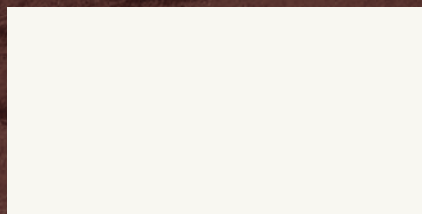


The articles in the volume present in an extended way most of the talks given at the 8th Annual Conference of SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year, which took place in Plovdiv in late June 2012. Participants coming from three continents took part in the event – Bulgarian researchers were major part of the group but there were also numerous guests from the USA, Great Britain, France, Norway, The Netherlands, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, Kosovo, Romania, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Russia, Greece, and Israel. The texts we offer to the attention of the reading audience provide a range of faces and places with which the authors make us meet as well as various analytical zooms which help incorporating the private, individual, and unique in national, regional and global processes and trends. The research area is extremely wide and picturesque ranging from North and South America through all Europe to Middle East, Ural, and Siberia.

ISSN 2228-1347



THE RITUAL YEAR 8 MIGRATIONS

THE RITUAL YEAR 8 MIGRATIONS

Edited by
Dobrinka Parusheva and Lina Gergova



THE RITUAL YEAR 8
MIGRATIONS



Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies
with Ethnographic Museum
at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
—
SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year

THE RITUAL YEAR 8
MIGRATIONS

Edited by
Dobrinka Parusheva and Lina Gergova

Sofia • 2014

THE RITUAL YEAR 8 MIGRATIONS

The Yearbook of the SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year

Sofia, IEFSEM-BAS, 2014

Peer reviewed articles based on the presentations of the conference in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, 26-29 June 2012

General Editor: Emily Lyle

Editors for this issue: Dobrinka Parusheva and Lina Gergova

Language editors: Jenny Butler, Molly Carter, Cozette Griffin-Kremer, John Helsloot, Emily Lyle, Neill Martin, Nancy McEntire, David Stanley, Elizabeth Warner

Design and layout: Yana Gergova

Advisory board:

Maria Teresa Agozzino, Marion Bowman, Jenny Butler, Molly Carter, Kinga Gáspár, Evy Håland, Aado Lintrop, Neill Martin, Lina Midholm, Tatiana Minniyakhmetova, David Stanley, Elizabeth Warner

The Yearbook is established in 2011 by merging former periodicals dedicated to the study of the Ritual Year: Proceedings of the (5 volumes in 2005–2011).

Published by the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

ISSN 2228-1347

- © Authors
- © Dobrinka Parusheva & Lina Gergova, editors
- © Yana Gergova, design and layout
- © SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year
- © IEFSEM-BAS

CONTENTS

Foreword	9
THE SEED-STORE OF THE YEAR	
<i>Emily Lyle</i>	15
MODERN SPORTS AWARDS CEREMONIES – A GENEALOGICAL ANALYSIS	
<i>Grigor Har. Grigorov</i>	27
THE RITUAL OF CHANGE IN A REMOTE AREA: CONTEMPORARY ARTS AND THE RENEWAL OF A POST-COLD WAR PLACE	
<i>Miha Kozorog</i>	43
RITUALS OF MIGRANT COMMUNITIES: Changing Calendars and Transmission of Traditions	
THE RITUAL GAMES OF THE SCOTTISH DIASPORA IN THE UNITED STATES	
<i>Laurent Sébastien Fournier</i>	65
RITUALS IN THE SLOVENIAN DIASPORIC COMMUNITY IN ARGENTINA	
<i>Jaka Repic</i>	78
MIGRATION AND RITUAL – REACTUALIZATION OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN A NEW CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT	
<i>Maria Kissikova</i>	96
SEASONAL LABOUR MIGRATIONS (<i>GURBET</i>) IN THE CENTRAL BALKANS AND THEIR ASSOCIATED RITUAL CYCLES	
<i>Petko Hristov</i>	108

SYNCRETISM IN AN ETHNIC CELEBRATION AMONG DESCENDENTS OF IMMIGRANTS IN ISRAEL

Rachel Sharaby 119

INHABITING DIVIDED TERRITORIES: 'COMING HOME' AND 'RETURNING TO THE HOMELAND'. HEIRS AND RITUALS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BULGARIAN-TURKISH BORDER

Meglana Zlatkova 142

NATIONAL COMMEMORATIVE MEETING ON PETROVA NIVA, BULGARIA: LOCAL/NATIONAL & TRADITIONAL/MODERN

Lina Gergova 162

**RITUALS OF MIGRANT COMMUNITIES:
Cultural Interaction and Preservation of Tradition**

RITUALS AND CUSTOMS IN AN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY

David Stanley 179

THE VIEW FROM THE MIGRANT'S WINDOW. INTERACTIONS OF THE ESTONIAN AND SWEDISH RITUAL YEAR

Mare Kõiva, Andres Kuperjanov 193

CALENDAR CUSTOMS IN THE LATVIAN VILLAGE OF TIMOFEYEVKA IN SIBERIA

Aigars Lielbārdis 216

THE RITUAL CALENDAR OF MIGRANTS: MOTIVES AND THE PROCESS OF MODIFICATION, FUNCTION AND EFFECT

Tatiana Minniyakhmetova 228

'WHEN IT'S A FESTIVAL LET'S CELEBRATE!' COMMUNAL FESTIVALS AND FESTAL INTERPRETATIONS IN GYIMES

Judit Balatonyi 237

TRADITION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF TRADITION:
THE EXPERIENCE OF RUSSIAN OLD BELIEVERS IN LATVIA

Nadežda Pazuhina

264

THE RITUAL YEAR OF THE CONTEMPORARY POLISH MIGRANT
COMMUNITY IN BULGARIA

Katya Mihaylova

274

THE CHALLENGES OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR MINORITIES IN
EUROPE. THE EXAMPLE OF *HITIMA* OR *HATIM*: A CELEBRATION AND A
RITE OF PASSAGE FOR YOUNG MUSLIMS OF FRANCE AND BULGARIA

Marie-Laure Boursin Lekov

286

LEARNING JEWISHNESS THROUGH RITUALS AND FESTIVITIES IN
FORMER EAST GERMANY TODAY

Karine Michel

305

MIGRATION OF RITUALS AND MYTHS

SAINT NEKTARIOS, 'THE MIGRANT SAINT': FROM THE GREEK AEGINA
TO THE 'ROMANIAN AEGINA'

Irina Stahl

327

NESTINARSKI RITUAL COMPLEX IN STOMANEVO VILLAGE –
A NEW PLACE FOR AN OLD TRADITION

Ana Stefanova

353

THE MIGRATION OF THE SEVEN SLEEPERS' MYTH FROM EPHESUS TO
BRITTANY: A CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM PILGRIMAGE CASE

Manoël Pénicaud

366

RITUAL HEALING ON TWO CONTINENTS: NATURE, TRADITION, AND
BELIEF (PART I)

Marlene Hugoson

375

RITUAL HEALING ON TWO CONTINENTS: NATURE, TRADITION, AND
BELIEF (PART II)

Nancy Cassell McEntire 388

CROSSING BORDERS WITH THE FESTIVAL OF BRIGID

Bożena Gierek 402

FAIRIES IN THE RITUAL YEAR IN SCOTLAND AND GREECE

Nikolemma Polyxeni Dimitriou 426

IN THE HANDS OF THE WOMEN, THE BABO DAY:
FROM A MID-WINTER FESTIVAL IN GREEK MACEDONIA TO THE
ANCIENT WORLD

Evy Johanne Håland 442

FOREWORD

As untimely as it now seems, a few decades ago observers proclaimed the twentieth century as the century of migrations, bearing in mind all wars, political unrest and violence causing those migrations, as well as economic inequalities and globalization were witnessed long before its end. Indeed, for the time being, the twenty-first century does not appear to have differed very much from previous patterns of upheaval and relocation. Commenting on cultural change in North America in the early twentieth century, Ellsworth Huntington stated the following: “History in its broadest aspect is a record of man’s migrations from one environment to another” (1919: 2). The analysis of migrations has always been marked by a specific ambivalence that contains both hostility and curiosity. Very often migrations are regarded as traumatic experiences causing fear and nostalgia or as promotions of inequality—either economically or politically. When examined as agents of progress, they often are linked to the development of transport and communications. On a fundamental level, migrations embody the basic human right of movement and choice of the place to live.

During the last several decades, research on migrations has resulted in valuable publications dealing with the migration processes, the life of the migrant communities, and their ways of accommodation and adaptation. In this volume, migration is not so much the object of research as it is a lens through which to observe ritual and ritual year. The authors explore the relationship between ritual and migration, focusing on how the latter influences the former. Movements and meetings of human communities promote analytical explorations in the area of rituals and festivity, and provide opportunities for new and sometimes unexpected insights.

The articles in the volume have developed from presentations at the 8th Annual Conference of SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year, which took place in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, in June 2012. The conference was organized by the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore with Ethnographic Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and by the University of Plovdiv, its official

host. Participants from three continents took part in the event. Bulgarian researchers were in the majority, but there were also guests from the USA, Great Britain, France, Norway, The Netherlands, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, Kosovo, Romania, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Russia, Greece, and Israel.

The articles presented here cover a wide range of topics and research locations, as well as a wide range of analyses, incorporating individual, regional, national, and global perspectives. Ethnographic work sites range from North and South America, through Europe and the Middle East, and into Ural and Siberia.

The articles are organized into three main sections. Following the tradition of previous publications of the annual conferences of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year, three articles serve as “starters,” each of which offers a different approach to the topic of migrations and/or the ritual year. *Emily Lyle* (UK) explores parallels between life cycles of plants and people according to the Indo-European calendar; *Grigor Grigorov* (Bulgaria) researches the ancient mythological layers of the Olympics award ceremonies; and *Miha Kozorog* (Slovenia) discusses the relation between contemporary rituals and tourism, using a case study of tourist-attracting events at the Slovenian-Italian border.

In section one, **Rituals of migrant communities: Changing calendars and transmission of traditions**, authors consider how the ritual calendar changes as a result of migration. *Laurent Sébastien Fournier* (France) focuses on what the “Highland” games help us learn about the impact of migrations on the ritual calendar of the Scottish Diaspora. *Jaka Repic* (Slovenia) explores the role of rituals in Slovenian Diaspora in Argentina, focusing on concepts of community and identity. Drawing on fieldwork in Western Macedonia and Western Bulgaria, *Petko Hristov* (Bulgaria) discusses seasonal labor migration and its relation to the appearance of new calendar feasts. *Maria Kissikova* (Bulgaria) analyses the accommodation of an individual to a new environment and how it affects her identity. This section also includes articles that address the transmission of traditions from one generation to another. *Rachel Sharaby* (Israel) considers how descendants of immigrants from North Africa to Israel have achieved a new cultural interpretation of the Mimouna holiday. *Meglana Zlatkova* (Bulgaria) focuses on generational aspects of migration between Bulgaria and Turkey and how the collective memory of different national

communities influences the perception of borders. *Lina Gergova* (Bulgaria) analyses the rituals of the heirs of refugees who moved from Eastern and Western Thrace to Bulgaria.

In section two, **Rituals of migrant communities: Cultural interaction and preservation of tradition**, the authors examine rituals as means of intercultural communication. *David Stanley* (USA) notes that the complexity of ethnicity and the immigration experience requires a broader scholarly focus – on the entire community rather than a single group. He illustrates this through a case study in Carbon County, Utah, between the 1880s and the 1920s. *Judit Balatonyi* (Hungary) considers rituals as cultural co-experiences of the population of Gyimes area in Romania, which consists of three ethnic groups (Hungarian, Roma and Romanian). *Aigars Lielbārdis* (Latvia) addresses similar cultural interactions, using the example of Timofeyevka, a Latvian village in the region of Novosibirsk in Russia. *Tatiana Minniyakhmetova* (Austria) focuses her attention on the ritual calendar of Udmurts, migrants to the Orenburg and Perm provinces. As bearers of tradition, institutions of various types, including religious ones, are also an object of interest in this section. *Nadežda Pazuhina* (Latvia) documents the care that was taken to preserve the cultural heritage of the Old Believers in Latvia in 1920s and 1930s, noting trends since the 1990s. *Marie-Laure Boursin Lekov* (France) shows how the annual celebration *hitima* or *hatim* is organized in France and in Bulgaria and how it contributes to the transmission and the construction of religious identity in a minority community. *Katya Mihaylova* (Bulgaria) examines the calendar festivals celebrated by Polish immigrants in Bulgaria, discussing how these festivals help to preserve ethnic, cultural, and religious identity. *Mare Kõiva and Andres Kuperjanov* (Estonia) present their survey on interactions between Estonians and local citizens living in Sweden during times of feasts. *Karine Michel* (France) shows how members of community institutions reach out to the Jewish population through rituals and festivities in former East Germany.

In the third section of this volume, **Migration of rituals and myths**, the authors present comparative research on rituals, customs, and beliefs that have migrated through time and space. *Irina Stahl* (Romania) uses the example of migration of relics of the Saint Nektarios from Greece to illustrate the flourishing of a cult and the revival of religious feelings after 1989, particularly in Bucharest and Iași. *Ana Stefanova* (Bulgaria) employs Jungian analysis to examine the migration of the ritual *nestinarstvo* from its

traditional places in the Strandzha Mountains to a “non-traditional” place in the Rodopi Mountains in Bulgaria. *Marlene Hugoson* (Sweden) and *Nancy Cassell McEntire* (USA) collaborate on documenting and examining the trans-Atlantic migrations of ancient rituals enacted at healing trees. *Manoël Pénicaut* (France) addresses one Christian-Muslim pilgrimage case, namely the migration of the myth of the Seven Sleepers, from Ephesus to Brittany. *Bożena Gierek* (Poland) discusses the ways festival of Brigid is celebrated in Ireland and in Poland and the migration of symbols related to it. *Nikolemma Polyxeni Dimitriou* (UK/Greece) presents her account of the place of the fairies in the Ritual calendar in Scotland and in Greece. *Arbnora Dushi* and *Arben Hoxha* (Kosova) revisit the story of the Albanian flag and the annual ritual of Kosovar Albanians celebrating the day of this national symbol. Finally, *Evy Johanne Håland* (Norway/Greece) offers her explorations of the Babo day (midwife day) in a village in Northern Greece.

All the articles in this volume deal with the relations between migration and rituals and offer a variety of approaches to these relations. As has been pointed out earlier, migration provides a focus for the advancement of research on ritual and the ritual year. A wide range of topics are discussed, such as social, political, and symbolic characteristics of rituals in migrant communities – and, further, the examination of changes in those rituals that are connected to migrations. Most of the authors point to the crucial importance of the rituals for creation and/or maintenance of the cultural identity of migrant communities. They also emphasize the importance of the balance between traditional and modern rituals during times of increasing intercultural communication and within the ever-growing force of globalization.

* * *

The 8th Annual Conference of SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year in Plovdiv took place in the year when the group’s president, Dr. Emily Lyle, was celebrating her 80th birthday. Dr. Lyle, senior research fellow, Celtic & Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, is co-founder and first president of this working group. Her academic interests are in the area of oral culture and folk narratives and customs, and she has published several books and numerous articles on these topics, including, more recently, *‘Galoshins’ Remembered: ‘A Penny Was a Lot in These Days’*. Edinburgh, 2011; *Ten Gods: A New Approach to Defining the Mythological Structures of the Indo-*

Europeans. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012; and “The Good Man’s Croft”, in *Scottish Studies*, Vol. 36 (2013), pp. 103-124. We hope that the 8th annual conference in Plovdiv was an appropriate occasion for her to enjoy the first year of her own eighth decade and that this volume will serve as a belated birthday present to her. We thank Emily for allowing the Ritual Year Working Group to exist – and for the many ways in which she has encouraged its prosperity.

* * *

We would like to express our gratitude to all members of the Conference Organizing Committee – Irina Sedakova, Léon Van Gulik, Krassimira Krastanova, Stoyan Antonov, Katya Mihaylova and Ekaterina Anastasova; and to Maria Schnitter, who was at the time the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and History at the University of Plovdiv, which hosted the conference; to our young colleagues who provided precious help during the conference: Yana Gergova, Anelia Avdzhieva and Svetoslava Mancheva; and to all personnel of the IEFEM – BAS and the University of Plovdiv. Last but not least, we owe much to our native-speaker editors: Emily Lyle, Elizabeth Warner, Cozette Griffin-Cremer, Nancy McEntire, David Stanley, Jennifer Butler, Molly Carter, Neill Martin, and John Helsloot; and the reviewers of the articles, Vihra Baeva and Nikolay Vukov. Their thoughtful assistance in the publication of this volume is highly appreciated.

