confessional struggle on how people should interpret and remember their own lives, how time was recognized and divided, and how people should interact within church and society. In other words, these church rituals were substantial to both collective and individual memory. Given the fact that the Lutheran Reformation was explicitly critical of the Roman Catholic past, the question is how this “eradication of memory” was actually planned by the new authorities as an eradication or re-coding of history combined with a certain continuity.

In these two cases—weddings and funerals—the Lutheran protest against Roman Catholic dogma was obvious and explicit: the Lutherans refuted the sacrament of matrimony and the sacrament of extreme unction. Hence, the Lutheran rituals had to include the strategy of both oblivion and new memory.

## A REFORMATION OF RITUALS

From the very beginning, the Lutheran reformation was a reformation of rituals, as has been pointed out in recent international research; for example, by the historians Edward Muir (1997) and Susan Karant-Nunn (1997). Martin Luther himself wrote new church rituals or instructions for rituals; for example, his *Taufbüchlein* (Baptismal Liturgy) of 1523 (Luther 1950 III: 310–316) or *Traubüchlein* (Wedding Liturgy) of 1529 (Luther 1950 IV: 100–103), which immediately became models for Lutheran baptismal and wedding rituals all over northern Europe.

In the case of Norway and Denmark, the ritual changes succeeding the introduction of Lutheranism also were closely linked to the political changes that took place. Until 1537, there was an independent Norwegian church: the Roman Catholic Church of Norway, with its own Archbishop in Trondheim. Geographically, this church province also included

Iceland, Greenland, the Orkneys, and the Faroe Islands. However, when the last archbishop fled the country in 1537, the ecclesiastical sovereignty of Norway was abolished. The Lutheran King of Denmark, Christian III, made claims to the Norwegian throne, and he put military force behind them. Having defeated Archbishop Olav Engelbrektsson, King Christian simply declared Norway a Lutheran kingdom and introduced the new Danish Lutheran church laws and rituals (the Church Ordinance, published in Latin in 1537 and in Danish in 1539) as the only valid and centralized standard regulated by the authorities in Copenhagen. Thus, the Reformation united Norway and Denmark under one ecclesiastical and ritual rule and made the clergy subordinate to the king alone.

### THE WEDDING RITUAL

The case of the wedding ritual is interesting. Martin Luther claimed that the sacrament of matrimony was a papist construction with no legitimacy in the Holy Scripture. In the Roman Catholic Church, it was not the church ritual that constituted this sacrament, but the physical union of the man and the woman. Nevertheless, the formal church rituals marking this union were elaborate and central in the late medieval church. The couple received the blessing of the church at the church door, followed by a nuptial mass inside the church. The nuptial mass was a ritual celebration of the wedding as a sacrament, and included a formal kiss, the exchange of rings between the parties, a nuptial crown, and candles. In addition, the priest blessed the bridal bed and the ritual drink given to the couple before going to bed. Thus, the Catholic ritual aimed at showing but not constituting the sacrament of matrimony (cf. Karant-Nunn 1997: 9 ff.).

To prevent any sacramental associations, Martin Luther prescribed that the church should stay as far away as possible from matrimony. Luther formed the opinion that the formal establishment of marriage was a purely secular business based on the consensus of the man and the woman (Fæhn 1993: 137). As an institution, marriage was according to God's will, and it was meant to establish organized households responsible for the production and distribution of God's gifts to man; however, marriage was not part of the ecclesiastical system for distributing divine grace. According to this view on marriage and the household, Luther prescribed only a short, optional church ritual that stated, "what has been united by God shall be separated by no man" and was followed by a prayer, some Bible texts referring to the obligations of the married couple, and a final blessing. In his introduction to his *Traubüchlein* he stated that the rituals both could and should differ from place to place according to local norms:

*Dem nach / weil die hochzeit vnd ehe stand ein weltlich geschefft ist / gebürt vns geistlichen odder kirchendienern nichts darynn zu ordenen odder regiern / Sondern lassen einer iglichen Stad vnd land hierynn yhren brauch vnd gewonheit / wie sie gehen.* (Luther 1950 IV: 100)

Luther's point of view was that the use of this ritual should be voluntary: if the congregations demanded according to local traditions that the clergy say prayers and blessings or meet the couple at the entrance of the church, these traditions should continue—but, of course, without any references to old liturgies. The same principle was introduced as the rule of the Lutheran Church in Denmark and Norway as well. This follows the fact that Luther's *Traubüchlein* of 1529 was translated into Danish the same year as it was published in German. Some years later, the influential Danish Bishop Peder Palladius edited his own translation of Luther's book on matrimony (Palladius 1911–12: 96–101) and, in 1556, Palladius included this translation in his *Alterbog* (Liturgical Handbook) under the title “En liden Bog om Brudvielse” (Wedding Manual; Palladius 1916–18: 473–477, cf. Fæhn 1993: 137).

The effect of this obviously was that many common people in both Denmark and Norway simply did not call for the clergy at all when they were to marry (Kolsrud 1938). In general, it seems that the Reformation caused much confusion with regard to both matrimonial ritual norms and church legislation in marital issues. This was explicitly held by the “Ribe synod” in 1542 (Rørdam 1883: 198).

This made it necessary in the eyes of the authorities to change policy. As early as 1550 the clergy of both Norway and Denmark demanded that couples that had not attended the church wedding ritual should be considered adulterers (Kolsrud 1938: 105 ff.). During the 1580s the optional status of the wedding ritual was permanently changed from voluntary to obligatory through King Frederick II's Marriage Act. This act was valid in Denmark after 1582 and explicitly validated for Iceland in 1588 and for Norway in 1589 (Kolsrud 1938: 111). As a consequence of this, central parts of the ritual were also changed. The vicar was to no longer state that the man and woman were already united by God. Instead, in a central passage of the ritual he declared them man and wife. In addition, the ritual thenceforth included several very severe and investigating questions from the vicar to the couple, and it is presumed that the entire ritual would take place inside the church and in front of the high altar; that is, in front of God himself.

This new ritual development in Denmark and Norway in the 1580s can be interpreted as a re-ritualization of matrimony based on the fear of moral disorder. Luther's view on marriage as a civil business based on consensus between two parties led to too many instances of adultery, according to the church authorities. The solution—agreed upon by both the king and the Church—was that a strengthened and obligatory church ritual with many references to moral standards in family life should be introduced. The authorities must have regarded the risk small that common people still would remember the Roman Catholic dogma of the sacramental status of matrimony and find support for that view in the new ritual.

Of course, this new wedding ritual was used by congregations (they had no other options), but in practical life and at least in peasant communities many people still regarded the consensus of the two parties as the essential element of matrimony, and started their common domestic life before the formal wedding took place in the church.

In practice, then, popular culture continued to regard marriage as it was regarded before the Reformation: as a physical and consensual union of two parties. In addition, there are sources documenting that the new Lutheran rituals for decades after the Reformation were supplemented by older Roman Catholic elements such as the use of church bells, wedding rings, and Holy Communion, and that the ritual was even performed outside the church door (Fæhn 1993: 140 ff.).

This development included the fact that authority over and responsibility for rituals became more diverse. Of course, the wedding rituals were more loosely linked to the ritual year as such, but the principle is of higher importance here: the Lutheran ritual experiments resulted in the clergy losing control to a certain extent over rituals of vital importance to all members of the local congregations. This is even clearer in my next example, the rituals of death.

### THE REFORMATION OF DEATH

The Lutheran reformation was not least of all a “reformation of death.” The Catholic purgatory was totally and quite fiercely rejected as heretical by Martin Luther, as was the sacrament of extreme unction or anointing of the sick. The natural consequence was that the Lutheran death rituals should represent a total different view of the destiny of the dead. According to the Lutheran doctrine, there were no possibilities for the dead to repent or be purified in the afterlife. Luther persisted that a Christian status of faith was final at the moment of death. Accordingly, any ritual related to the funeral should be constructed around this new notion of dying and death. In 1542, Denmark and Norway had its new Lutheran funeral ritual published (Rørdam 1883: 85 ff.). Compared to the Roman Catholic rituals, which in practice accompanied the dying and the dead for days or even weeks until the moment of death and burial, thus organizing a temporal sequence of dying and death (cf. Fæhn 1993:146. Karant-Nunn 1997: 138 ff.), the 1542 ritual was extremely short, simple, and almost self-effacing (Amundsen 1991). The ritual is introduced as follows: to accompany a dead person to his or her grave is “a merciful act” by any living Christian. If a clergyman is asked to take part in this “merciful act” it will not be for the sake of the dead, but in order to “wake up the living,” and his participation shall be limited to the day of the burial. Instead of being a ritual distributed in time and space, the Lutheran burial rituals were organized to speak instantly and for the moment—and they were meant to be so. Any sermon given at the grave should be addressed to the living and their situation, not to the dead or their fate in the afterlife. Moreover, according to the seventeenth-century Danish–Norwegian ritual, probably referring to an older tradition (cf. Schjørring 1959), the clergyman should ceremonially sprinkle earth on the coffin three times before the grave was filled, saying: “You have come from the earth, you shall turn into earth, and from the earth you shall rise.” This was obviously also meant as a statement of the status of the dead:

the dead would stay in their graves until the Last Judgment. This gave no place for a ritual year of the dead. In short, the Lutheran funeral ritual was more like a non-ritual aiming at destroying old religious ideas about the dead and the afterlife. Despite some minor changes during the seventeenth century, this rather modest church ritual was maintained until the nineteenth century. Of course, the nobility and royalty were capable of developing even the Lutheran ritual into enormous proportions in both time and space, with processions, music, architecture, and hour-long sermons according to the Baroque manners of *pompa funebris*: the use of wakes, processions following the dead body from one part of the country to another, the ringing of church bells regularly for weeks, months, and even years, made such funeral rituals into time-dividing and time-structuring rituals for large communities (cf. Johannsen 2004). Even so, the Lutheran view on death and burial was never changed in Denmark and Norway during the following centuries: this ritual was about the living, not about the dead—and eventually only about the lives of the recently deceased, but not about their future destiny in the afterlife before the Last Judgment.

### RITUAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

What is notable, however, is that the radicalism of the Lutheran funeral ritual opened the way for new ritual practices and new ritual masters and entrepreneurs, just as in the case of the wedding. The Norwegian church historian Helge Fæhn remarked that it is more or less unthinkable that the ritual changes in funeral rituals took place immediately after the Lutheran reformation in the 1530s. He advocated the view that the full implementation of the new “non-ritual” must have developed gradually and lasted for several generations (Fæhn 1993: 148).

On the other hand, there are actually no positive indications that the Lutheran clergy were disobedient regarding this issue. More thought should be given to another perspective, which was only hinted at by Helge Fæhn: according to the new Lutheran regulations, the ritual participation of the clergy was restricted to burial in the churchyard or in the church. This meant that all the old rituals—from the wake in the room where the deceased was placed until the burial to blessings of and prayers over the dead body and the use of church bells to mark the soul’s travel onward into Purgatory—were free to all members of the congregation to use.

This ritual privatization actually has several positive source references from both the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Several contemporaries comment on the fact that in many cases, and parallel with what happened with wedding rituals, ordinary people did not care to invite the local clergy to perform the new ritual. Members of the congregations simply organized the burials themselves. In a draft for a new church law, the Lutheran bishops of Norway in 1604 mentioned several examples of uncivilized or even heretical customs among the commoners of the country. With the access to the parish church, the

local congregation used the church bells to indicate the fate of the dead (*sjeleringing* ‘soul ringing’) at the moment of death (“through this they want to ring the soul into heaven”). Another example mentioned by the bishops was that the wake over the dead body still was common practice; however, to the bishops the fact that no were clergy present explained why wakes had turned into rather violent and vulgar parties for young people that wanted to dance and drink, just like “the heathens use to do” (Fæhn 1993: 148 ff.).

Even if such use of church bells or the use of wakes was explicitly prohibited during the seventeenth century, people continued to practice these rituals or ritualized customs. Wakes are documented in Norwegian popular use until the early twentieth century, and in much nineteenth-century folklore material the relationship between church bells and the eternal fate of the deceased is still very strong and important; for example, that the fate of the dead could be prophesied by the sound of the bells, or that the local church bells started to ring by themselves in instances in which the local minister had condemned a dead sinner to hell, indicating that the sinner’s soul would go to heaven after all (see Hodne 1980 for numerous examples).

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Lutheran Reformation in Denmark and Norway starting in the late 1530s was to a large extent a ritual reformation. It has been commonly assumed that the success of the Lutheran Reformation was due to continuous and successful religious instruction by means of Martin Luther’s *Small Catechism*. Lutheran piety became a piety of reading and praying. The new words and new texts led to eradication of positive memories of the Roman Catholic past, of its rituals, of its spaces and places, and its annual circularity—in short, of its pious culture. However, by looking at the ritual development of the Lutheran church in Denmark and Norway, the picture turns out to be more complex. Of course, the new authorities could not possibly know how the common people would react to radical ritual changes, and there are indeed many indications of both open protests and violence, and more silent disapproval or disregard (cf. Kolsrud 1939). At the same time, it obviously must have been urgent to the authorities to have religious opinions changed as quickly as possible. The final success of the Lutheran Reformation was definitely not secured politically until the middle of the seventeenth century. To secure the cultural success of Lutheranism might have taken as much time as the political success, not least of all because it was necessary to turn the memory of the Roman Catholic period into oblivion or disregard. The two ritual reforms mentioned here had the obvious intention of oblivion or disregard, to rewrite and re-edit the ritual world and the temporal and spatial extension of the Christian religion. Many Lutheran reformers were of the opinion that rituals were substantially unnecessary to firmly believing Christians; rituals were meant for the weak-hearted and uneducated members of the congregation.

In order to communicate with an illiterate population, the rituals were obviously of great importance to the Roman Catholic Church: in order to visualize, verbalize, and incorporate the Christian interpretation of individual and collective life, dogma, and history. To the Lutheran Church, it must have been of equally high importance to neutralize and abolish long-established and remembered verbalization, visualization, and incorporation by simply altering the rituals or by reducing them to an absolute minimum and making them optional and instant.

Seen from this perspective and with reference to the two ritual cases mentioned here, it seems that the ritual reforms of the Lutheran Church of Denmark and Norway had the character of experiments with no definite outcome. To a large extent, they turned out to be failures. Like Susan Karant-Nunn, one can wonder “how few uneducated people were able to accept this despiritized, streamlined world” (1997: 186). A ritual or memory strategy based on limitation, restriction, and disregard of earlier rituals did not succeed, mostly because people remembered and, for example, made elements of the old funeral rituals their own, thus permanently loosening the church’s grip on the complex matter of death and burial. In the case of matrimony, the Lutheran strategy was even less successful because it made it possible to continue to remember and practice the sacramental dimension of marriage by staying away from the church and the new clergy. This made the Lutheran church revise its strategy and re-ritualize this specific area.

However, in contrast, the use of the clergy at the burial remained optional through the following centuries. The only requirement was that the vicar be informed about the death and burial so that he could later perform the symbolic sprinkling of earth on the grave.

In short, ritual silence or ritual withdrawal did not turn out to be a successful strategy in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Denmark and Norway. To compensate for the effects by giving the congregations new texts to memorize was obviously insufficient. On the contrary, this strategy paved the way for alternative memories of the ritual past, for uncontrolled memories of a religious culture that had been taken away from the congregations in both countries forcibly and without advance preparation.

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## REFORMA RITUALNIH PRAKS IN RITUALNO VEDENJE

*V luteranski reformaciji na severu Evrope v 16. in 17. stoletju je prišlo do obsežnih reform ritualnih praks. Ne nazadnje je to očitno tudi na področju pogrebnih in poročnih obredij. Pri pogrebnih obredjih so reformatorji zavzeli stališče, da se je potrebno izogibati kakršnemukoli sklicevanju na življenje mrtvih duš v posmrtnosti in vicah. Namesto tega so v novih obredjih nagovarjali žive o zadevah, povezanih v zvezi z njihovim krščanskim življenjem in odrešenjem. Zato je bilo luteransko pogrebno obredje v primerjavi s prejšnjo rimokatoliško liturgijo skrčeno na minimum. Kljub temu so se že v 16. stoletju ta nova obredja razvila v bogate, kompleksne, socialno razločujoče in kulturno izpopolnjene oblike – upoštevala so perspektivo živih, a so vseeno ohranila povezavo z mrtvimi, njihovimi krščanskimi življenji in njihovo bodočo usodo. Logično stališče glede tega kompleksnega in na videz nekoliko kontradiktornega procesa je vzajemno razmerje med obrednimi reformami, kot so jih narekovala nove ideologije skupaj s cerkvenimi uradniki, ter prakso in potrebami izvajalcev oziroma uporabnikov teh obredij.*

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# FOLKLORIZATION AS DIVERSIFICATION OR MOLDING: COMPARING TWO “TRADITIONAL” HOLIDAYS

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MATEJA HABINC

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*The article presents transformations of St. Roch's Day and carnival festivities in the last decade before and the first two decades after the Second World War in the Slovenian town of Brežice. The main focus is how the public celebration of these two “typical” holidays of the town was transformed, which primarily occurred as a consequence of changes in the broader sociopolitical situation. The author thus interprets them through the perspective of folklorization.*

Keywords: holidays, communism, Slovenia, folklorization

*Članek sledi spremembam v praznovanjih dveh, za manjše slovensko mesto Brežice »tipičnih« praznikov, Rokovega in pusta. Umešča jih v kontekst širših, družbeno-političnih dogodkov v prvih dveh desetletjih po drugi svetovni vojni in jih skuša interpretirati skozi perspektivo folklorizacije.*

Ključne besede: prazniki, socializem, Slovenija, folklorizacija

As many anthropologists that study socialist and post-socialist societies have already determined, communist ideology was not something that people merely uncritically reproduced. On the contrary, they were well aware of the benefits and weaknesses caused by interacting with ideology: they tried to adapt ideology to their own aims and to gain access to the sources and privileges of the state. Communist paternalism was therefore not limited to dependency on the state; it also included familiarity and personal contacts, which the periphery tried to establish with centers of political power (e.g., see Kaneff 2004). Because control over time was never absolute under communism (e.g., see Verdery 2002), Kaneff claims that various interpretations of the past coexisted, which either helped or hindered people from the periphery establishing relationships with the state and nurturing their political careers. These various interpretations of the past were history, tradition, and folklore. Whereas history was a personification of concurrent politics and economics, tradition was its opposite—it was a potentially alternative way of conceptualizing the past and its social order. History, or linear time, was usually expressed through media and state holidays, whereas tradition, perceived as cyclic time, resisted the state (e.g., in religious or “folk” celebrations). Yet, tradition could also be re-contextualized into folklore and in such a folklorized version it could be presented in public as a state-supported view of a national identity (Kaneff 2004: 10).

In her research on these various interpretations of the past, Kaneff concentrated on more recent decades in socialist Bulgaria. In contrast, I studied transformations of calendar festivities in the town of Brežice, located in southeastern Slovenia, focusing on the first two decades after the Second World War.<sup>1</sup> I agree with Pittaway and Swain (2003: 12)

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<sup>1</sup> The article is based on material that was primarily gathered for my dissertation during my fieldwork between 2003 and 2006 (see Habinc 2006).

that research on earlier periods of socialism could methodologically be more challenging because its remembrance could be subjected to either more general memories about socialism, to remembering its more recent decades, or even to post-socialist nostalgia. However, the material I gathered about conceptualizing the past during socialism shows a remarkable resemblance to Kaneff's triad, which was perhaps even easier to recognize in the first decades of socialism because that was the time of establishing a new state with its new festive calendar. This article thus presents how, in my opinion, the carnival in Brežice became folklore and how the other "typical holiday of Brežice," St. Roch's Day, turned into a tradition. However, first I take a brief look at Slovenian holiday legislation and offer a brief overview of holiday practice observed at the local scale in the last decade before and first two decades after the Second World War.

In 1929 a special law was introduced in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which fixed two state holidays: the birthday of His Majesty the King and the day of the state's unification. Roman Catholic state employees, who statistically also prevailed in Brežice at that time, were also free from work at Christmas, New Year's Day, Epiphany, St. Joseph's Day, Easter Monday, Ascension Day, Corpus Christi, Sts. Peter and Paul's Day, Sts. Cyril and Methodius' Day, the Assumption, All Saints' Day, and the Immaculate Conception (*Zakon o praznikih* 1929: 767). Shortly after the war, the break with this old holiday arrangement was not immediate and final. According to church chronicle reports, "people were not totally satisfied with the changes that the new system was introducing" (*Kronika* 1945–1989, 1945: 5) and therefore many religious rituals as well as religious education were not only allowed, but also quite broadly attended and appreciated. In some people's opinions, the public function of the Church even increased during this period in comparison to prewar times.<sup>2</sup> However, after Tito's break with Stalin in 1948 (i.e., when Yugoslavia started to prove to the rest of the world that Stalin's accusations concerning Yugoslav communism were false), the constitutional division between church and state from 1946 became more visible and strictly practiced. Public religious celebrations became exceptional and mostly moved to either the Church's domain or private spheres. Religious processions at Easter and Corpus Christi, for example, were first moved to land owned by the Church, but by the beginning of the 1950s they had vanished from the streets of Brežice and took place only inside the church. At the same time, one could no longer see St. Nicholas and his costumed escort, and sources no longer reported about Easter bell chiming, processions during the Minor Rogation Days, or public singing at name-days (especially for St. Joseph's Day). It was not before 1955, ten years after the Second World War, that a special law regulating state holidays was introduced in Yugoslavia. This law defined New Year's, May Day,

<sup>2</sup> For example, there were some festive practices not noted or even continued from the years before the Second World War: a mass in 1946 celebrating a federal state holiday, Victory Day; a midnight mass on New Year's Eve in 1946; a procession at Corpus Christi through the streets of the town, in which the participants carried Eucharist symbols woven out of greenery; and a procession on Palm Sunday in 1949.

and Republic Day as the three federal holidays for which two days off work were allotted (*Zakon o državnih praznikih* 1955), and other federal or republic holidays were present as well, for longer or shorter periods of time (see Habinc 2006). After the mid-1950s, when this division between history and tradition was already well established with the new holiday legislation, it is interesting that some traditional practices did not lose importance, but gained it. This mostly happened to non-religious parts of tradition, such as carnival, whereas religious festivities were turning into an archaic tradition; in Brežice, this was the case for St. Roch's Day.

### CELEBRATING ST. ROCH'S DAY DURING THE FIRST DECADES OF SOCIALISM THE TRADITION OF BREŽICE

According to sources, pilgrims started visiting the Church of St. Roch in Brežice on 15 and 16 August (the Assumption and St. Roch's Day) by the beginning of the eighteenth century (Kemperl 2003: 168). Written and oral sources describe these days as a local, "typical" holiday of the town, but also as the only occasion in the time before the Second World War when Brežice was crowded with people (Počkar 1999: 110, 135). In addition to the fact that St. Roch's Day was both a religious and social event, it was also important because a fair took place in the town. The main street, running from the Church of St. Roch in the north of the town to the south, was reserved for merchants, craftsmen, and women from the town or its vicinity. On the other hand, the marketplace, located east of the main street, held stands for merchants from other areas. The seven days of the fair distinguished St. Roch's Day from other festive events, of which some were also characterized as "typical" for the town. For example, this feast, the Corpus Christi procession, and the Easter procession were the kind of events for which the people wore their best clothes, cleaned and decorated their dwellings, and displayed their social status by performing certain customs, such as holding Easter egg hunts. Such display of one's social status through material symbols also established a distinction between the town and its rural surroundings. However, St. Roch's Day in particular—with its religious, social, and emphasized economic importance—was much more a holiday that intentionally aimed at connecting people, rather than creating differences between the town and the rural inhabitants.