Dobrinka Parusheva and Lina Gergova

Work Cited

Huntington, Ellsworth. 1919. *The Red Man’s Continent: A Chronicle of Aboriginal America*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

THE SEED-STORE OF THE YEAR

Emily Lyle

Abstract

Although plants and humans both live in linear time, they are incorporated in the symbolic cycle of which one level is the ritual year. The death period of three months posited as occurring in the Indo-European calendar before the winter solstice is studied in this article in the light of information from Iran and Rome. The Iranian myth of Yima speaks of the *vava*, which is a place of storage for the seed of humans, and this is interpreted as a spatiotemporal entity. It is divided among the social classes in the ratio of 1:2:3 in the order priests, warrior, cultivators, and this ratio has been applied to the year for both the period of the living and the period of the dead. The three days on which the mundus was opened in Rome to allow contact between the living and the dead are interpreted as falling at the beginnings of the sections of the death period, and the offerings made during a death period in India are taken to indicate that there was an Indo-European practice of offering three different kinds of product, such as cakes, meat, and vegetables, on these days and that they represented the three groups of which the society consisted. The whole pattern seems to operate in terms of the symbolic storage of seed in a granary so as to ensure prosperity in the year to come.

Key words

Calendar, cyclical time, death period, India, Indo-European tripartition, Iran, offerings, Rome, seed-corn, Yima.

When I recently began exploring the life-cycle of plants, including domesticated crops, I had thought at first that this might require separate treatment from the human life-cycle, but soon realised that the situation is the same for both. Plants and humans have an actual span of life in linear time from birth/germination, through maturity, to a close in the death of the individual, although the length of time taken by the process may be widely different in the two life forms. When these plant and human lives are conceived of cosmologically they are brought into cyclical time, of which a particularly important expression is the cycle of the year. This is the process that Mircea Eliade (1974, 86–87) spoke of as a transfer from profane time

to sacred time. For the Indo-European tradition which underlies most European cultures, the annual transition between cycles comes at midwinter and is often marked by the twelve days.

The conceptual problem that may arise in the case of plants which is not present in the case of humans is that the length of the plant life may be close to the length of the year. With humans it is clear that rituals marking birth, marriage and death take place in linear time and are only analogically connected with certain points in the annual cycle, which can be identified as midwinter for death-and-birth and midsummer for marriage. When we are faced with crops (which may be harvested at widely different times of year) we should similarly see related ritual events as happening in linear time. Harvest celebrations, for example, are markers like weddings and funerals in human life. Each crop has its own distinctive set of markers and these may vary widely even for a single crop depending on geographical variants like climatic conditions and altitude, so that we have to specify that for this particular crop in this particular place there are these ritual markers of its actual process of maturation and decay. When the plants are taken up into the cosmic cycle of which one expression is the year, they all have the same pattern which is one that is shared with humans.

All the same, plants, and also animals, have something special to offer to the sacred cycle as expressed in the ritual year when they fall into a pattern of annual recurrence – like the young lambs in spring that are a familiar part of my own environment. For cereal crops which are sown once in the year, we have the phenomenon to which I am drawing special attention in this article. I shall refer to the cereal crop as ‘corn’, which is a word applied to the most common type of cereal in a particular area. When the corn is ripe, it is harvested and the grain is separated from the stalks. Now comes a choice about which portions of the crop to consume and which to save. Both are essential to the continuation of life.

John Ruskin, the nineteenth-century art-critic, social reformer, and economist, includes a formulation of this double idea and speaks about wealth in terms of the production of corn (1902, 149–150):

[T]here are two kinds of true production, always going on in an active State: one of seed, and one of food; or production for the Ground, and for the Mouth; both of which are by covetous persons thought to be production only for the granary; whereas the function of the granary is but intermediate and conservative,

fulfilled in distribution; else it ends in nothing but mildew, and nourishment of rats and worms. And since production for the Ground is only useful with future hope of harvest, all essential production is for the Mouth; and is finally measured by the mouth; hence ... consumption is the crown of production; and the wealth of a nation is only to be estimated by what it consumes.

The products of the corn may be eaten over a period of some time as well as immediately so that there is some storing involved even with grain destined for consumption (in production for the Mouth), but the corn that is being saved to be sown for next year's crop (production for the Ground) must be stored for the full period up to the time of sowing. In order to keep up the quality, it is advisable to select the best of the grain for this future sowing and to keep it separately in what I have called a 'seed-store'.

This storing of seed in a granary for future sowing seems to serve as a metaphor for the regeneration of humans within the cosmic cycle in the Iranian myth of Yima's underground *vara*. The seed of humans is stored in a land of the dead from which regeneration comes in due course. One version of the myth gives details about the construction of the *vara* that can be applied to the death period in the year explored in an earlier study (Lyle 2013), and interpretation of the Iranian myth throws fresh light on the problematic *mundus* in Rome which was opened on three days of the year to permit contact with the dead. I explore the Iranian and Roman materials in the rest of this paper.

The *vara* in Iran

Yima is the Iranian counterpart of the Indian Yama, god of the realm of the dead,¹ and Yima's realm, since it contains 'seed' can be regarded as a kind of imagined granary. Yima is said to construct "underneath the earth in concealment" a marvellous mansion which neither summer nor winter can destroy, and which contains "all the bounties that are on earth" (Anklesaria 1956, 270–271). Bruce Lincoln (1982) has shown that Yima's *vara*, with its walls made of earth, "is a transformed image of his paradisaical post mortem realm" and can be equated with the burial mound, and possibly the evidence he brings would also support the idea that the *vara* was an underground granary.

¹ For a study of the complex of stories relating to Yima, see Dumézil 1973.

At the level of myth, the *vara* was created as a place of safety from the annihilation threatened by a severe winter. The passage from the *Vendidad* (2.30) which describes how it was to be made is introduced by Emile Benveniste (1932, 119–120; my translation):

Now, when Ahura Mazda commands Yama [Yima] to build the subterranean enclosure which will preserve the specimens of the good creation from the fury of the approaching winter, he adds a precise instruction that the interpreters have not explained: "In the first part (of this subterranean region), make nine passages (or divisions); in the intermediate part six, in the last, three. In the divisions of the first part, place the seed of a thousand men and women, in those of the second, six hundred; in those of the last, three hundred.

There are 18 divisions split up into three sections containing 3, 6, and 9 compartments in the ratio 1:2:3. The figure of a thousand is simply a round number representing nine hundred so that the number of men and women matches the number of compartments in this as in the other cases (Benveniste 1932, 120n2). As explained by both Benveniste and by Georges Dumézil (1973, 48), the three compartments of different sizes are for the three Indo-European social groups, one for the priests, one for the warriors and one for the cultivators and herders, with the highest value being attached to the smallest portion which is for the priests. I have developed this insight in my recent book, *Ten Gods* (2012, 58–65), which includes study of a proposed connection with the world ages which is not explored here. In connection with the *vara*, I entered into a series of related interpretations. I took it that the realm of the dead mirrors that of the living, and that the instructions given to Yima about the composition of the subterranean otherworld would reveal information about the composition of this world also. I also took it that the system is a spatiotemporal one and that the unit of time within the year is the fortnight or half-month of which the 'regular' part of the year devoted to the living (and not the one devoted to the dead as in the *Vendidad*) contains 9 months (18 half-months) distributed among priests, warriors, and cultivators and herders in the ratio of 1:2:3. Dividing the remaining quarter of the year in the same ratio but running in the reverse order in a manner appropriate to the world of the dead, and so starting with the largest as in the *Vendidad*, gives 1½ months for the cultivators and

herders, 1 month for the warriors, and a half-month for the priests, and this can be seen as the temporal aspect of the realm of the dead-and-unborn (i.e. the ‘seed’ saved for the future by Yima). Although there are clearly a number of speculations involved, this view of the year as containing portions relating to the three social groups and a remaining quarter relating to the dead is in keeping with Indian treatments of the calendar (Smith 1994, 15, 155–156, 187, 196) although these operate in terms of complete seasons. The results of my interpretation can be seen at a glance in Figures 1 and 2. Of the three sections of the period of the dead, one, devoted to the cultivators and herders, belongs to the summer half of the year, and two, devoted to the warriors and priests, belong to the hierarchically superior winter half.

winter (2nd half)	1	LIVING
spring	2	
summer	3	
autumn	3	
winter (1st half)	2	DEAD
	1	

Fig. 1. The triple portions of the living and the dead in relation to the seasons, with midwinter at the top of the figure. The sections are distinguished as follows: white = priests, dots = warriors, and diagonal lines = cultivators and herders.

MIDWINTER

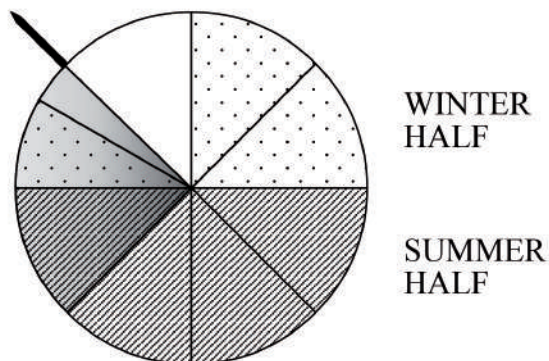


Fig. 2. A circular representation of the year showing the triple portions of the living and the dead in relation to the summer and winter halves.

The spatiotemporal approach brings study of this realm of the dead into the area of the ritual year, and traces may remain in the different folk calendars of Europe in festivals marking the beginnings of these periods. In Scotland, the first marker is Michaelmas on 29 September, approximating the autumn equinox (21 September), and this emphasises the crops and livestock. The second marker is Halloween, the eve of Samhain, which opens the winter half of the year. This corresponds to All Saints Day (1 November) in the Church calendar, and it is relevant that this is immediately followed by All Souls Day, when the dead are remembered. Halloween is marked by house-visiting customs involving people in disguise who represent the returning dead. I would say at present that Scotland lacks a third marker which should follow about a month after Halloween, around 1 December.

Rome, which is well known for holding onto archaic ritual features even when their meaning has been lost, seems to have retained all three markers in the form of its three days when the *mundus* was open, although we have little indication of the activities that took place then (Scullard 1981, 45, 180–181, 191, 197). Dumézil comments on these days (1970, 353): “It is not possible to reconstruct that which our informants themselves no longer understood and about which, on the whole, they said very little.” We do know, however, that when the *mundus* was open there was held to be

direct contact between the living and the dead (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003, 1000b). Since study of the *vara* in a spatiotemporal context has led to the theory that there were three sections of a death time which started at irregularly spaced intervals, it is now possible to offer a solution in these terms to one of the puzzles surrounding these days, which were 24 August, 5 October, and 8 November.

The *mundus* in Rome

Before considering the evidence on the *mundus*, something has to be said about the calendar. The Roman calendar that has been adopted for world-wide use is the creation of Julius Caesar and began on 1 January 45 BCE.² It had as its basis the pre-Julian Roman calendar of which the one example that survives is a fragmentary wall painting of the Fasti Antiates of the late Republic which it has been possible to reconstruct (Rüpke 2011, 7). This was a lunar calendar with intercalary months and Julius Caesar's reform was called for because intercalation had been neglected, and the connection with the seasons of the year had been lost. We can assume that a calendar like this did run in line with the seasons at an earlier stage, although we have no direct evidence.

In considering the treatment of the dead in the Roman year as a whole, we need to be aware of the anomaly by which the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth months that give us the month names September, October, November and December are appropriately named if the year begins in March, not January. Jörg Rüpke (2011, 6) has these comments on the reconstruction of the pre-Julian Fasti:

The year consists of twelve months; these are represented in as many columns, and begin with January. The names of the numeric months – September, October, November, December – are those still in use to this day; considered in combination with certain rituals, they indicate that, on 1 or 15 March, there was a break in the year that also had a bearing on the calendar: however, competing New Years are not an unusual phenomenon, and, so far as the calendar was concerned, the Republic may have known no other beginning to the year except January.

² The transition to this calendar is discussed in Feeney 2007, 196–201.

The period of the Parentalia, when families honoured their ancestors, comes shortly before the March year-opening when new fire was created,³ and it seems that we should bracket these two events and see this attention to the dead as preceding the new year. In that case, assuming the midwinter start for the Indo-European year, the activities in relation to the dead found in the Parentalia would perhaps in an earlier period have followed on from, or been included in, the death period indicated by the *mundus* days. This suggestion is offered by way of bridging the gap between this Roman practice of honouring the dead and the calendar modelled in Figure 2.

The days when the *mundus* was open are not marked in the Fasti and we are dependent on textual references for information about them. Macrobius includes mention of the *mundus* in the *Saturnalia* (1.16.16–18) in a section on the calendar. He says that religion forbids engaging in battle “when the entrance to the underworld is open”, since, “this being a sacred occasion dedicated to Father Dis and Proserpine”, men “deemed it better to go out to battle when the jaws of Pluto are shut.” He adds:

And that is why Varro writes: “When the entrance to the mundus is open, it is as if the door of the grim, infernal deities were open. A religious ban therefore forbids us not only to engage in battle but to levy troops and march to war, to weigh anchor, and to marry a wife for the raising of children.”

Information that there were three such days and the dates on which they fell comes to us from a dictionary entry on “Mundus” in *De verborum significatu* by Verrius Flaccus (c. 55 BCE – c. 20 CE), which is known only through later abridged copies by Festus and Paulus Diaconus (Lindsay 1978, 144–145). Verrius Flaccus’s authority for the material on the *mundus* quoted below was a lost work on pontifical law by the jurist Ateius Capito. The entry, after giving the dates (24 August, 5 October, and 8 November), mentions some kind of superstructure and then continues:

As for its lower part, which is so to speak consecrated to the spirits, our ancestors decided that it should remain closed at all times, save on the days indicated above. These days they regarded as unlucky for the following reason: at the moment when the secrets

³ Ovid, *Fasti*, 2.33–2.34, 533–570, 3.143–3.144; Boyle and Woodard 2000, 27, 43–44, 58, 185, 199, 208–209.

of the sacred place of the spirits were so to speak brought to light and uncovered, they wished no official act to be performed. Likewise, on these days one did not engage in combat with the enemy, nor levy troops, nor hold comitia, and no official activity was entered upon, save in cases of extreme necessity.⁴

This set of days has presented a puzzle, and I think the present theory of a three-part death period may explain it. The second date follows roughly a month and a half after the first and the third follows roughly a month after the second. The third is not followed by another instance and so no limit is indicated to the period. If the three days are understood as relating to the threefold system already outlined, they can be shown as in Figure 3.

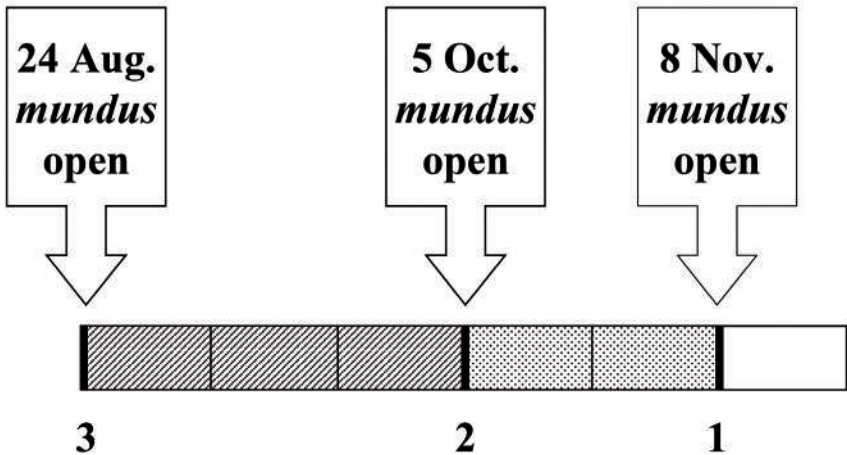


Fig. 3. The three days when the mundus was open shown as occurring at the start of the three sections of the death period.

When this whole death period is understood as essential to regeneration, we can expect that representatives of the items to be regenerated would be thrown into the pit on these three days. In India, a series of death rituals was performed in the closing three months of the

⁴ The translation is from Dumézil 1970, 273, except that I have given 'spirits' and 'unlucky' for words that had been left in Latin (*dii Manes* and *religiosi*), and that I have translated the word *religio* in its concrete-object sense of 'sacred place' instead of 'religion'.

year (prior to the winter solstice). These were the Astaka festivals, which, as originally celebrated, had different kinds of offering: cakes in the month of Margacirsha, meat in the month of Pausha, and vegetables in the month of Magha (Oberlies 1998, 307–308 and n770, 309n776; Caland 1888, 42–43; 1893, 166–170). There is no explicit mention of a connection with the three groups of priests, warriors, and cultivators,⁵ but it seems likely that this link was implicitly present.

Of course, we cannot know whether the Romans made such offerings, but we can certainly suggest that the three days they continued to commemorate had at one time incorporated rituals that included offerings of three different kinds like those found in the Astaka festivals. On the basis of the materials studied, we can formulate the general idea that there was a death period of three months within the ritual year and that distinctive offerings were made at three points within it. These offerings were made out of the wealth accumulated in the course of the preceding year. The part of the year's production that they represented was for the Ground, with a view to eventual use for the Mouth. The prosperity of the year to come was dependent on this symbolic garnering up of a part of the year's increase, which was sacrificed to the land of the dead (cf. Le Borgne 1999). These glimpses from the past seem to give us a framework in which to explore the many traditions found throughout Europe in more recent times relating to harvest and to death and renewal.

REFERENCES

- Anklesaria, Behramgore Tehmuras, trans. 1956. *Zand-Akasiḥ: Iranian or Greater Bundahisn*. Bombay: Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha.
- Benveniste, Emile. 1932. "Les Classes sociales dans la tradition avestique." *Journal Asiatique* 221: 117–134.
- Boyle, Anthony J., and Roger D. Woodard, eds. 2000. *Ovid. Fasti*. London: Penguin Books.
- Caland, Willem. 1888. *Über Totenverehrung bei einigen der indo-germanischen Völker*. Amsterdam: J. Müller.

⁵ In prehistory, the groups would not have been the occupational groups found in historical sources but the equivalent sections of society: old men, young men, and mature men (Lyle 2012, 16, 32–36).

- . 1893. *Altindischer Ahnencult*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Davies, Percival Vaughan, trans. 1969. *Macrobius. The Saturnalia*. New York and London: Columbia University Press.
- Dumézil, Georges. 1930. “La Préhistoire indo-iranienne des castes.” *Journal Asiatique* 216:109–130.
- . 1970. *Archaic Roman Religion*. 2 vols. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1973. *The Destiny of a King*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Eliade, Mircea. 1974. *The Myth of the Eternal Return, or, Cosmos and History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Feeney, Dennis. 2007. *Caesar’s Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History*. Berkeley and London: University of California Press.
- Hornblower, Simon, and Antony Spawforth. 2003. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 3rd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Le Borgne, Aude. 1999. “Fulfilling Expectations and Meeting Obligations in the Ritual Year.” *Cosmos* 15: 91–110.
- Lincoln, Bruce. 1982. “The ‘House of Clay’.” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 24: 1–12.
- Lindsay, Wallace M. 1978. *Sexti Pompei Festi, “De verborum significatu” quae supersunt cum Pauli epitome*. 2nd edn. Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms Verlag.
- Lyle, Emily. 2012. *Ten Gods: A New Approach to Defining the Mythological Structures of the Indo-Europeans*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- . 2013. “The Summer/Winter and Decrease/Increase Transitions in the Year and their Life-Cycle Equivalents.” In *The Ritual Year 5. The Power of the Mask*, ed. Arūnas Vaicekauskas, 18–29. Kaunas: Vitautas Magnus University.
- Oberlies, Thomas. 1998. *Die Religion des Rgveda*. Part 1. *Das religiöse System des Rgveda*. Vienna: Institut für Indologie der Universität Wien.
- Rüpke, Jörg. 2011. *The Roman Calendar from Numa to Constantine: Time, History and the Fasti*. Chichester: Wiley and Blackwell.
- Ruskin, John. 1902. “Ad Valorem” in his *Unto This Last: Four Essays on the First Principles of Political Economy*, 105–174. London: George Allen.
- Scullard, H. H. 1981. *Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Smith, Brian K. 1994. *Classifying the Universe: the Ancient Indian Varna System and the Origins of Caste*. New York: OUP.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Dr Emily Lyle is a Senior Research Fellow in the department of Celtic and Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh and is President of the Ritual Year Working Group of SIEF. She has been exploring the ritual year as one aspect of the Indo-European cosmology which is the subject of her recent book, *Ten Gods: A New Approach to Defining the Mythological Structures of the Indo-Europeans* (2012). She has also engaged in fieldwork on Scottish calendar traditions, with results published in “Galoshins” *Remembered: A Penny Was a Lot in These Days* (2011), and issue no. 59 of the archive journal, *Tocher* (2009).

MODERN SPORTS AWARDS CEREMONIES – A GENEALOGICAL ANALYSIS

Grigor Har. Grigorov

Abstract

The study will attempt to interpret the 'hidden' scenario of the modern awards ceremony in sport. It argues that all the components of the ritual (the awarding of medals, the standing on a podium, the raising of the flag, the playing of the national anthem, etc.) are established on the basis of two myths of Greek antiquity: the Hercules' story and the myth of the Golden Age. It is argued that the ceremony declares that the champion belongs to the golden generation and that it symbolically raises him/her up as a star in the sky.

Key words

Ritual, sport, awards ceremony, Olympic games, flag hoisting, national anthems.

After each sports competition we watch a winner's award ceremony. We can ask: When did this ceremony appear, and how is it shaped? And the most important: What is its deep logic? This article attempts to answer to these questions. We just must say in advance that the contemporary sports awards ceremonies follow the pattern of the Olympic Games, established by Pierre de Coubertin; they, in turn, are shaped on the analogy of the Ancient Olympics. This double heritage forms the logic of the argument presented below – from ancient to modern Olympics.

The Olympic games in Antiquity

Pan-Hellenic athletic Games between representatives of several city-states (poleis) and kingdoms from Ancient Greece were held in Athens (565 BC), Delphi (582 BC), Nemea (573 BC), and the Isthmian Peninsula (586 BC). The most popular were those in Olympia, near the city of Elis. Some narratives explain the appearance of the Games.

According to the dominant version, the Olympic Games were founded by Heracles. King of Elis, Augeas promises a tenth of his flocks to anyone who managed to clean his stables which had been left uncleaned for many years. Heracles changed the flow of two rivers and carried away the accumulated muck in one day. However, the king refused to give him the promised reward and Heracles returned to Elis with an army, captured the city and killed Augeas. After the battle he offered a sacrifice to the gods and founded the Games in honour of his father, Zeus .

According to other versions the Games were established by Zeus (in honour of his victory over Cronus), by Pelops (in honour of his ascension on the throne of Pisa) or by King Iphitos of Elis (with a view to saving his people from rampant plague – an action aimed at guaranteeing the goodwill of the gods, prompted by a vague prophecy of the Delphic oracle) (Mez^o 1956, 11–12).

During the Games, for three months a holy truce, or *ekecheiria*, was observed in Olympia; wars were terminated and the area was declared sacrosanct. At that time nobody could appear in Olympia with arms – under the threat of divine curse, heavy fines, and even the deprivation of the whole polis of the right of participation in the competitions. Ancient writers testify that the sacred peace treaty was drawn up in ancient times by King Iphitos and the Spartan lawgiver, Lycurgus.

For the entire existence of the Games the sacred peace was broken only twice: from 420 to 371 BC Elis was forced to sign a contract that permitted Sparta to participate in the organization of the competitions (the treaty was suspended in 371 BC with the help of Thebes); in 365 BC Arcadia conducted a policy of dictation of the Games too. Elis held all Games organized by foreigners to be ‘non-Olympics’ and did not admit their results (Shanin 2001, 45).

The Olympic Games were not just sport events, or just a religious ceremony; they were a celebration of the unity of the Hellenic world. Most important treaties between different poleis were concluded here. Prominent people in the arts and philosophy, politics and oratory, including: Socrates, Demosthenes, Themistocles, Alcibiades, Gorgias, Plato (in fact, he was a champion in fist fighting) and many others have been guests in Olympia. During the 88th Olympics (444 BC) arts competitions were organized; the first prize awarded was to Herodotus for his “History”.

The importance of the Games can be judged by the fact that the historian Timaeus from Tauromenium (345-250 BC) introduced the Pan-Hellenic calendar on the basis of the Olympics – up to this time every polis had used its own calendar. The first Games were declared held in 776 BC and each Olympics received the name of the winner in the stadion race (Shanin 2001, 27; Mező 1956, 29).

The Games were held every 4 years at an interval of 1417 days on a fixed date in the middle of the summer (July or August). On the appointed day, with the first rays of the sun in the archway of the stadium the competition organisers went out. They were dressed in crimson cloaks and wore crowns on their heads, and the athletes of all the cities followed them.

The Olympic Games originally lasted one day and contained a single event: the stadion race which was a short sprint measuring between 170-180 meters, or the length of the stadium.

Gradually, the Games were taken over by ‘athletic’ features. New competitions were introduced (Mező 1956, 12–13; Rivkin 1969, 33):

- 724 BC – Middle-distance foot race (diaulos, or two-stade race, approximately 400 metres);
- 720 BC – Roadwork, or long-distance foot race (dolichos, about 5 km);
- 708 BC – Wrestling (pale) and pentathlon (consisting of wrestling, stadion, long jump, javelin throw, and discus throw);
- 688 BC – Fist fighting;
- 680 BC – Chariot racing;
- 648 BC – Horse racing and pankration (fighting by the mixed techniques of boxing and wrestling, similar to modern ‘catch as catch can’);
- 520 BC – Running in full or partial armour (hoplitodromos, or “Hoplite race”).

With the increase in the number of the competitions (they reached 20) the duration of the Games was increased too. From the 77th Olympics (472 BC) they already lasted 5 days (2 days of religious ceremonies and 3 days of competitions) and later they lasted even 7 days (Chamoux 1979, 196; Havin 1977, 12). The period 6th-5th century BC was the Golden Age of the competitions (Rivkin 1969, 23). Gradually, a process of degradation can be observed and in the middle of the 4th century the decline is fully evident. The Games lost their educational value, professionals appeared, cities began to recruit athletes, and in the 98th Olympics (338 BC) the first scandal of

bribery arose (Kun 1982, 73).

The Olympics did not lose their significance during the period of Roman domination, although the spectacular aspect began to dominate. However, after the proclamation of Christianity as an official religion the Church opposed the Games, and it prevailed. The last ancient Olympics took place in 394 AD. A year later Emperor Theodosius I forbade the Games with a special decree. In 426 AD, Emperor Theodosius II ordered the burning of the city, and the flames destroyed many statues of gods, heroes and athletes. Two earthquakes in 522 and 551 AD demolished another large part of the material traces from ancient times.

What was the nature of the ancient Games? Initially they were undoubtedly religious rites. A very popular hypothesis is that the athletic contest descended from ancient funerary rites. Its defenders usually emphasize the analogy with the commemoration games that Achilles organizes in honour of Patroclus in the Iliad. However the 7th book of the Odyssey narrates that the Phaiacian king, Alcinous, arranges games to amuse his guest Odysseus that have neither a funeral nor even a religious character (Chamoux 1979, 195, 220).

Another hypothesis interprets the games as a ritual to appease the gods and express gratitude to them (Shanin 2001, 14), and that certainly contains truth, but perhaps not the whole truth. It is undisputed that Olympia had one of the most ancient Hellenic sanctuaries dedicated to Hera. Other academics envisage the existence of a local cult of ancestors and point out the burial mounds of Pelops and Taraxippus, or the presence of a sacred place, dedicated to Zeus, motivated by the relations of the Delphic oracle and Olympia, reinforced in the 5th century BC by the building of his temple in honour of the victory over the Persians (Kun 1982, 40). According to a third hypothesis, the Games were associated with initiation (Kun 1982, 73), and this is a reasonable assumption for the latest stages of the competitions. There are less convincing hypotheses such as the theory that the Games functioned as a duel between brothers for the right of inheritance (Shanin 2001, 14).

With all due respect to the proposed hypotheses, I shall suggest another that I have never met: The Games were originally a religious ritual associated with the solar cult. Its sense is: Every four years a 'new fire' was obtained there and was relayed to all Greek poleis. The stadion race evidently was an imitative magic ritual to ensure that the sun followed its natural course; it

is symptomatic that the sprint took place on a straight (not circular) path. The 4-year cycle was most probably determined by the calendar and the need to add an extra day every four years. It seems to me that just this assumption explains why the stadion race remains in later times the central event of the competitions, why the practice of naming the Olympics with the name of the winner of the sprint is approved and, finally, why exactly the stadion race winner receives the honour of spreading the sacrificial fire (Bazunov 1980, 8).

The fact that Timaeus introduced the Pan-Hellenic calendar, using exactly the Olympic cycle, has a deep logic too; maybe he had simply restored one basic function of the Games. And the last point: How otherwise is the ritual logic of the judges and the athletes entering into the stadium exactly at sunrise to be explained?!

After each competition public criers officially announced the name of the winner and his native city (Rivkin 1969, 66), a practice typologically similar to modern national flag hoisting. This event took place near the gate of Echo; ancient sources claim that the echo repeated the name of the winner seven times (Bazunov 1980, 7). The referees presented the athlete with a palm branch and tied a purple ribbon on his head. The spectators threw flowers and carried the winner on their hands. In the evening a banquet was given by the winner.

The official award ceremony was held on the last day of the Olympics. In front of Zeus' temple a chair of gold and ivory was set, decorated with olive wreaths from the sacred olive tree growing near Zeus' temple. According to a legend that we owe to Pindar, the sacred olive tree was brought from the land of the Hyperboreans and planted here by Heracles, while the olive branches were cut with a golden knife by a boy from Elis (Mező 1956, 16; Rivkin 1969, 69). Here the athletes came one after another and the chief referee placed wreaths on their heads. Public criers announced again the athlete's name and his hometown. According to some sources the tradition of crowning the victor with laurels was 'restored' on the advice of the Delphic oracle during the seventh Olympics (Kun 1982, 61).

Then a solemn procession was held. In the lead walked the referees and the winners, followed by the political elite of the poleis. All together they sang the song: "Glory to thee, mighty Heracles, the winner of the Games! (...) Glory to the winner!" The athletes made sacrifices to the gods and went to the residential building of the governors of Elis. There solemn banquets were organized for the participants in the competitions (Rivkin 1969, 70).

Winners enjoyed great fame. Their names were written on marble tablets that were kept in the Olympia gymnasium. It was a great honour for a city to have its citizen become a winner in the Olympics. The victor was elected to senior positions; he was always granted honorary seats in the theatre; he was exempted from taxes; and he was fed at the public expense for the rest of his life (Shanin 2001, 32; Rivkin 1969, 71).

The ancient Greeks regarded an Olympic victory as the greatest possible honour – “there is no more glorious victory than winning the Olympics”, says Pindar. This idea is well illustrated by the anecdote about Diagoras of Rhodes, told by Cicero in “Tusculan Disputations” (I, 46, 111). According to this account, Diagoras, a famous fist-fighter champion, had in his old age the happiness of seeing his sons winning at the Games. At this moment a Spartan congratulated him and said: “Die now, Diagoras, because you will not feel in future a similar heavenly happiness!” (Chamoux 1979, 198). Moreover, in the 4th century BC the Spartan sage Chilo actually died of joy after his son’s victory (Rivkin 1969, 68).

Statues were ordered in honour of victorious athletes. They were erected at the gates of temples and theatres, in the middle of city squares, and even in Olympia (after 540 BC). In the period 6th-5th century BC they were images of the ideal athlete, but after the 4th century BC they came closer to portraits (Rivkin 1969, 75), a fact that illustrates the degradation of the religious aspect of the Games. Simultaneously the ideology of the divine election of the winner disappeared (Kun 1982, 68–69).

Ancient writers (Pindar, Lucian, etc.) wrote that the winner was considered equal to a god; his fellow-citizens paid honours to him, organized feasts, ordered memorials and odes, and even struck coins with his image. Once, to welcome a champion the citizens ruined the walls of a polis, so that the victory would not escape from the town (Shanin 2001, 32; Bazunov 1980, 3).

In other words, the attitude toward winners was religious or at least quasi-religious. And this is not an exaggeration: in the front of Zeus’ temple figures of gods and champions were placed together. There is even direct evidence of worship. To give just a single example among many, the wrestler Theagenes of Thasos was deified after his death (Rivkin 1969, 75).

I will argue that in the mature period of the Games (5th-4th century BC) they were confined to a new logic. The competition was given the meaning of a ritual relating to the Heracles myth in which a man was promoted to the status of a god, or at least of a semi-god, due to his exploits. That is evident

from the frequent occurrence of Heracles' name in the narratives about Olympics, as listed below.

Heracles established the athletic festival to honour his father, Zeus, after having gained a victory over the King of Elis, Augeas. This is one of the versions of the myth of the origin of the Games.

In honour of the goddess Athena Heracles planted olive trees in the locality of Olympia and thus introduced the Olympic award – the winner to be crowned with an olive wreath (Rivkin 1969, 19).

The stadion (the length of the foot-runners' track) in Olympia was measured by Heracles himself and, as his foot was bigger than the foot of an ordinary man, the Olympic stadion (192.27 m.) is longer than stadii in other stadiums (Rivkin 1969, 34).

At the solemn procession concluding the Games the anthem is sung: "Glory to thee, mighty Heracles, the winner of the Games! [...] Glory to the winner!"

One of the most famous statues of Heracles in Antiquity was erected in the temple of Zeus (5th century BC).

We could argue that the Heracles plot (the human ascension to the gods) is the hidden scenario of the Games. In this sense, the locality of Olympia may be accepted as a terrestrial counterpart of Olympus: the myths say that gods live in the 'high' mount of Olympus; the ritual of the elevation of a man to the position of a semi-god is held in the 'low' locality of Olympia. The fact that one nearby mountain bears the name of Zeus's father Cronus and that another is called Olympus cannot be a coincidence (Rivkin 1969, 19).