During the Second World War, the Church of St. Roch was damaged. The parish church's chronicle reports that in 1945 old construction wood was stored in it and the building was no longer used for religious purposes (*Kronika* 1945–1989, 1945: 5). However, this only seems to be the case for this particular year because many informants claim that religious rites (at least around St. Roch's Day) were performed there until the beginning of the church's extensive renovation in 1951. Allegedly, there was even at least one religious rite added in those first postwar years; namely, some people remember processions with candles

going around the church on the evening of 15 August. However, when the renovation of the Church of St. Roch began, lasting until 1959 (Kemperl 2003: 173), all religious activities were transferred to the parish Church of St. Lawrence, located in the middle of the town. St. Roch's Day was still religiously celebrated, but the celebrations were more intermixed with other religious occasions. One of those was, for example, St. Lawrence's Day, the parish patron saint's day, celebrated on 10 August, only six days before St. Roch's Day. During the 1950s St. Roch's Day was still accompanied by a fair, but with the argument that the stands were disturbing traffic these were prohibited outside the area legally owned by the Church by early 1950s. They were thus limited to small parcels around the (parish) church, although for a few years they were also transferred to the town's marketplace, which was quite distant from both the Church of St. Roch and the parish church. This reduced the economic importance of the event for both the residents and the visiting merchants. After these reactionary times, St. Roch's Day acquired the status of a relic and lost its association with economic progress and the idea of modernization. Nevertheless, its religious and (at least for some groups) social function persisted, and pilgrims from the mostly rural surroundings of the town remained very regular visitors to it. However, the persistence of a ritual practice was publicly often disqualified and labeled as "a reactionary tradition." The "worshippers of the saint"—as, for example, the following media excerpt defined a special "we-group" of not only Brežice's residents (Elwert 1996, cf. Habinc 2011)—were similarly exposed to public criticism and ridicule:<sup>3</sup>

*The traditional church blessing at St. Roch's in Brežice is accompanied by similar traditional drinking and fights by the fervent worshippers of this saint. The authorities from the Brežice Police deal with pilgrims from the town's vicinity on a regular basis. Namely, these boys are so "devoted" to St. Roch that they can't even say goodbye to him without everybody else knowing about it. In this manner they again ended this year's blessing with carousing and fighting in a pub in [the nearby village of] Čatež. (DŠ 1956)*

As I was told, the "members" of this religious "we-group" often perceived themselves as second-class citizens that were publicly criticized for being, for example, "traditionally drunk" on St. Roch's Day. However, similar activity, such as excessive drinking on the municipal holiday—a historical occasion, according to Kaneff—was presented as cohesive and fun. Or, as the media excerpt humorously presented wine tastings at one such celebration of Brežice's municipal holiday:

*My friends and I considered a wine exhibition with wine tasting "the heart" of the festive events. Malicious tongues say that all seventeen parts of this "program" were a bit too much for the otherwise solid residents, but I think that the locals and their guests processed them well. (Pepče pripoveduje 1954)*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. examples of their public ridicule at carnivals, described later in the article.

## CELEBRATING CARNIVAL DURING THE FIRST DECADES OF SOCIALISM: THE FOLKLORE OF BREŽICE

Whereas celebrations of St. Roch's Day were perceived as a reactionary tradition of Brežice mostly because they were religious acts, carnival—labeled a “pagan, dishonored and shameful” event by a parish priest already in the prewar years (e.g., see *Oznanila* 1927–1934, 11 February 1934)—had a different starting point for its postwar perception. Written and oral sources characterize it as the “typical” event of the town, although there were no “typical” carnival costumes or characters in the town (Kuret 1984: 236). For a few decades, up until the 1940s, the town's fire brigade, the local hunters' association, and the local representatives of the Sokol society—a sports, cultural, and (after 1929) also a regime institution (see Dolenc, Pahor and Majaron 1998: 146)—organized carnival parties and balls. Most of my informants considered the Sokol carnival ball, held on Saturday evening in a small room of the Slovenian Cultural Center, the most important carnival event of them all. It was not only designed as an internal event for members of the association; rather, it was an occasion where not only the local elite gathered, but where carnival models from larger Slovenian towns were followed and where Brežice proved to at least be in touch with wider social trends.<sup>4</sup> At the event people could easily display their social statuses. Similar to the processions already mentioned at the Feast of Corpus Christi or Easter, the Sokol carnival ball also created a distinction between the town and its rural surroundings, where costumed figures still mostly freely wandered through the countryside, and only a few carnival parties in the inns were organized there. The residents of the town, on the other hand, tried to cultivate spontaneous carnival activities: a children's carnival was held in the Slovenian Cultural Center, a minor carnival parade went through the streets of the town on Shrove Tuesday, and a funeral of a straw figure known as *kurent* was also staged on the following Thursday. Most of the costumes in both of the parades were individual, and a few group costumes were also presented on floats; the informants I talked to, for example, mostly remembered a “public toilet.” This particular group costume referred to the state of affairs in the town and it was at the same time the community's self-criticism and a proposal to the local authorities. It ridiculed the hygienic situation on a secluded side street in the town, which was also used as a toilet and therefore often referred to as ‘shit street’.<sup>5</sup> As the excerpt from the following interview illustrates, an improvised public toilet was constructed on a float, driven at the carnival to the municipal headquarters, where a short speech was held about the necessity of a public toilet in the town:

*It was on a float—there was a hut set up and on the top there was a sign: “public toilet.” This float was then driven in front of the municipal*

<sup>4</sup> In the 1920s, when a ball (*reduta*) in only black and/or white costumes was organized (Počkar 1999: 112), informants explained that the Ljubljana's carnival model was being followed.

<sup>5</sup> In German *Scheißgasse*, and colloquially in Slovenian *Šajzgasa*.

*headquarters and when the hut was opened people could see there was a public toilet inside.* (Transcript 2003/04: 177)

All of these carnival activities were interrupted by the Second World War. The first time that both old and new residents started thinking about reviving it was almost a decade after the war. It was in the beginning of the 1950s that history and tradition, in Kaneff's terms, gained in distinction and also that folklore—as a state-approved version of tradition—was constructed. Folklore's public existence was made possible in various ways; however, it first had to be discursively argued. This was also the case in Brežice, where the fact that the Church never strongly supported carnival was also stressed in discursive argumentations produced by appropriate Brežice “old-timers.” For example, there was a certain individual that was the only one competent enough to explain why insisting on tradition was “the right thing to do” because he was from the town and played a prominent political role. At the time the following article was published, he was a local political authority, and later he also became a member of the political elite at the republic level in Slovenia as well as at the Yugoslav federal level:

*The opinion of certain individuals, that carnival with its masquerades is a remnant of mystical customs and is therefore not modern, will not hold water. The tradition of kurentovanje<sup>6</sup> is an ancient custom in Slovenia. It is significant that the religious circles were never wild about carnival masqueraders. Everyone that knows their history knows that carnival practices in Slovenia are a component of folklore, and it is the right thing to do to support these practices and to preserve them for posterity as national values. (Pust, oj pust ti čas presneti ...)*

Seen from this excerpt, such argumentation transformed tradition into folklore or into “national values worth preserving for posterity” by referring to counter-religiosity, modernization, and nationalization and by describing continuity as no threat to the new social system (cf. Kaneff 2004: 12). However, not only was the discursive appropriateness of the event constructed, but its non-threatening continuity was also guaranteed by inventing a “typical” Brežice costume. In Kaneff's words, what seemed to be a topical costume (i.e., a public toilet) in the prewar years became instead a visual element of carnival in the early 1950s—selected, emphasized, and presented as “typical” costume of Brežice and as its “authentic” folklore (cf. Kaneff 2004: 147). It was detached from its actuality, meaning, and social criticism, and as such the costume of the public toilet became presented as a publicly acceptable town tradition. Considering that the immanent characteristic of any carnival is its inversion of the social system and of the prevailing power relations—for example, by ridiculing them (e.g., see Kuret 1984)—it seems that a group costume of a public toilet also had a similar relaxing function. However, its criticism was only directed towards the past; specifically, it constituted one of those costumes that referred to the reactionary past. Namely, most of the

<sup>6</sup> At the time when this article was published, in my opinion *kurentovanje* was a synonym for carnival (cf. Habinc forthcoming).





Figure 1 and 2. Some of the costumes of the last Egyptian king, Farouk I, in Brežice (courtesy of the Brežice Lower Sava Museum and Matjaž Filipič, Brežice)

Nasser was one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961 (Krušič 1976: 646). Ridiculing everything that preceded the Non-Aligned Movement could thus be interpreted as ridiculing the pre-modern past or the pre-modern Other, while at the same time also emphasizing Yugoslavia's role in the world's political movements in general.

However, it was not only the (pre-socialist) past in general that was criticized at the Brežice carnivals; aspects of contemporaneity that conflicted with socialist modernization were publicly exposed as well. For example, informants remember ridiculing individuals that still openly expressed their religiosity: in one of the carnival speeches a local doctor from a religious family was accused of “breaking his patients’ bones,” for example, while at another carnival a love affair between a local vicar and a nurse was also publicly discussed (Transcript 2003/04: 232). In those first postwar decades carnival can thus be considered society's “safety valve,” but only in a limited, state-approved manner.

In addition to the shifts in the context of an occasion, other changes can also be observed in post-Second World War carnival celebrations in Brežice: for example, ritual practice at that time more or less depended on newcomers to Brežice, especially the group of merchants that mostly migrated to the town from its rural surroundings. Sometimes they knew each other from before, at least by surname, but in many cases they created their first personal bonds when they gathered to sew carnival costumes, prepare group costumes, props, and texts, and when they organized public meetings of the carnival committee, staged in the Sokols' Slovenian Cultural Center—renamed and owned by the Yugoslav People's Army after the war. As the other specific “we-group” of the town (Elwert 1996; cf. Habinc 2011), which among other things formed itself around carnival activities, they also organized large-scale parades on Shrove Tuesday, as well as large-scale funeral processions on Ash Wednesday or the following Thursday. In the late 1950s some large-scale

individual or group costumes that appeared at carnivals in Brežice until the mid-1960s reflected contemporaneous popular culture (e.g., Indians, cowboys, the Count of Monte Cristo, a girl with violets, clowns, etc.); some individuals also wore tuxedos, top hats, and other bourgeois outfits, and others dressed up as the last Egyptian king, Farouk I, and his escorts (Transcript 2003/04: 232). As the informants explained, “this was popular at the time,” but historical records add that Farouk was the last Egyptian king, who ended his rule after the upheaval in 1952, when he was replaced by Gamal Abdel Nasser. Alongside Yugoslav President Tito and the Indian political leader Nehru,

organizations—for example, the Association of Friends of Youth and the National Youth Organization—joined this spontaneous organization, which soon caused carnival to become a large-scale event. More or less it was staged in open, public spaces or to a lesser extent in halls with open access for everybody. The carnivals in the town were thus still distinguished from those in the countryside, but it had changed in comparison to before the Second World War. An urban model of the Sokol ball held in a hall, for example, was replaced with large-scale parades and festive events performed in public spaces. On the one hand, the town's carnival became ruralized by mostly being performed as a tour, yet it also became cultivated and festivalized for the masses. In Kockel's words: folklorization during socialism not only showed enthusiasm for colorful, staged, and large-scale presentations of (past and present) cultural or social diversity, but it also tried to suppress other, non-cultivated and non-organized expressions of this diversity in everyday lived reality (Kockel 2002: 168).

#### FOLKLORIZATION AS DIVERSIFICATION OR MOLDING?

The case studies presented here compared two different calendar holidays. Once again—only now in the context of the conference of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year, dedicated to the relationship between researchers and performers—they highlighted how significant the contextual role a wider socio-political framework has in any concurrent research or/and performed holiday situation. As yet another local example of an “old story” that follows transformations and connects them with the power-plays involved, this drew my attention to different interpretations of one of Kaneff's key terms used in this article, and to various possible perceptions of what folklorization is. Can the postwar carnival in Brežice as an example of a folklorized occasion really be considered an event that flourished, whereas St. Roch's Day, on the other hand, became more limited? If one only observes the public appearance of both events, then in my opinion it is possible to agree with this. However, according to Kaneff, folklorization is not a term containing any valuation. It only signifies adaptations of the tradition during socialism, which enabled its transformed version, folklore, to remain public. Similarly, some other authors perceive folklorization not as a process of de-contextualization, but rather as a process of re-contextualizing and creating something new. In this process the past is not merely transmitted into contemporaneity; rather, it is adapted to it and used in a new way (e.g., see Kirshenblatt Gimblett 1995; Kockel 2007; Carter 2007; on heritagization, cf. Baskar 2005). Folklorization thus implies changing both a “text” and/or its “context” of use. As Kockel put it, tradition is vital as long as people use it and find it legitimate, no matter how and in what way it changes (Kockel 2007: 25, 30). Such perceptions of folklorization are in a way close to those known among at least some Slovenian and Croatian scholars. For example, Stanonik sees folklorization as a process of (literary) desubjectivization, as a sign of the vitality of a work or a phenomena (2001: 104; cf. Lozica 1990: 209; Povrzanović 1989: 167). As long as variants live, it could be argued that

the phenomena or a “text” is alive and well. However, if I now turn to the folklorization I had in mind when describing postwar changes in the Brežice carnival, what does folklorization refer to in this case? First of all, it relates to the change of the socio-political context because of which “proper” explanations of carnival and its adaptations were needed. The context of a phenomenon changed and consequently this phenomenon as a “text” changed as well: not only the organizers and performers of carnival were different, but also emphases in the scenario shifted, for example. Without this shift in carnival as a “text,” becoming mostly a large-scale event with new socially relevant costumes for individuals or groups, it probably would not be promoted as much or even encouraged, as it was in those first two decades after the Second World War. However, in my opinion, it is not necessary to see all the changes that carnival as a “text” was subjected to in those first postwar years and that I characterized as folklorization as though they are leading towards the diversification and variedness of the occasion. Framing or freezing a public toilet costume into a “typical” town costume can be better perceived as a limitation than diversification, as molding that does not allow variants. In addition, carnival as a mostly large-scale event and no longer an elite one, or costumes that functioned as society’s “safety valve” only to a limited extent, can be seen more as limitations than as proliferation of variants. Could it therefore be doubted that folklorization (as, for example, in Stanonik’s understanding) is really a signifier of enriching, broadening, and the liveliness of phenomena? Klekot wrote that folklorization was and still is politically an extensively used tool for dealing with potentially dangerous differences in the modern state: “Folklorize and rule’ seems to have been a tacit motto of both the British Empire and the Soviet Union” (Klekot 2010: 80). Based on the case study presented here, and if one observes carnival in the more limited time span of a few decades, questioning Stanonik’s definition thus seems reasonable. Folklorizing tradition did also mean limiting and restricting at least some elements of carnival, which I believe is also a point that Kaneff emphasized. However, on the other hand—perceived over a longer period and comparing carnival in various social contexts—restrictions can perhaps only be seen as the flipside of enriching, with mutual exchange and influence. The molding of the Brežice carnival and its later institutionalization did lead to its (temporary?) disappearance.<sup>7</sup> However, there is no assurance that, for example, the Sokol balls, a group public toilet costume, or perhaps even any less representative elements of any carnival performed in Brežice at any time will not be reused again as an inspiration for “local identity,” sociability, fun, a “safety valve,” or any function a carnival can have. As Kaneff wrote, folklorization is not a specific characteristic of socialist times; it is part of the more general project of modernization (Kaneff 2004: 12, 139-140) and that is why I believe shrinking, molding, and lessening are only an itinerary that can be enriched and broadened again, when perhaps a new reason for legitimizing Brežice’s carnival will be sought.

<sup>7</sup> The carnival in Brežice died out in the early 1970s, when it became an “institution” with a carnival section as part of the Tourist Board of Brežice overseeing it.

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## FOLKLORIZACIJA KOT RAZNOLIKOST ALI OMEJEVANJE. PRIMERJAVA DVEH "TRADICIONALNIH" PRAZNIKOV

*Študija primera obravnava spremembe v praznovanjih sv. Roka in pusta v manjšem slovenskem mestu Brežice, do katerih je prišlo v prvih dveh desetletjih po drugi svetovni vojni. Tako ustni kot drugi viri, večinoma pisni so priložnosti namreč označili kot za mesto »značilna praznika«, oziroma »mestni tradiciji«. Avtorica pa sledeč Deemi Kanef, po kateri so zgodovina, tradicija in*

folklor med socializmom pomenile tri različne načine konceptualiziranja preteklosti, analizira, kako je ena od omenjenih priložnosti v obravnavanem obdobju postala razumljena kot (nazadnjaška) tradicija, druga pa kot državno odobrena folklor. Rokovega se je po letu 1945 vsaj v javnem diskurzu oprijel status tradicionalističnega in nazadnjaškega verskega praznika, s čimer se ga je tudi vse manj javno praznovalo, močno okrnjena pa je postala tudi njegova gospodarska vloga. Pust kot priložnost, nad katero Cerkev ni bila navdušena že pred drugo svetovno vojno, pa je po drugi strani postal sinonim za mestno tradicijo, ki naj je ne bi le ohranjali, ampak kot »narodno bogastvo« tudi spodbujali. Iz raznolikih, tudi elitnih načinov pustovanj, znanih v mestu v prvi polovici 20. stoletja, se je po drugi svetovni vojni pust spremenil v javni in množični dogodek. Mnogi, predvsem priseljenci so bili za sodelovanje motivirani, saj jim je udeležba lahko zagotovila specifično vlogo in pozicijo moči. V obravnavanem obdobju je pust postal folklor, k čemur je pripomogel tudi izum »tipične« maske, ki jo avtorica sledeč Kaneffovi razume kot jasen primer folklorizacije: specifični vizualni element je bil izbran in nato preoblikovan tako, da je zadovoljeval sočasne družbene potrebe.

Kot »stara zgodba«, predstavljena v kontekstu konference delovne skupine Ritual Year, posvečene razmerju med izvajalci in raziskovalci, članek tako izpostavlja širšo družbeno-politično situacijo vsakokratne raziskave in tudi vsakokratne izvedbe praznika. Z rabo koncepta folklorizacija pa se obenem sprašuje, na kaj se koncept dejansko nanaša in kaj pomeni. Ob tem primerja nekatera široko in splošno rabljena razumevanja pojma kot procesa sprememb z nekaj redkimi opredelitvami, znanimi v slovenski in hrvaški folkloristiki, po katerih folklorizacija pomeni raznolikost in variantnost obravnavanega fenomena. Avtorica se ob tem sprašuje, če sta izum »tipične« maske in omejitev pusta na množične in javne dogodke zares pomenila raznolikost in obogatitev pustovanj ali pa je takšno razumevanje lahko le delno, saj folklorizacija bolj kot karkoli drugega pomeni uokvirjanje in omejevanje.

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# YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO...THE DISTANCED PARTICIPATION IN A ROYAL WEDDING

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MARLENE HUGOSON

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*On 19 June 2010 Swedish Crown Princess Victoria married Mr Daniel Westling. The wedding was celebrated not only in the capital city of Stockholm, but also in the groom's home village, where some 6,000 people assembled to watch and celebrate the wedding beneath a giant television screen placed in a country field. As examples of this type of distanced participation become more noticeable in the ritual year, the phenomenon becomes increasingly interesting to follow. This time the investigation leads to the small village of Ockelbo, Sweden, where the municipality organised a large-scale village feast and consciously rooted the performance in the rural identity of the area.<sup>1</sup>*

Keywords: *royal wedding, distanced participation, village promotion, Ockelbo*

*19. junija 2010 se je švedska kronska princesa Viktorija poročila z Danielom Westlingom. Poroke niso praznovali le v švedski prestolnici Stockholmu, marveč tudi v ženinovi domači vasi, kjer se je okrog 6000 ljudi zbralo k ogledu in praznovanju poroke pred ogromnim televizijskim zaslonom, nameščenim na podeželskem polju. Ker so primeri tovrstne oddaljene udeležbe v okviru ritualnega leta vse pogostejši, je ta fenomen postal zanimivejši za opazovanje. Tokrat je preiskava vodila v malo vasico Ockelbo na Švedskem, kjer je mestna občina organizirala obsežno vasko praznovanje in zavestno utemeljila izvedbo v ruralni identiteti področja. Ključne besede: *oddaljena udeležba, slavnosti, kraljevska poroka, promocija podeželja, Ockelbo**

More than 12,000 people have assembled in Ockelbo to celebrate the wedding between Swedish Crown Princess Victoria and village son Daniel Westling, a man of the people. It should be noted that a mere 6,000 people live in Ockelbo. It is mainly the villagers and their neighbours from the district that have come together for the celebration, but a few participants have travelled from other parts of the country to be there while others are part of the media posse deployed to cover the event. Never before has the little village been so much in the public eye as on this day.

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<sup>1</sup> The material used in this paper is part of a joint documentation of the celebration of the royal wedding, produced by the Department of Dialectology and Folklore Research in Uppsala, Stockholm City Museum, Nordiska museet, and the Royal Armoury in Stockholm. The term 'distanced participation' is my own, building on ideas presented in Eric Hobsbawm's article "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe 1870-1914" (2005).

<sup>2</sup> V tem članku uporabljeni material je del skupne dokumentacije o praznovanju kraljevske poroke, nastal je pod okriljem Oddelka za dialektologijo in folklorne raziskave v Uppsali, stockholmskega Mestnega muzeja, Nordijskega muzeja in Kraljeve heraldike v Stockholmu. Termin »oddaljena udeležba« je moj, utemeljen pa je na idejah, predstavljenih v članku Erica Hobsbawma »Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe 1870–1914« (2005).

A program filled with local activities has been arranged for the entire wedding week by the Municipality of Ockelbo and is orchestrated by Monica Järnkvist and her team.<sup>3</sup> The program for the wedding day itself is solid, spanning almost 20 hours.<sup>4</sup>

A large canopy tent has been set up in the manor courtyard at Wij Gardens (a park with show gardens). The tent first functions as a radio broadcast- and breakfast tent, and later in the day as a lunch tent and bubbly bar, serving champagne and beer. Swedish radio and the show *Ring så spelar vi* (Call and We'll Play It) with host Lisa Syrén entertains the lively radio listeners from seven in the morning onwards. At ten o'clock *Melodikrysset* (The Melody Crossword) hosted by Anders Eldeman begins, and the listeners on location receive their own crosswords to fill in. Those that wear flowers in their hair are treated to breakfast and, despite the rain, the guests soon begin arriving in large numbers. On a field nearby a stage with a giant television screen has been built for the expected crowds.

### DISTANCED PARTICIPATION

The sun is out again when the wedding ceremony begins in the afternoon. Paper flags are handed out to the viewers on location in Ockelbo and some of them are wearing crowns on their heads. The television cameras allow the viewing public to get closer to the bride and groom than even the guests at the wedding in Stockholm Cathedral, and the interaction with the images on the giant screen is apparent. When the groom's parents Olle and Eva Westling, who live in Ockelbo, are shown on camera the audience of 6,000 cheers, and also when the groom arrives together with the bride's brother, Prince Carl Philip. However, when commentator John Chrispinsson informs the viewers that the groom is from Ockelbo, but places the village in the wrong province, the audience in Ockelbo boos. Oblivious to this, the commentator continues, "It is a piece of, what shall we call it, transformation, magic if you like, that will take place: here Mr Daniel Westling goes into the church. In an hour he will be Prince Daniel, Duke of Västergötland, His Royal Highness, and Knight of the Order of the Seraphim" (SVT 2010b). When Daniel, village son of Ockelbo, is referred to as a prince-to-be, the audience cheers and applauds loudly.

In a close-up shot the audience then get to see the couple exchange rings, whereupon Archbishop Anders Wejryd declares,

*You have now entered into holy wedlock with each other . . . and confirmed this before God and this congregation. You are now husband and wife. May the Lord be with you and guide you in His truth, now and forever*  
(SVT 2010b).

<sup>3</sup> Thanks to Monica Järnkvist for hospitality and service shown to two cultural workers doing field work, photographer Jessika Wallin from Nordiska museet and myself. In her report summarising the festivities she also supplies data on the festivities (Järnkvist 2011).

<sup>4</sup> In the following I will use historic present tense as a literary handle to give the reader a sense of 'being there'.





Figure 1. Distanced participation in a Royal wedding. Ockelbo. (Photo: M. Hugoson 2010. © Dialekt- och folkminnesarkivet i Uppsala.)

During the pause the archbishop makes, the audience in Ockelbo cheers and applauds again, and when the happy couple pauses on the cathedral steps a moment later, four cheers for them are called from the stage by the chairman of the Municipality of Ockelbo, Magnus Jonsson. The audience joins him and 2,010 yellow balloons are released and sails up from behind the wedding stage towards the blue sky, symbolising both the year and the colours of the Swedish flag. Happy viewers in Ockelbo pop open the wine bottles they have brought and touch glasses to celebrate that the couple have finally been allowed to wed, and they enthusiastically cheer when the bride and groom kiss on the balcony of the royal castle a little while later (SVT 2010a).

## NATIONALISTIC ENDEAVOURS

That Ockelbo opted for such a lavish local celebration of something that takes place in Stockholm, and that a giant television screen becomes such a prominent part of the celebration, can be considered remarkable. However, this is not a unique phenomenon, but rather part of something greater. The distanced participation seen in Ockelbo springs from the same mechanics of rapid social change that brought on the construction of new traditions in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as presented by Eric Hobsbawm in the article “Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe 1870-1914” (Hobsbawm 2005). Technical innovation continue to change

human interaction, and today computer programs such as Skype allow people to see each other and interact via computer but, despite being a one-way form of communication, the audience in Ockelbo still reacts and interacts with what is happening on the television screen as though it was a two-way form of communication.