Three additional instances can be added to support this hypothesis. Firstly, the Achaeans took part in the Lamian war only through the wrestler champion Chilo, who was officially made equal to a whole unit (Shanin 2001, 30). Secondly, the famous athlete Milon from the South-Italian town of Croton was elected as the head of an army and he led it in the costume of Heracles, wearing a lion skin and carrying a club in his hands (Rivkin 1969, 73). The facts are eloquent: the champion has the status of a deity and does not need an army (in the first case) or receives the right to imitate the mythical hero Heracles (in the latter case). Most telling is the third case: Theogenes of Thasos, a consecutive winner in several competitions, was the son of a Heracles priest but was treated as the son of a god. His cult was probably introduced at the end of the 5th or the beginning of the 4th century.

Misfortune befell Thasos when his statue was thrown in the sea (Chamoux 1979, 200–201).

Modern awards ceremonies

The present-day sport awards ceremonies are established under the influence of modern Olympic Games symbolism. This symbolism, developed mainly by Baron Pierre de Coubertin, quotes the ancient Pan-Hellenic Games and ‘restores’ its rituals in a different time, and (perhaps) with a different sense. This context seems important, and that is why a brief history of the development of the Olympic movement is presented.

Attempts at ‘restoration’ of the ancient athletic Games have been made several times:

- 1604 – Crown Prosecutor Robert Dover organized nationwide competitions named “British Olympics”;
- 1830’s – One of the followers of Pehr Ling attempted to arrange regular (every two years) “Olympic Games” in the area of Helsingborg, Sweden;
- 1838 – Single “Olympics” were held in the village Letrino in honour of the Greek liberation;
- 1844 – “Olympic Games” in Montreal;
- 1859, 1870, 1875, 1888, 1889 – “Pan-Hellenic Games” in Athens (Kun 1982, 102, 141, 221–222).

All these events, however, were not regular, had no established competition program and possessed only local significance, and that is why they are widely interpreted as forerunners of the modern Olympics. Undoubtedly, they stimulated the restoration of the Games. Other important impulses came from the archaeological studies of ancient Olympia, in which the most important steps were:

- 1723 – The idea of studying Olympia was first proposed by the French scholar Dom Bernard de Montfaucon. The proposal remained unfulfilled;
- 1766 – The English archaeologist Richard Chandler revealed some of the ruins in Olympia;
- 1828-1829 – A French expedition excavated Olympia and revealed the altar of Zeus;
- 1875-1881 – There were significant archaeological investigations by a German expedition led by Ernst Curtius (Kun 1982, 220–221; Rivkin 1969, 30; Groote 1977, 10).

The history of the ‘restoration’ of the Olympics due to the work of Pierre de Coubertin is well known, so we will only briefly mark its key moments, stressing the symbolism:

- 25 November 1892 – Coubertin announced the Olympic Games restoration project;

- 23 June 1894 – The project was approved by representatives of 12 nations. The first International Olympic Committee (IOC) was elected and the Olympic Charter was voted for. In the same year Coubertin began to issue the journal “Revue Olympique”;

- 5 April 1896 – The first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens. The opening ceremony of hoisting the national flag of the host country was performed. The athletes’ march under their national flags as a part of the opening ceremony was introduced in 1908;

- 1906 – Coubertin proposed in “Revue Olympique” the ‘restoration’ of the oath. This ritual was introduced in 1920;

- 1908 – The idea of organizing a competition of fine arts during the Games appeared. It was implemented in the 5th Olympic Games in Stockholm in 1912. The gold medal for poetry was received by Coubertin himself who participated in the competition under a pseudonym with the poem “Ode to Sport” in French and German;

- 1908 – At the Games in London, the Pennsylvanian bishop said: “The important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle”. Published in October 1912 with Coubertin’s addition (“...because the essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well”), this thought became the “Olympic principle”, whose authorship is usually attributed to Coubertin;

- 1913 – The Olympic flag, composed of five interlaced coloured circles (symbolizing the five continents) was approved. In 1914, it flew in Paris on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the restoration of the Games, and after 1920 on every Olympic stadium;

- 1928 – At the Olympics in Amsterdam the Olympic flame was lit for the first time. The ritual of bringing it by relay from Olympia dates only from 1936.

Although the rhetoric speaks of the ‘restoration’ of the ancient Games, only some of the rituals in the modern awards ceremony are borrowed from the Hellenic tradition, while others are newly invented. The present-day ceremony is a composite of three main parts: the medals, the hoisting of the national flag, the (three-tiered) rostrum. Here is briefly their history.

Medals

Medals came into being as insignia of honour for military merit in the Middle Ages. However, the distinction of golden, silver and bronze medals appeared only after the establishment of modern sports contests. Medals were awarded even at the first contemporary Olympics in Athens (1896) – the winners received silver medals, and the second-place competitors received bronze ones. In 1900 most of the participants in the Games did not receive medals but cups and trophies. The current three-medal format was introduced at the 1904 Olympics ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold medal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold_medal)).

Nowadays there are strict requirements for the prizes. The medals must have a diameter of at least 60 mm and a thickness of at least 3 mm. The gold and silver medals must be made of silver of 92.5% assay, and the first place one must be gilded with at least six grams of fine gold. Third-place medals must be made of bronze (Groote 1977, 167).

National Flag Hoisting

The national flag hoisting during the awards ceremony was introduced in the protocol even as early as the first modern Olympic Games in Athens (1896) and has never been omitted since. It is typologically analogous to the solemn announcement of the winner's native city in Antiquity.

In fact, in the Olympic circles there is substantial opposition to this ritual, the argument being that the national flag hoisting fuels sports nationalism. A proposal for cancelling it was even widely discussed during the meetings of the 10th and 11th Congress of IOC, but the defenders of the ritual won the vote with a large majority.

The first modern Olympics to this day practise the ritual of hoisting / lowering the national flag of the host country at the opening / closing of the Games.

(Three-tiered) Rostrum

The rostrum was used for the first time in the awards ceremony at the 1930 British Empire Games in Hamilton (in the province of Ontario, Canada). The innovation was immediately adopted and introduced at the Summer Olympics in Los Angeles (1932) and at the Winter Olympics in Lake Placid (1932) (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podium).

Interpretations and analyses

I argue that the current awards ceremony again secretly follows the logic of the Heracles myth though using different vehicles of expression.

The establishment of the three-format medals (golden, silver and bronze) undoubtedly rests on the myth of the Golden Age recorded in Ancient Greece (Hesiod), in Ancient Rome (Ovid), in the Bible and other religious texts (India, China, the Aztec Empire). Interestingly, the words metal and medal are homonymous in most European languages though their etymology is different (medal, from Ital. *medaglia*; metal from Gr. *metallon* via Lat. *metallum*).

I shall briefly recount the myth as it occurs in Hesiod's version: During the Golden Age people led a carefree life; they did not know sorrow; the earth generously endowed them with all goods, and death was just like a short sleep. The Silver Age was more disagreeable; infancy lasted a hundred years and old age came all of a sudden; people became too haughty to respect the gods. The Bronze Age was vigorous and terrible; people were not familiar with iron and yet managed to destroy each other.

Following the myth logic, awarding medals of different metals to the athletes means their symbolic similarity to the generations of the Golden, the Silver and the Bronze Ages accordingly.

The three-tiered rostrum is a symbol of the space of the gods (the heavens). My arguments:

The sequence of gold-silver-bronze indicates a descending cosmic-space hierarchy: gold = the sun, the stars; silver = the moon; copper = the vault of heaven (copper as a regular epithet of heaven is to be found in the Egyptian "Book of the Dead", in Homer's poems and in Bulgarian folk riddles). On the other hand, there is a myth of almost universal spread that the earth and heaven once were in close proximity, but came apart because of ancient people's sinfulness. The concord of this evidence can lead us to the reconstruction of the notion of three heavenly spheres, formed during the three bygone epochs. (We can remember that in primordial times gods used to reward mortals by turning them into stars).

The hoisting of the national flag is a symbolic presentation of the very act of the winner's ascension to the gods (on Olympus, in the heavens). My argument is:

Flag symbolism is closely tied to cosmos – on a vast number of state flags are pictured images of: the Sun, the Moon, or the stars. The message of

this flag imagery is: the mundane state is a counterpart of the heavenly body, and the state is eternal in the same way as the luminaries are.

The act of hoisting the flag is fixed by analogy to the sun-rise, and its hauling down – by analogy to the sun-set (this is quite evident in the civil and army ritual of hoisting the flag in the morning, and its hauling down in the evening).

This symbolic logic serves as basis of the turn over the flag in time of war (it is analogue to the sunrise from west) – the both ideas suggest apocalyptic imagery. Thus the practice of the flag lowering at half mast in days of national mourning can be explained: this position shows the position of the celebrated heroes between earth and heaven – they are not alive (and are not part of our world), but they are still not immortal (and have not reached heaven).

National anthems

National flag hoisting, however, is accompanied by the sound of the national anthem. How we can interpret this fact?

Let us assume the following hypothesis as an axiom – I will try to prove it in another context. Religious hymns and the national anthems that arose under their influence represent a musical-poetic speech gesture addressed by a community to God. This gesture, manifested in different modes between the poles of spell and prayer, expects a response from the sky, a response expressed not through words, but through a miracle. This communicative situation is evident in the classic royal anthems (like “God Save the King”) and is concealed in cases, where marches (like the Marseillaise) acquire the status of national anthems. Even in these cases, however, the communicative situation is perhaps blurred though it still exists: the difference is that the community does not address God, but an imaginary image, presented by symbols, such as the flag, the homeland-heaven, etc. Therefore, we can assume that the ritual act that is performed to the sound of the national anthem is a prayer in a profound ritual sense, or, it is a symbolic copy of the expected miracle whose divine sanction is required by the act of singing. Or, in other words: the anthem is the appeal to Heaven to sanction the wonder, while the ritual act is a symbolic copy of the expected miracle (the first is based on the efficacy of verbal magic, the second on the efficacy of imitative magic).

The national flag hoisting in this sense is a symbolic rite of ascension of man into Heaven: the flag is a metonymy of the athlete/s; the anthem further is a spell guaranteeing the efficacy of the ritual. The same harmony between words and actions can be observed with respect to the Olympics as a whole: the solemn declaration of the opening of the Games is accompanied by the Olympic flag hoisting, while the closing ceremony ends with the lowering of the flag. Between these two moments the passage between earth and Heaven is ritually open (for a few days every 4 years) and the Olympic flame is a prayer to the gods to accept the most worthy men among them.

Hence I can conclude that flag hoisting at the awards ceremony symbolizes the act of the hero's ascension to heaven – in fact, we witness the making of a new (sports) star, and this is the happy ending of the Heracles story.

New Heracles Myth

Several facts in the history of the establishment of the modern Games support this hypothesis.

Coubertin vigorously opposed the participation of women at the Games at least twice: in 1900, when he was excluded from the organization committee (Kun 1982, 239), and in 1912, when he was active in it (Groote 1977, 37). Moreover, in 1911, he insisted that the program for the Games in Stockholm must include these sports that serve as a criterion for masculinity (Kun 1982, 234). What could be the explanation? To think that Coubertin was being discriminatory is ridiculous when his adherence to principles is taken into account; he has proven, however, to be particularly sensitive toward the symbolism of the ritual messages. It can be assumed that he did not wish weaken the Heracles myth as reproduced by the Olympics. (In Hellenic mythology a narrative for deified woman does not exist.)

Another point is that in 1894 a proposal for an Olympic award for achievement in the field of mountaineering was put forward (Coubertin 1983, 112). It was never accepted, but its appearance is symptomatic: climbing inaccessible peaks in real space is an analogue of the symbolic champion's ascension into Heaven reconstructed here. In other words the conquest of Everest today 'replaces' the ascension to Olympus. This is evident from the historical fact that the development of the Olympic movement strongly inflamed the passion for climbing the highest peak on the planet (Coubertin 1983, 149).

Let us draw attention to something else. The ritual of releasing doves into the sky took place even at the first modern Olympics in Athens 1896. The invention probably compensated for the lack of ceremony producing the symbolic meaning of the competition. How? The dove is important not only as a symbol of peace for the establishment of the modern version of sacred truce, but as a symbol of flight and ascension. The release of doves could be interpreted as a functional analogue to the altar smoke sent up to the gods in Antiquity.

Finally, I shall mention that the practice of having the Olympic flame lighted by famous champions gradually emerges. And since we know that fire is a privilege of the gods and is the 'substance' of the sun and the stars, we can conclude that the fact the champions rule over fire means that they are recognized as gods or stars.

The suspicion that championship in the Olympics is not just a victory against competitors, but an act with cosmological dimensions can be proved through a particular case – the marathon course in 1896. The competition was invented by the French academic, Michel Bréal, and took place on the route run by Pheidippides to announce victory over the Persians. The marathon race was the most symbolically important event not only in 1896 but for decades afterwards also. In Athens, the prizes for the marathon's winner, if a Greek, were previously announced. They included: a golden bowl, a wine barrel, a free meals' voucher for a year, free tailoring and barbering for life, 100 kilograms of chocolate, 10 cows, 30 bulls and – it is not a joke – the hand of the daughter of the Greek businessman and philanthropist, Averoff, with a dowry of 1 million drachmas (Kun 1982, 238). After the competition the winner, the Greek postman Spyridon Louis, was carried on their hands by the princes Constantine and George while the ladies showered him with their expensive jewelry (Coubertin 1983, 65). This scenario contains all the signs of mythological deification: ritual restoration of a mythologized historical precedent (the Pheidippides' act is the subject of *imitatio*), ascension into Heaven (carrying on hands), performed by princes (only the divine authority dominates over the royal), promised wedding with the 'royal' daughter (who can be married only to a star-crossed hero or to a god), and sacrifice (the gifts of jewelry). We are observing spontaneous acts symbolically producing the same message as the subsequent award ceremony.

If we compare the ancient and the current ritual, we can conclude that in Antiquity the awards ceremony overtly follows the logic of the Heracles

myth narrative; while the modern ceremony rather conceals it. At the same time the modern ritual reads the three-epochs myth in the negative or constructs it as an anti-myth: if the myth argues that the invincible heroes of ancient times have irrevocably departed, the ritual uncovers their representatives in our generation.

REFERENCES

- Bazunov, Boris. 1980. *Estafeta olimpijskogo ognya [The Olympic Fire Really]*. Moskva: FiS.
- Chamoux, François. 1979. *Gryckata civilizaciya prez arhaichnata i klasicheskata epoha [Greek Civilization in the Archaic and Classical Age]*. Sofia: Bylgarski hudojnik.
- Coubertin, Pierre de. 1983. *Olimpijski memoari. – Duhovnoto nasledstvo na Pier dyo Kuberten [Olympic Memories. – The Spiritual Heritage of Pierre de Coubertin]*. Vol. 1. Sofia: Medicina i fizkultura.
- Groote, Roger de. 1977. *Le livre des jeux Olympiques*. Paris: [-].
- Havin, Boris. 1977. *Vsichko za olimpijskite igri [All about the Olympic Games]*. Sofia: Medicina i fizkultura.
- Kiljunen, Kimmo. 2008. *Enciklopedia na stranite po sveta i tehnite znamena [Encyclopedia of the Countries in the World and Their Flags]*. Sofia: Trud.
- Kun, László. 1982. *Vseobshchaya istoria fizicheskoy kul'tury i sporta [General History of Physical Culture and Sport]*. Moskva: Raduga.
- Mayer, Otto. 1960. *A travers les anneaux olympiques*. Genève: P. Cailler.
- Mező, Ferenc. 1956. *Les jeux olympiques modernes*. Budapest: Pannónia.
- Rivkin, Boris. 1969. *V doline Alfeya. Olimpijskie igry v iskusstve drevnej Grecii [In the Valley of Alpheus. Olympic Games in Ancient Greek Art]*. Moskva: Iskusstvo.
- Shanin, Jurij. 2001. *Olimpiya. Istoriya antichnogo atletizma [Olympia. History of Ancient Athleticism]*. Sanct Petersburg: Aleteya.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Grigor Har. Grigorov was born in 1976 in Sofia. He defended his PhD thesis “A Literary Anthropology of the Heroic. Constructing Nationally Significant

Personification” in the department of Literary Theory at the Institute of Literature, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Currently he is Assistant Professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with the Ethnographic Museum, BAS. His present interests are focused on genre and ritual theory, national anthems and jokelore.

THE RITUAL OF CHANGE IN A REMOTE AREA: CONTEMPORARY ARTS AND THE RENEWAL OF A POST-COLD WAR PLACE

Miha Kozorog

Abstract

The article discusses the agency of the public arts event ‘Topolo Station’ in relation to the ‘remote area’ of Slavia Friulana in northeast Italy on the Italian-Slovenian border. Various aspects of the area are analysed by using Edwin Ardener’s theory of ‘remoteness’. The area’s history is also described, with a focus on mass emigration, ethnic conflict, and the Cold War. The event is discussed as an event that models lived reality to stimulate the production of a more cosmopolitan place.

Key words

Remoteness, emigration, ethnic conflict, Cold War, event-that-models, contemporary arts, place-making, Stazione di Topolò / Postaja Topolove, Slavia Friulana (Italy).