The giant television screen in Ockelbo is an excellent example of distanced participation in yearly rituals and life celebrations. Other examples of this are the Nobel festivities arranged around Sweden at the same time as the real Nobel banquet, where the television is part of the festivities so that the guests can toast the King alongside the invited guests at Stockholm City Hall (Hugoson 2007), or the use of television broadcasts and giant television screens during important funerals, allowing those that cannot be fitted into the church to still take part in the ceremony (Hugoson 2011). Looking at broadcast weddings and funerals, it is interesting to note that the outdoor placement of the giant television screens changes the distanced participation, in parts moving it from an indoor setting to a large-scale outdoor production (a phenomenon that can also be seen during the Last Night of the Proms, where people also assemble outdoors in front of giant television screens).<sup>5</sup>

The television broadcasts from the royal wedding is more than entertainment, it also serves a political purpose, as popularisation and consequent strengthening of the monarchy can be identified as part of the nationalistic endeavour at a time of increasing globalisation – a globalisation which at times threatens already existing domestic cultural patterns and use of language. In this endeavour the distanced participation plays its part, creating a feeling of community on both the local and the national level. During the celebration in Ockelbo the homogeneity of the crowd is striking, few persons of apparent foreign descent can be spotted, even though Iranians and Somali are two prominent refugee groups in the area. However, the inclusion of multicultural music on the main stage officially signals that immigrants are encouraged to partake in the festivities, following the lead of the Swedish government politics. Yet there is no visible political party behind the municipality's decision to put on a giant village feast including these multicultural ingredients, as opposed to the example shown in István Povedák's paper "Reinvented-invented-copied-traditional-cultural' Festivals in Contemporary Hungary," where the nationalistic political forces behind the festivities were shown to be more prominent (Povedak 2011).

## PROXIMITY AND DISTANCE

The broadcast from the wedding in Stockholm is shown on the giant screen in Ockelbo, but Swedish television, Swedish radio, and several newspapers also sends reports from the celebration in Ockelbo. Swedish radio has several lorries with sound equipment on location for the shows *Ring så spelar vi*, *Melodikryset*, and *Sommarkonsert i Ockelbo kyrka* (Summer

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<sup>5</sup> Thanks to Per Vikstrand for enlightening me about Last Night of the Proms.

Concert in Ockelbo Church). Swedish television covers the celebration in Ockelbo and broadcast shorter segments from the festivities, and reporters from local and national media are on site. The media thus make it possible for the audience watching the broadcasts in Sweden and abroad to take part in the festivities in Ockelbo as well.

The broadcasts and news coverage *from Ockelbo to Ockelbo* inverted the relationship between proximity and distance; at Bysjöstrand, a retirement home in Ockelbo, the staff arranges a wedding lunch and a cake buffet. Freshly picked flowers decorate the tables, and Swedish flags and yellow and blue balloons decorate the communal areas. Because the eighty elderly persons living at the home cannot partake in the celebrations outside, parts of the celebrations are brought to them: a brass band has been there to perform in the morning, yet their main source of entertainment is the televised broadcasts from Ockelbo. Five groups of elderly people have been seated in front of as many television sets.<sup>6</sup>

### DEMOCRATIC DIMENSIONS

That so many people have assembled in Ockelbo is a sign of both local pride and a testament to the joy felt over the fact that a commoner is allowed to marry the princess, and thus become a prince; it is like something out of a traditional folk legend. Since the end of the 1970s, Swedish parents have joked that their sons and daughters will marry one of the three royal children. The fact that society has now evolved to the point where this is possible, and that love can overcome social obstacles without abdication or loss of titles, gives the wedding a democratic dimension.<sup>7</sup>

Even the Crown Princess herself seems surprised that she has finally been allowed to marry Daniel Westling, after proving the relationship to the world during their eight years as a couple. In the speech she gives from the balcony on the royal castle, she says,

*Dear, dear friends, I would like to begin by thanking the Swedish people for giving me my prince. We, my husband and I [strong reaction from the crowd], are so incredibly happy and very thankful that so many want to be here to celebrate with us. It is an enormous experience; this is our greatest day in our lives so far. To feel your support means more to us than you will ever be able to comprehend, it is something incredible. Today is a day we will carry with us in our hearts for the rest of our lives. Thank you.* (SVT 2010a).

<sup>6</sup> Thanks to division manager Monica Stark for information on the number of elderly at the Bysjöstrand care home and how many groups there were.

<sup>7</sup> Only a few generations earlier, three Swedish princes married women from a lower social stratum and consequently lost their titles: Lennart (loss of title in 1932), Sigvard (loss of title in 1934), and Carl Johan (loss of title in 1946). Their relative, British King Edward VIII, was forced to abdicate in 1936 before he could marry Mrs Wallis Simpson.

A group of women that has been tempted to come to Ockelbo on this day are Elisabet, Anna, Tina, Amalia, Åsa, and Liselotte. They have travelled across the country from Gothenburg to participate in the celebration. To mark the occasion they have dressed up in ball gowns and all but one wears a tiara. By dressing up in fine clothes, jewellery, homemade royal sashes, and giving royal waves, the six friends jestingly assume the obligations of royalty. Because no physical wedding couple is to be found, the six friends thus fill a void and immediately get courted by the media. Their play with class markers can be interpreted as expressing values of equality, but also a contradictory will to emulate the royals because there is no doubt they appreciate the royal family.

### OCKELBO AS A BRAND

After the engagement between the Crown Princess and Daniel Westling was announced the media coverage has been intense, and Ockelbo seized the opportunity to market itself by sending out an invitation to *The Great Village Feast*, and for a village feast of this dimension much food is required. In the morning 3,000 breakfasts have been served and in the food tents to the left of the manor the preparations have been going on since seven in the morning. The amount of charcoal used is enormous and smoke from the grills drifts like a light fog between the tents. An army of volunteer summer hosts helps out throughout the day, and the activity before lunch is frantic. The “Picnic Royal,” the locally produced lunch/dinner with a luxurious country touch served to those that have bought tickets, consists of small herring pickled in spruce sprouts, wild boar sausages and wild boar steak, hullless oat crème, crisp bread, white-mould cheese, and rhubarb marmalade. By half past three in the afternoon more than 4,000 picnic sets have been served.

Between two and three in the afternoon, a cake buffet is served in a pine walkway planted next to the stubble field with the television screen. A dozen bakers empty a lorry carrying three hundred cakes from the local bakery and place them on a 656-foot-long table, decorated with checkered tablecloths and bouquets of lupines and cow parsley. The bakers then proceed to serve strawberry tart, chocolate- and almond cake, and a white marzipan-covered cake decorated with a plastic gold crown. At each end of the long table a five-tiered wedding cake is placed, decorated with dog roses and daisies. Two thousand tickets have been sold for the buffet and, despite having to eat the cake and drink the coffee in the rain, the paying guests are in a good mood. Several of them resolutely take out their umbrellas when the rain no longer can be ignored.

Aside from the ticket sales for food and beverages, commerce at Wij gardens in Ockelbo is limited. The local industry and local crafts industry<sup>8</sup> produced by artists and craftsmen is discreetly shown (discreet being the operative word because the people of

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<sup>8</sup> Thanks to Magnus Gustavsson for the use of the term ‘*hembygdsindustri*’ (local crafts industry).

Ockelbo kept the secret of the romance between the princess and the local lad from the media for several years). Next to the old-fashioned café at Wij Gardens, Mikael Olsson and his son are selling wedding memorabilia and advertising products from a closed-down snowmobile company bearing the name of the village. Inside the café, artist Tony Warren shows a symbol-filled still life titled *Tillgivenhet* (Affection). It is to be given to the couple from the people of Ockelbo. In honour of the day, seamstress Lena Larsson is dressed in the folk costume of the area, and wears a wreath of buttercups and cow parsley in her hair. She informs me that the bride and groom have just received a pair of folk costumes that she was secretly commissioned to make by the municipality. The second gift from the municipality is a yearly camp for children and youth from low-income areas in the cities. Discreet product placement can be found only in the cutlery tray from Ikea that the “Picnic Royal” is served in, the fleece blankets that the radio audience was able to borrow in the morning, and three small wedding-themed greenhouses that the company has decorated close to the manor buildings.

#### VILLAGE PROMOTION

The Municipality of Ockelbo has financed a whole week’s worth of entertainment to celebrate the wedding.<sup>9</sup> The return on the investment is apparent because the promotional value of the media attention the village receives could never be bought on a municipal budget. It would have been easy for the municipality to sell out and turn the festivities into a money-making extravaganza, but instead there is a sense of occasion and an acute awareness of the level of dignity required by their unexpected connection to the royal house. Kinga Gaspar eloquently uses the phrase “Take the best we have to show who we are,” (Gaspar 2011) which could also be used here to sum up how the municipality chose to promote its village—a decision that in turn reflected well on both the village and the groom.<sup>10</sup>

Everything is immaculately planned and the image of Ockelbo that emerges is rural, yet professional: parking and traffic wardens direct the cars to avert chaos on the roads. For the media, with somewhat different needs than the other guests, a press center has been set up inside a traditional wooden house at Wij Gardens and it functions somewhat like the entrance to a hive throughout the day. Reporters set out in search of news segments and then return to forward the information they have gathered to their editorial offices.

<sup>9</sup> Thanks to Laurent Sébastien Fournier for pointing out the importance of the municipality’s economic involvement in the festivities.

<sup>10</sup> In this particular case one will of course never know whether there was a PR specialist working for the royal palace, steering the municipality towards this decision and outcome, or if the restraint shown should be interpreted as an elongation of the previously mentioned discretion, or if it was a combination of the two.

When the bubbly bar serving alcohol opens, a group of hired guards in black uniforms, badges on their front pockets, and severe faces appear—most likely the same facial expressions they use working the doors of nightclubs in the nearby town of Gävle. The presence of the police is as noticeable, but has a friendlier air. Several policemen and policewomen in the unit have a “Picnic Royal” before they start their shift and then patrol and seem as relaxed as the guests. County council ambulance nurses work alongside Red Cross medics to inform the public about their work and to be of assistance if anyone needs them.

Practical problems are given simple but well-thought-out solutions. A cutlery tray transforms into a picnic tray. The cake buffet table is converted into a long bench for those who have not brought a picnic blanket to sit on during the entertainment. The rhubarb syrup left over from lunch is offered as drinks for self serving. Portable loos and urinals are set up so that no one need to look far for one during their visit to Wij Gardens, and next to the stage the loos and urinals have been hidden away behind some sheaf of hay; this gives a rural impression and also function as an exciting place to climb and sit for the children; as they climb about, the stacked hay starts to fall apart, and by nightfall all that remains is a flat heap of hay.

A parallel to this commercialisation of a rural identity can be found in the agrarian festivals of Provence, France. Studying the changing conceptions of the festivals, Laurent Sébastien Fournier states: “the crops from agricultural products, considered yesterday as the fruits of the common work of man and nature, have been transformed and evaluated in cultural goods.” (Fournier 2006). In Ockelbo the locally produced lunch, the rhubarb syrup drinks, the wild flowers used for decorations, the stacked hay, and even the muddy stubble field, is more than agricultural products; they become symbols of cultural heritage. Linked with the shown professionalism, an image of modern rural life is presented and functions as an advertisement for village life.

## MUSIC AND DANCING

A large-scale village feast finally requires entertainment and Ockelbo makes use of local, neighbouring, and nationally famous entertainers to provide this. People stroll between the entertainment points that have been strategically placed around the village: A brass band from the neighbouring town of Gävle is there early to entertain the first guests. Dressed in black vests and bowler hats the musicians perform at a crossroads near the pine walkway at Wij Gardens and, even though no one is dancing, it makes one think of rural crossroad dances of times gone by.

On a small stage built in the market square, local and regional artists and organisations entertain the passersby at lunchtime. The Lions Club present their gift to the couple: a donation to the Children’s Diabetes Fund, of which the Crown Princess is guardian. Some stop to watch the entertainment, while others pop into one of the shops or share a cup of coffee with friends.

In the village church a concert is given by the Symphony Orchestra of Gävle, directed by the promising young conductor Johan Larsson, who grew up in Ockelbo. The concert offers “classic summer hits with a love theme” and is broadcasted live on the radio (SR 2010). Not everyone finds a seat in the church, and the six hundred to seven hundred listeners that do get in nudge elbows, but fall devoutly silent when the music begins.

During the broadcast from Stockholm the entertainment on the large stage pauses, but as soon as the broadcast ends, the live entertainment resumes again. The Symphony Orchestra of Sandviken backs the artists and well-loved Swedish entertainer Lasse Berghagen acts as conf rencier. The rain has started up again, but despite the dark clouds many stay to listen to the performing stars, and as a finale they come together and sing the Beatles song “All You Need is Love” and the crowd cheers so loudly it can be heard all across the county.

After the festivities at Wij Gardens and the official celebration in Ockelbo are over, one activity still remains for the locals. At Plan, the People’s Amusement Park, a small funfair has set up with wagon stands and a carousel, a beer tent is open, the dance hall has been decorated with birch branches (a sign of festivities in Sweden), and a small outdoor stage is ready for the retro entertainers hired to perform that summer night. It is primarily locals that have been allowed to buy tickets to the event, and the guests arriving are in high spirits. Outside the gates, a police unit gathers for instructions, and the directive is to be lenient and only intervene if one of the 2,000 guests behaves badly or starts a fight. The real celebration can commence.

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## PRISRČNO VABLJENI NA ... ODDALJENA UDELEŽBA NA KRALJEVSKI POROKI

*19. junija 2010 sta se poročila švedska princesa Viktorija in običajen smrtnik, podeželan gospod Daniel Westling, doma iz Ockelboja. Značilnosti te nenavadne poroke lahko opišemo na treh ravneh.*

*Promocija vasi Ockelbo: po objavljeni novici o zaroki med kronsko princeso in Danielom Westlingom je bila medijska pokritost dogajanja zelo intenzivna in Ockelbo je izrabil priložnost za trženje s pošiljanjem vabil na veliko vaško gostijo. Dobičkonosnost investicije je kmalu postala očitna, saj promocijske vrednosti medijske pozornosti, ki je je bilo mestece deležno, nikoli ne bi bilo moč kupiti z občinskimi sredstvi. V Ockelboju je bila za kosilo lokalna hrana, dekoracije iz divjih cvetic ... Ti produkti so postali simboli kulturne dediščine. V povezavi s prikazanim profesionalizmom se je predstavila podoba modernega podeželskega življenja, ki je služila kot oglas za vaško življenje.*

*Oddaljena udeležba pri dogodku: pozornost vzbuja dejstvo, da se je Ockelbo odločil za takšno potratno lokalno praznovanje nečesa, kar se je dogajalo v Stockholmu, ter da je tako pomemben del dogodka postal ogromen televizijski zaslon. A dogodek ni bil osamljen, marveč je bil del nečesa večjega. Oddaljena udeležba, do kakršne je prišlo v Ockelboju, izhaja iz mehanizma*



*hitrih socialnih sprememb, ki je povzročil oblikovanje novih tradicij v poznem 19. stoletju (prim. Hobsbawm 2005). Tehnične inovacije še naprej spreminjajo človeško interakcijo, a čeprav je šlo za enosmerno obliko komunikacije, se je občinstvo v Ockelboju odzivalo in poskušalo vplivati na dogodek, kot da bi šlo za dvosmerno komunikacijo. Ta dogodek je primer, kako je lahko oddaljena udeležba vključena v letne rituale in življenjska praznovanja.*

*Demokratske dimenzije dogodka: množica ljudi v Ockelboju je bila dokaz lokalnega ponosa, pa tudi dokaz veselja ob dejstvu, da se je lahko navadni državljani poročili s princeso in tako postal princ. Dejstvo, da se je družba razvila do točke, ko lahko ljubezen premaga socialne ovire brez razdedinjenja ali izgube nazivov, je poroki podelilo demokratično dimenzijo. Televizijski prenos kraljevske poroke z oddaljeno udeležbo je ustvaril občutek skupnosti tako na lokalni kot na državni ravni. Vključitev multikulturne glasbe na glavnem odru pa je uradno nakazala, da spodbuja sodelovanje priseljencev pri praznovanju.*

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# REVIVAL OF LOCAL MASKING TRADITIONS IN LATVIA AS THE RESULT OF COOPERATION BETWEEN PERFORMERS AND RESEARCHERS

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ĀĪDA RANCĀNE

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*At a time when it is possible to identify oneself with the global and universal, an opposite process is also occurring: an increase in interest in the local. This article describes the process of renewing three previously interrupted traditions. Is it possible to reconstruct a tradition at all, and what are the general conditions of cooperation between the researchers and participants to ensure a successful process?*

Keywords: researcher, performer, masked processions, local traditions, reconstruction of ritual

*V času, ko se je mogoče poistovetiti z globalnim in univerzalnim, se pojavlja tudi nasprotni proces – porast zanimanja za lokalno. V razpravi avtorica opiše proces obnavljanja treh predhodno prekinjenih tradicij in se sprašuje, ali je mogoče rekonstruirati tradicijo in v katerih okoliščinah lahko sodelovanje raziskovalca in udeležencev zagotovi uspeh?*

Ključne besede: raziskovalec, izvajalec, maskirane procesije, lokalne tradicije, rekonstrukcija rituala

The end of the nineteenth century in Latvia was marked by the beginning of complicated changes related to the gradual disappearance of traditional lifestyles. Traditional costumed processions were gradually losing their religious ritual functions while their entertainment function was coming to the fore. Although there were major changes in social life, in several rural regions of Latvia masking remained a common practice and small groups of enthusiasts found it important to participate in the masked processions for one reason or another, especially to repeat the traditions created by their ancestors.

In the revival of masking traditions, major input was provided by the folklore movement that arose by the end of the 1970s. Within this movement, existing materials and traditions were acknowledged, reproduced, and popularized. However, in reviving masking traditions, the time, place, look, and symbolic meaning of these traditions were ignored, thus unifying the structure of the masked processions, their activities, and their names.

## THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF MASKS

The source of this problem of loss of tradition can be found at the beginning of the twentieth century, when Krišjānis Barons, a folksong collector, published a six-volume set titled *Latvju Dainas*. One of the volumes has a collection of folksongs related to masks and masking. Barons united them under the title “Songs of *budēli*, *ķekatas*, and *čigāni*” and commented: “These songs are of a similar nature and content, so we place them together, and around Christmas time” (Barons & Visendorfs 1989–1994: 165).

At that time in Latvia, there were at least seventy different names for local masking groups. This situation is explained by the fact that the three masking traditions mentioned above, very different in their nature, are the ones that have an impressive number of songs, and so it was from them that the majority of oral folklore in the form of folksongs was gathered. Thanks to this written source and ignoring the context of masking which was started by Barons and continued in schools and schoolbooks, these three names—*budēļi*, *ķekatas*, and *čigāni*—came to be used when describing all local masking traditions at different festivals throughout the year. One cannot deny the similar nature of the *budēļi*, *ķekatas*, or any other masking group, but naming them all alike robs one of an opportunity to understand individual masking rituals because the time, place, and symbolic meaning are ignored. Like the names, the very structure of all masked processions and activities during the processions are unified.

At the end of the twentieth century, revival of the tradition of masked processions in the folklore movement occurred as follows: the folk groups that practiced masking attempted to create a program of masked processions using the songs and activities of the masks of different regions from various seasonal festivities. For instance, a masked group that called itself *Budēļi* (Shrovetide – region Zemgale / Semigallia), sang songs about jumping and stomping on weeds from the repertoire of *Ķekatas* (Shrovetide – Kurzeme / Courland). They also danced with the figure of Death (Gypsies, Christmastime – Vidzeme / Livonia), played the game Wolf and Goat (Gypsies, Christmastime – Latgale / Latgallia), danced with the figure of a Bear (Christmastime – Kurzeme / Courland), and even managed to sing a song from recent folklore about a Gypsy girl, her good looks, and her desire to find a Gypsy husband.

Some of the most popular mask figures were the Crane, the Bear, Female and Male Gypsies, Death, Female and Male Goats, and the Horse and Rider. If the group was larger, one might also find the Tall Woman, Short Man, Grain Sheaf, Sieve, Broom, Living Dead, Musician on a Hay Stack, and Wolf. All of these personas could be related to the Christmastime masked processions, although there has been little research to establish this. The bottom line is this: during this period, it was unacceptable to have the entire group comprised of only Goats, Cranes, or Little Men, a fact seen in the testimonies of the narrators (Rancāne 2009: 43–76). In the same way, the standardized educational information on masked processions stated that it was possible to wear costumes from St. Martin's Day until Shrovetide. In this case as well, the folklore archives expanded the boundaries of the masking period. They show that processions were common from St. Michael's Day (29 September) until St. George's Day (24 April). There are also records of the presence of masks at baptisms, weddings, funerals, home blessings, and harvest festivals.

Moreover, the behavior of the masked processions organized by modern folk groups differed significantly from those processions that were still taking place in Latvia's countryside. It proved difficult for urban people to reach the same level of vitality and enthusiasm that came naturally to the rural people in their natural habitat. At the same time, this

difference was partly a result of the Soviet era that had, intentionally or not, overwhelmed society for a long time with the deprivation of personal liberties and standardization of the performing arts. Although many found the folklore movement attractive because it offered an opportunity to feel natural and free of any artificial norms, a society needs time until its members begin to realize their own uniqueness and start demonstrating it without restraint; for example, by taking on the masked personas.

On the other hand, research on masking in Latvia has its own special features. Although several authors have described various masked processions (Jansons 2010: 56–69), there is only one researcher Latvia can be proud of during the previous century: Jānis Alberts Jansons, thanks to whom testimonies from rural people about masked processions were collected in the 1920s and 1930s. However, the research was reported in German because Jansons' dissertation was defended in Cologne, Germany. For this reason, this material was not widely available and understandable to the revivers of masking traditions in Latvia. Only in 2010 was this work translated into Latvian and published. In his work *Latviešu masku gājieni* (Latvian Masked Processions), Jansons mentions the interesting and different nature of various processions, but later he places them on the same level and only speaks about the basic structure of the event: arriving at the household, questioning the people of the household, instructing them, teasing them, and singing teasing songs about them; this is followed by presenting masks with humorous imitations of housework and fieldwork, walking around the house with smoking twigs, dancing, riding in a sled, performing jokes and games involving masked people, feasting, and finally either saying goodbyes and proceeding to the next household or removing the masks and continuing with the games (Janson 1933: 73). In this schematic, one can see the traditions of different regions and different festivals combined. It was not the objective of Jansons' work to reconstruct the different processions or to single out their differences in activities and nuances, characters, or symbolism.

## MASK FESTIVALS A CURRENT FORM OF MASKING

At the beginning of the 1990s, a new political, economic, and cultural situation manifested itself in Latvia. It resulted in two opposite tendencies that also appear in the masking culture. On the one hand, new elements have been introduced from global culture, such as Halloween and city carnivals; on the other hand, interest in local traditions seems to have grown stronger. In the various regions, interest has grown in local cultural characteristics.

This period may have brought along a mix of values for some. People are searching for the real thing, the true, the natural. It is the urban people that, being the furthest from nature and the traditional way of life, are approaching traditional heritage again intellectually and are searching for a fruitful way to connect it to modern life and its forms of

communication. “As finite beings we stand in traditions, whether we know these traditions or not, whether we are conscious of them or so blinded as to believe that we begin anew. This does not affect at all the power of tradition over us,” writes the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (2002: 92). He believes a tradition is not merely conservation, but rather transference. It is awareness of the ancient and expressing it anew.

Whereas folk groups have their masked processions each year during seasonal festivities, in 1995 the city council of Daugavpils presented an initiative to hold a mask festival that would unite traditional masking and the individual and artistic approach of the students of a local art school in creating contemporary masks. After that, for several years the traditions were unchanged, until 2001, when the National Center for Folk Art became involved in reviving masking and held the International Mask Festival together with people from Daugavpils for the four following years. As the name of the festival indicates, the participants included one or more groups of masks from abroad. In this way, the Latvian participants had the chance learn about the masking traditions of Lithuania, Estonia, Russia, Belarus, Bulgaria, and Poland. Beginning in 2005, the festival started “moving” through all of Latvia’s regions, thus giving a wider circle of society the chance to learn about traditions.<sup>1</sup> Since 2010, the responsibility for organizing the festival has shifted to a non-government institution—the Latvian Folk Society—which is responsible for organizing the festival together with the corresponding municipality. It is interesting that some of the municipalities involved in holding the festival have expressed a desire to continue with a similar festival of their own. One of them, Salacgrīva, has already done so, which means that there were three International Mask Festivals scheduled for 2012: in Milzkalne (the thirteenth), in Salacgrīva (the third), and in Daugavpils (the ninth).

The desire of the organizers of the festivals to ensure the survival and popularization of traditions is demonstrated by the fact that in 2001 the National Center for Folk Art started issuing printed material about and masks in Latvia. (Rancane 2001) In 2002, the organizers of the festival published methodological material, giving the participants their first opportunity to learn from archive materials. (Rancane 2002) In 2003, another set of material comprising both of the previous issues was printed with melodies for songs, lyrics, and illustrations. (Rancane 2003) Another important step in understanding traditions is the research by Aīda Rancāne, published in 2009 as the volume *Maskas un maskošānās Latvijā* (Masks and Masking in Latvia).

An important part of the festival has always been a scholarly conference or seminar with the participation of carnival researchers and folklore specialists from Latvia and abroad. During these conferences, it has been possible to learn about the traditions, festivals, and new research from different countries. In the workshops, interested people have the chance to learn how to make a traditional mask properly and how to use the mask to create a particular persona.

<sup>1</sup> Places where the festival takes place: Madona (2005), Bauska (2006), Liepāja (2007), Riga (2008), Dagda (2009), Salacgrīva (2010), Viesīte (2011), and Tukums and Milzkalne (2012).

During the festival each year, the activity of masking inside a rural household is organized like a competition. Each group presents its tradition in contact with the household's people. Although the contexts of a festival and the traditional environment of a home are impossible to compare, there is still the opportunity for successful activity of a in a contemporary situation without losing the sense of authenticity. A huge room, bright lights, amplifiers, a big crowd of spectators, the presence of a jury—these are significantly different factors that cause the participants to adjust the traditional materials to the competitive situation. However, on one of the festival's days an opportunity is given the groups to enjoy the rural environment and visit a countryside household, where the situation is very close to the traditional one.

In this way, the festival is an opportunity to motivate those interested to learn, cherish, and popularize masking traditions. In this situation, there is the opportunity for planned and successful three-way cooperation involving researchers, organizers, and performers. At the same time, the festival is a creative workshop for polishing one's masking skills and learning the tradition.

#### THE *VECĪŠI* MASK GROUP

As mentioned above, the archives have a fairly rich amount of material relating to masking traditions. However, not all regions of Latvia have preserved masking as a living tradition. This article describes three traditions of masked processions, typical for their respective regions and periods of time but completely unknown to contemporary groups, or perhaps forgotten by them. These traditions are no longer present in the rural environment and they have not been inherited through oral transmission from the previous generation.

The first of these is *vecīši*. This tradition was completely unfamiliar to the mask groups of the folklore movement; not even the name was known. Moreover, archive materials are quite scarce. Nonetheless, the first impulse to renew this tradition came from these materials. Later, after analyzing the ritual context, the etymology of the name, and the symbolism of the ritual, the researchers' next step in reconstructing the tradition was to understand the meaning of the ritual. Finally, a group from the region where the recorded materials had originated showed their efforts to specialists at the festival. Their revival centered on the autumn seasonal cycle of costumed processions, marking the end of the harvest and the beginning of the season of ancestor spirits. This period lasts until St. Martin's Day, believed to mark the end of autumn, the beginning of winter, and the end of the ancestor spirit season, when the spirits of the deceased come to visit their families, feast on the wealth brought by autumn, and thereby bring blessings for the following year.

The masks are anthropomorphic. The name of the group—the Old Men—is related to the ancestor cult. An important aspect of the ritual is the light color of the robes, indicating their link to the world of the dead. The next important aspect is their silent behavior; if they sing at all, the songs are very specific. The old women directing the singing have been very secretive about the art so that nobody else would learn it. It is written that they would

repeat the same phrases over and over again and sometimes spending the entire evening at one household. They would be offered a thick porridge and meat, specially prepared and kept for them (Rancāne 2009: 43–44). Thus there is a close resemblance between the masks and the rituals of the ancestor cult, when the spirits of the deceased are welcomed and offered food and drink.

In renewing this tradition, the greatest problem is the textual material, which is not fixed. Thus it would be more correct to speak of a partial reconstruction of *vecīši*. As already mentioned, the art of singing was cherished but was not passed on. Because of this, they were forced to use folklore material from the archives (riddles, tales, games, and songs) relative to the period, the place in question, and its relation to the ancestor cult. Currently, three folk groups of Livonia in Vidriži, Salacgrīva, and Katlakalns are attempting to revive the tradition. Each of them has a different approach and form of expression.

The masks of Vidriži allow themselves to be carried along by their creative impulses more than the others. “Just as a soup needs to be salted, folk events, even if very familiar, need to be accompanied by a fresh and creative spark!” the leader of the group believes (Interview 1). Their masking can be characterized as a performance or as ritual theatre, but the performance is created based on an understanding about the ritual and the meaning of masks. One respondent said:

*Old—that means “wise”. I understand the vecīši masks as images of the spirits of our ancestors. Both my parents and grandparents are no longer in this world, but I don’t feel like I’ve lost them forever; maybe it sounds a little weird, but by putting on the Old Woman mask I always feel a surge of joy, strength, and something like an invisible uniting line. When I put on this mask, it’s as if all my female relatives were standing behind my back. (Interview 1)*

In addition to their being very familiar with the Latvian folk material, helpful materials from Finno-Ugric folklore are also used because the region where the group operates was also populated by Livonians.<sup>2</sup> When asked about the method being used in reconstructing the tradition, the respondent replied:

*I use my intuition. I don’t know who’s sending me those visions, but I’ve seen all of our masked performances (and every other ritual) on my inner screen—in a clear, concrete vision—all that’s left for me is to write it down and relate to my people, to stage a performance. . . . In my group, I teach them to be responsible about the entire process. My duty is to give everyone their instruments and methods on how to work with themselves, by showing them the “map” of our common activity ground, and at the same time it’s an invaluable opportunity for myself to be growing together with them. In the rehearsals, we’ve got a fantastic harmony and openness, a free and*

<sup>2</sup> A Baltic Finnic people in Latvia who speak a Finno-Ugric language.





Figure 1. The *veciši* group. The 12<sup>th</sup> International Festival of Mask Traditions in Viesīte, Latvia, 12 February 2011. (Photos by A. Rancane)

*light flow of energy and information. Every project is a creative, dynamic process for us, and all of us are winners, in an equal manner, I'd say: the richer each one's individual experience, the fuller our understanding of the event.* (Interview 1)

Alongside books and materials about methods, the masks of Salacgrīva also rely on their own feelings in renewing the traditions. The motivation of the leader of the *veciši* mask group is the following: “For me, this link to the spirits of our ancestors is very important, as is the positive energy and preserving the tradition” (Interview 2). The group has been participating in the festivals and mask events in their own region for ten years in a row now, but it seems they have not found the “true key” to the masking activities. In addition, one of the participants has confessed that she would prefer another tradition, one more exciting, fun, and appropriate for the modern day.

The renovators of *veciši* in Katlakalns (Figure 1) have the least experience in reclaiming the tradition, but it must be pointed out they are very careful in creating the masks and reconstructing the images. The selection of folklore material also is appropriate, but the skill to act freely and improvise still has to be acquired.

Because it is mostly urban people or young people attempting to revive the *veciši* tradition in this region near Riga, the participants lack the living link of generations that gives a tradition its life energy, and sometimes the behavior of the costume-wearers is in between a true experience and a theatrical performance.

THE *KAITAS* MASK GROUP

The next group, renewed thanks to the successful cooperation of researchers and enthusiasts, is *kaitas* (or *koitas*). *Kaitas* masks are seen between Christmas and Epiphany in the central and southern parts of Latgallia. Here, unlike the previous local tradition, the textual material has been amply recorded. The difference between this tradition and the others is the nature of its presentation, which is enriched by improvisation. There might be, for example, a simple dance evening in a rural household during which the *kaitas* characters would present a play once in a while. The masks of *kaitas* may be anthropomorphic (social characters), zoomorphic (animals and birds), or allegorical (Death, the Devil, the Tall Wife, the Little Boy, etc.). In Latvian, the name *kaitas* is related to teasing and playing pranks. The *kaitas* figures are joined by the most celebrated pranksters of the area, who improvise performances based on a particular topic, which may be given by one of the members of the household present at the event. Usually, the choice would be something seemingly of no particular interest. However, the prankster is capable of speaking the entire night through and making the others laugh, talking, for instance, about a stove in the house, a pair of boots, or some other simple thing. The *kaitas* characters would also play some joking games, such as Burglars, Fiddlers, Crayfish, Death-Devil-Angel, and others, exciting and funny enough to simultaneously evoke loud laughter, merriment, and fear (Rancāne 2009: 59-60).

A mask group from a rural area of southern Latgallia (Figure 2) that has spent years reviving this tradition has been very successful because their group includes people talented enough to create interesting play scenarios and to act them out with witty dialogues. The leader of the *kaitas* group stated:

*Material is very scarce but, while researching that which exists, I understood the goal we have to achieve through our masking. That is, through the masks, we have to illustrate the changes in human nature during the Christmastime season that are real for us, but at the same time conserve the basic principles of kaitas masks—kaitas figures don't arrive all at once like other mask groups do, they don't sing much, and they use double meaning in their dialogues. Just like other mask groups, their activities carry the very meaning for masking: to help people.* (Interview 3)

The *kaitas* group in Dagda need to develop their skills of improvisation in various situations, both in composing texts on the spot and creating scenarios. Perhaps that would allow the audience to perceive the masking tradition with greater clarity. The leader of the group says

*Speaking about kaitas, if they're created outside festivals, the audience perceives them like a theater play, without being conscious of their hidden meaning. This is why I often have to explain the nature of this tradition.* (Interview 3).

Another, more positive thing must be mentioned: another winter tradition, *čigāni*, is still alive in that area of Latgallia, and the participants are familiar with it. In fact, some of them even inherited it from their parents. Consequently, the characters of the masks and their



Figure 2 The *kaitas* mask group. The 12<sup>th</sup> International Festival of Mask Traditions in Viesīte, Latvia, 12 February 2011.

behaviours can be copied from that mask group, although some of them still remember the *kaitas* processions. The interest of the participants in learning the *kaitas* tradition is genuine:

*It's very difficult to explain, but as the carnival season approaches, people tend to come and ask what we're going to do this time. . . . Returning from the festival, we shared our feelings. The strange feeling of peace was unanimous.* (Interview 3).

#### THE *BUDĒĻI* MASK GROUP

Any masked character previously and even now in Latvia is called *budēlis*. As already mentioned, this tradition has the most singing because every dialogue with the members of the household is entirely sung. The songs are fixed in a four-line format and the majority of them are published and available to any user. It is important to note, however, that there are cases when, during interviews in another region, the respondent initially uses the term *budēļi*, and only later is it revealed that the local people in fact call the masks by a different name.

Traditionally, the *budēļi* procession is typical of the southwestern region of Latvia, including two culturally historic regions, Semigallia and Courland. These processions are seen only at Shrovetide, the beginning of spring, and the start of a new agricultural year. In many places, the masking season ends with Shrovetide, which is why this tradition was especially popular. With the approach of spring and the awakening of nature, the topic of fertility becomes important in the processions. Sexuality, merriment, laughter, jumping, pouring water, thrashing, and talking about the phallus are very typical of *budēļi* processions (Rancāne 2009: 67–71).

The first important input by researchers into the renewal of the *budēļi* tradition was the reconstruction of the typical headdresses. There had been reports of specific humorous headdresses worn by the *budēļi*, which were made by tying the upper ends of straw. Printed editions from the beginning of the last century also mention *budēļi* wearing decorated straw headdresses (Līdeks 1991: 128). Finally, during field research in 1993 the geologist and ethnographer Viktors Grāvītis learned how the *budēļi* straw headdress is made, according to a hundred-year-old woman's description. He found some straw and made the headdress together with the elderly woman (Grāvītis 1995: 98–99). Afterwards, master classes were held and those interested had the opportunity to learn how to make the headdress.

At the same time, researchers were not unanimous about the meaning of the *budēļi* mask group. The successful reconstruction of the *budēļi* masks gave the researchers an understanding of the symbolism of these masks. The *budēļi* headdress reminds the people of the last stalk of grain, which is usually left unharvested to stand in the field so that the living force of the harvest can hide inside it. The *budēļi* figures that visit a household at the beginning of the new agricultural year personify those forces of fertility and perform magic activities. In this way, the etymology of the name *budēļi* becomes understandable, related to the Latvian word for 'excite' or 'wake up' (Rancāne 2011).

The next important stage for researchers in renewing the tradition was to find the lyrics of the songs, many of them quite erotic, in the archives for the benefit of the mask-wearers, who could then learn to freely improvise with the lyrics, especially in song battles between household members and mask-wearers, or only between the ed characters. Learning the lyrics and the method of free improvisation in a situation is a skill that traditional societies spend years developing, and members of such societies are often familiar with the tradition since childhood. Nowadays, the mask-wearers usually write a scenario with songs in sequence. To attain free improvisation, the mask-wearers still need to learn massive amounts of lyrics in order to be able to express themselves freely. On the other hand, the inability of the heads of a household to reply with a song is also a problem. To reconstruct the tradition fully, a dialogue between both parties, turning into a "song battle," is necessary.

The renovators of the *budēļi* masks (Figure 3) must prepare in a timely fashion: "Preparations begin during the end of summer, by making the *budēļi* headdresses, afterwards acquiring fur-coats, sewing satchels and face masks, and learning lyrics" (Interview 4). To reconstruct the mask tradition completely, bells made in Latvia to hang from the belts are still necessary. Currently, bells made in other countries are used.

Recently, another feature testified by the narrators has been used in the festivals: members of the most ancient processions were only male. "I was even more attracted to the *budēļi* tradition when I realized only young men were taking part, that it's a men's thing" (Interview 4), relates the leader of a *budēļi* group. The list of participants changes over the years, but by preparing and teaching new members using photographs from the previous years, men become interested in learning the skills. However, the experience is difficult to describe, depending on previous experience and knowledge: "I personally get



Figure 3. The *budēļi* group. The 12<sup>th</sup> International Festival of Mask Traditions in Viesīte, Latvia, 12 February 2011.

good emotions from the masked processions. It is the realization that you're a messenger of spring, a rouser, a fosterer of fertility. By wearing the *budēļi* costume, just a little tipsy from alcohol, entering a different state through noise and movement, I feel special, I'm a *budēlis*" (Interview 4).

#### COOPERATION BETWEEN RESEARCHERS AND PERFORMERS

In creating any kind of product, especially one as complicated as masks, the interest, mutual understanding, and help of all those involved is very important, especially the willing participation of people in learning a tradition. None of the groups had been talked into renewing their local tradition; it was the desire of the participants themselves to find and present their regional identities.

They dedicate their time, money, and intellect. What is their motivation? One of the leaders of the *kaitas* group said:

*When putting on the masks, the participants cease to be Johns, or Sandras, and so on. There's a strange aura present within the group—elation, commotion, joy. People's true nature is unlocked and revealed. It even brings them closer together; the participants return from the festivals different and better. I'm not the only one to notice; so do other members of the folk group that haven't been to the festival for one reason or another. They even find it difficult to go back into the collective that had worn costumes.* (Interview 3)

The respondent's answer confirms what anthropologists have already observed: collective rituals may become vehicles for social organization and transformation by contributing to

the formation of strong emotional bonds among group members (Dunbar 2006) and by reinforcing social solidarity and group cohesion (Whitehouse 2004: 193).

Masking rituals also have more than social significance. The religious aspect communicated by the traditional masks and wearing them is also present. The genuine interest in the meaning of the symbols and rituals on the part of the performers (at least some of them) adds a spiritual dimension to their performance that cannot be missed by an observer. Perhaps that is an obstacle to continuing the popularity of traditional masking in the general society of Latvia. The entertaining nature of the masks is saturated by a rich, ancient culture, not easily understandable by many contemporary persons. As one mask leader said:

*We have neighbors with a Christian background or simply contemporary thinking. Ours is the only home celebrating on 21 December, 21 March, 21 June . . . nobody knows much about the Old Faith and, even if they do, they don't practice it. There have been awkward moments when we enter a household and realize we're not welcome. What's left is to invite friends or go visit those of similar minds.* (Interview 1)

In regions where the masking traditions have disappeared, the renewed tradition might not take root in general society. Although it is part of a region's heritage, contemporary life seems to have moved away from specific traditions. One possible problem in renewing the tradition is that the intellectual aspect often dominates the emotional, and that limits both the maskers and the observers. A long time has to pass, and quite a bit of experience be gained, to enable the participants in the ritual to adapt the ancient folklore material, learn the "rules of the game," and be capable of improvising freely within those rules.

Comparing mask-wearing in Latvia to the popularity of carnival festivals in other European countries, an expert on traditional cultures recognizes that it "has become a form of mass entertainment, and commercialized by losing its ancient sociological and symbolic context. Popularization of those forms of mask-wearing will not be supported in our society" (Interview 5). A specialist from a museum thinks likewise: "By turning mask-wearing into an extra popular activity, we risk losing its true meaning and content" (Interview 6).

Masked processions and festivals are not being popularized and followed by the mass media. Traditional mask-wearing is not being taught in the public schools, and so researchers and organizers are the only ones attaching social significance to the phenomena. Lately, it is through the initiative of the mask-wearers themselves that videos of masked groups' activities during a festival are placed on the internet; this is a modern form of self-representation as recognized by the ethnologist Jurij Fikfak (2011). The opportunity to see the ritual activities of masks via the internet is a great help in educating the public.

When the performance is finished, the mask wearers are interested in the researchers' opinion. This is why seminars are organized about the traditions observed. The first part includes general questions (the semantics of masks, reasons for masking, meaning of

activities, etc.), and the second part is dedicated to analyzing the performances and evaluating them. The groups most successful in representing the tradition are congratulated, as are the makers of individual masks.

The gathering of groups for performances within festival competitions gives each of them an opportunity to compare themselves with the others and to compete. Often, this is a greater stimulus in reconstructing costumes than the specialists' evaluation. After years spent observing masks, it is clear how a character or his behavior, or even an episode of a scenario, can be copied from another group or participant. However, it is not a matter of merely copying the other, but including the idea or the tradition within the local tradition in a creative manner. This process can be related to other countries as well. Bulgarian masks can be a source of inspiration. Moreover, several groups from Latvia have participated in the Surva International Kukeri Festival in Pernik. Anthropologist Cesare Poppi, the research advisor to the project Carnival King of Europe,<sup>3</sup> has visited Latvia repeatedly and introduced mask wearers to videos of Alpine and Balkan masking traditions.

Nevertheless, only a small number of groups take part in reconstructing masking traditions, and so the lack of competition may discourage the exchange of experiences within local traditions. Attempts to gain the recognition of researchers and folklore specialists by competing with other masked groups, and to obtain a recognized status among them, can be positive, but there have also been cases when the strict evaluation criteria and the quality of performance of other participants have caused several groups to quit the festival.

Similarly, involvement of just one or a few researchers in renovating the masking tradition can create the risk of subjectivity. Unfortunately, there are few researchers in Latvia that direct scholarly interest towards masks and masking. One of the reasons is the lack of traditional Latvian masks as objects of applied art. They have always been created "for a reason"; that is, in relation to calendar festivities. Masks are made using easily found materials that are "just lying around," and so they usually lack durability. Moreover, the tradition of wooden masks had disappeared even before efforts to collect them were begun, so museums do not have rich collections of masks. There are only two wooden masks from Courland at the Latvian National History Museum. The nonexistence of masks in museums dictates the focus of research:

*Researchers working in museums will have to choose research projects with results that can be used in the museum's work. So they will pick themes related to the existing museum archives or specifics. . . . The ethnographers at our museum usually begin their work by making a catalogue of a collection. . . . To begin research on masks, they would have to be in the collection. It would be analyzed and catalogued, and the research would be as thorough as possible. (Interview 6)*

<sup>3</sup> Carnival King of Europe is a research project funded by the Culture Department of the European Union. It aims to bring to light the important similarities that can be observed among specific aspects of carnivals and winter fertility rituals across different areas of Europe.

In a situation like this, with a very small number of interested researchers, it is important to involve international experts. It has been possible to carry out this idea at least partially, thanks to the International Masks Festival in Latvia.

Researchers are interested in the usefulness of their research to society. In the schematic below (Figure 4), it is clear how research—the product created by the researcher—is embodied in life. During this process, both the performers and the researchers themselves encounter new questions that demand new answers. In this way, the performer becomes the consumer of the research in a way. At the same time, a successfully renewed tradition can produce interest in an observer previously unfamiliar with it. This interest can stimulate their research, thus strengthening their understanding of the subject.

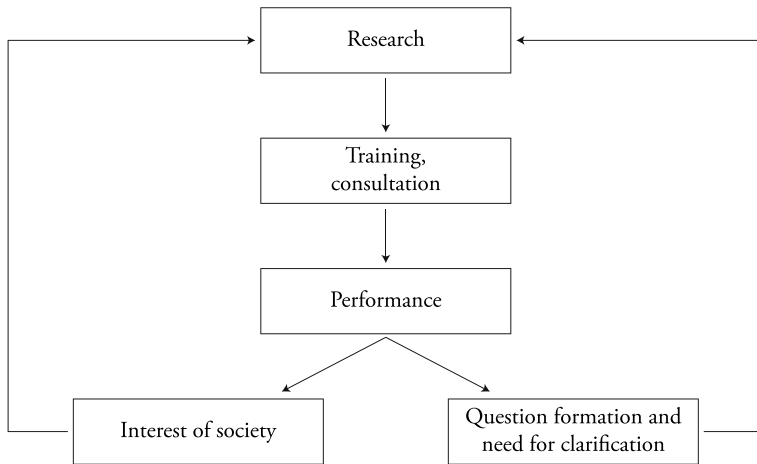


Figure. 4. Interaction of research between performers and society in renewing a tradition.

## CONCLUSION

The viability of cultural expressions in contemporary Latvian social environments has taken very different directions during recent decades, sometimes even moving in opposite directions. The social status and influence of the caretakers and their groups within traditional culture in the 1980s were quite high, and the message they bore was generally accepted and incorporated into family traditions. That period was accompanied by the motto “We have to learn and use the heritage of our ancestors as much as possible.”

After the restoration of Latvia’s independence in the 1990s, attitudes toward the process of inheriting culture changed. The change started with the belief that “now we are free from ideological sub-layers, and inheriting traditions should continue within their natural environment, within the family.” This opinion coincided with the period just after the Iron Curtain had fallen and a wave of Western mass culture rapidly filled Latvian



culture space. The opinions of specialists of traditional culture and the performing groups lost significance and influence. Folk groups were often seen by researchers and politicians as a relic of the Soviet amateur movement. It was years later that the realization came that inheritance of traditions was no longer possible within families. There had been an interruption in cultural inheritance. The current middle generation that is socially and financially active is unfamiliar with traditions, their significance, and their meaning. An interesting phenomenon occurred: traditions were brought into families by children, who were taught them in preschool and school.

Recently, it has become painfully clear that, in the organized system of municipalities' cultural life, the best and only way to renew traditions is the folk group and its activities. It must be recognized that a folk group that has been organized in a certain region is very similar in its form and nature to the spontaneous groups that once existed at weddings, funerals, shared work projects, and similar group activities. There is no insurmountable contradiction here. Of course, there is no traditional society any more, but the intangible cultural values created by these groups are wonderfully capable of existing in contemporary life. Those groups are a valuable source of research as well as its partner.

This situation requires researchers to adapt to changes of circumstances, and to alter their research methods or create new ones. In a situation like this, it is possible to obtain good results through participant observation. Essentially, the researchers become active users of the given tradition because they are familiar with the folklore material and its traditional contexts, understand symbols, learn the means of expression (songs, music, choreography, etc.), and orient themselves in matters of meaning and significance.

The problem lies in the fact that contemporary society is oriented towards the passive consumption of a culture product when traditional cultural expressions by their very nature require active participation of the members of society, both in the groups of the traditional culture as carriers of the tradition and in ritual events such as the masked processions. Otherwise, just a small number of people partake in the process and the general population may perceive that community as a closed one with its own particular interests.

Finally, it may be concluded that the process of renewing a tradition and the research associated with it can be successful only if a wide range of subjects is involved: the performers of a tradition, the organizers of the cultural life of a municipality, the mass media, the members of the educational system and, of course, researchers.