Introduction

The article discusses the public arts event “Topolo Station” [*Stazione di Topolò / Postaja Topolove*], and its agency in relation to the ‘remote area’ of Slavia Friulana in the Friuli Venezia Giulia autonomous region in northeast Italy. First, I shall describe what makes this area remote. Important features in this respect include emigration, ethnic conflict and the Cold War. Then I shall discuss what kind of change this internationally noted annual contemporary arts project brings to the area, and especially to the village of Topolò/Topolove, where the event takes place. I shall describe how the movement of artists and publics as well as of art, images and resources, has encouraged a feeling of renewal in the area. The ethnographic data was obtained both on and off location between 2007 and 2012.



*Pic. 1. The village of Topolo from afar –
in the middle of the woods.*



*Pic. 2. The village of Topolo:
75 buildings and less than 30 residents.*

Given the central theme of this collection of texts, the question of what qualifies a contemporary art event as a ritual is surely pertinent. “Ritual” is a controversial concept (Goody 1977) that was first defined within the framework of religious studies, but was later also applied to non-

religious contemporary cultural performances (Manning 1983b; Moore and Myerhoff 1977). Rappaport's definition of ritual as a "[p]erformance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not encoded by the performers" (1992, 249) sounds socially deterministic, since it strips performers of all agency. Nevertheless, in the case of ritual ascribing a certain rigidity to the structure of an event is useful since it allows us to distinguish ritual from other forms of social performance. But how much rigidity defines ritual? Does the mere fact that Topolo Station takes place at the same time at the same location, even if only since 1994, already make the event a ritual? In my opinion it does, since regardless of the annual changes to its programme the event's sequences exhibit a certain regularity of schedules and venues as it has formed over the years. Moreover, I have encountered people at the event who visit it in a ritualistic manner, so to speak, since they associate it with the summer.



Pic. 3. Preparations for "senjam" (July 3, 2011).

The event begins each year at the time of a traditional village religious holiday – *senjam*. *Senjam* is a Roman Catholic procession celebrating the sanctification of the village church in 1847, which departs from the village church to pass through religious spots in the village. It is performed every first Sunday in July, while Topolo Station starts the day before (and lasts for about two weeks). In this way the event at the time of its creation sought

communication with locals, including those who no longer live in the village but return in numbers for the holiday, while simultaneously it planted in tradition, in the existing order, the seeds of change. It can thus be viewed as a new ritual that was intended to express a creative complementarity with an older one. Because of this it can also be described as play, which Don Handelman defined as the antithesis of ritual. According to him, ritual conveys the message, “Let us believe”, while play conveys the message, “Let us make believe” (in Manning 1983a, 22). Ritual therefore reminds society of the moral order and the way things are, whereas play creates the conditions for a different understanding of things since it refers to what could be. The art festival through its activities thus encouraged an imaginary in which a remote place can become a “global centre” (Bukovaz 2007) where it is possible to live a better life than before. Handelman also showed, however, that ritual and play transition into each other, so that ritual paves the way for play, and play creates the conditions for a new ritual (in Manning 1983a, 22–23) – as when in the village of Topolò/Topolove the traditional village holiday paved the way for contemporary art, which in time became a ritualised form of the “production of locality” (cf. Appadurai 1996, 180–181; Kozorog 2011).



Pic. 4. Topolo Station programme at “senjam” (July 3, 2011).

Contemporary art was introduced into the village in the manner of play, but the actors behind this decision had a clear political goal, which was to use art to stimulate a social transformation. “Public art” (Miles 2010),

which means the intervention of art in public space, was introduced with the intention of encouraging public discourse on the internalised experiences of recent local history. This is connected to life along the Iron Curtain and the expressing of ethnicity and mass emigration. At the same time, artistic play was intended to create new horizons for imagining local reality, together with a dismantling of the past – for example, the internalised Iron Curtain (cf. Cozzi 2009). The aim was to produce a new spatialisation, one that would make the area less geographically isolated and more socially cosmopolitan (cf. Massey 2005). Topolo Station can therefore be described as an “event-that-models” (Handelman 1998), since in it contemporary art assumes the function of “modelling” the lived world, with the aim of providing the starting points for imagining new horizons (see Handelman 1998, xxi–xxv). Art, created in interaction with the local experience of the world, thus became an agency (Gell 2006) for shaping new social perspectives in the concrete environment.



Pic. 5. Installation containing messages of village residents from 2001 to their successors in 2125.



Pic. 6. Opening of a house, renovated by the municipality of Grimacco/Garmak for Topolo Station (July 2, 2011)

Contextualising Slavia Friulana: On mountains and ethnicity

Slavia Friulana is a mountainous area in the northeast of Italy, stretching north to south along the border with Slovenia. Orographically, it represents a clear counterpoint to the Friuli lowlands to the west, while to the east its mountains continue into the Soča Valley region in Slovenia. The area’s western historical boundaries have been based on the contrast between low- and highlands, while to the east it is delineated by a geopolitical border that has existed more or less continually for five centuries, since the

time of the Venetian republic. As is evident from the bilingual names in this article, the area has two official languages – Italian as a majority and Slovene as a minority language. Slovenians were only given official minority status at the national level in 1999 (Vidali 2011, 38).¹ The name *Slavia Friulana*, like some other names (*Sclavonis*, *Schiavonia*, *Slavia Veneta*, etc.), derives from the ethnonym for Slavs. Thus, already at the time of the Venetian republic (and even before), the area's inhabitants were viewed as representing an ethnic 'Other' (Grafenauer 1975, 105; Rutar 1998, 3), as people who speak a Slavic dialect. In certain historical contexts Slovene ethnicity also became a controversial trait of the local population.

Mountains are an important element in assessing the remoteness of an area. However, Edwin Ardener, in his definition of remoteness, emphasised that remote places are defined not so much in terms of topographical as topological space (2007, 214), that is, their phenomenological perception in relation to other places. Remoteness as the experience of a geographical and social position therefore emerges from interactions with the 'outside' world, with those who talk about 'remote places' from privileged centres where dominant discourses about 'Other' people and places are created (2007, 215–218). Since until the fall of the Iron Curtain and Slovenia's integration into the European Union and the Schengen Area a fairly rigid state border stretched along *Slavia Friulana*, this topological context must also be taken into account in assessing the area's remoteness, in addition to its mountainous topography. Thus, from the west the area was perceived as an antipode to the more fertile, urbanised and earlier-industrialised Friuli lowlands and as a place 'on the border', where the perception of the area's inhabitants also included an ethnic categorisation (e.g. Blanchini 1898 and Musoni 1902 in Kalc 1997, 195–196). From the other side, i.e. from the 'centre' to the east, the area was on the other hand perceived primarily as inhabited by 'cross-border Slovenes' who were separated from Slovenia proper and therefore vulnerable (e.g. Rutar [1899]; Bevk 1938 etc.). Thus the dominant external perceptions, which according to Ardener fundamentally inform internal perceptions of remoteness, drew an image of rustic mountain people as a cultural and ethnic 'Other'. An interlocutor from *Slavia Friulana* described to me her experience of 'Otherness':

¹ In the wider area, Friulians also enjoy minority status.

When I was fourteen,² I enrolled at a school in Udine (...). And Udine was not Cividale [the nearest urban centre]. It was more open, and the school was an art school. The teachers were open as well. The first time I heard a good word about my world, it was from a professor who said, 'You come from Slavia Friulana? It's a great culture, you're very rich!' The first time! It opened up a world to me. It was like a light. When the professor said that, it was the first time I felt that [my culture] is rich.

On the subject of people from remote places, Ardener thought that they are attracted to the 'outside world'. In the same way as my interlocutor experienced a new meaning of her own culture in the 'outside world', so the 'outside world' also offers numerous havens for other seekers of 'meaning' from remote areas. The only road, so to speak, "leads from your very doorstep to everywhere", and it is therefore followed by many young people (Ardener 2007, 219). During the 20th century Slavia Friulana became almost completely deserted by following this road. In the village of Topolò/Topolove, which used to be the biggest in its municipality, there were 490 inhabitants in 1891 (Gariup, Gariup and Rucli 1994, 29–30), in 1951 – 276 (Čermelj 1975, 139), while today there are less than 30. Locals³ experience the abandonment of the village, which through overgrowing also shows itself in the landscape, as worrying.

The general history of the mountainous areas of what is today northeast Italy has exhibited seasonal and temporary migrations as a supplement to the mountain agricultural economy since at least the 16th century (Kalc 1997, 194). In the 19th century, with the introduction of a labour market to meet the needs of building infrastructure and urbanisation, emigration became *en masse*, and the time spent away from home also increased (ibid.). However, in the area where the village of Topolò/Topolove is situated, this mass turn to emigration occurred relatively late, i.e. only at the beginning of the 20th century. There is so far no adequate explanation for the unbalanced migration trends in the area (Zanini et al. 2009, 32–33). Nevertheless, seasonal migration was an economic factor in the area even before the 19th century, since the Remondini publishing house had been hiring salesmen

² This was in the second half of the 1970s.

³ By 'locals' I do not mean only the few who live in the village, but also emigrants who remain connected to it and regularly return there.

among the local population since 1750 to sell its wares in eastern countries (the Austrian lands, Hungary, the Balkans etc.) (Zanini et al. 2009). When in the 20th century the people of this corner of Slavia Friulana did start to emigrate, however, they did so in very large numbers, which radically shifted the local economy from a peasant one to one dependent on migrants. It is estimated that the percentage of migrants within the local population rose from 2.6% in the 1890s to 12% (as much as 30% in some villages) during the first decade of the 20th century (Kalc 1997, 195).

With the “demographic collapse following the dramatic population outflow in the second half of the 20th century,” the issue of migration gained a political dimension (Zanini et al. 2009, 30). Because it was possible to ethnically categorise the migrants as Slovenes, some authors (but above all Slovenes in Slavia Friulana) criticised migration as a political instrument for weakening the ethnically Slovene character of Slavia Friulana (e.g. Clavora and Ruttar 1990). Ethnicity as a political issue had already appeared immediately after the annexation of the area to the Kingdom of Italy in 1867, when authorities began to prohibit the use of Slovene in official matters (Rutar 1998, 171–173). The state’s stance towards the Slovene language became especially hostile during the interwar period under fascism (Kacin Wohinz 2003). The founding of the Republic of Italy after World War 2 ushered in the era of the Cold War, during which Slavia Friulana functioned as a border area within a geopolitical situation of global proportions. In this period, too, its Slovene-speaking inhabitants and those categorised as ethnically Slovene were viewed with distrust, which took the form of surveillance and intimidation by paramilitary organisations such as *Organizzazione O*, *Gladio* and others (Petricig 1997; Zuanella 1998). Due to Italy’s political interest in the total loyalty of its citizenry along the Iron Curtain, the state, with more or less hidden means of terror, discouraged the public expression of Slovene ethnic identity as recognised on the other side of the Curtain (Cozzi 2009; Stranj 1999, 124–125), which in fact meant the continuation of the pre-war doctrine of “border-area fascism” (Kacin Wohinz 2003). The emigration of Slovene-speaking inhabitants during this period has thus also been linked to restrictions on people’s freedom (Kalc 2002, 145–151) or explained as politically motivated with the aim of weakening the Slovene minority (Clavora and Ruttar 1990). In addition to emigration, in this same period the area’s marginalisation was also reinforced by heavy military presence (Stranj 1999, 22) and various

prohibitions in place along the Iron Curtain (Cozzi 2009), which marked the area as a danger zone.

The politicisation of ethnic identity led to conflicts in which Slovene ethnic identity was locally demonised by use of the labels *Filo-Slavo* and *Filo-Titino*, which associated Slovenes with the ‘communist regime’ in SFR Yugoslavia. Due to the politicisation of language as the fundamental diacritic of Slovene ethnicity (cf. Barth 1969), some speakers of Slovene declared themselves ethnically different to Slovenes and denied the connection between the local Slovene dialect and the Slovene language. This phenomenon is present even today (Cozzi 2009, 153; for an example of ‘scientific’ arguments for the non-Slovene character of ‘Slavs’ in Slavia Friulana, see Jaculin 2007). On the other hand, for the same reasons, cultural organisations became active in politically representing Slovenes. In such circumstances, ethnic and cultural discourse became the primary factor in social dynamics.

Slavia Friulana experienced a historical turning point in the 1990s with the end of Yugoslavia and the start of new European integration processes. Cross-border projects in cooperation with actors from the Soča Valley area and a different politicisation of the ethnic question in the spirit of European integration (see Vidali 2011) set the stage for a new spatialisation of the remote area (cf. Shields 1991). Despite these positive changes, however, Slavia Friulana remains marked by remoteness. According to Ardener, one of the central paradoxes of remoteness is the constant invention of development projects that are aimed towards securing a better future for a remote area, but which most often leave behind only remains and ruins (2007, 218–219). Thus remoteness is today being constituted anew through survival strategies that seek competitive advantages in the contemporary world (cf. Berglund 2011; Green 2005). These can be found in tourism, culture, energy resources and human potential (Forum 2002), but may also include environmentally controversial energy and tourism mega-projects. Some see an alternative to the latter “harsher” forms of “development” in the “cosmopolitan discourse” (cf. Harvey 2009) of contemporary art.

A global station in a remote area

Don Handelman suggested that events can be studied in either a diachronic or synchronic perspective (1998, 17). We can observe their development through time, or pay attention to their constitution and plans, forms, concepts, etc., which he termed the “event design” (1998). In the case

of Topolo Station, I shall focus mainly on the latter, even though the event has undergone an evolution that could be the subject of a separate discussion.

Ardener says of remote areas that they are full of strangers, among whom one often finds “innovators” (2007, 218), i.e. people with ideas for various projects to ‘develop’ such places. I shall return to his claim about the quantity of strangers, but first let me say that the initiator of the art project in the village of Topolò/Topolove is an immigrant. He described his idea to me thus:

I lived in very peripheral places. Mountainous, or in Tuscany, but in non-central places. Not in the cities. The second important thing I would like to say is that it's not true that places like impoverished mountain areas are also places where it's no longer possible to... (...) A conclusion that I often find myself in disagreement with is when somebody thinks that contemporary culture, contemporary art, contemporary technologies harm such places because they destroy their soul. I think, and I may be wrong, but I think that a place that continues its life solely through putting up old songs, old rituals tied to a different agrarian world that does not exist anymore, and similar things, actually wants to bring about its own death. But when you show that the place is capable of producing something that could also have been produced in Berlin, Ljubljana, Milan or Turin, it means that the place is still alive. That's why creating contemporary art, experimenting in places like this, is not insulting them, but is rather a demonstration that a culture is still alive. In that place.

In an area where for decades ‘culture’ was the basis of social dynamics since it defined interethnic relations, this view of culture provoked a certain uneasiness because it juxtaposed cosmopolitan contemporary art and ethnic heritage. By launching contemporary art as a motor for the area’s future and with its implicit critique of heritagisation (cf. Smith 2006) as inhibiting the future, the project certainly did open up a contestable field. Despite differing attitudes towards it among locals, however, a few local intellectuals supported the project because they saw it as an opportunity to ‘heal’ the place, which had been exhausted by the Iron Curtain and interethnic conflict. One of the first to extend her hand to the project explained to me:

[T]he idea was..., to me a strong one is whether art can be a special, different language, with which we [ethnically divided locals] can again begin to talk to each other.

At a different opportunity, she also stated:

From this comes the idea of building a station, a space of communication where hospitality is guaranteed. This way you overturn your history, which is telling you that you have no future except for the nothing that remains. We turned our perspective around and said: 'No!'