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Interview 2 with Zenta Mennika in Salacgrīva, February 26<sup>th</sup> 2012. Private archive.

Interview 3 with Inta Viļuma in Dagda, February 14<sup>th</sup> 2012. Private archive.

Interview 4 with Jānis Jasjukevičs in Rīga, February 16<sup>th</sup> 2012. Private archive.

Interview 5 with Gita Lancere, an expert of traditional culture from the Centre of Culture Education and Immaterial Heritage, in Rīga, February 20<sup>th</sup> 2012. Private archive.

Interview 6 with Daina Kraukle, director of the Archive of Ethnographic open-air museum, in Rīga, February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2012. Private archive.

## OŽIVLJANJE LOKALNE TRADICIJE MASKIRANJA KOT REZULTAT SODELOVANJA MED IZVAJALCI IN RAZISKOVALCI

*Arhivsko gradivo v Latviji vsebuje številna pričevanja o veliki raznolikosti skupin mask, maskiranih procesij, o njihovem videzu in aktivnosti. Trenutno je znanih okrog sedemdeset imen skupin mask.*

*Ob koncu 19. in v začetku 20. stoletja je tradicionalna podeželska družba razkrojila; hkrati pa je potekalo intenzivno zbiranje in arhiviranje folklore. V tem času so zbiralci folklornega gradiva, novinarji in kulturni ter izobraževalni delavci, sami nosilci izročila, in celo raziskovalci, mnoga razširjena imena mask uporabljali kot sinonime, ne da bi razumeli razloge za tradicijo maskiranja. V 80. in 90. letih 20. stoletja se je nadaljevalo z rekonstrukcijo maskiranih sprevodov, ne da bi upoštevali značilnosti lokalnih izročil.*

*Enaindvajseto stoletje se je začelo z novim valom obnavljanja in raziskovanja tradicij maskiranja. K temu je prispeval tudi mednarodni festival tradicij maskiranja, saj si je za svoj glavni cilj zadal obnovitev lokalnih tradicij in njihovo popularizacijo v širši družbi. Izvajalci tradicij maskiranja, folklorne skupine, organizatorji kulturnega življenja ter raziskovalci so začeli sodelovati. Med rezultate tega sodelovanja je vračanje k tradiciji, k prvotnim oblikam maskiranja: veciši, budēļi in kaitas. V procesu rekonstrukcije so uporabili različna in med seboj komplementarna orodja:*

- a) etnologi in drugi strokovnjaki so raziskali arhivsko gradivo in izdali publikacije o metodah izdelovanja mask ter drugih spretnostih;*
- b) člani folklornih skupin so se naučili načinov izražanja konkretnih tradicij maskiranja (videza, ritualnih aktivnosti, folklornih veščin itn.);*
- c) organizirali so festivale mednarodnih tradicij maskiranja, kjer so te skupine predstavljale svoje veščine;*
- d) specialisti in raziskovalci so svoje analize in sklepe predstavili članom maskiranih procesij. V procesu rekonstrukcije tradicij maskiranja bi bila dobrodošla vpletenost širšega kroga folklornih skupin in raziskovalcev; to bi spodbudilo izmenjavo, obenem pa širši javnosti omogočilo razumevanje do vključevanja tradicionalne kulture v sodobni svet ter ohranjanja njene živosti.*

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# THE WANDERING BLIND MENDICANT SINGER AND THE SLAVIC RITUAL YEAR

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KATYA MIHAYLOVA

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*The Slavic wandering mendicant singers, who were usually blind from birth, were trained in special associations of the craft-guild type, where they were taught song repertoires and begging prayers by an older singer in exchange for pay. These informal guilds were of a religious nature, and they were formed in the vicinity of a monastery. Such associations survived until the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. They had special rules of operation, common customs and norms of behavior, their own patron saint, a hierarchy, common duties of members, a common pool of money, a secret language, secret signs, and so on. A comparison is made with similar associations of blind street singers in other European countries.*

Keywords: *wandering blind mendicant singer, Slavic folklore, ritual year, rites of passage, religious and legendary songs*

*Slovanski beraški potujoči pevci, ki so bili navadno slepi od rojstva, so se urili v posebnih združenjih cebovske vrste, kjer jih je starejši pevec v zameno za plačilo učil repertoarja pesmi in beraških molitev. Ti neformalni cebi so bili verske narave, nastajali pa so v bližini samostanov. Takšna združenja so preživela do konca devetnajstega ali začetka dvajsetega stoletja. Imela so posebna pravila delovanja, skupne navade in pravila obnašanja, lastnega svetniškega zavetnika, hierarhijo, skupne dolžnosti članov, skupen denar, tajen jezik, tajne znake itd. Avtorica jih je primerjala s podobnimi združenjih slepih pocestnih pevcev v drugih evropskih državah.*

Ključne besede: *slep beraški potujoči pevec, slovanska folklor, obredno leto, obredi prehoda, verske pesmi in legende*

The wandering blind mendicant singer is a peculiar type of professional epic singer. In this article I limit myself to wandering blind mendicant singers among the Slavic peoples. This phenomenon is also characteristic of other countries in Europe, Asia, and elsewhere, and a number of the semantic and functional characteristics of itinerant blind mendicant singers are valid for other national traditions as well.<sup>1</sup> Those characteristics do not have specific elements that distinguish the wandering blind mendicant singer as a typical Slavic phenomenon, the difference being that in other European countries the tradition of mendicant singing declined at the end of the eighteenth century, whereas the institution of professional mendicant singing survived in most Slavic countries until as late as the 1930s or 1940s due to the specific social and historical conditions and the longer survival of the patriarchal village community among the Slavs (especially among the South Slavs).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed examination of this phenomenon in Europe, see Mihaylova (1993: 29–36).

<sup>2</sup> This article is based on field research conducted by the author in several Slavic countries, archival sources, and materials published in rare books and periodicals from the early nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century.

## SLAVIC NAMES FOR MENDICANT SINGERS

Itinerant mendicant singers were known by various names among the different Slavic peoples: *kaliki perekhozhie* and their successors, *nishchie startsy*, among the Russians, *kobzari*, *lirnyky*, and *bandurysty* among the Ukrainians, *startsi* among the Belarusians, *dziady* among the Poles, *džadi-žobráci* among the Slovaks, *niněristé* among the Czechs, *slepi guslari* among the Serbs and Croats, *slepi gadulari* among the Bulgarians, *bozhetsi* and *pitachi* in Macedonia, and so on. Those names are usually derived from the musical instruments played by the singers (*lira*, *kobza*, and *bandura* among the Ukrainians, *lira korbowa* among the Poles, *niněra* among the Czechs, *gusla* among the Serbs and Croats, *gadulka* among the Bulgarians, etc.).

## GUILD-TYPE ASSOCIATIONS OF SLAVIC MENDICANT SINGERS

The wandering mendicant singer was a professional epic singer not only because he earned a living by singing. These types of singers, who were usually blind from birth or had become blind later in life, were trained in informal associations in exchange for pay. In most Slavic countries, such associations were closed or secret, similar to the craft guilds of medieval times. Some of them survived until the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. Almost all were of a religious nature and they were founded in the vicinity of a monastery: for example, the *slepáčka akademija* (academy of the blind) of the Serbian *guslari* in the town of Irig in the Srem District near the monasteries of Fruška Gora (which survived until the mid-eighteenth century), the *dobarska shkola* (Dobarsko school) of the Bulgarian *slepi gadulari* in the village of Dobarsko in the Razlog District near the Rila Monastery or the *baldevska shkola* (Baldevo school) in the village of Baldevo in the Pazardzhik District, the *uchilishte za pevtsi* (school for singers) or *slepachki manastir* (monastery of the blind) of the *pitachi* and *bozhetsi* near Bitola in Vardar Macedonia, the *nishchensky tsekh* (guild of beggars) of the Belarusian *startsi* in the town of Semezhov in the Slutsk District of the Minsk Province, the *bratstvo* or *gurt* of the Ukrainian *lirnyky* and *kobzari* in the town of Mena and other such secret organizations in the Chernigov, Podole, Poltava, and Kharkiv provinces, the *cech žobrácov* (guild of beggars) of Slovak beggars in the village of Farkašín (today Vlčkovce) in the Trnava District of western Slovakia, and so on. These associations had special rules of operation, common customs, and norms of behavior. They also had their own hierarchy, their own holiday, common duties of members, and a common pool of money. They were headed by an older mendicant singer that was usually elected from among the blind beggars—the *tsekhmeyster* (guildmaster), *panotets* (master-father), *starosta* (elder), *žobrácý rychtár* (beggars' mayor), *król dziadóv* (king of the beggars), and so on—who taught the guild's songs to those willing to practice the "beggars' craft," learning how to play the musical stringed instrument, how to behave, and so on. At the end of the training period, which lasted two or three years, trainees were required to take

an examination in order to become mendicant singers. In some organizations, such as the fraternities of the Ukrainian *kobzari* and *lirnyky*, the examination was conducted in a special ritual ceremony called *vyzvilka* or *odklinshchyny*, which was attended by the entire fraternity.<sup>3</sup> The members of those guild-type organizations also had a secret language, such as the *lebiys'ky yazyk* (from *lebiy* 'old man') or *lobur'ska mova* of the Ukrainian *lirnyky*, the *lyubetsky lement* of the Belarusian *startsi* in the Mogilev Province (who called each other *lyubki*), the secret language of the Russian *startsy* from the area near the town of Bryansk, the *gegavački jazik* of the Serbian *guslari*, the language of the Bulgarian beggars from the village of Dobarsko in the Razlog District, the language of the blind *bozhetsi* and *pitachi* from the area of Bitola and Prilep in Vardar Macedonia, and so on. Those secret languages had quite a rich vocabulary; for example, the *lyubetsky lement* of the Belarusian *startsi* had nouns for people and parts of the human body, animals, plants, natural phenomena, food, cutlery, clothing, dwelling, different religious concepts, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, numerals, pronouns, and so on (Romanov 1890: 118–145). The language of the Ukrainian *lirnyky* and *kobzari* was just as rich and had special words for the days of the week.<sup>4</sup> Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century linguists were especially interested in the language of the blind beggars in Vardar Macedonia, where other craft guilds in the cities also had their secret languages. The secret language of beggars was made up of distorted words from Bulgarian as well as Greek, Turkish, Serbian, Vlach, and Romany words. What was most characteristic of this secret language, though, was that it had special words for the numbers; these words were not found in any other secret guild language in the region (Chilev 1900: 876–878; Gabyuv 1900: 868–870; Shishmanov 1895: 25–27, 47–50). In some Slavic countries, sighted beggars also had secret signs that they drew on the walls of houses to help guide the other members of their organization, such as the secret signs of the Polish *dziady* or of the Slovak *džadi-žobráci* (Mihailova 2006: 299–328; Michajłowa 2010: 254–286). In countries like Ukraine and Belarus, blind mendicant singers were especially keen on keeping their craft and organization secret. The *gurt*, *bratstvo*, or *tsekh* of the Ukrainian *lirnyky* and *kobzari* had secret oral charters called *Ustyns'ki*, *Nezryachi*, or *Slipets'ki Knygy* ('Oral books' or 'Books of the blind'). These charters contained the customs of the guild, which was organized like a commune governed by an elected council. They also contained the rights and norms of behavior of every member, the activities of the guild's council and tribunal, information about the places that were best for collecting alms, words and phrases from the guild's secret language, instructions about how to play the musical instruments (the *lira* and *kobza*), the words of prayers begging for alms and the words of psalms expressing gratitude to almsgivers, the entire repertoire of the guild's songs, stories about famous members of the guild, and so on. The content of the books remained unknown to the rank-

<sup>3</sup> See RF IFME, f. 11-4/589, recorded by Martinovich in 1885–1886; RF IFME, f. 11-4/591, recorded by Martinovich in 1885; RF IFME, f. 11-4/592, recorded by Martinovich in 1885; RF IFME, f. 8-4/338, recorded by Dniprovski.

<sup>4</sup> RF IFME, f. 11-4/592, p. 4, recorded by Martinovich in 1885. See also RF IFME, f. 6-4/161a, pp. 1–5, recorded by Kharkiv in 1929–1930.



Figure 1. Russian blind mendicant singers with a guide (Reproduced from Maslov 1905).

and-file members of the guild or fraternity. It was known only to the guildmasters and teachers, who memorized it by heart. Anyone that dared to reveal the secret content of the books was cursed, and the books contained special curses and imprecations expressly for that purpose.<sup>5</sup> The religious nature of the organizations of mendicant singers was also considered especially important. This was manifested in the mandatory training of those that wanted to perform religious songs and prayers, and in the mandatory assembly of all members on the feast-day of the local church, where the newly trained beggars were “blessed.” Furthermore, candles and other items for the church were purchased in part with money collected by the beggars. In some Slavic countries, the beggars’ fraternities and other such associations had patron saints. For example, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the well-known community of blind beggars in the town of

Bitola (at that time largely Bulgarian) regarded St. Peter, St. Nicholas, and the Prophet Elijah as their patron saints and invented a long rhapsody in their honor, in which they prompted listeners to give them alms (Chilev 1900: 876). Mendicant singers also often had certain religious duties. This was especially true in Belarus and Ukraine, where beggars worshipped their own icon in the local church, kept the lamp in front of it burning, cleaned the church, and so on (Gruzinsky 1891: 149–150). Furthermore, the loss of the religious nature of the *kobzar* and *lirnyk* guilds in Ukraine led to the disappearance of these icons. If, for example, a guild’s banner or other religious symbols kept in the local church were destroyed, the guild in question was most likely to fall apart and cease to exist (Cherems’ky 1999: 43).

## THE REPERTOIRE OF MENDICANT SINGERS

Wandering mendicant singers had different types of songs in their repertoire to suit different audiences, depending on the place and time of performance. Among the Slavs, these repertoires consisted mostly of epic songs and could be provisionally divided into three

<sup>5</sup> RF IFME, f. 8-4/338, recorded by Dniprovski.



groups of songs: historical-heroic epic songs, family songs and ballads, and religious and legendary epic songs. Religious and legendary epic songs were an essential part of the repertoire of wandering mendicant singers. They indicated the professional character of the singers, who could not practice their craft unless they knew those songs.

#### A COMPARISON WITH WANDERING MENDICANT SINGERS IN OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

In other European countries, the role of the wandering mendicant singer is similar. Itinerant street singers such as the *Platschierer* in Germany, Switzerland, and other German-speaking countries, the *ciego jacarero* in Spain, the blind *vielle* players in France, the blind street singers in Sicily, or singers playing the hurdy-gurdy in Britain also performed mostly religious songs. Those songs, however, were not in the style of “high” religious poetry, which consisted of versified vitae of saints disseminated by the church among the aristocracy. They were instead in the style of poetry close to that of the common people. Itinerant mendicant singers had organizations that were established in the vicinity of a monastery, as in the Slavic countries. For example, a brotherhood of poor blind men was founded in Madrid in 1614 under the patronage of the Calced Carmelite Monastery of Our Lady of the Visitation (*Nuestra Señora de la Visitación*)<sup>6</sup> and had statutes that were approved by the ecclesiastical judge. By virtue of their statutes and other court judgments, the members of the fraternity sold not only their own ballads, but also newspapers, calendars, almanacs, books of devotion, and printed edicts without permitting non-affiliated blind men to do so. As a distinguishing sign, the members of the brotherhood were to wear a medal, suspended from the neck, bearing an image of Our Lady. Some of them also had other duties, such as saying weekly or daily prayers (Kany 1932: 64–65). In the fourteenth century, the phenomenon of itinerant mendicant singers was also common in the German lands and was regarded as an occupation. There is evidence from the mid-thirteenth century of blind itinerant singers in Saxony that sang songs about Siegfried’s battle with the dragon (Lachmann 1833: 113). In his 1343–1349 vita of St. Nicholas, the writer Herman von Fritschelar notes: “I do not intend to tell you about the miracles [of St Nicholas]—they are painted on the walls and sung by the blind men in the streets” (Grimm 1829: 173). Another vita of Bishop Ljudger (*Vita Liudgeri*) mentions a blind singer from Friesland in Northern Germany called Bernlof, who was loved and respected by everyone for his singing. The vita notes that the bishop had cured his blindness and had thus won him over for the Christian faith. Instead of epic and heroic songs, the singer began to sing songs about Jesus Christ (Hammerich 1874: 223). The available evidence about these itinerant mendicant professional singers in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance shows that they were most often described as being

<sup>6</sup> For the Virgin Mary’s visitation to her cousin Elisabeth, who conceived late in life by God’s grace, see Luke 1: 39–56.

blind, although some of them were not such in reality. Because the majority of professional mendicant singers were blind, the term “blind street singers” gradually became a general term for all itinerant beggars that earned a living by singing. The contemporary British scholar Peter Burke also notes that in the early Modern Ages the term “blind street singers” was used more as a cliché than as a statement of fact (1981: 111). What those itinerant singers in western Europe had in common was their repertoire of religious and legendary songs with distinctly moral-didactic elements. According to a German legend, a true folk bard was someone that created and disseminated songs about Jesus Christ (Hammerich 1874: 223). This shows not only how the wandering mendicant singer was perceived, but also what role was assigned to him in the dissemination and preservation of the religious and legendary epic songs and ideas of Christianity among the common people.

### THE REPERTOIRE OF RELIGIOUS AND LEGENDARY SONGS

The religious and legendary songs that peasants in the different Slavic countries associated most closely with blind itinerant mendicant singers were rarely performed by other folk-singers. Most Slavic peoples had special names for these songs: the Bulgarians called them *prosechki*, *bozhii*, or *molebni pesni* (beggars', divine, or praying songs), the Serbs *slepačke* or *pretkućnice* ('songs that blind men sang in front of people's houses, pleading for alms') or *klanjalice* ('songs by which blind men prayed at religious festivals and fairs'), the Slovaks *pitačky* (from the verb *pýtať* 'to beg'), the Ukrainians, *zhebranki* (from the verb *zhebraty* 'to beg'), *zaplachki*, *zaproshnyts'ky zhali* (begging laments), and so on.

The religious songs of itinerant mendicant singers are based on motifs from the New or Old Testament, exempla of preachers, and vitae of Christian saints, hermits, or martyrs. A common theme that runs through a number of storylines and motifs is that of sin and punishment. Most of the songs in the repertoire of blind mendicant singers deal with problems concerning charity to the poor (the Gospel parable of the rich and the poor Lazarus), the Last Judgment, the fate of righteous and sinful souls in the world beyond, punishment of the rich (e.g., songs about Saint Peter's sinful mother), penitence and absolution of sins, the protective function of the Mother of God and her miracle-working icons, and heaven and hell. Some songs are based on apocryphal versions of the relevant Old Testament or New Testament story. Others, although they contain Christian concepts, they are treated with the devices of folklore, and are therefore “brought down to earth” and represented as stories about everyday life. One could say that the religious songs of the wandering mendicant singer, who usually came from the people of a lower social rank, are a “low” version of “high” Christian culture. In a number of cases, the mendicant singer songs were influenced by sermons of local or itinerant Catholic preachers, and especially by religious legends. In terms of function, some unquestionable similarities can be found between the itinerant preacher and the itinerant mendicant singer.

The main places for wandering blind mendicant singers' performances were the festivals and feasts honoring patron saints and other religious holidays. They also were led from house to house, singing religious and legendary songs and blessing the threshold of the house without going inside. They did this at strictly fixed times of the year—during Advent (the Christmas Fast) and Lent. During other times and at other places, mendicant singers could also perform other repertoires, mostly heroic epic songs.

## SEMANTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MENDICANT SINGER

By examining some folk songs, narratives, beliefs, customs, and ritual practices, one can learn how the itinerant mendicant singer was perceived by the common people. The main features



Figure 2. Bulgarian blind singer and *gadulka* player (Painting by Iliya Petrov, 1927).

include sacredness (mendicant singers were perceived as a human incarnation of a deity and associated with the cult of the dead), poverty (they were likened to Jesus Christ, who wandered around the earth to test people), mobility (they wandered mostly from secular to sacred places), liminality (they sang at the threshold of houses, on roads, and bridges, and at liminal times, such as fasts and rites of passage), and blindness (associated simultaneously with the world beyond and with death, on the one hand, and with the supreme, the divine, with wisdom and insight, on the other). It is because of their specific semantic characteristics that they were perceived in a specific way and performed specific functions in society. **F2**

## PERFORMANCE OF MENDICANT SINGERS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS AT RITES IN THE HUMAN LIFECYCLE

In the closed village patriarchal communities, which survived until later times among most of the Slavs, itinerant mendicant singers were perceived as people whose prayers reached God more directly. That is why peasants invited them to perform at important moments of the human lifecycle. Until the 1940s in Poland, for example, the blind mendicant singer was a desired guest at feasts celebrating the baptism of newborn children of rich families, especially those that had long been childless (Łuczowski 1986: 98). This was associated

with the belief that blind mendicant singers brought good fortune to children. The same belief inspired the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century custom of inviting mendicant singers to become godfathers of children of noble families (Dobrogost 1897: 866) or the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century practice of asking beggars to become godfathers of ailing children (Kuchowicz 1975: 183). Among the South and East Slavs, blind epic mendicant singers were preferred at weddings instead of other folksingers not only because of their higher professional skills and inspiration given to them by God, but also because it was believed that they were “people of God” and would bring good fortune to the newlyweds (Sheyn 1893: 570). Conversely, the punishment for refusing to accept a mendicant singer at the wedding was severe because it was believed that the curse of the beggar immediately took effect: the child born to the newlyweds would be blind.<sup>7</sup> In Polish villages until the first decades of the twentieth century, all weddings were invariably attended by the universally respected itinerant mendicant singer, the *dziad*; in some villages, he would even be invited to be best man at the wedding because he was believed to be closest to God, and would therefore bring good fortune to the godchildren (Biegeleisen 1927: 204–205).

Because of the notion of the sacredness of mendicant singers, on the one hand, and of their liminality and connection with the world of the dead on the other, they were also invited to perform at funeral rites. This practice was especially popular among the West and East Slavs. In eastern Slovakia, mostly women beggars were invited to perform the lamentation for the deceased in their home, on the way to the cemetery, and at the grave.<sup>8</sup> In some places mendicant singers performed during the transportation of the deceased to the cemetery. In the area around Krakow in Poland, for instance, the peasants would invite a mendicant singer to lead the funeral procession if the cemetery was far away, and not the village priest, who would have to be paid well. During the funeral procession the beggar performed songs that he had composed about the good and the bad deeds of the deceased.<sup>9</sup> A similar custom was also common until the end of the nineteenth century among the Roman Catholic population in the area around the town of Grodno (Sheyn 1893: 572). Among the Russians, since the time of Kievan Rus all funerals of noblemen were invariably attended by the *nishchenstvuyushchie brat'ya* (mendicant brothers), who accompanied the deceased, their benefactors, with special lamentations (Maslov 1905: 7).

In most Slavic countries, beggars regarded All Souls' Day as their holiday. In what was a universal custom, specially prepared bread or other ritual food was distributed at the graveside to the beggars that gathered there. The Serbs, for example, believed that giving

<sup>7</sup> Informant Iliya Georgiev Toshev, born 1923 in the village of Petrovo, Sandanski district; fourth-grade education; miner, mason, beekeeper, singer in the village church; former guide of blind mendicant singers. Recorded by Katya Mihaylova, 11 September 1987.

<sup>8</sup> ALU HR, No. A XCII/5-291, p. 3, recorded by Míča in 1978 in the village of Drienov, Šariš region.

<sup>9</sup> Thanks to Antoni Zola from the Department of Ethnomusicology and Hymnology at the Institute of Musicology of John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland for this information found during field research.

food and drink to beggars and other poor people at the graves of the dead on All Souls' Day represented giving food and drink to the dead that had risen from their graves to eat and drink (Stanković 1959: 136). Giving food and drink to beggars also acknowledged the special power of the prayer of beggars, which was believed to be more effective. The beggars knew prayers for various occasions, such as absolution of sins, healing physical disabilities, or protection from the evil eye. However, the main role assigned by peasants to beggars was to pray to God for the commemoration of the dead and the salvation of their souls. The attitude of Polish peasants towards beggars is best described by the sociologist Stefan Czarnowski:

*If they had a major request of God, peasants would give money to the priest to conduct a service, whereas if they had smaller wishes they would give a couple of coins to the beggar so that he or she would take their petition to God. Thus assigning their deeds to those that knew the way to God better than they did, peasants felt secure about themselves.* (Czarnowski 1956: 105)

In this sense, the function of the beggar was that of a mediator between heaven and earth, between God and man.

Wandering mendicant singers mostly performed this function at commemorative rites among the East and West Slavs. In a number of villages in Belarus, the mendicant singer replaced the priest. In villages in the Minsk Province, a mendicant singer invited at All Souls' Day would stand in front of the icon in the home and pray for each of the deceased whose names were told to him by the man or woman of the house. At the end, he would pronounce a commemorative prayer for all the deceased. On that day beggars went to all the houses in the village, but if they happened to miss someone's house they would be called back and begged to go inside because their prayers were believed to be beneficial (Sheyn 1893: 563). Peasants in the Mogilev Province also invited mendicant singers instead of priests to conduct (for a significantly smaller fee) commemorative services or Akathist hymns<sup>10</sup> for various occasions, such as blessing the cattle on 23 April. Peasants also said they preferred to invite a mendicant singer instead of the priest because they wanted their deceased relative to hear more comprehensible songs, which were more popular and better liked by the common people—songs called *zhalobnye stikhi* (lamenting poems) instead of the reading of the Psalter (Romanov 1890: 123). On All Souls' Day, blind singers performed religious songs at gravesites, for which they were rewarded much more generously than ordinary beggars, who prayed only for the souls of the dead. Peasants believed that “those that sing religious songs pray twice” (Łuczowski 1986: 99).

By participating in rites of passage that were important to the patriarchal community, mendicant singers performed the function of mediators, easing the passage from one state or social status to another.

<sup>10</sup> An Akathist hymn is a hymn of praise and thanksgiving dedicated to the Mother of God, Jesus Christ, or a saint, sung by the congregation while standing (from Greek *ἀκάθιστος* ‘not-sitting’).

## PERCEPTION OF MENDICANT SINGERS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS AT THE CALENDAR FEASTS OF THE RITUAL YEAR

In addition to the rites of passage in the human lifecycle, mendicant singers were also rewarded, having been assigned a specific function, at other rites and feasts of the ritual year. Most of these annual calendar feasts were connected with the cult of the dead and of ancestors. Beggars were perceived as “a personification of the ancestor” (Čajkanović 1973: 149). They were honored especially on Christmas Eve and at Easter. The Russians believed it was very important to give alms to the *nishchie brat'ya* on Good Friday. On that day in the Oryol Province, for example, blind mendicant singers went from house to house, saying a special prayer for the salvation of the souls from sins.<sup>11</sup> In the Polesie region of Poland, there was a custom of taking consecrated eggs to the graveyard on Easter and giving them to the beggars that went there on that day to pray for the dead.<sup>12</sup> The Serbs strictly observed the mandatory ritual practice of giving food and drink to the beggars on *Božić* (Christmas)

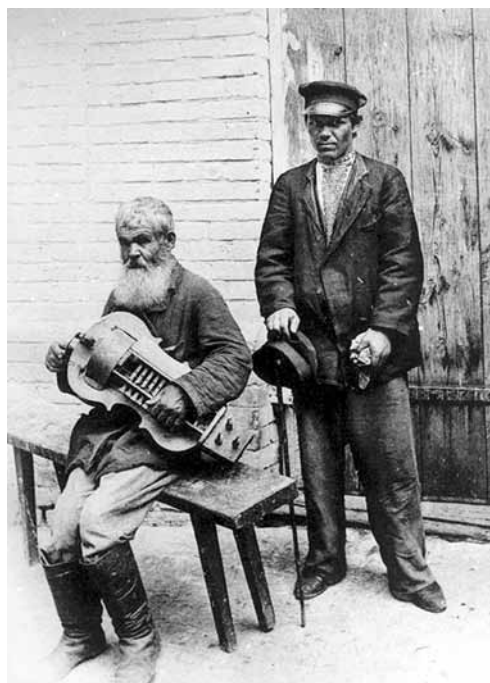


Figure 3. Ukrainian blind *lira* player with a guide in Kyiv in the early twentieth century.

and on the feast day of the patron saint of the family and the domestic hearth *Slava* (also known as *Krsno ime*), believing that on those days the soul of the dead was immediately present (Kulišić 1970: 40). In Bohemia and Slovakia, beggars received rich gifts on Maundy Thursday (*Zelený čtvrtok*, literally ‘green Thursday’), the Thursday before Good Thursday (Kratochvíl 1912: 350).

In addition to the feast days connected with the cult of the dead, beggars were also honored at other festivals of the ritual year. The main purpose of some ritual practices was to make a petition or express gratitude to God or a saint. Patriarchal peasants believed that success in their work or happiness in their personal lives largely depended on the observance of those practices on particular days of the religious calendar. For example, in Belarus itinerant mendicant singers, the *nishchie startsi*, were invited *u*

<sup>11</sup> AREM, f. 7, op. 1, d. No. 1081, pp. 3–4, Orlovsky uезд, Orlovskaya guberniya, recorded by Kostin in 1898.

<sup>12</sup> APAE, sygn. 9/28/VII, p. 87, informant Maria Zajączkowska, born 1921 in the village of Oborowo, Kossów Poleski district, recorded by Jankowska in 1970 in the village of Górczyca in the Lwówek Śląski district.

*besedu na Mikolsbchinu*, the feast held in spring and autumn in honor of Saint Nicholas to thank him for a good harvest or to appease him and ensure fertility. Beggars were given a place of honor at the festive table. Peasants set great store by their prayer on that day (Sheyn 1893: 563). In Russia on 8 May, the day of the John the Evangelist, special pies were made and given to beggars in order to ensure the fertility of the summer crops, whose sowing started on that day (Maksimov 1877: 121).

#### A COMPARISON BETWEEN WANDERING MENDICANT SINGERS AND RITUAL FIGURES AT THE RITES OF PASSAGE DURING FASTS

The time of fasting before Christmas and Easter, when mendicant singers went from house to house singing religious and legendary epic songs, is believed to be a time of passage at both the social and cosmic levels. It is a time when peasants perform rites of passage necessary for the socialization of young people and their passage into a new social status. This passage involves a journey, going from house to house and singing special songs for the occasion, performed by the following ritual figures: during Advent (the Christmas Fast), by *koledari* or Christmas performers among all Slavic peoples; and during Lent by *lazarki*<sup>13</sup> among the Bulgarians, *lazaritse* among the Serbs, *v'yunoshniki* among the Russians, *valachobniki* among the Belarusians, *dyngusiarze*, *śmigustnicy*, and *dziady śmigustne* among the Poles, and so on. Some of the songs sung by those ritual figures were also performed in similar versions by wandering mendicant singers. Entering into the ritual tradition of villages, the mendicant singers, as liminal figures, also performed a specific function in the life of the patriarchal community. Similar to the ritual figures during Advent (the Christmas Fast) and Lent, the itinerant mendicant singers were perceived as “foreign.” They were associated with foreign space, with the distant and the unknown and, at the same time, with the world beyond, the world of the dead and the ancestors. Unlike the *koledari* or *lazarki* who, by entering a home, underwent a transformation and passed into another status (from “foreign” into “own”), wandering mendicant singers remained on the boundary between the two worlds. They did not pass into another social status. The *koledari* and *lazarki* walked the path from Chaos to Cosmos, whereby they themselves passed from their old into their new status; in other words, they were active. Their path was a ritual path and a sign “of the social activity of the ethnic community” (Kraev 1988: 27). The path of mendicant singers is not a path of the ritually and socially active; it is a path of passive observers, of carriers of the eternal divine truths and of ancestral memory, a path of mediators easing the ritual figures’ passage into a new status.

<sup>13</sup> *Lazarki* are performers of the old Bulgarian folk custom of *lazarwane* on Saint Lazarus’ Day (the day before Palm Sunday), when girls in bridal costume go around the village houses, dancing and singing songs for love, marriage, health, and prosperity.

The young male *koledari* were carriers of the male warrior element, of the heroic. Coming from the “underworld,” as Bulgarian *koledari* songs, they had to overcome a number of obstacles along their way.<sup>14</sup> Like the ritual figures in other initiation rites, they even had to undergo temporary death in order—through the enacted passage into the otherworld of dead ancestors—to acquire experience and knowledge necessary for initiation into the community of adults and of full-fledged members of society. In the case of mendicant singers, the situation is the opposite: they were not in the active position of young warriors seeking the knowledge of the ancestors and of God, but were in the passive position of elders, of carriers of the knowledge that had to be transmitted to the still unsocialized young men or women. Beggars were associated with God, who had descended to earth, or with ancestors that had come from the world beyond. This is why they were perceived as carriers of the wisdom, knowledge, and experience of the elders. This is also why honoring and listening to their prayers and songs during Advent (the Christmas Fast) and Lent became a guarantee



Figure 4. The Ukrainian blind *bandura* player Anatoly Us in the Kyiv Metro in the late twentieth century. The sign in front of him reads: ‘Help the blind folk *kobzar*’. (Photo: K. Mihaylova, 1999)

of successful preparation of young people for their passage into the world of adults. In other words, one may say that whereas the *koledari* and *lazarki* ritual figures were active and temporary mediators between the foreign and the own, mendicant singers were passive and permanent mediators for the village patriarchal community.

The different social roles of the *koledari*, *lazarki* and other ritual figures, on the one hand, and the mendicant singers that went from house to house during Advent (the Christmas Fast) and Lent, on the other, is also evident from the dominant motifs in their songs. Regardless of the Christianization of some motifs upon the inclusion of heroic epic songs into the Christmas cycle, the heroic element is dominant in the *koledari* songs of the South Slavs. What is dominant in the *lazarki* songs, in the *valachobnyya*, *v'yunosnyye* and similar ritual songs in the spring cycle among the other Slavs, is the life-affirming element, joy at the victory of the life-giving forces of reborn nature over winter and death. The

<sup>14</sup> AIF, no. 182, p. 75, No. 38, recorded by Katya Mihaylova in Sofia, 24 July 1980.



beggars' songs performed during fasts are entirely religious and moral in character, with strongly pronounced moralizing and social elements. Mostly among the South and East Slavs, there are some songs that were performed both by *koledari* or *lazarki* and by mendicant singers. The dominant motif in the common versions of the songs in the repertoire of these ritual figures and of mendicant singers is the motif of the fate of the righteous and of sinners in the world beyond death.

## CONCLUSION

The wandering mendicant singers performed a specific moral function during the Slavic ritual year, a function that was very important for the value-orientation of young people participating in initiation rites. They performed this function not only with regard to the young but also with regard to the other members of the village community because of the broader meaning and significance of initiation rites in the social life of the entire patriarchal community. By participating in the rites of the human lifecycle and of the annual calendar cycle that were important for the patriarchal community, these singers helped the community make sense of its present life, affirming the moral norms of the collective consciousness and building the morality and value systems of its individuals.

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ALU HR = Archív literatúry a umenia, Oddelenie hudobných rukopisov Slovenskej národnej knižnice. Martin.

APAE = Archiwum Polskiego Atlasu Etnograficznego. Wrocław.

AREM = Arkhiv Rossijskogo Etnograficheskogo Muzeja (Etnograficheskoe byuro knyaza V. N. Tenisheva). Sankt Peterburg.

RF IMFE = Naukovi arkhivni fondy rukopysiv i fonozapysiv Instytutu mystetstvoznavstva, fol'klorystyki ta etnologii im. M. T. Ril'skogo Natsional'noi akademii nauk Ukrainy. Kyiv.

### POTUJOČI SLEPI BERAŠKI PEVEC IN SLOVANSKO OBREDNO LETO

*Potujoči berač, slepi beraški pevec je bil poseben tip poklicnega epskega pevca, a ne le zato, ker se je preživljal s petjem. Med Slovani je bil ta tip pevcev, navadno slepih že ob rojstvu ali kasneje oslepelih, izučen v posebnih združenjih tipa obrtnih cehov, kjer so se od starejšega pevca v zameno za plačilo naučili pesemskih repertoarjev in priprošnjih molitev. Ti neformalni cehi so bili religiozne narave, nastajali pa so v bližini samostanov. Tourstne povezave so preživele do poznega devetnajstega oziroma zgodnjega dvajsetega stoletja. Imeli so posebne smernice delovanja, skupne navade in načine vedenja, lasten praznik, zavetnika in hierarhijo, skupne dolžnosti članov, skupen denarni fond, skrivni jezik, skrivne znake in podobno. Primerjamo jih lahko s podobnimi združenji slepih uličnih pevcev v drugih evropskih državah.*

*Bistvenega pomena za repertoar potujočih pevcev so bile religiozne in legendarne pesmi. Bile so obvezen del šolanja, saj so določale profesionalni karakter tega tipa pevcev, ki brez poznavanja tourstnih pesmi niso mogli opravljati svoje obrti. Nabožne pesmi beračev temeljijo na motivih iz nove ali stare zaveze, eksemplov pridigarjev in življenjepisov krščanskih svetnikov, puščavnikov ali mučencev. Skupna tema, ki jo najdemo v številnih zgodbah in motivih, se nanaša na greh in kazen; kot celota so te pesmi moralno didaktične.*

*Ljudske pesmi, pripovedi, prepričanja, navade in obredne prakse nam dajo slutiti, kako so preprosti ljudje sprejemali potujoče pevce. Njihove bistvene poteze vključujejo sakralnost, revščino, mobilnost, liminalnost, slepoto itn.*

*V zaprtih vaških patriarhalnih skupnostih so beraške pevce sprejemali kot nekakšne »božje ljudi«, saj naj bi njihove molitve Boga dosegle bolj neposredno. Vabili so jih ob pomembnih trenutkih življenjskega cikla – ob obredjih prehoda pri rojstvu, poroki, pogrebu in spominskih slovesnostih.*

*Avtorica razišče funkcije, ki so jih imeli beraški pevci ob nekaterih praznikih v ritualnem letu. Večina teh koledarskih praznikov je bila povezana s kultom prednikov. Beračem so vsi Slovani izkazovali čast zlasti na sveti večer in ob veliki noči. Glavni namen obrednih praks, ki so vključevale beraške pevce ob naštetih in tudi nekaterih drugih praznikih, je bil izraziti prošnjo ali hvaležnost do Boga ali svetnika. Kmetje so verjeli, da sta uspeh pri delu oziroma sreča v osebnem življenju v veliki meri odvisna od izvajanja teh šeg ob določenih dneh verskega koledarja.*

*Glavne priložnosti za petje slepih pevcev so bili prazniki in gostije v čast zavetnika lokalne cerkve. Prav tako so ob spremljavi vodnika hodili od hiše do hiše, prepevali religiozne in legendarne epske pesmi ter blagoslavljali ob vhodu v hišo, ne da bi vstopili. To so počeli ob točno določenem času: v adventu (božičnem postu) in postnem času.*

*Članek temelji na terenski raziskavi, ki jo je avtorica izvedla v različnih slovanskih deželah, s pomočjo arhivskih virov in materialov, izdanih v redkih knjigah in periodiki od začetka devetnajstega do sredine dvajsetega stoletja.*

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# THE FESTIVAL DEDICATED TO THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE VISION OF AGIA PELAGIA AND OTHER RITUALS

EVY JOHANNE HÅLAND

*The local festival dedicated to the Anniversary of the Vision of Agia (Saint) Pelagia or Osia (Venerable, Blessed, Saint)<sup>1</sup> Pelagia is celebrated on the Greek island of Tinos and is dedicated to one of the most recent Orthodox saints, Saint Pelagia, a nun that was sanctified in 1971. After the great Greek War of Liberation (1821) broke out, the pious nun Pelagia had several mystical visions that lead to the discovery of the miraculous icon of the Annunciation.*

*Keywords: Greece, history, legends, memory, myth, religious festivals*

*Lokalni festival, namenjen obletnici Videnja agie (svetnice) ali osie (častite, blažene, svetnice) Pelagije, praznujejo na grškem otoku Tinosu in je posvečen eni najnovejših pravoslavnih svetnic, leta 1971 za sveto razglašeno redovnico Agio Pelagijo. Po izbruhu grške osvobodilne vojne (1821) je imela pobožna redovnica Pelagija več mističnih videnj, ki so vodila v odkritje čudežne ikone Oznanjenja.*

*Ključne besede: Grčija, zgodovina, legende, spomin, mit, verski prazniki*

In 1823, after several mystical visions by a pious nun named Pelagia (Figure 1), the miraculous holy icon of the Annunciation (Grk. *Euangelismos*) of the *Panagia (Megalochari, i.e. Blessed Virgin)* was found. According to tradition, the nun Pelagia had repeated visions of the Mother of the God, Panagia, who ordered her to inform the elders to start excavations in order to find her icon, buried many years earlier in an uncultivated field, and to build her “house” (i.e., her church) at that place. On 30 January 1823, the icon, said to be the work of Agios (Saint) Luke, was unearthed in the field where it had remained for about 850 years, since a church built on the ruins of the pagan temple of Dionysos was destroyed

<sup>1</sup> The transliteration of Greek follows the rules of the Nordic Library, Athens, but when quoting from a published text another style may be used because there are several different ways of transliterating Greek texts. Strictly speaking, Pelagia is not an *Agia* ‘saint’ but *Osia* ‘venerable, blessed’. Her official name is *Pelagias os.* (i.e., *Osia*) *en Tēnos*, thus distinguishing her from another Saint Pelagia within the Orthodox church from whom she took her name, and who is celebrated on 4 May. One of my male informants from Tinos, one of the chorus members at Annunciation Church, stresses that Pelagia of Tinos is not a saint like Saint Nicholas, for example, because miracles are not attributed to her. According to one of my other informants, a young female scholar from Thessaloniki, there are two kinds of saints, or rather two levels—*Agia* (f.) / *Agios* (m.) and *Osia* (f.) / *Osios* (m.), for ceremonial reasons. She further explains that *Osia/Osios* is the designation for a person that has participated in something of religious importance, but miracles are never attributed to this person. The difference is also seen in the liturgy because the liturgy performed for an *Osia/Osios* is much shorter than the liturgy performed for an *Agia/Agios*. They both emphasize that Pelagia is an *Osia*, which means that she is “further down” within the hierarchical structure of saints. This might also be the reason that she is not found on all lists of saints in Greece. The nuns I have been talking with in the convent where she lived, however, regard her as an *Agia*, as do also most ordinary people on the island, particularly the women. Furthermore, some of her icons refer to her as an *Agia* (i.e., *Ē Agia Pelagia Ē en Tēnō*), as I also do in this study.



Figure 1. Painting illustrating Agia Pelagia receiving the vision on the Aegean island of Tinos. (Photo by E.J. Håland)

and burned down by the Saracens in the tenth century AD. Two years before the icon was found, the great Greek War of Liberation (1821) broke out. The discovery of the icon, the construction of the Church of Panagia Evangelistria, the enormous crowds of pilgrims, and all the miracles worked by the icon, contributed to the island being declared sacred by a government decree in 1971. Pelagia was also sanctified. In addition to the thousands of pilgrims that come to Tinos on their own, several pilgrimages are organized by representatives of the Orthodox Church, such as in Athens or Larissa, particularly in connection with the most important festival on 15 August.

Below the main church on Tinos are several cave-shaped chapels, one of which is dedicated to the Life-Giving Spring. Rituals connected with water are important here, as in all Greek churches. The legend continues, stating that the first excavations on Tinos brought to light the ruins of the foundations of the Byzantine church, first and foremost a deep but dry well. Some months later, in 1823, the cornerstone of the church dedicated to the Life-Giving Spring was laid. Later, the icon was found approximately two meters from the well. After the icon was found, it was decided to build a large church above the church dedicated to the Life-Giving Spring. Thus, the chapel or church dedicated to the Life-Giving Spring, which is designed like a cave, is located below Annunciation Church.

As already mentioned, the mouth of a well was found during the excavations made during the search for the icon, but the well was completely dry and useless. On the day the church cornerstone was laid, however, the formerly dry well was filled to the brim with water.

The spring is seen as a miracle, and according to tradition it is one of the most important miracles of the Panagia of Tinos. Since the discovery of water in this well, pilgrims have regarded it as sacred water. Accordingly, small or large bottles of this precious water are taken home by pilgrims from all over the world, and they keep it at home as a talisman. They also take some soil from the hole where the miraculous icon was found. Everyone on Tinos knows the legend and the most famous miracles worked by the holy icon by heart, and they recount them to newcomers. The pilgrims, however, are also informed by reading a printed pamphlet distributed by the church.<sup>2</sup>

The pamphlet, written by E. A. Foskolos and first published in 1968, is titled *Description of the Finding of the Miraculous Holy Icon of the Annunciation on Tinos in the year 1823: Goals and Activities of the Holy Institution, The Panhellenic Shrine of Our Lady of the Annunciation of Tinos: History, Miracles, Activities*.<sup>3</sup> In the shorter English version of the pamphlet from 2004, in section 2, “The Holy Virgin’s Message to the People in Visions to a Pious Nun” we can read:

*During the year 1822, a Nun named Pelaghia was visited by vision of the Holy Virgin. In the visions, she was ordered by the Blessed Mother to go to the Town of Tenos and inform the elders that it was Her wish that excavations be made to find Her Holy Icon. The holy Virgin gave Pelaghia a description of the exact location in an uncultivated field where they would find the Icon which lay buried since the destruction of the Ancient Church. After retrieving it from the ground, a Church was to be built to honor the Holy Virgin and to house Her Icon.*

*Pelaghia at first hesitated to speak of the visions, and assumed that people would not believe her. However, she was overwhelmed with the knowledge that she, a simple but religious mortal, had been chosen by Divine Grace to make this wondrous announcement to the people of Tenos.*

*Pelaghia went to Tenos and informed the Bishop of Tenos about her Divine Visions. The Bishop, a wise, prudent and pious man, who was fully aware of the virtue and holiness of Pelaghia, believed the words of the Nun. The Bishop was reminded of the narration of an older resident of the town who, a few years prior to this joyous news had also expressed the Holy Virgin’s desire that her Holy Icon be found. The Bishop knew that throughout Christian History, God had revealed his Divine Will through visions to pious persons. Deeply moved, the Bishop gave his blessing to the Chosen Nun and ordered the ringing of all church bells to rally the people of Tenos. With faith in his heart, the Bishop informed the populace about the visions of Pelaghia and*

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Foskolos (1996). Karita (no date) gives a substantially longer description in the book about the life of Pelagia.

<sup>3</sup> It is republished annually in Greek, and since 1991 shorter versions have also been translated into English, French, and German. The latest English translation is from 2009.

*expressed his belief that the Blessed Virgin's wish was that the Sacred Icon be found.* (cf. Foskolos, 2004: 6–7, translated by Theodora D. Silvestros)

The next section (part 3) outlines the preliminary excavations that brought to light the ruins of the foundations of the ancient church and the dry well, but no icon. Accordingly, people's enthusiasm diminished, and the excavations stopped. Following a cholera epidemic believed to be the punishment from the Virgin for stopping the excavations, these were resumed, and finally the icon was unearthed, as outlined in section 4: "Discovery of the Holy Icon" (Foskolos, 2004: 7–9).

During the festival calendar on Tinos, the greatest shrine of Greek Orthodoxy, the miraculous icon has its own ritual year, and the annual festive cycle on Tinos starts on 30 January with the festival dedicated to the finding of the icon, when the event is ritually re-enacted. The next festival is dedicated to the Day of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary. This day has both a religious and a national ideological significance because 25 March is celebrated as Independence Day. 23 July is dedicated to the Vision of Saint Pelagia. The most important festival, the Dormition of the Panagia, is celebrated on 15 August, along with Armed Forces Day.

Official processions carrying the icon in their midst are important parts of the festivals. Popular customs also relate to the importance of fetching holy water and soil as well as other symbols with a long tradition in Greek religions.<sup>4</sup>

### 23 JULY: ANNIVERSARY OF THE VISION OF AGIA PELAGIA

The third important festival on Tinos is dedicated to one of the most recent Orthodox saints, the aforementioned Saint Pelagia. Her Vision is celebrated on 23 July. During this local festival, the ritual connection between the Kekhrovouno Convent, where she lived, and Annunciation Church in the village of Tinos (the main township on the island), is marked by a procession with the miraculous icon (Figure 5).

On the eve of the festival, a liturgy is celebrated in Annunciation Church in the town of Tinos, which is crowded by the islanders, and all those coming home to Tinos for their summer vacations. The icon of Pelagia is decorated with flowers and burning candles, and plays a main role during the liturgy together with the miraculous icon of the Annunciation. Pelagia also has a chapel dedicated to her below the main church. Her icon is placed in front of the stones from earlier sanctuaries that were removed when the miraculous icon was unearthed. Although Annunciation Church wanted to have her bones when they were

<sup>4</sup> Since 1983, I have had several periods of fieldwork in the Mediterranean, mainly in Greece and Italy where I have also been conducting research on religious festivals since 1987 (cf. Håland 2007a). Since 1990 I have also carried out extensive fieldwork on Tinos, and I witnessed the festival dedicated to the Dormition of the Panagia in 1990, annually in the period from 1993 to 1998 and from 2004 to 2011. I attended the festivals dedicated to Pelagia's Vision in 2005 and 2011, and the following account is mainly based on my fieldwork.



disinterred three years after her death (as is the general rule within the Orthodox Church), her relics (i.e., her head) are still in the Kekhrovouno Convent, where she had her visions in 1822 (Kardamitsē 1992; Karita no date).