The findings above present us with an image of Slavia Friulana at the time of the project's creation in which we see a place characterised by a small number of people divided. Contemporary art was intended to introduce into this environment a new language that would describe it not in the simplified terms offered by heritage constructions of culture, but in terms of multilayered interpretations of local reality through which a plurality of starting points for imagining the area's future could emerge. Here it is worth noting Doreen Massey's (2005, 141) conceptualisation of place as the 'throwing togetherness' of people, things, spaces, histories and possibilities, which inevitably elicits negotiations around identities, policies and the future of a place. Contemporary art was therefore understood precisely as an intervention in a place where in the words of one of the project's collaborators "politics failed, (...) because it was not that corner where [often ethnically defined] sides talked to each other, [but where they] were always one against the other", and where "culture as culture, too, was always either the culture of Slovenes or the culture of Italians." Contemporary art was neither 'Slovene' nor 'Italian', but rather by its very 'nature' tended towards a cosmopolitan production of messages.⁴

The project aimed to create such messages by means of immediate artistic intervention into the place itself, which, however, can only be achieved on the basis of an artist's knowledge of the place, its history and its social narratives. Artists were therefore invited to live among the locals, whereby the project's creators also wished to encourage the opening up of the place to outsiders. This event policy was connected to two historical

⁴ Cosmopolitanism is here understood as "imagination that is articulated in cultural models of world openness that enable novel understandings and explanations of the local/global nexus" (Nowicka and Rovisco 2009, 6).

and symbolic contexts: on the one hand Slavia Friulana's history of emigration and migrant cosmopolitanism, and on the other the closing and decosmopolitanisation of the area during the Cold War. Already Kant's pivotal definition of cosmopolitanism concerns the right of individuals to temporarily sojourn outside their home country (see, e.g., Harvey 2009, 17–18). In this sense Topolo Station leaned on the idea that society in Slavia Friulana had in the past produced migrants and therefore had been an open and hospitable society, since during their travels migrants learned to appreciate the hospitality that they encountered. This kind of social attitude was according to my previously cited interlocutor damaged by the capillary system of control over local villagers during the Cold War, which seeded mistrust among them. The contemporary arts event thus aimed to reawaken cosmopolitan hospitality:

Those who have always been emigrants know what hospitality is. They know what it means to be accepted in a house or not. In our DNA..., this was a long time ago, like when I told you about 'guziranjje' [selling door-to-door] around the world [the Remondini salesmen – see above], these people had a clear idea. And the local, peasant culture is also very accepting, but even more so the culture of those who travel for work. And so this culture of ours changed so much [with the Cold War] that everyone became very closed. So closed that the idea [of the project] was totally... It absolutely overturned everything. It was truly powerful. Because we asked in the village from the very beginning: "Look, the idea is that you open your houses, that you will, if artists arrive, you will..., don't be afraid because they only come here for their work." Everyone in Topolo..., well, maybe not all, there are always those who are against, but let's say that on the whole the village welcomed the idea...⁵

Contemporary art, especially installation, performed an ethnographic and conversational function (Calzadilla and Marcus 2006; Lippard 2010), since a work of art was (conditionally speaking) defined as a public exhibition

⁵ I base my article on the assumption that locals have accepted the project as their own. However, local attitudes are, of course, not homogenous, but form a plurality that also contains pronouncedly negative views. Spatial limitations do not allow for a more detailed analysis of these relations, so let me just give a local's explanation that if the locals had not accepted the project, it would certainly no longer exist.

of ethnography intended to introduce into public discourse discussions about the past and future. The project's creators wished to publicly address the problematic aspects of local reality, and therefore numerous works of art commented on life along the border, the situation of the Slovene minority and emigration. Calzadilla and Marcus emphasise that ethnography-based installations leave behind a public discourse (2006, 109). Because ethnographic installations talk about concrete people, the latter are moved to reflect on and interpret them. The project therefore functions through 'modelling' (Handelman 1998, xxi–xxv) a concrete social reality, providing it with imagination potential that enables it to trigger new events and shape a better place to live in.

On the basis of individual conversations I have had with those involved, I can state that some installations had quite a strong impact on the consciousness and emotions of locals. But I would like to point to another, more tangible (and perhaps also more banal) effect of the project, which is that it has brought outside recognition and an imaginary of inclusion into supralocal spaces to the remote area and its inhabitants. Even though I am discussing first of all a single village, I nevertheless hold that the project has also had a broader impact across Slavia Friulana. For example, I asked a gentleman, about whom I was convinced was from the village since I encountered him at the festival year after year, why he thought the festival is important for Topolò/Topolove. He responded that it is not important only for this particular village but for the whole of Slavia Friulana. He also told me that he himself is not from the village and that he does not even have relatives there, but that he nevertheless visits and helps out as a volunteer because the project represents a change for the broader local environment. What is more, he even claimed that with the project the remote area is carving out new geographies, which in his opinion should also be recognised in the eastern centre of dominant discourses, namely Slovenia:

And [the project brings change] not only for Slavia Friulana, but also for Slovenia. Today what's happening here is talked about all over the world. It has brought [change] for both me and you [as someone from Slovenia]! Today the whole world knows about us!

In Ardener's words, "[r]emote areas are obsessed with communications" (2007, 219). That is, they are obsessed with demonstrating their connectedness to 'the world', which sometimes makes it seem as if

they are not really remote at all. In fact, however, without remoteness this issue would not occupy them to the same extent. This is one of the reasons that Topolo Station has been received favourably by locals. The project developed the imaginary of the place's connectedness to wider spaces on several levels, but primarily through the presence of artists from various parts of the world in the local environment itself. "You meet lots of people (...) and those who came the first years, it seems to me, come back just like our people, I see them again," commented an older lady from the village, comparing visitors to the event to local emigrants. This comparison requires further consideration, however. The place had historically already been part of a supralocal world, but through emigration processes, i.e. through processes that led to abandoned villages and feelings of personal loss among locals. With the project, the place has become 'globalised' through a different kind of migration, one which positions the place as a centre to where not only emigrants regularly return but to where, with certain 'cultural' aims, also come 'significant Others' (artists). Artists, who as guests are given the identity of 'Topolonauts', then become representatives of the locality in centres of contemporary art around the world, i.e. in social environments that as part of high culture are by definition different from the worlds of local emigrants. Thus this new form of globalisation has given a new purpose to the reproduction of the place.

Today, of course, imaginaries about the statuses of remote areas in the world are above all shaped through mass media. Contemporary art in the peripheral village of Topolò/Topolove has certainly attracted both numerous visitors and very diverse mass media (from regional to national and international), whereby a certain mythic construction of the spatial aspects of the place has emerged (cf. Shields 1991). An associate of the project recalled:

When the Station became more widely known, people, let's say emigrants, for instance from Milan, started to approach me, saying: "You know what happened to me? I was in Turin one day and [they] said, – Where are you from? – And I said, – I'm from Cividale. – And they didn't know where that was. – Where's Cividale? – It's in Friuli, actually my village is called Topolo. – Ah, of course, Topolo, we've heard of it!" And that's how it began. As a myth about Topolo being more famous than Cividale or Udine. [Laughs.] And that's how this new energy began, the one we ourselves wanted.

Once the village gained media recognition, it was also noticed by centres of power. Thus, for example, in 2012 the *Direzione regionale per i beni culturali e paesaggistici del Friuli Venezia Giulia* ('Regional Directorate for Cultural and Landscape Wealth of Friuli Venezia Giulia') reported on its web page that "[in] March the German travel magazine *GeoSeason* ranked the village of Topolo among the 10 most beautiful villages in Italy."⁶ In the history of the project this kind of recognition almost certainly influenced the allocation of development funds, which is why some locals associate recent reconstruction work in the village with the art project:

M.K.: The reconstruction of the village, when the village was fixed up, was this in any way connected to the Station?

Lady 1: I don't know, (...) maybe because they give more [funds] because this thing [the Station] is here. Maybe they give more, whether to fix the road or to fix things up, because of this thing. It must be useful for something.

Lady 2: Mhm, mhm... [Nodding.]

Lady 1: If it wasn't..., it's better if it's here than if it's not, I think. And I think that if one thinks it through, that's how it is.

Lady 2: That they gave [the funds] because of this Station.

Lady 1: They gave more for here [the place]. Because of the legislation, they (...) fixed, well, they certainly did fix a lot here in Topolo. Maybe they gave more...

Lady 2: ...than to other villages. They chose this village.

However, the reconstruction of the village was only possible with the villagers' cooperation. Associates of the project are therefore convinced that first a new, more positive view of the locality was needed, and only afterwards could locals see the point in physically rebuilding the village. This positive point of view was provided by Topolo Station.

Conclusion

Among the paradoxes of remote areas Ardener lists that they are full of strangers (2007, 218). This does not mean that strangers really appear *en masse*, but more that they stand out, which makes it seem as if they are

⁶ Source: http://www.friuliveneziagiulia.beniculturali.it/notizie-ed-eventi/DBEvents_single_view?dbid=782683 (last checked 25/10/2012).

present in greater numbers, partly because locals often react defensively. In the case of the project discussed here, the claim about the defensive stance towards strangers does bear a grain of truth, especially since the project's main creator, an outsider-innovator, introduced a language of cosmopolitanism that occasionally provoked defensive reactions in the local, primarily ethnically defined culture. This does not, however, represent the totality of local reactions, since the outsider was also viewed with sympathy for opening up the possibility of new forms of communication between the locality and the world at large.

In general, locals were also pleased to meet other outsiders who came to the public arts event, since this made them feel that the all but forgotten place had a future. But a problem arises at this point. Namely, does the event merely model a kind of temporary hope, i.e. more or less just a facade behind which hides a more bitter future for the remote area, or does the area in fact have a future as a centre that would possess greater autonomy in relation to broader contemporary social processes? Even though I have no doubt that numerous things in the area have changed for the better, some problems connected to remoteness remain acute. The main problem is the emigration of young people (Forum 2002). To counteract this, the project's associates have actively encouraged the immigration of interesting 'outsiders' to the area, but have at the same time been faced with a lack of the basic infrastructure required by contemporary artists, especially broadband internet access. Despite its real impact on migration processes, the project thus in no way transcends the broader limitations of the area. The event, therefore, is indeed transforming the geographies of remoteness, but nevertheless remains embedded in them.

In light of all this, is one forced to conclude that flowers have in fact paved the way to hell? Not necessarily, since the event did not simply paint a facade when it presented the remote place for the world to see but also helped develop among locals a certain critical assessment of locality that will perhaps become an agency for further positive change in the area. It has shown that the future has not yet been lost and that it can also be shaped through projects that are not subject to big capital. However, only time will tell what the future has in store for the area.

Rather than with a hypothetical future, I shall therefore conclude with another of Ardener's paradoxes, or, more precisely, a temporary suspension of this paradox. The question is how events like the one discussed here affect

remoteness *in situ*, i.e. during their execution, and why they are useful in this regard. One of the key paradoxes of remote areas, Ardener claims, is that they are “event-rich” or “event-dense” (2007, 221–223). In his view, in non-remote places many things take place ‘automatically’, and therefore not as events, whereas in remote places they attract attention and are ascribed the status of an event. In remote places people react to any ingress of the ‘outside’, and so the quantity of information in remote areas is constantly very high. I claim that a temporary suspension of this paradox appears with an event like Topolo Station. Namely, during such an event the number of strangers (who suddenly outnumber locals) objectively skyrockets, and by implication so does (objectively) the quantity of information (due to human movement, presentations of works of art, media coverage, etc.). At the same time, however, the quantity of information also subjectively shrinks, since the remote place temporarily takes on some aspects of non-remote places (i.e. the threshold of an occurrence becoming an event is raised) and the local can now get lost in the social flow, free from the imperative of constantly reflecting on her own role (her actions have a lesser chance of becoming a local event). In this regard such rituals provide a certain relief to inhabitants of remote places, since in them they can feel more relaxed about themselves and the world.

REFERENCES

- Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ardener, Edwin. 2007. *The Voice of Prophecy and Other Essays*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Barth, Fredrik. 1969. “Introduction.” In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Culture Difference*, edited by Fredrik Barth, 9–38. Bergen and Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Berglund, Eeva. 2011. “Making Space in Finland’s New Economy.” In *Boundless Worlds: An Anthropological Approach to Movement*, edited by Peter Wynn Kirby, 191–209. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Bevk, France. 1938. *Kaplan Martin Čedermac*. Ljubljana: Slovenska matica.
- Bukovaz, Antonella. 2007. “Globalna postaja.” [Unpublished manuscript.] Cividale del Friuli / Čedad: Author’s personal archive.

- Calzadilla, Fernando, and George E. Marcus. 2006. "Artists in the Field: Between Art and Anthropology." In *Contemporary Art and Anthropology*, edited by Arnd Schneider and Christopher Wright, 95–115. Oxford and New York: Berg.
- Čermelj, Lavo. 1975. "Tržaška, goriška in videmska pokrajina: Statistika in imenoslovje." In *Slovinci v Italiji po drugi svetovni vojni*, 119–177. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba; Koper: Primorski tisk; Trieste / Trst: Tržaški tisk.
- Clavara, Ferruccio, and Riccardo Ruttar. 1990. *La comunità senza nome: La Slavia alle soglie del 2000*. Cividale del Friuli / Čedad: Unione emigranti Sloveni del Friuli-Venezia Giulia.
- Cozzi, Donatella. 2009. "'The Inner Frontier': Borders, Narratives, and Cultural Intimacy in Topolò/Topolove." *Traditiones* 38(2): 151–164.
- Forum. 2002. *Forum di sviluppo locale: Atti di un percorso partecipativo (novembre 2001 – novembre 2002)*. Udine: Natisone Gal.
- Gariup, Mario, Renzo Gariup and Renzo Rucli. 1994. *Topolò: Racconto sulle origini di un paese delle Valli del Natisone. / Topolove: Pripoved o koreninah beneške vasi*. Liessa Grimacco / Lesa: Circolo culturale Rečan / Kulturno društvo Rečan.
- Gell, Alfred. 2006. *Umetnost in delovanje: Antropološka teorija*. Ljubljana: Študentska založba.
- Goody, Jack. 1977. "Against 'Ritual': Loosely Structured Thoughts on a Loosely Defined Topic." In *Secular Ritual*, edited by Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff, 25–35. Assen: Van Gorcum.
- Grafenauer, Bogo. 1975. "Samouprava Beneške Slovenije." In *Slovinci v Italiji po drugi svetovni vojni*, 104–109. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba; Koper: Primorski tisk; Trieste/Trst: Tržaški tisk.
- Green, Sarah F. 2005. *Notes from the Balkans: Locating Marginality and Ambiguity on the Greek-Albanian Border*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Handelman, Don. 1998. *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Harvey, David. 2009. *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Jaculin, Giuseppe. 2007. *Gli Slavi del Natisone*. Arti Grafiche Friulane.
- Kacin Wohinz, Milica. 2003. "Fašizem in jugoslovanska manjšina v Italiji." *Trinkov koledar za Beneške Slovence 2003*: 76–79.
- Kalc, Aleksej et al. 2002. *Poti in usode: Selitvene izkušnje Slovencev z zahodne meje*. Koper/Capodistria and Trieste/Trst: Zgodovinsko društvo za južno

- Primorsko, Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Republike Slovenije Koper and Narodna in študijska knjižnica Trst.
- Kalc, Aleksej. 1997. "Selitvena gibanja ob zahodnih mejah slovenskega etničnega prostora: Teme in problemi." *Annales* 10: 193–214.
- Kozorog, Miha. 2011. "Festival Tourism and Production of Locality in a Small Slovenian Town." *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 9(4): 298–319.
- Lippard, Lucy R. 2010. "Further Afield." In *Between Art and Anthropology: Contemporary Ethnographic Practice*, edited by Arnd Schneider and Christopher Wright, 23–33. Oxford and New York: Berg.
- Manning, Frank E. 1983a. "Cosmos and Chaos: Celebration in the Modern World." In *The Celebration of Society: Perspectives on Contemporary Cultural Performance*, edited by Frank E. Manning, 3–30. Bowling Green and London: Bowling Green University Popular Press and University of Western Ontario.
- Manning, Frank E., ed. 1983b. *The Celebration of Society: Perspectives on Contemporary Cultural Performance*. Bowling Green and London: Bowling Green University Popular Press and University of Western Ontario.
- Massey, Doreen. 2005. *For Space*. Los Angeles, London and New Delhi: Sage.
- Miles, Malcolm. 2010. "Clean City: Urbanism, Aesthetics and Dissent." In *Arte pública e cidadania: Novas leituras da cidade criativa*, edited by Pedro de Andrade et al., 33–43. Casal de Cambra: Caleidoscópico.
- Moore, Sally F., and Barbara G. Myerhoff, eds. 1977. *Secular Ritual*. Assen: Van Gorcum.
- Nowicka, Magdalena, and Maria Rovisco. 2009. "Introduction: Making Sense of Cosmopolitanism." In *Cosmopolitanism in Practice*, edited by Magdalena Nowicka and Maria Rovisco, 1–16. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate.
- Petricig, Paolo. 1997. *Pod senco Trikolore*. San Pietro al Natisone / Špeter: Lipa.
- Rappaport, Roy A. 1992. "Ritual." In *Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments: A Communication-centered Handbook*, edited by Richard Bauman, 249–260. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rutar, Simon. 1998. *Beneška Slovenija: Prirodnozanski in zgodovinski opis (15 podob)*. Cividale del Friuli / Čedad: Združenje Evgen Blankin.
- Shields, Rob. 1991. *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Smith, Laurajane. 2006. *Uses of Heritage*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Stranj, Pavel. 1999. *Slovensko prebivalstvo Furlanije - Julijske Krajine v družbeni in zgodovinski perspektivi*. Trieste/Trst: Slovenski raziskovalni inštitut.
- Vidali, Zaira. 2011. "The Socio-political and Ideological-cultural Elements of the

Italian Nation and the National Minority Question in Italy.” *Razprave in gradivo* 65: 36–59.

Zanini, Alba, Aleksej Kalc, Alberto Milano and Alessandro Giacomello. 2009. *Guziranje – dalla Schiavoniavenera all’Ingheria con le stampe dej Remondini – z Beneškega na Ogrsko s tiskovanami Remondini – from Venetian Schavonia to Hungary with the Remondini prints*. Udine: Comune di stregna.

Zuanella, Natalino. 1998. *Mračna leta Benečije: Dejavnosti tajnih organizacij v vzhodni Furlaniji*. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Miha Kozorog is a researcher at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Ljubljana. His main research topics include popular culture, tourism, and place-making. He has conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Slovenia and Italy. In 2009 he published a monograph titled *Anthropology of a Tourist Destination in Formation: Place, Festivals and Local Identity in the Tolminska Region* (in Slovenian).