Early the next morning, headed by the church musicians, the miraculous icon is carried in a procession accompanied with the nuns of the convent and islanders to the harbor and carried by taxi to the Kekhrovouno Convent, dedicated to the Dormition of the Panagia, where it remains all day. A mass is celebrated, followed by a lunch “served by the abbess” (according to the program for the festival in 2005) to all the participants, the most significant visitors receiving the most elaborate meals. In 2011, however, the lunch was more meager, officially due to the severe economic crises in Greece. Most people stay at the convent all day, taking the opportunity to visit the cell of Saint Pelagia and see her humble belongings and her ascetic bed. Three years after her death, when she was disinterred, the nuns hid her remains because they did not want them to be buried outside of the convent. Later, her head was found buried in a chapel dedicated to John the Baptist. After lunch several women perform their own liturgy in this church, when a group of women join in singing hymns to Pelagia in front of the iconostasis where they found her skull. Today, her holy head is seen in her church next to her cell, where a liturgy is celebrated in the afternoon. In connection with Pelagia, there is also a death cult in connection with the holy head of Pelagia, which resides in an ornate stand near the main entrance of her church, and through the glass top of the stand the dome of her skull can be seen. To the right of the stand is another stand displaying the visiting icon. In general, pilgrims pay the same devotion to her head as to the miraculous icon of the Annunciation, touching the glass top with similar votive offerings or objects they want to make holy, such as cotton, flowers, green leaves, candles, blessed bread, or cloth. Particularly during the festival, flower buds from the wreath of flowers decorating the stand are considered to be effective amulets after being crossed three times over her head.

Later, during a nine-kilometer procession that takes several hours and consists of the clergy and many faithful, the holy icon is returned to Annunciation Church in the town of Tinos. When departing from the convent church, at the beginning of the procession the icon is carried by the abbess followed by another nun. However, the second carrier shares this duty with a male layperson, who also holds the icon. Later during the procession, the nuns are required to hand the icon over to male priests. It is interesting to note that when handing over the icon soon after leaving the convent, the abbess is very reluctant to do this, and says several times that they want to have the icon remain in the convent longer. Thus, there is a parallel to their unwillingness to hand over the remains of Pelagia and later the skull when it finally was found; that is, a conflict between the female convent and the male church in the town. Arriving in the town of Tinos late at night, the icon and the entire procession are welcomed by fireworks, torches, and the horns of ships and buses. The miraculous icon is returned to the church after sermons and speeches at a podium by the waterfront, thus closing this very picturesque local festival dedicated to the Vision.

## MYSTICAL VISIONS

The most famous mystical visions in Greece are connected with the Tinos legend. Within Orthodox belief, however, one often learns about someone that sees a saint in his or her sleep demanding that the faithful do various things—for example, to find a buried icon needing to be liberated. Among the *Anastenarides* (i.e., those who celebrate the Anastenaria festival), for example, dreams and visions are important in connection with finding or making icons:<sup>5</sup> Among the Anastenarides, there is a particular relationship between the owner of the icon and the icon itself because the owner's family descends from the person that originally found or decided to make the icon, often after a dream in which the saint ordered the dreamer to make the icon. According to the tradition, “someone sees in a dream where to find an icon,” or a person “sees in a dream that we have to make an icon.” Mystical visions by devout persons and finding buried icons are in fact common features in the Orthodox Church, in both early and modern times, and the legends are often recounted in different ways based on who recounts the actual legend. This is particularly illustrated by my experience from the Acropolis caves in Athens.<sup>6</sup> The story from Tinos has similarities to the Athenian Acropolis cave dedicated to Our Lady of the Cavern (Grk. *Panagia Crysoepēliōtissa*). This involves an analogous account to the one told on Tinos.

According to the legend behind the cult dedicated to Our Lady of the Golden Cavern in the Acropolis cave in Athens, an icon helped the Athenians save the city against the assault of the Goths: Roxanne, the daughter of a pagan medical doctor, dreamed of the Panagia, who asked her “to set her free; she was imprisoned.” In other words, her icon was buried here. After three dreams, she asked the other Christians to go along with her, and she dug and found the icon. Then the Panagia appeared to her in a vision. She promised to help Roxanne liberate Athens. When Alaric came, he wanted to destroy the city. However, a light appeared before them, Alaric saw the Panagia on the city wall, and Alaric departed. According to the legend, he left because he was a Christian and believed in the Panagia. Many of the pagan Athenians interpreted the miracle in their own way, and they thought that the protecting city goddess on the Acropolis, Athena, had appeared on the city wall. The miracle happened in August AD 395 and therefore 15 August is celebrated here in commemoration of the miracle.<sup>7</sup> The legend was published in an Athenian newspaper in 1989. I have discussed the problematic dating of this newspaper article elsewhere (Håland 2007b). It was shown to me in two of the Athenian Acropolis caves (i.e., churches dating from the fifth or sixth century) where I have conducted fieldwork. The article is framed and glazed, and one of my informants told that

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Håland (2007a, chapter 4); see also Håland (2008) for a shorter version and Danforth (1989: 173, cf. 136 ff., chapter 1). The following account also draws on these references.

<sup>6</sup> See Håland (2007b) for a presentation of the two caves.

<sup>7</sup> In this instance another meaning is thus added to the celebration of 15 August, the Dormition of the Panagia.

he had hung it up. He did not remember exactly when and where the article was published, only that he found (i.e., read) it “some years ago,” “the year I was on Tinos during the Panagia” (i.e., 15 August 1989). So, I asked him when and where the article had been published because as a researcher I have to produce documents in support of the information I give, but the discouraging answer he gave was “I don’t remember where I found it, only that it is some years old.” I determined that he was on Tinos on 15 August 1989.

The article describes the legend behind the cult dedicated to Our Lady of the Cavern in this particular cave. In addition to the aforementioned problematic dating of the article, however, there is also the particular interpretation my Athenian informants put into the article because they recount the legend in their own way: “At the beginning of Christianity there was a miraculous icon in this cave. It was painted by Saint Luke the Evangelist during Mary’s lifetime.” My informants are eager to stress the relation between the pagans and the Christians and to emphasize the magical power of the icon.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, they also say that the icon was brought to the cave when people that did not believe in Christianity were present. The article does not say anything about that, but it tells how the icon helped the Athenians save the city from the Goths (cf. Håland 2007b).

Among all the Orthodox icons, icons depicting the Panagia are most venerated, and the cult has been important since the early Byzantine period, when, according to legend, she revealed herself carrying a sword on the walls of Constantinople and Athens and saved her cities. Since then, the vision of the PanagiaVirgin has accompanied the Greek armed forces in the same way as the ancient goddess Athena. The victory belongs to the Panagia as the commander-in-chief. This is not only recounted in oral literature and by informants, but also illustrated in many popular paintings in Greek culture (Mazarakēs-Ainian 1987).

Athena on the city wall is a common motif in ancient myths about periods of war; for example, when the inhabitants of Troy dreamed that Athena was participating in the fight (Plut. *Luc.* 10.3). Paralleling several stories telling about fighting women—goddesses included—participating in battles, one encounters the armed virgin that protects her territory in the modern and ancient worlds.<sup>9</sup>

Divine intervention by way of a light appearing before the invaders has many ancient parallels; for example the cloud of dust and song from the pilgrims’ procession to Eleusis, the omen of Persian disaster in connection with the battle at Salamis (Hdt. 8.65, 8.84), the snow-storm in the war between the democrats and the Thirty Tyrants (Xen. *Hell.* 2.4, 14 f.; Diod. 14.32, 2 f.), and the story of the Jewish exodus from Egypt (Clem. Al. *Strom.* 1.24, 163, 1–3).

Dreams and the subsequent finding of an icon or divine appearances have traditionally been a common-cause connection in Greece during periods of conflict such as rebellions, the fight for liberation from Turkish rule, and other stories from more recent times when

<sup>8</sup> It is also said that today the icon can be found in the church dedicated to the Panagia Crysospēliōtissa, in the neighborhood of Omonia Square. They also call it *Eirinē* ‘peace’ or “Sleep” (i.e. ‘Death’).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Mazarakēs-Ainian (1987, plates 4, 11, 13, 48) and Seremetakis (1991: 237 ff.; modern material: Panagia/women) with Xen. *An.* 3.2, 11 f. (Artemis). See also Håland (2007a, chapter 6) for further references.



Figure 2. Panagia's active participation in the Graeco-Italian war of 1940, is illustrated in several pictures from the period. Courtesy National Historical museum, Athens.

the nation has been threatened. This mix of politics and religion is particularly manifested in posters announcing the Dormition festival on Tinos today, thus reflecting Byzantine manifestations as well as paintings and newspapers from the war period. It may, for example, be illustrated by a painting of a battleground filled with soldiers during the Greco-Italian war in 1940 and 1941. The Panagia and the child are hovering in the clouds above, accompanied by angels, one of which carries a Greek flag.<sup>10</sup> According to some, the church on Tinos also dedicated the entire collection of votive offerings to assist the Allies during the Second World War, thus paralleling the Panagia's active participation as illustrated in several pictures from the period (Figure 2).<sup>11</sup>

In the popular summer festival of Agios Charalampos (Saint Charalampos) in the village of Agia Paraskeuē on the island of Lesbos, we also meet the coupling of "Greekness" and Orthodoxy, through the concept that the Greek War of Liberation had divine sanction because, according to the local legend, the saint appeared on Mount Tauros/Taurus (i.e., the mountain of the bull) before the war of liberation broke out. Since this miraculous appearance, the festival has been celebrated annually.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Mazarakēs-Ainian (1987, plate 11; see also plates 4, 13, 48).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Mazarakēs-Ainian (1987).

This festival is based on the following legend which is told by all villagers to visitors arriving at Agia Paraskeuē: During the period of the Turkish occupation, a farmer from Agia Paraskeuē named Malomytēs lost his ox. While searching for it, he entered the headquarters of a Turkish bandit, who attempted to kill him. However, every time he was about to pull the trigger, his human victim vanished in front of his eyes. The Turk attributed this miracle to Agios Charalampos, who was venerated in the area. He left his cover, and approached the Christian, gave him back his ox, which he had stolen, and told him to light a candle to the saint because he had saved him. Malomytēs, deeply disturbed, returned to his village and told the village elders of the miracle. Carrying the saint's icon, the priest and the elders set off to mountain Tauros. Shortly afterwards the Turks, having seen the lights lit by the Christians, arrived in an angry mood. However, they accepted the explanation they were given, gave permission for a service to be performed, and told the elders to come every year to honor their saint, without fear.<sup>12</sup> This story recounts the main elements of the legend that I was told by my informants when I visited the village in 1992. The same story was told by the staff at the local council house and by the organizers of the festival. The main factors are also found in the various written versions of the legend. The most extensive is recorded by Christopha D. Chatzēgiannē in a pamphlet from 1969. In vernacular language, and after a paragraph introducing the village with particular focus on the history of the ploughmen's guild founded in 1774, and specifically protected by Saint Charalampos, he describes the legend under the title "The Miracle of the Bull":

*East of the village, we find a great end extensive pine-forest, the Tsamliki. . . . At the northeastern part of this forest, . . . at the slope of mountain Tauros, in the middle of the pines, above a spring, is a small chapel dedicated to Agios Charalampos. Through the forest one can see the sea and the coast of Asia Minor (i.e., Turkey) on the other side. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the chapel was more or less demolished. . . . No liturgies were celebrated because the Turks were terrorizing people. The place acted as a refuge for a Turkish robber that used to plunder the area. People from the village of Agia Paraskeuē didn't carry any weapons. In this place, a miracle occurred that became the starting point for the festival celebrated at Tauros, according to the official tradition.*

*One day, a farmer (i.e., a ploughman) from Agia Paraskeuē named Malomytēs lost his ox. While searching for the animal, he entered the place called Tsamliki, the area of Tauros which in those days was untrodden by a Christian foot. The bull, however, was not to be seen. In despair he passed by the spring and came to a clearing, where he could see more. And there, a tall monk with a long white beard appeared in front of him. "Your ox is there," he said, and pointed towards the small chapel. Malomytēs turned and*

<sup>12</sup> The story most likely indicates that this is an example of a shared saint; cf. Cuffel (2005).

*wanted to ask who he was and where he came from. The monk vanished. He called again, but didn't see anyone. He made the sign of the cross. Behind the fence, he saw the small chapel of Agios Charalampos and understood that the monk was a divine vision, that he was the saint. Seized by terror and trembling, he kneeled down to pay devotion to the saint. He looked around, feeling only solitude and did not see any bull. Malomytēs, having calmed down, went two steps further down towards the spring to rinse the sweat and cool his mouth. But when he bent over the spring, his eyes fell on the Turkish bandit with his pistol in his hand, right opposite the small chapel. When the Turk met his eyes, he cried out: "come here." Malomytēs, frightened, with a dry throat, approached the bandit. "What are you looking for here?" asked the Turk. He told about the animal he had lost. "I have your bull," said the bandit, "come here and I will return it, and pay devotion to the saint that is worshipped by the poor. I tried to kill you three times, when you were on your knees, but every time you vanished in front of my eyes, and I attribute this to your saint. So, take your ox and go back to your village. But come back here and celebrate your saint that saved you."*

The next passage describes the founding of the festival and the problems with the Turks at the beginning and again at the end of the nineteenth century (i.e., in 1897, in connection with the Greco-Turkish war). Chatzēgiannē also recounts further miracles, or signs from the saint connected with establishing the celebration. According to another local writer, Christos Paraskeuaidē (1991: 136) the festival at Tauros goes back to the Turkish period and the miracle Agios Charalampos performed when the farmer from Agia Paraskeuē, Malomytēs, lost his bull. After having searched for his bull for several days, he came to Tauros, where the Turkish bandit had his headquarters near a small chapel dedicated to Agios Charalampos. The rest of the story is the same as told by other sources: the bandit tried to kill Malomytēs three times, but every time the farmer vanished in front of his very eyes, and the Turk ascribed the miracle to the saint. Malomytēs, his friends, and a priest came back to the mountain one Sunday to celebrate a liturgy in the chapel. Since then, the festival has been celebrated annually at the mountain. Alternatively, the following story is told: During the Turkish occupation, a Turk stole a bull. Each time he tried to kill it, a bright light shone in his eyes, until eventually he gave the bull back. This version is related to the belief that the saint is incarnated in a bull (cf. also Aikaterinidēs 1979).

According to the legend, the festival dedicated to Ag. Charalampos has been celebrated since the Turkish period, as described in the pamphlet (Chatzēgiannē 1969) that is presented to interested visitors at the office of the organizing committee, the modern version of the ploughmen's guild, whose protector is Ag. Charalampos. Both the date and legend about the Turkish bandit might be seen as a statement in the struggle against the Turks. It has also been suggested (Makistou 1970: 63) that the festival may be traced back to the ancient Greek period but was abandoned early during Turkish rule. This is difficult to prove, however, because

different rituals that constitute the festival are also found in other places in the northeastern Aegean. Because the festival thus resumes after the appearance of the saint around the beginning of the struggle against the Turks, there is a parallel to other supernatural signs during the same period; for example, finding icons or the appearance of divine persons.

Although the legend about Ag. Charalampos is traced back to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the bibliography about the festival was produced in the twentieth century, and there are many similarities between my own observations and the actual documentation.<sup>13</sup>

## COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES

During the festival dedicated to Agios Charalampos an important ritual is the sacrifice of a bull (Figure 11), which is consumed as a communal meal known as *kesketsi*. The bull is dedicated by an emigrant. He represents a group of people that always return home to the village during the annual festival of the saint. This is why there is no fixed date for celebrating the festival, just that it is always celebrated around the grain harvest. In 1992 it was postponed until the school terms had finished in South Africa, where a large contingent from the village has settled. In this festival dedicated to a deceased Christian saint, horses and horse races are important elements, particularly for adolescents, and the festival concludes with a large communal meal that the entire village participates in. The various participants at the feast often have entirely different purposes for participating in the festivities. The feast is a popular gathering where all the activities that are performed renew and confirm networks that constitute village solidarity. This is particularly illustrated by the local farmers' union that organizes the festival dedicated to their patron saint. Rather than being an invention of tradition (cf. Hobsbawm & Ranger 1994), the festival thus becomes a "conservation" of tradition because coming home to the village is coming back home to security and safety, carrying out the same rituals as one's parents and grandparents. The same fact is illustrated in the festival on Tinos because the Vision of Saint Pelagia is a local festival when people from Tinos living in Athens, the U.S., or around the Mediterranean come home for their summer vacations by the end of the threshing month.<sup>14</sup> The festival expresses the relationship within the human world by emphasizing solidarity and symbolizes the relationship with local "ancestors," as the builders of the church, whose tombs are located on the east side of the main church in the courtyard, and in particular the nun that had the vision. Although this article has not focused on the main festival on Tinos

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Håland (2007a, Figures 79, 82, and 85 from 1992), Paraskeuaïdē (1991: 85, Figure 1, and 97, Figure 1 from 1929), Makistou (1970, Figures 64, 67, 69, 71, and 73 from 1969), Aikaterinidēs (1979, plate 1 from 1969 and 1973), Kakouri (1965: 67; she visited the festival in 1964). See also Håland (2007a, chapter 4) for the bibliography of the festival.

<sup>14</sup> The traditional names for June and July, *Theristēs* 'reaper, harvester' and *Alōnarēs* 'thresher', reflect these activities.

celebrated on 15 August, it is worth mentioning that 15 August is important concerning the remembrance of specific events for people generally, as illustrated when one of my informants, the aforementioned young Athenian, says: “Some years ago . . . the year I was on Tinos during the Panagia” (i.e., 15 August 1989), thus illustrating the importance of 15 August in general for the Greek people, because the actual dating was given in a quite different context during fieldwork in the Acropolis caves in Athens.

According to the introductory words written in the pamphlet in Agia Paraskeuē (Chatzēgiannē 1969), the intention behind founding the farmers’ union (i.e., the ploughmen’s guild) was to develop the village, and so they were starting a civilizing process by the end of the Turkish period. On the other hand, several of the elements of the festival have a very long tradition within modern and ancient Greek religion and may be traced back to the ancient Greek period, particularly the ceremonial blood sacrifice, the collective banquet, horse races, and divine appearances in periods of crises. These elements are also important features within modern Greek culture in general and very often belong to legends told in connection with religious festivals. As seen in connection with the sanctuary on Tinos and the Acropolis cave, divine appearances in periods of crises in particular are very often the necessary causes for starting the celebration of a festival, such as the commemoration of the miracle performed by Agios Charalampos at Tauros. In the modern era, these appearances are generally linked to the liberation from Turkish rule. Another important feature is the contest (Grk. *agōn*), which is not only demonstrated by the horse races. These factors are important within modern Greek culture; however, their ancient parallels illustrate the traditional importance of the aspects in the geographical area, and their significance for the construction and maintenance of collective identities.<sup>15</sup>

#### SOME NOTES ON HISTORY, MEMORY, MYTH, AND RE-PRESENTING THE PAST IN THE GREEK CONTEXT

Ancient myths did not begin as fiction; they originally transmitted real information about real events and observations, sometimes preserving information for millennia within non-literate societies. People have been literate for so long that they have forgotten how myths encode reality. By accepting the idea that ancient myths are a quite reasonable way to convey important messages orally over many generations, one may restore some of the lost history and teaching about human storytelling such as the Barbers (2004) have convincingly done, by way of recent studies of how the human brain works applied to data from the ancient world.

In earlier scholarship, history was considered synonymous with rapid changes, but now it is realized that stability is no less historical than change and that it is as important

<sup>15</sup> That the same factors are used in the construction of collective identities all over the Balkan and Mediterranean areas is another topic that I cannot discuss here, despite its importance; see, however, Håland (2007a, chapter 2).



to explain stability as change. According to the historian Fernand Braudel, a single society may have different dimensions of time (Braudel 1969: 41–83), and it is particularly *la longue durée*, connected with his view of the ecological unity of the Mediterranean (Braudel 1990), that is relevant for the material encountered in the Greek context in connection with religious rituals. Because man is prisoner of the climate and the vegetation, it is difficult to escape certain geographical frames and limits of productivity as well as spiritual constraints or mentalities. Therefore, it is important to take account of the history of the infrastructure, the nearly “non-moving history,” which everything gravitates around (Braudel 1969: 51–54).

Braudel’s *la longue durée* corresponds to the second and third of Klaus Roth’s categories: linear time, cyclical time, and dreamtime or frozen time (cf. Roth 1994: 159–176). The cyclical perception of time is characterized 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. In Greece, a cyclical perception of time and the perspective of frozen time are still prominent. Even if modern Greece is a country that increasingly depends on tourism, these factors are still important because the farmer mentality does not change easily. For example, this is illustrated by the agricultural calendar, which is also synonymous with the ritual calendar, because the church calendar is added to or built upon the first—that is, the order of nature (cf. Håland 2005, 2007a). In addition, past stages in the development of Greek culture are unusually accessible. The Mediterranean area generally, and Greece particularly, offer a unique opportunity to follow questions of continuity and change over very long spans of time directly and not conjecturally because there is a long literate and archaeological tradition that may be combined with the results of empirical fieldwork.

When carrying out fieldwork on religious festivals in contemporary Greece, one learns that continuity and change, the concept and notion of history, and uses of the past are important in several connections concerning the official versus popular worldview and male versus female; they might interact but also diverge. This has to do with the gendered times and values in Greece.

A festival is very often an excellent occasion to study the relation between the female and male world (i.e. the differences between female and male values),<sup>16</sup> illustrating the various identities and statuses displayed in the festival. This is illustrated, for example, by the women performing their own liturgy during the Vision festival when singing hymns to Pelagia. A similar ritual is performed during the Dormition festival, although, according to representatives from the official male church, “this is not religion.” The ritual continues anyway, and many women prefer joining in here and do not attend the official male liturgy. Thus, when the formal liturgy has finished, many women join in singing hymns to the Panagia in front of the iconostasis (the church icon screen). In fact, many of the female pilgrims, particularly younger ones, do not enter the church until the priests have finished

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Håland (2007a). The following is further developed in Håland (2012).

their liturgy.<sup>17</sup> Many local women also go to the church carrying chairs and other items with them to spend the night in the church. On the other hand, both men and women tell about dreams and visions in connection with their pilgrimages to Tinos, and the Vision festival is an important part of the entire church. Therefore, I want to emphasize that, as always when trying to classify different parts or categories, the two opposing worlds and value-systems, the female and male, are nevertheless both complementary and interdependent.

Is the Greek nation's identity a male identity, as opposed to a female, domestic identity? Partly yes, partly no. Yes, because the Greek nation and its identity belong to a male, linear history according to an analysis based on Julia Kristeva and Jill Dubisch's distinction between two kinds of time, female and male time, which I have developed into female and male values.<sup>18</sup> According to Kristeva men's time is linear time: time as project, teleology, linear and perspective unfolding: time as departure, progression, and arrival, in other words, the time of history. In contrast, women's time is, on the one hand, repetitive (i.e., cyclical) and, on the other hand, beyond time in its ordinary sense. It is eternal (i.e., monumental) time. Kristeva also states that the most recent development of the maternal cult is demonstrated by the body of the Virgin Mother because her body does not die, but moves from one spatiality to another within the same time via Dormition according to the Orthodox faith or via Assumption according to the Catholics. Female time is cyclical and monumental, characterized by repetition and eternity (Kristeva 1986: 191).

On the other hand, there is also a combination of a linear, male history and a cyclical and monumental female history characterized by repetition and eternity because the Panagia announced the resurrection of Greekness to the nun in 1822. Hence, the Panagia is the first and most important saint of the new Greek nation-state. In many ways, she represents Greece, and might be seen as embodying Greece in her eternal aspect. Although embedded in history, the Panagia represents the never-dying spirit of nationhood (unearthed in a field), as contrasted to a specific political entity (the current state of Greece) existing in limited and delimited historical time. The account of finding the icon and building the church also represents women's time because the female miracles and visions are embedded in men's historical time.<sup>19</sup> The Panagia represents the domestic realm, but she also stands as a national and local political representation beyond the domestic realm.<sup>20</sup>

When conversing with Greek informants, one learns that they do not necessarily always think, or "see," in a "European historical linear" way, but have their own history, which is

<sup>17</sup> Many female pilgrims also stay at their hotels or rooms until the official liturgy has finished, such as Dēmetra (who comes on her pilgrimage every year from Peloponnesos), who asked me whether the priests had finished yet, so she could go up (i.e., to the church). Most people say that they go "to the Panagia" (as(because she resides in the icon); that is, not "to the church.")

<sup>18</sup> Håland (2007a), Kristeva (1986: 187–213), Dubisch (1991: 1–26).

<sup>19</sup> This does not mean that history only is represented by linear time. History is also characterized by stability and might also be cyclical, as in agricultural societies; cf. Håland (2007a, chapter 2, 2005) and Braudel (1969: 41–83). See also above.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Dubisch (1991, 1995).

very often local. It might be illustrated by social memory linked to a particular holy place, such as natural landscapes where miracles have occurred and are likely to happen again. It concerns different forms of both conceptions of time and history, as encountered in a Greek society versus northern European researchers (i.e., Eurocentric versus Greek perspectives), which ultimately also affects the interpretation of ancient sources and Europe versus various parts of the world in the current age of globalization.

By presenting the festival and rituals, it is seen that they represent gendered and official versus popular values. When working with Greek cultural history, different conceptions of time and thereby notions of history are encountered. These views are gendered, but they also relate to “us” versus “them,” or the Eurocentric linear time versus cyclical time in the Braudelian sense met in Greek peasant society, a time that also is related to religious rituals. This is due to the importance of the Greek agricultural calendar and its annual festivals. One also encounters mythical time (or dreamtime or frozen time), which in the European context is particularly present in the Balkans. The implication of these factors for a Western, Eurocentric analysis of history and ritual are central and important for feminist concerns with escaping the limitations of male-centered temporality, but also when one wants to examine how the Greeks consider their own history because Greek informants do not necessarily have the same historical categories or worldview as a northwestern European, as seen when analyzing the local history of the Greek pilgrimage site on Tinos. During and particularly after the all-night-service (Grk. *olonychtia*) between 14 and 15 August, many pilgrims are eager to see whether the Panagia will appear at the bell tower (Figure 3); some, particularly



Figure 3. People looking towards the bell tower, 14 August, Tinos. (Photo: E.J. Håland)

women, also have a vision. Some years ago, for example, a woman outside the church started screaming and exclaiming in fear and happiness simultaneously. At once, inside the church, another woman informed her husband: “She sees the Panagia.”

Many of the pilgrims coming to Tinos are fulfilling a vow given after having a dream in which the Panagia has ordered them to go to Tinos, bringing with them particular offerings in exchange for a cure. Before leaving for Tinos, a mother may say: “Save my child, my Panagia, and I will crawl on my knees, all the way to your icon.” One of my informants on Tinos, an Athenian woman in her fifties, said (in 2007) that her left leg was healed on 7 August 2000 after the Panagia appeared in a dream and demanded that she go to Tinos and light a candle. Since then, she has gone to Tinos annually during the Dormition. On a later occasion she told me that an additional reason for the annual pilgrimage is that, although she has a degree in mathematics, she was unemployed for a long time, but the Panagia answered her prayers and the annual pilgrimage also became an offering of gratitude after finding a job. Greek history connected with popular religiosity thus becomes beyond time, and a parallel both to the cyclical time related to religious rituals and “frozen” history, whereas Eurocentric history becomes linear. In other words, one sees the consequences of the three notions of history and time encountered in the Greek context illustrating societies that have their own internal logic.

Greek festivals show the interplay or combination of Eurocentric, male, linear history, such as the general description of the Greek revolution of 1821, versus Greek, cyclical, or female time, which has been regarded as history versus myth because women’s time often contains miracles and visions, forces generally excluded from official Eurocentric male history, but which nevertheless are important in the Greek context. To Western views of causality and of human nature, it may not be so remarkable that the icon on Tinos should be buried in the ruins of a church, nor that a dry well, once excavated, might be unblocked and begin to flow again. Nor is it odd that in the difficult early days of the Greek War of Independence both priests and populace would be looking for reassurance and hope. On the other hand, this is not the view encountered when talking with people on Tinos, who believe in this as well as the other miracles connected with finding the icon and the subsequent history of the sanctuary, and this has to do with Greece’s particular and ambiguous position as both “us” and “them”—that is, its double set of identities, ancient and Byzantine, connected with the “Romeic” or inward-facing and “Hellenic” or outward-facing traditions. (Cf. Herzfeld 1986, 1992; Dubisch 1995; Håland 2007a). In many festivals, for example on Tinos, the festival dedicated to the Dormition of the Panagia is celebrated on 15 August along with Armed Forces Day.

On Armed Forces Day, one encounters a nationalist ideology conforming to Western ideology concerning nation building, while at the same time and in connection with the pilgrimage during the Dormition of the Panagia, one encounters another ideology that represents the “Greek Romeic thesis” (i.e., the inward-facing identity), the Romeic image of Greece, an identity that echoes the Byzantine Empire and hence the Orthodox Christian tradition to which the overwhelming majority of Greeks still adhere. This Romeic (or inside)

tradition often gains victory over the Hellenic one, and in general the Romeic tradition is protected against Europeans and other Western people. The inward-facing identity is not placed at the disposal of foreigners, as the Greeks do with their common Ancient heritage, which is outward-directed. On Tinos, for example, foreigners may be most interested in the official festival and the elements illustrating nationalism, such as the military escort, the detachment of sailors in the procession, and warships at the harbor, whereas the Greeks are most occupied with carrying out the important rituals such as venerating the icon, which is also passed over them during the procession, and fetching water and earth, rituals connected with deep-seated values, lasting mentalities that have a very long tradition within Greek culture. In fact, the Romeic tradition may have more in common with the ancient world than the Hellenic one, although the Hellenic tradition is better known in Western tradition (see also Håland (2007a, 2007b).

The study of official versus popular religious practices, illustrated by different historical perspectives and conceptions of time, in which dreams and visions are important, has significance because it offers a fuller understanding of religious life in the Mediterranean and indeed of religious culture as a whole than if one only studied official ideological statements. In this way, it is also seen how many parallels there are within the region instead of only focusing on differences.

Certain cultural patterns and social values are found in the same geographical area. There are, of course, many local differences within the Mediterranean area, but the point is that certain cultural patterns, such as the death-cult, recur across the many ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups from Portugal in the west to Iraq in the east. The death-cult is particularly illustrated by the importance of shared saints, such as Agios Charalampos (cf. also Cuffel 2005; Håland 2004). Also important are focal symbols such as icons, water, and earth, and their significance in connection with festivals and life-cycle passages (Håland 2005, 2007a, 2007b). As already stated, icons depicting the Panagia are most venerated among all the Orthodox icons, and her icons are not only important in the Greek context, but also in North Africa, for example, where weeping or sweating icons, particularly the Panagia's, are considered to be important messages for the faithful because the icons may tell the faithful to do various things. I have not come across weeping icons in the Greek context, but the Byzantine specialist Maria Vassilaki (2003) has carried out an interesting comparison between a bleeding icon in the modern Greek context i.e. the Panagia Kardiotissa in Agios Nektarios' Church at Kipoupolis of Peristeri, a suburb northwest of Athens, which was reported in March 2001 to have started bleeding from the neck) and Byzantine sources. The icon of Panagia Kardiotissa was reported to have stopped bleeding on 2 July 2001, and to have cured several people, among others a woman with cancer (Vassilaki 2003: 123). The weeping icons and saints that visit various faithful in their dreams parallel ancient gods and goddesses helping people in fights, such as in the *Iliad* (20), and also visiting them in dreams or disguised as different persons, such as the relation between Athena, disguised as Mentor (*Od.* 2.401, 24.548), and her favorite, Odysseus and his son.

The Greek material therefore has comparative parallels throughout the Mediterranean in both time and space, and my particular study can become part of a larger study.

The importance of the Romeic tradition is not only illustrated when comparing modern, particularly popular, and ancient rituals, but also from a comparative civilizational perspective. As Victor Turner (1991) has illustrated based on examples from Mexico, similar elements are found in the Greek context concerning the ritual process in connection with natural phenomena such as mountains, caves, and springs and one can see how new religions have adapted to older beliefs, often in connection with a native person (Indian or Greek) having a vision in a cave, simultaneous with the beginning of a national struggle for independence. (That is, in official religion one sees a mix of Christianity and the liberation movement adapted to older pre-Christian religions.) In this way, people use old symbols in new political settings just as they also did in the Byzantine period, for example, and most probably also earlier when “adapting” prehistoric “natural” religions to the Olympian pantheon.

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## PRAZNIK, POSVEČEN PRIKAZOVANJU SVETI (AGIA) ALI BLAŽENI (OSIA) PELAGIJI IN DRUGI RITUALI

*Lokalni festival, namenjen obletnici videnja svete (agia) ali blažene (osia) Pelagije, praznujejo na grškem otoku Tinosu in je posvečen eni najnovejših pravoslavnih svetnic, redovnici Pelagiji, leta 1971 razglašeno za svetnico. Po izbruhu grške osvobodilne vojne (1821) je imela pobožna redovnica Pelagija več mističnih videnj, ki so vodila v odkritje čudežne ikone Oznanjenja. Po izročilu se je Pelagiji v videnjih večkrat prikazala Devica Marija (Panagia), ki ji je naročila, naj začne kopati, da bo našla njeno ikono.*

*Leta 1823 so ikono izkopal na polju, kjer je ležala okrog 850 let. »Pelagijino Videnje« praznujejo vsako leto 23. julija. V času festivala ima poseben pomen izpostavitve njene lobanje ob njeni celici v samostanu Kekhrovouno.*

*Na podlagi predstavitve tega praznika in nekaterih drugih pomembnejših ritualov iz Grčije, kjer je avtorica raziskovala na terenu, članek obravnava nekatere vidike zgodovine, spomina, mita ali načinov re-prezentacije preteklosti v grškem kontekstu.*

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# THE TRANSFORMATION OF MODERN GREEK CALENDAR CUSTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH FIRE: TRADITION AND CONTEMPORANEITY

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SVETLANA SIDNEVA

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*This article addresses some Greek traditions associated with fire: pirovasiya (fire-walking, which is also performed in some other regions of the Balkans; for example, in Bulgaria), the burning of Judas, and the fires burned during the Shrovetide carnival in Ioannina. The sources of the study were fieldwork and material from tourism sites describing regional customs and traditions.*

Keywords: *calendar customs, fire, Modern Greek, traditional culture.*

*Članek obravnava nekatere grške tradicije, povezane z ognjem: pirovasiya (hoja po žerjavici, ki jo izvajajo tudi v nekaterih drugih balkanskih regijah, na primer v Bolgariji), zažiganje Juda ter prižiganje kresov v pustnem času na Ioannini. Študija temelji na terenskem delu in na materialu, zbranim na turističnih straneh, ki opisujejo regionalne šege in tradicije.*

Ključne besede: *koledarski rituali, ogenj, moderno grško, tradicionalna kultura.*

In recent times, modern societies have been taking an increasing interest in traditional culture. This stems from the desire to determine national identity, which turns out to be an extremely challenging task in this era of globalization and leveling of cultural differences. At the same time, the “performance” component of some rites is utilized for commercial purposes. As a result, the original meaning and spirit of the rites change and are reinterpreted. In some instances, this is so much the case that it leads to modern myth-making and contamination by different cultural traditions that were originally divorced from each other.

The rituals that use fire are the most “profitable” or “fruitful” from this point of view. Initially, for traditional culture, fire was an integral part of many rituals associated with any festival. To name just a few, these included burning effigies and sacred plants during the Shrovetide carnival, the Yule log, and St. John’s and May fires. In this case, fire was regarded as a sacred object, the source of heat and light. Fire could also be a mediator between people and the other world (e.g., the customs of burning ritual food for the dead, sacrifice in a fire, etc.). Fire also had healing and purification functions. Fire could be perceived as a destructive element that must be treated with respect (e.g., all sorts of prohibitions: no foul language in front of a fire, not stamping it out, not putting it out, etc.).

Thus, for traditional culture, the performance aspect of fire rituals was initially secondary. Now the situation has changed.

This study examines some Greek traditions associated with fire: *pirovasiya* (fire-walking, which is also performed in some other regions of the Balkans; for example, in Bulgaria), the burning of Judas, and the fires burned during the Shrovetide carnival in Ioannina. The sources of the study were fieldwork and material from tourism sites describing regional customs and traditions.

*Pyrovasiya*, or fire-walking, as part of *anastenaria* exists mainly in the region of Serres in the village of Ayia Eleni and some other villages of northern Greece: Melike, Langadas, and Makrolefke. The practice was originally dedicated to the festivals of the patron saint of the village, St. Helen (20–23 May), and was strictly connected with the church calendar. In folk tradition, there are several legends that tell about the origin of the wonderful ability of *pyrovates* ('fire-walkers') to walk unharmed on hot coals. The main motif of these legends is saving icons from a burning church and granting the wonderful gift of walking on fire to the rescuers. Some informants that tell legends may add a "historical" connotation to its original interpretation. They might say, for example, that the church was set on fire by the Turks. The action may be located in the informant's village. In the "classic" version of the legend, St. Constantine's Church in the village of Kotsi caught fire in the year 1250. The villagers heard the icons groaning and went into the church to rescue them. Their descendants moved to Langadas (in northern Greece) in the 1900s, taking the icons and the tradition of fire-walking with them. However, there are oral or online print versions of the legend in which the story of the year 1250 is set in Langadas.

Traditionally, the rite was performed as follows. On the eve of the festival, those intending to participate gathered at a place called *kontaki*, where they put the icons of Sts. Helen and Constantine and musical instruments and bells to be used during the ceremony. The participants spent the night of 20 May with prayer and music and entered into a trance. Sometimes an animal (a young black bull) was offered as a sacrifice. On 21 May the first walk was performed on the coals left after the bonfire kindled the day before.

Currently, there are cases of deviation from tradition, or academic reflections on the rite. Because many researchers trace the festival to the Dionysian cults that existed in Thrace, sometimes *pyrovasiya* is used in performances that are not connected with Christian tradition and that exploit the legacy of antiquity, as evidenced by such notices:

*The pyrovasias event was held in the Eleusis region (19 Jan. 2009). The day began with a tour of the sanctuary of Eleusis and continued in private (kindly given by one of the pyrovaton) with preparing the pyrovasias event. The organizers of the event were members of the non-profit company "Garden – Mythical Greek Daily," who took care of lighting and fueling the pyre and the hospitality and dinner offered to the participants. It was preceded by a recitation of Orphic hymns to the deities Hestia, Hygieia, Demeter, and Dionysus. Watch the video, set in an exhilarating climate, accompanied by the sounds of drums and shouts of "Io Bacchae"; most of the attendees briefly abandoned reason and turned to the path of the heart. They took the path of fire, eliminating illness and death, showing how everyone has a Dionysus Zagreus inside himself that can freely convert to Dionysus. (Pylē Iasōnos 2009)*

It should be noted that in this case the calendar loses its meaning; the dates shift. The date 19 January does not coincide with the day honoring Sts. Helen and Constantine and cannot be explained by the ancient pagan tradition of the Eleusinian mysteries. It is known

that the ancient ritual of Demeter and her daughter, when the hymns dedicated to the goddesses and to Dionysus and Triptolemos (according the Orphic tradition) were sung, was held in February or in September.

Something in the *anastenaria* becomes a performance for the tourists. Such a festival may be held at any time, regardless of the ritual calendar, although the Greeks seek to follow the tradition. The program from the site “Anastenaria-tours” is typical:

*The anastenaria take place yearly on May 21 and last for 3 days at the towns of Lagkada - Thessaloniki, Agia Eleni - Serres, Meliki - Verria and Mavrolefki - Drama. Every year the following land tours are organized to watch the tradition: ... a 3 days tour to the region of Serres, visiting the lake of Kerkini, watching the “anastenaria” celebrations at the village of “Agia Eleni” near the town of Serres and visiting Vergina on the day of return to Athens. Departure from Athens on May 20 and return on May 22. (The Anastenaria fire walking ritual of Greece)*

In this case, one of the purposes of the tour may be to become acquainted with the tradition and its survival. In Bulgaria, *anastenaria* may be presented as a “tavern-show” on any day. Some tourist sites write about the healing power of *anastenaria*, present the “anastenaria-tours” as a “health promotion program,” and try to involve tourists in participating not only as spectators but as real actors. It seems strange, taking into consideration the fact that traditionally only a select group had the ability to walk unharmed on hot coals, but the potential clients of a travel agency that proposes “anastenaria-tours” may read the scientific explanation of the phenomena and even the instructions (in this case partly “occult”) on how to attain the required condition for fire-walking.

There are curious cases of mixing absolutely diverse traditions. The term *anastenaria* becomes, as it were, a common noun, a synonym for any kind of fire-walking. On one of the Russian sites, for example, there a headline “Nestinarstvo in India” or “Hindu-nestinar walks on fire” (Amen Ra 2011). The creators of another tourism site assert that the *nestinaries* are descendants of Indian yogis! It is worth noting that the etymology of the term remains controversial. Some researchers presume that the word is derived from *neštinar* or *ištinar* ‘sage person’, ‘who knows’ or from the Greek word *estia* ‘fire’ or *nestia* ‘fast’. Popular belief claims that the term is derived from the Greek verb *anastenazo* ‘moan, groan’. This reflects a kind of cultural heritage dispute between Bulgaria and Greece. However, there are cases in which the Greeks and Bulgarians hold a joint celebration. Clearly, in this case the ritual is illustrative in nature and initiated by the cultural centers, and not by a closed community in which “knowledge” or the “gift” is hereditary, as it was earlier:

*This year the cultural center of the village of Brontivo, Bulgaria hosted the events of the custom in Ayia Eleni Serres for the first time. (Omogeneia 2008)*

In northern Greece, there is also another ritual associated with fire, which is held during the Shrovetide carnival. In Ioannina the people kindle fires called *dzamales*, *dzores*, or *dzorabines*. They stack logs and demolish various objects in a particular place, from which they

kindle a bonfire after sunset. Sometimes there is a real competition between city districts or even between schools to see who will make the biggest fire. People dance and sing around the fire. The fire's name, *dzamala*, is rather interesting and controversial. In fact, it has become the name of the participants in the rite, which had no direct relation to fire. The ritual was held in autumn and repeated during the winter carnival. It was a ritual to ensure crop fertility (a producing rite) or crop safety (an apotropaic rite). During the ceremony, the death and resurrection of a man, a god, or a totem animal was played out and at a deeper level this imitated the death and resurrection of plants. The rite was called *Dzamala* ('camel'). It may be dedicated to the Feast of St. Demetrius (October 26). St. Demetrius was linked by popular etymology to grain (*dimitriaka*). In Greek archives and research publications, there are many descriptions of the ritual. The main idea was a masquerade. The participants in the celebration put on sheepskins and bells and danced. Sometimes they built a kind of wooden skeleton (frame) and covered it with skins. Four young men hid themselves under this construction and moved the "camel" (Εγκυκλοπαίδεια 2008; Kakouri 1965; Λεκάκης 2009; Μέγας 1992). According to another version of the celebration, a man dressed as a woman was called *Dzamala*. Other participants called *dzamaldes* danced with "her" and this created a situation of rivalry. One "fan" of *Dzamala* "killed" the other, beating him with a branch. *Dzamala* mourned the hapless suitor. When the "killer" approached the "dead" man to "take off his skin" (literally "tear" it off), he was immediately resurrected. Women gave grains of wheat to the performers (Μέγας 1992). During the Shrovetide carnival, a similar ritual game was performed, but sometimes it could



Figure 1. Ritual fire »dzamala«, Shrovetide, Ioannina 2010. (Photo: S. Sidneva)

have a different name; for example, *Kalogeroi* ('monks'). For the "murder" the participants used a cornel tree branch. Then the two players of the game were harnessed to a plow and had to go around the square. Fire was not necessarily present in the ceremony, especially during the autumn rite. Later there was a mixture of the two rites: the Shrovetide fire and *Dzamala*. The etymology of the fires, as mentioned above, is controversial. A more obvious etymology is the origin of the word from the Arabic word for 'camel', although the Greeks give other explanations of the word, even taking it back to ancient Greek *damala* 'log'. This idea is questionable, taking into consideration the use of zoomorphic costumes by the participants and burning of the symbolic image of a camel in some regions, although now the traditional zoomorphic costumes are no longer in use (Figure 1). The people wear mass-produced carnival costumes such as devils, angels, wizards, and so on. Sometimes the central fire is set up with the assistance of the municipal services and the advertising and the invitations are published on websites. In this case, the celebration may be reconstructed more "accurately" according to archival data and research publications.

The ritual calendar may assume a political-historical meaning. On websites describing the festivals one can find the idea that they helped to unite the Greeks during the Turkish conquest, as something reminiscent of an ancient Thracian ritual and thus a more ancient history.

Another interesting custom is timed at Easter: the burning of Judas. As a rule, it is held on Holy Saturday. The young men bring logs, branches, and trash to the main square of the village, construct an effigy symbolizing Judas, and light a large fire. The festival is especially popular on the island of Crete, where an interesting story about Judas is recorded. According to this story, the prophet Nathan prophesied to the pregnant mother of Judas that her child would become a great fire and burn the world (Στρυβακτάκης 1999). The U.S. State Department's *Religious Freedom* report called the ritual politically incorrect due to a mistranslation of the term: the burning of the Jews instead of the burning of Judas. The head of the Greek Orthodox Church had to defend the practice, saying that the ritual had to do only with Judas, who betrayed Christ. Another interesting case is the burning of Angela Merkel's effigy. This shows the influence of history and politics on the calendar. One can trace the stages of rethinking tradition. The Christianization of the ceremony made Judas the main character instead of the pagan incarnation of winter. The German chancellor took the place of Judas as the personification of the "new evil" that must be overcome.

There are some curious modern "beliefs" associated with fire. These include bans on the use of gas burners or other "modern" means of kindling a fire, or otherwise the fire will not be "true." The fire is also not considered "true" if it is produced by firecrackers or flares. In the ritual it is important to use real wood. However another tradition in conjunction with a historical event contradicts these beliefs. Its location is the town of Vrontados on the island of Chios (etymologically connected with the rite because *vronti* means 'thunder'). Many tourism sites describe an unusual celebration of Easter, during which the people launch rockets from the roofs of two churches (St. Mark's and the Red Madonna), trying

to hit the bell tower of the opposing church. This is a relatively new custom. It appeared in the nineteenth century. The Greek sailors used real guns (cannons) to fight off pirates and to celebrate Easter. When the island was occupied by the Ottomans, the conquerors prohibited the use of guns. So the ship owners replaced the confiscated cannons with rockets. It was a kind of political and religious protest. The Greeks did not want to neglect their tradition. Today, this tradition emphasizes the importance of the spectacular aspects of fire rituals. Travel agencies use it to attract more tourists (CarniFest 2012). However, an interesting fact is worth noting. Now, the participants in the event give the rockets the names of ancient or medieval epic heroes: Achilles, Digenis, and so on. It shows various aspects of Greek national identity, and the connection with ancient and Byzantine heritage, and with ancient myths and folk epic. For the participants, the *rouketopolemos* ‘rocket war’ becomes something like a sports event, a competition between two “teams” representing two churches. The winner is the one that hits the opposing bell tower more often. There are even “fans” among the parishioners, who may place bets.

In conclusion, many rituals using the “cleansing” power of fire are alive in modern times, thanks to its spectacular nature. As in ancient times, this is a reason for association and communication between people. Considered as a way to return to basics, but endowed with new meanings, some rites lose touch with the calendar cycle. There is contamination of cultures, and a mixture of academic and traditional folk motifs.

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## TRANSFORMACIJA MODERNIH GRŠKIH KOLEDARSKIH ŠEG, POVEZANIH Z OGNJEM. TRADICIJA IN SODOBNOST

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*V sodobni komunikaciji se pojavlja več grških šeg, povezanih z ognjem, npr. hoja po žerjavici, ki se tradicionalno izvaja v nekaterih severnogrških krajih na dan svetega Konstantina in Helene; velikonočna šega zažiganja Jude; kresovi svetega Janeza in drugi.*

*Vsi ti obredi so zanimivi, saj ustvarjajo nova besedila z nenavadno zmešnjavo različnih kulturnih tradicij, mešanico znanstvenih in ljudskih motivov, posebno v razlagi »zdravilne moči ognja«.*

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