**RITUALS OF MIGRANT COMMUNITIES:
CHANGING CALENDARS AND
TRANSMISSION OF TRADITIONS**

THE RITUAL GAMES OF THE SCOTTISH DIASPORA IN THE UNITED STATES

Laurent Sébastien Fournier

Abstract

The Highland games of Scotland can be described as yearly public performances mixing athletic sports together with folk music, traditional dances, and other entertaining events. They can be found in several locations in Scotland and abroad, in different countries of the Commonwealth, in some European countries, in Canada, and in the United States. This paper considers the Highland games within the frame of the ritual year for two reasons: First, all the games follow a series of ritual patterns; and second, all of them occur only once a year in a given place and shape the ritual calendar for many Scots and people of Scottish descent. As such, the Highland games can be considered as 'profane rituals', reproducing every year the same activities in a given place for a given audience. The author focuses on what the games teach about the impact of migrations on the ritual calendar of the Scottish Diaspora. Fieldwork allows a systematic, comparative study of the games. It considers the Scottish Highland games as a specific 'genre' of ritual events and emphasizes some of the significant differences among them. The case of the Highland games performed in the United States of America is especially interesting because it opens a reflection on the connections between the Highland games, the Scottish national culture, and the Scottish Diaspora. This type of study may eventually help clarify the role of rituals in an increasingly intercultural, globalized world.

Key words

Highland games, Scotland, United States, Diaspora, history, anthropology.

This paper examines, from both historical and anthropological perspectives, the Highland games that are exported to the United States by Scottish migrants. These games have been performed in the United States from the nineteenth century onwards and have in some cases reached a massive audience in the second half of the twentieth century. Such yearly events use athletics, but also folk music and dance, to reinvent 'Scottishness' far from the motherland. Their organizers often add innovative features to the programs traditionally found in Scotland. Occasionally the American games even become the new standard and bring significant changes to the

Scottish games from Scotland. Looking at the calendar of the American Highland games helps encompass the ritual year of the Scottish Diaspora by identifying specific places and times. It also enlightens the diffusion of British sporting practices worldwide and reassesses the history of games and sports.

1. Highland Games

I will examine here the Highland games of Scotland, which can roughly be described as yearly public performances mixing athletic sports together with folk music, traditional dances, and other entertaining events¹. Highland games were codified in the nineteenth century but they are often given an older origin and connected with the old Scottish clan system. A special feature of Highland games, however, is that they do not only happen in the Highlands of Scotland. They don't even have any relation with the geographical term of highlands in general, as a specialist of the games puts it:

Strange but true: The highest Highland games in the world are the Eastern Sierra Games at Mammoth Mountain, California, USA. At 9000 feet above sea level, they are truly high land games. The lowest games are the annual games at Swifterband, the Netherlands, which are seven meters below the sea (Webster 2011, 276).

The Highland games can be found in the Lowlands of Scotland and even abroad, in different countries of the Commonwealth like New Zealand or Australia, in some European countries, in Canada, and in the United States. The way these games managed to spread worldwide offers a good example of the diffusion of a national culture. Historical evidence shows the role of the Scottish migrants in the spreading of such a culture. Here I will consider the Highland games within the frame of the ritual year because of two reasons: First, all the games follow a series of ritual patterns; and second, all of them occur only once a year in a given place and shape the ritual calendar of many Scots and people of Scottish descent today. As such, the Highland games can be considered as 'profane rituals', reproducing every year the same activities

¹I am grateful to Emily Lyle and her colleagues from the School for Scottish Studies in Edinburgh who opened the gates of Scottish culture for me and helped me more than once in my fieldwork. I have been examining Scottish culture since 2006, which drives me to some comparisons between the Mediterranean area rituals, my previous field of interest, and Scottish ones.

in a given place for a given audience. I will first describe this special sort of games; then I will focus on what they can teach us about the impact of migrations on the ritual calendar of the Scottish Diaspora.

2. Ethnography of the Games

Although I had already heard about them in books and on television, the first Highland games I went to were in Stirling, Scotland, in 2008. According to the leaflet popularizing the program of the games, the visitors could choose among different activities happening at the same time². One part of the area was devoted to the sports, especially the athletics. These sports mainly consisted in throwing heavy weights, stones, hammers, and eventually in ‘tossing the caber’, which is one of the most spectacular and attractive sports found in the events³. These activities, usually known as ‘the heavies’, are connected with mythical times, when athletics were used as a means to select the Scottish clan’s best warriors. Other competitions are organized, such as wrestling, the ‘tug of war’, and a set of different contests called ‘novelties’, which in general are less serious or even considered as amusing⁴.

In the Stirling games of 2008, the organizers had chosen to emphasize karate, a sheep dog (herding) competition, and an entertaining haggis-eating contest⁵. They explained that karate could be considered as local because this Asian martial art had now been taught in Stirling for more than 20 years. The local dojo had been invited to present some karate demonstrations on the main scene of the games. In other locations many other attractions

² This feature is typical for modern and newly invented festivals. I have shown elsewhere (Fournier 2006) that the traditional festivals used only one central ritual frame in order to get everybody staying together. When the festivals get concerned with mass tourism and with people coming from outside the organising community, they use to split apart and to propose different activities at the same time.

³ The official throwing events are to throw or ‘put’ the light 17 lb. stone with a run-up, put the heavy 26 lb. stone standing style with no run-up, throw the light 16 lb. hammer, throw the heavy 22 lb. hammer, throw the light 28 lb. weight for distance, throw the heavy 56 lb. weight for distance, throw the 56 lb. weight for height, and toss the long pole, or ‘caber’. For a description, see Webster (2011, 175–184).

⁴ According to Redmond (1971), contests such as the wheelbarrow race or the sack race were common features in the nineteenth-century games. Today, they are frowned upon by the organizers as not being ‘serious’ enough.

⁵ Haggis is a Scottish national dish which has been emphasized by the poet Robert Burns (1759–1796). It consists in a pudding containing sheep’s pluck, onion, oatmeal, spices and traditionally cooked in the animal’s stomach.

can be recorded, depending on the organizer's imagination or on the local context. The sports are also often complemented by some amateur running, cycling, or jumping. Another part of the area is devoted to Highland dancing, where traditional dances are performed as competitions. Whereas the sports mostly attract the men, the girls and women usually take part in the dances. The different champions in sports and dances are awarded trophies and traditional pipe bands regularly parade during the day. Pipers also have their own competitions, with solo pipers being awarded trophies. Last but not least, a part of the area is concerned with drinking, eating, and the fun fair.

In Scotland, the season of the games is the summer, with most of the local Highland games occurring between June and September. Organizers explain that summer is the best season to have a good weather for outdoor sports and that it attracts local tourists as well as the Scottish emigrants who are taking a trip back to their homeland. The games have been held during the summer since the nineteenth century, and there is no evidence of an older tradition of summer games. Indeed, in the past, it was customary to have the games at this time to allow some important dignitaries to patronize the event. However, the organization of the games in the summer is now so much accepted that it can be considered as an important milestone of the Scottish ritual year.

3. Comparing the Games

Since my first experience in Stirling, Scotland, I have been to several other Highland games and have discovered that in spite of many differences, some features – the heavies, the dancing, the pipe bands, the novelties and the fair – were essential to the games and could be found everywhere. This invites a systematic comparative study of the games, and leads to an examination of the Scottish Highland games as a specific 'genre' of ritual events⁶. Among some of the significant differences between the games are the following:

Their age: Some of the games were founded in the nineteenth century, after Queen Victoria's setting in Balmoral castle in the Scottish Highlands, while others are only 20 or 30 years old, like the Stirling games. The older games are usually connected with romanticism and with the birth of a

⁶ I use the term 'genre' here as it is used in literature: a set of works (or facts) answering comparable formal criteria and characteristics.

Scottish national consciousness; whereas the younger games answer the need to attract tourism or to reinforce a community feeling in today's increasingly individualistic society.

Their location: Games take place in cities, small towns, villages, or even in the countryside – in both high and low elevations.

Their sociology: Some of the games are more popular and attractive for the working class, while others are still deeply connected with the local elites and with the gentry who often patronizes the games.

Their relation to sport ethics: Professional or amateur competitions obey established rules of play, according to the game.

Their variant forms: This refers to the way they arrange the different parts of the ritual, with some Highland games being more specialized in sports, some others in music, or in dancing, etc., which connects each of them with different specialized audiences.

Their attention to tourism: Many tour operators, in Edinburgh for instance, propose trips to some of the games, whereas other games are not influenced by tourism and thus remain mostly confidential and local events.

A consideration of all these different criteria allows an extensive mapping of the games and an exploration of the structure and the limits of this ritual 'genre'. Such a comparative study can be carried out in Scotland, among the hundred or more Highland games and gatherings available through the tourist office calendar in Edinburgh⁷. But it is also interesting to build up a comparison at a broader scale between the Highland games in Scotland and the Highland games abroad, with a goal of identifying and understanding their significant similarities and differences.

4. Highland Games Abroad: the Case of the United States

As I have mentioned, the Scottish Highland games appear to be a specific 'genre' of ritual events because they are at once presented as traditional, related to the Scottish national culture, and yet they have spread worldwide through a truly international network of athletes and performers. There would be a lot to say, for instance, about the recent Europeanization of the Highland games, with athletes coming from Hungary, Scandinavia, the Baltic countries, the Netherlands and France, to mention only a few

⁷ A number of lists are available online for the international audiences, for instance on: international.visitscotland.com/content/pdf/fr/4005947.

countries where the games have developed. But here I would like to focus on the case of the United States.

Historically the Highland games in the United States are connected with the Scottish immigration, which began in the eighteenth century. A ship named “The Thistle”, known as the Scottish equivalent of the “Mayflower”, brought 350 Scottish migrants to North Carolina in 1739 (see Meyer 1961). The Culloden defeat in 1746 and the 1747 Proscription Act forbade the Scottish garb, kilts, bagpipes, Highlander meetings in Scotland, and from 1760 onwards an economic policy known as “The Clearances” further lessened the Highlanders rights in Scotland⁸. While the English landlords became more and more powerful in Scotland, the Scots began to emigrate in massive numbers.

Little by little, during the nineteenth century, a great number of Scottish societies and clubs were founded among the Scottish immigrants. In the United States and in Canada, several “Caledonian Clubs” began to organize sports in the biggest cities⁹. The first record of a Scottish sport meeting in America dates from 1836 in New York. In the second half of the nineteenth century these meetings often attracted several thousands of people and they influenced the birth of the modern athletics and ‘track and field’ sports. Sport historians have also emphasized the role of the Scottish games in the development of university sports at this time in the United States. However, at the end of the nineteenth century the Scottish sports were criticized because of their professionalism. They quickly faded out and were replaced by amateur athletics.

It was only after World War II that a revival of the tradition of Scottish games in the United States could be observed. In 1954 an American journalist named Donald MacDonald discovered the Highland games in Braemar, Scotland, and decided to organize similar games in North Carolina, his home¹⁰. This is known as the origin of one of the biggest Highland games in the United States, the “Grandfather Mountain Highland games”, near Linville, North Carolina. MacDonald’s idea was to pay a tribute to the first Scots who came to the United States in the eighteenth century, but also to

⁸ On the influence of the Clearances on the invention of the Scottish nation, see Prebble (1963). For a historical and sociological study of the Highland games, see Jarvie (1991).

⁹ See Redmond (1971) on the United States; Redmond (1982) on Canada.

¹⁰ See MacDonald (2007) for an inside view of the games; Ray (2001) for an external analysis.

build up new connections between the people of Scottish descent in America and their homeland.

Today, there are about 80 Highland games and gatherings across the United States, which represents nearly the number of games in Scotland. The biggest of them, in Pleasanton, California, claims to bring more than 30,000 people together and has been organized for nearly 150 years. Other games, in the East and in the Southern regions of the United States, have been established in the last 30 or 40 years, which invites a reflection on the connections between the Highland games, the Scottish national culture, and the Scottish Diaspora.

5. Highland Games and Migrations: Re-shaping the Ritual Year

Regarding the question of the ritual year and migrations, different aspects can be emphasized with this Highland games example. It is interesting to note that all these aspects provide information about the impact of migrations on the ritual calendar.

First, it is interesting to note that unlike most migrant rituals, the Scottish rituals can be observed through history. For example, the Scottish Highland games were revived in North Carolina more than 15 generations after the initial migration of so many Scottish citizens from Scotland to the United States. In this context, the relation of the Highland games to the homeland is mostly an imaginary one and connects the games with other events associated with ‘living history’¹¹.

With only a distant link to the historic past, the people performing these rituals are therefore quite free to invent a whole set of new criteria to define what should be or what should not be ‘Scottishness’. Observing the Highland games in the United States brings evidence of specific features being emphasized and of new rituals being invented. For instance, a lot of American Highland games have put great emphasis on the clan system, because many of their participants are interested in genealogy. The old Scottish clan system is revived through “Clan Societies” and the “Council of Scottish Clans and Associations” (COSCA) was founded in the United States in 1974. Significantly, such Clan Societies do not appear in the Scottish Highland games. Moreover, a new special ritual has appeared in the American Highland games under the name of “Kirking of the Tartans”, and

¹¹ For more references on living history, see Fournier (2008).

in 1998, April 6th was adopted as the “Tartan Day” by the American Senate to commemorate “the contribution of generations of American-Scots to the prosperity of modern America”. These examples show well how a national culture can develop in its own way abroad.



The Highland games in the United States have their own organization, media and habits. Journals like the *Scottish-American Journal* or *The Highlander* were published in the nineteenth century. Nowadays, each of the different events has its own brochures and leaflets, which advertise the games and reflect the special ways they are organized. These brochures bring evidence of the many Scottish associations in the United States. They also show that the time of year of the games has changed dramatically in the American context. Whereas most of the Scottish Highland games happen in the summer, Highland games and gatherings in the United States can be set up all year round.

Interestingly, after a period when the motherland was identified as a model to follow, things have begun to change as some of the American Highland games have grown bigger and bigger. From the 1970s onwards,

American athletes went back to compete in Scotland and won a lot of prizes. Among the audience members, many American participants get involved in the Scottish events without having any Scottish family connections. A survey conducted in the beginning of the 1980s has shown that only one third of the Scottish dancers in America had Scottish names (Berthoff 1982). Such numbers show again that self-identification to Scotland is more a matter of personal taste than a matter of ancestral descent.

Sometimes the American games even become the new standard and thus effect changes in the Scottish games from Scotland. This is especially true among the athletes who use training methods devised by prominent American coaches. In spite of the national image that they carry, Highland games have become a melting-pot, widely open to the influences of a modern, commercial, and globalized world culture. As such, they can happen anywhere and some of them only keep a very loose connection with their Scottish origin.

Within this context, the Highland games offer an image of Scottishness that is partly disconnected from other aspects of Scottish culture. It is significant to note that some Scottish nationalists have criticized the Highland games because they emphasize the tartans and old-fashioned kilts instead of the local working class culture and the political struggle for independence (see Nairn 1977). As vestiges of a romantic past, tartans and kilts are suspected in this view to 'play London's game' by emphasizing the exoticism of Scottish culture and denying Scotland's political legitimacy as a modern nation. As in many other European cases, folklore is accused of playing a conservative game by hiding the real stakes connected with the affirmation of regional or national identities.

6. Discussion

Different conclusions can be drawn from this example. Here I would suggest that they can be adapted from profane rituals like the Highland games and applied to other types of rituals as well.

First, the Highland games example shows that ritual events can follow a migrant community and remain active in the context of the Diaspora, keeping the same name and social functions far from the motherland, even if their contents are subject to variations and if some new sequences or elements appear and contribute to their progressive change.

Second, people who don't belong to the Scottish community can

participate in these rituals and freely add invented parts or sequences. In the United States, people of Latino or Polish descent regularly participate in the Highland games because they were invited by friends, neighbors, etc., and they find a personal interest in participating in the rituals of the Scottish community without being Scots themselves.

Third, the element of time is an important part of the process. In the Highland games example, the transplanted rituals faded out towards the end of the nineteenth century but they were unexpectedly revived nearly one century later. This situation should alert people who are studying migrations to be cautious regarding the conclusions they reach from short-



term observations. The American case shows that integration is a long-term process and should be studied through its entire history as well as through the lenses of sociology and politics.

Fourth, new calendars can be created along the way, with the help of global influences such as the sports and the tourism industries. If the Highland games and their diffusions were mainly governed by sports, it would be easy to cite the role of tourism in the fabrication of new rituals. For

instance, the Chinese New Year rituals have become an important tourist destination in Paris or in San Francisco today, encouraging the Chinese Diaspora to keep on performing these rituals.

One last result of this fieldwork is to show that some rituals travel better than others. The ability to adapt to other cultures and other contexts varies according to different criteria, among which figure the following:

The position that the rituals held in their original context: Were they already emphasized? What did they represent in the homeland?

The strength of the Diaspora in the destination culture: Is it able to organize locally in order to set up and to maintain rituals? Are there enough networks and patrons?

The relations between the Diaspora and the new local context: Is the Diaspora well accepted? Are there any problems with integration?

The competition between the different Diasporas: Does the ritual belong to a younger or to an older Diaspora? What sort of legitimacy does the Diaspora have in the new country?

The type of memory the Diaspora carries: Was it formed after a political struggle, an economic crisis, or an environmental disaster? Are there any returnees who reinforce the relations with the homeland?

7. Conclusion

All these elements show the complexity of this field of study. They call for a systematic analysis of the ways that migrations influence the ritual calendars. This study would be useful for finding out more about the role of rituals in the building of intercultural relations in a globalized world. It would emphasize the dynamics of the different Diasporas, showing their leading role in the reconfiguration of rituals. Not only do the Diasporas reshape the rituals they carry with them in migrations, but the returnees also have a deep influence on the ways the rituals are performed in the homeland. In this perspective, the study of rituals becomes an important tool in the comprehension of dynamic, transnational culture.

REFERENCES

Berthoff, Rowland. 1982. "Under the Kilt: Variations on the Scottish-American Ground." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 1 (1): 5–34.

- Fournier, Laurent Sébastien. 2006. "Agrarian Festivals and the Ritual Year in Mediterranean France: Preserving Traditions or Building Heritage?" In *The Ritual Year*, edited by George Mifsud-Chircop, 257–270. Malta: P.E.G. Publications.
- . 2008. "The Claim for History in Contemporary Calendar Festivals: Legendary, Historical and Present Times." In *The Ritual Year and History*, edited by Irina Sedakova, 66–71. Straznice: N.U.L.K.
- Jarvie, Grant. 1991. *Highland Games: The Making of the Myth*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- MacDonald, Donald. 2007. *It's Scotland in USA. America's Braemar. Grandfather Mountain and the Re-Birth of Scottish Identity across USA*. Madison: Southern Lion Books.
- Meyer, Duane. 1961. *The Highland Scots of North Carolina (1732-1776)*. Charlotte: University of North Carolina Press.
- Nairn, Tom. 2003. *The Break-Up of Britain. Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*. Alton: Common Ground Publishing (1st edition: 1977).
- Prebble, John. 1963. *The Highland Clearances*. London: Secker & Warburg.
- Ray, Celeste. 2001. *Highland Heritage. Scottish Americans in the American South*. Charlotte: University of North Carolina Press.
- Redmond, Gerald. 1971. *The Caledonian Games in Nineteenth Century America*. Fairleigh: Dickinson University Press.
- . 1982. *The Sporting Scots of Nineteenth Century Canada*. Fairleigh: Dickinson University Press.
- Webster, David. 2011. *The World History of Highland Games*. Edinburgh: Luath Press Limited.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Laurent Sébastien Fournier is a social anthropologist, born in Arles (France) in 1974. Between 1998 and 2002 he trained at the University of Montpellier where he presented his Ph.D. on the transformation of local French festivals into cultural heritage. Between 1999 and 2011 he was an assistant-professor at the Universities of Montpellier, Nîmes, and Nantes. From 2006 onwards, he has been conducting intensive fieldwork in Scotland and England on local festivals and sports. His research interests concern the revitalization of local festivals in Europe, traditional games and sports as intangible heritage, and the history of Europeanist anthropology and

folklore. He is also an expert for the French Ministry of Culture and for the UNESCO in the field of intangible cultural heritage. Since 2011 he has been a fellow of the C.N.R.S. in Aix-en-Provence (IDEMEC UMR 7307), in charge of a research program on the international diffusion of traditional games and sports.

RITUALS IN THE SLOVENIAN DIASPORIC COMMUNITY IN ARGENTINA

Jaka Repic

Abstract

This article explores the symbolic, social and political dimensions of rituals in the Slovenian diaspora in Argentina and especially their role in the constitution and identity of the diasporic community. After the Second World War thousands of Slovenians escaped from their homes in fear of the communist revolution in Yugoslavia. The majority of them emigrated to Argentina. There, Slovenian migrants and their descendants established a structurally complex diasporic community which included churches, schools and local associations and had a rich diversity of ritual activities. The pervasive struggle for preserving, affirming and conceptualising social memories of exile, a mythology of homeland and return, a political stance, relations between the individual and the community and their relationship to Slovenia are still being defined within various ritual contexts.

Key words

Ritual, diaspora, Slovenians in Argentina, return mobility.

Introduction

In this article, I explore the significance of ceremonies, holidays, commemorations and other rituals in the construction, preservation and interpretation of social memories, community and diasporic identity among Slovenians in Argentina. Analysis focuses on the so-called 'political emigration' (see Žigon 1998; 2001) – the Slovenian community which was initially established by political refugees and migrants who escaped from Slovenia after the Second World War. Collectively internalised experiences of exile were a key element in the construction of this community, the establishment of social memories of war and post-war events and the creation of a specific diasporic identity, and are self-evident in daily practices, everyday life and (in) ritual activities.

I approach rituals in their social and political contexts, examining their functions and their role in the construction and ideological and social

reproduction of the Slovenian diaspora. I explore how the construction of a diasporic identity is related to traumatic social memories of war and exile, to the preservation of a mythology of roots and homeland, as well as to the possibilities of return migration and other forms of return mobilities that started after the independence of Slovenia in 1991. Theoretically, I use Rihtman Auguštin's (2000) concept of political ritual (cf. Simonič 2009), encompassing various holidays, celebrations, commemorations, pilgrimages, etc. which facilitate the exploration of relationships between individuals and community, as well as the way in which Slovenians in Argentina conceptualise the temporal (past, present and future) and spatial relations (roots, homeland, place of residence) which are important to them. Hence, I analyse the rituals of the Slovenian diaspora as part of the wider apparatus of social construction that facilitates establishing and maintaining the community, internal cohesion and solidarity, social memories of exile, political and ideological position and commitment to preserving 'Slovenianness', i.e. Slovenian identity and the sense of belonging, in the diaspora. My analysis is mainly based on ethnographic research I have conducted since 2004 in Buenos Aires, Bariloche and among return migrants in Slovenia. I have also analysed various publications, especially the newspaper *Free Slovenia (Svobodna Slovenija/Eslovenia Libre)*, published weekly in Buenos Aires since 1948 by the association United Slovenia (*Zedinjena Slovenija/Eslovenia Unida*).

In this article I do not describe or analyse in detail particular rituals but rather focus on the ritual construction of Slovenian identity. Rituals in a diaspora are social events authoritatively conveying the justification of building the community and preserving language, memories of homeland, cultural traditions and ethnic identity¹. The various religious ceremonies, community celebrations, commemorations of war or post-war events and memorial acts for distinguished individuals are socially cohesive events which construct and ideologically reproduce the community.

Historical background of the Slovenian diaspora in Argentina

The majority of Slovenian immigrants who arrived in Argentina after the Second World War and were actively involved in establishing a community

¹ Terminologically, I accept Eriksen's differentiation between ethnicity and nationalism (1993, 13–14) and accordingly use the term ethnic for the Slovenian migrant community in a multicultural state.

were political refugees. In May 1945, immediately after the war in Europe ended, thousands of refugees escaped from Slovenia in fear of the communist revolution which had taken place in Yugoslavia. They settled temporarily in refugee camps in Austria and Italy from where they eventually migrated to Argentina, Canada and several European countries (see Žigon 1998, 2001; Sjekloča 2004; Repič 2006). Many of the refugees were soldiers of the anti-communist collaboration force, the Slovenian Homeguard, which was allied to the German army, and had fought against the Slovenian partisans who cooperated with the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. They escaped because they were afraid of retaliations from the communist regime which came to power after the German capitulation. Apart from the soldiers, many civilians who were either members of the Homeguard, or supported it during the war, also escaped.

The weeks following the end of the war were, in fact, extremely violent in Slovenia. In May and June 1945 especially tens of thousands of people – members of the retreating armies, collaborators and civilian regime opponents – were executed without court trials and buried in hidden mass graves (see Ferenc 2005; Dežman 2008). Among the victims were supposedly around fourteen thousand Slovenians. Some were captured at home but a large majority of them were repatriated from the refugee camp of Vetrinje in Austria by the British army (see Corselis 1997, 131).²

Narratives of repatriations from the refugee camps and of secret mass executions in Kočevski rog and some other locations in Slovenia have been incorporated into individual and socially-constructed traumatic experiences and social memories. Repatriated soldiers who survived secret mass executions initially brought accounts of what was happening to the refugee camps in Austria. There are several documented cases of people who survived executions and escaped death squads by hiding among the corpses in the trenches. After the migration to Argentina these accounts remained very vivid and present in the community. They were often remembered and narrated at various ceremonies and even published (e. g. Kocmur 1965-1971; Zajec, Kozina and Dejak 1998; cf. Švent 2007, 64). Throughout the history of the Slovenian diaspora these narratives have represented a crucial

² In this article I do not explore the post-war executions in Slovenia which have been extensively researched elsewhere (see e. g. Ferenc 2005). Instead I explore how memories and discourses of executions have been produced, spread and ritualised among Slovenians in Argentina and how they influenced the constitution of the community and its ideological and political position.

mythological foundation for diasporic identity and have been present in various types of rituals. The most obvious ritual with representations of post-war executions is the Memorial ceremony, a commemoration of the victims of war, organised annually since 1948 by the Slovenian association in Buenos Aires (see Rant 1998).

In the refugee camps, Slovenians who shared a similar traumatic experience of displacement established strong relationships and a relatively sophisticated organisation (cf. Corsellis 1997, 137; see also Arnež 1999; Švent 2007) which later functioned as the basic structure of their expatriate association in Argentina. They were politically very active and organised cultural events, schools, publications and ceremonies.³ An important factor in the refugees' later involvement in the building of community in Argentina was the relatively well-organised immigration process, as was the assistance provided by several influential Slovenians who already lived in Argentina. Janez Hladnik, a priest stationed in Buenos Aires, managed to persuade the Argentinean government to approve the immigration of Slovenian refugees.⁴ He also helped with the initial organisation, settlement issues, etc.

In 1947 Slovenians started emigrating from the refugee camps. The majority of them, just over six thousand, emigrated to Argentina where they established an organisationally complex and introverted ethnic community. They established the Association of Slovenians (*Društvo Slovencev*), later renamed as United Slovenia (*Zedinjena Slovenija/Eslovenia Unida*), as well as nine local associations in Buenos Aires, Mendoza and San Carlos de Bariloche. They were not the first Slovenians to have settled in large numbers in Argentina, though. At the time of their arrival there were already approximately thirty thousand Slovenians who mostly arrived after the First World War from Primorska, the westernmost part of Slovenia, which was annexed to Italy in 1920 with the Treaty of Rappallo. However, due to political and ideological differences, no significant social relations between the two groups were established. Most of the newly arrived Slovenian migrants wanted to settle clustered together or at least to maintain strong personal relationships. They even managed to establish several urban neighbourhoods, such as *Villa Eslovena* or 'Slovenian village' in Lanús, a southern suburb of

³ For a detailed historical account of the life of Slovenians in the refugee camps in Austria and Italy, see Švent (2007); cf. Corsellis (1997).

⁴ After the war, most of the countries of the Allies were reluctant to accept people who were involved in collaboration with the German army.

Buenos Aires, where Janez Hladnik organised the communal acquisition of a larger patch of land and the establishment of an urban community (see *50 let Slovenske vasi* 2002).

Immediately after the first immigrants arrived in Argentina the basic organisational structure of the Slovenian association and community was laid. They eventually established ethnic and cultural centres, built churches and sport facilities, founded newspapers, ethnic radio, published books, organised ceremonies and commemorations, and set up Slovenian primary and secondary schools (see Debeljak 1994; Rant 1998; Žigon 2001; Repič 2006). The Slovenian community in Argentina was established as a closely interconnected network of migrants and their descendants, and can be explored as a 'diaspora', characterised by a 'specific type of consciousness' (cf. Vertovec 1999, 450) with ambivalent identities⁵ (see Golob 2009; Repič 2010a). 'Slovenianness' in the diaspora has been conceptualised through traumatic social memories of war, post-war executions and displacement, and has constructed a strong ideological and political stance and commitment to preserving ideas of origin, myths of homeland and myths of return.

William Safran defines diasporas as expatriate communities, dispersed from the homeland to several destinations in which migrants and their descendants are not fully integrated into their places of residence, but maintain memories and myths of their parental or ancestral homeland and hopes of eventual return, and are often even engaged in the political or economical restoration or maintenance of their homeland (see Safran 1991, 83–84). Diasporic communities are usually established by refugees or political migrants who preserve traumatic memories of exile and conceptualise relations to their parental or ancestral homeland as the underlying socio-cultural substance of their community and identity (cf. Clifford 1997, 284; Povrzanović Frykman 2004, 82–85; Brubaker 2005). The mythology of eventual return, active social and economic links, political engagement and other forms of transnational connections are important factors in establishing relations with the homeland. According to Brubaker, the mythology of return and connections with the homeland are crucial in diaspora constructions because the constitutive attribute of community is its 'orientation to real or imagined "homeland" as an authoritative source of value, loyalty and identity' (Brubaker 2005, 5).

⁵ Other researchers of Slovenian emigration often used the notion of dual ethnic or national identity (cf. Sulič 1983; Lukšič-Hacin 1999; Čebulj-Sajko 2000; Žigon 1998, 2001).

By using the theoretical framework of diasporas, I contextualise specific attributes of the Slovenian community and identity, permeated with enduring relations to the homeland, and analyse the construction and ideological reproduction of community and identity in their ritual contexts. The leaders of the Slovenian association immediately started organising catholic and political ceremonies.⁶ They also established new rituals, connected to the Homeguard army, war, exile and the formation of community in Argentina. In the first decades, the association became more complex, new local associations were established along with schools and ethnic or cultural centres as nexuses of social life and events.

Rituals of the Slovenian diaspora in Argentina

I explore the role of rituals through their spatial, temporal and symbolic dimensions. In the ritual context, past, present and future are interpreted and constructed through social memories of displacement, whereas notions of roots and homeland as well as the mythology of return define triadic relations between individuals, community and Slovenia. Return is not merely present in myths and in rituals but also in the life trajectories of migrants and their descendants. Therefore I also explore the role of rituals in return mobilities that occurred after the declaration of Slovenian independence in 1991. The main issues I explore here are how rituals and celebrations are connected to the structure of the diaspora; how they are used to reinterpret past and present, perpetuate social memories and political ideology, and preserve or redefine diasporic identity; how they reflect upon notions of roots, home and homeland; and how they are redefined in the framework of recent return mobilities.

Ritual activities encompass various ceremonies and commemorations at the local community centres or churches and large events organised by the main Slovenian expatriate association. Moreover, the meanings, symbols and concepts conveyed through active involvement in the rituals are adopted in family life, daily practices, art, schools, publications, etc. The rituals therefore essentially define social identities, characterised by diasporic contexts. They explicate the reasons for exile from the homeland and migration to Argentina as well as defining and articulating the importance

⁶ Formation of the Slovenian association *United Slovenia* and its activities have been described in details by Rant (1998) and Žigon (2001).

of origin and the preservation of the so-called 'Slovenianness'. In this sense, rituals are used in defining social memories and voicing the experience of exile, as well as transferring them to younger generations. They are also used for establishing power relations, identity politics and reproduction of community's political and ideological stance.

Diasporic contexts are crucial for understanding the role, position and consequences of the rituals, which manifest themselves in different ways on different levels – those of the individual and the family as well as local and ethnic community levels. In the following section of the article, I explore overall meanings and the symbolic role of the rituals for the community structure and contextualise internal power structures, the ideology and politics of ethnic identity, interpretation of the past and the symbolic assertion of roots and homeland as cultural attributes. For this purpose I concentrate on four sets of rituals among Slovenians in Argentina, broadly differentiated according to their social and historical contexts: annual rituals or rituals of the religious calendar year, celebrations pertaining to the history and formation of the community, political ceremonies and commemorations, and rituals of return mobilities (cf. Repič 2013).

1. Celebrations connected to the annual ritual year or religious holidays, such as that of St. Nicholas, Christmas, Easter and other catholic holidays (also) may convey political meanings but above all represent and strengthen ethnic identity and the conceptualisation of Slovenian traditional culture. They tend to be organised in a way that resembles the traditional practices of celebrations in mid-20th century Slovenia, as the migrants remembered them. Their importance lies in preserving traditional ways of celebration that imply a link with Slovenia. Furthermore, catholic rituals are often implicitly connected to experiences of exile. In this way, religious rituals reveal a close bond with Slovenian language, culture and identity, the whole notion of being a Slovenian in Argentina.

2. Various ceremonies are connected to the formation of the main association, United Slovenia, and that of local communities, together with their activities and the distinguished individuals who played an important role in those communities. These often rather informal events include celebration of the beginning and ending of the school year, anniversaries of associations, and so on. Some of them are organised in the main association although most of them take place in the local community centres. These ceremonies are accompanied by a church mass, sporting

and cultural events, theatre performances, school plays, concerts, and suchlike.

3. Political rituals and commemorations represent an important aspect of social cohesion, of a common ideological base and the preservation of social memories and therefore involve meticulous actualisation and control of the past. In the rituals, the past is interpreted through the diasporic experiences and unjust reasons for displacement and migration are often stressed. Political rituals and commemorations strengthen the community's social cohesion as well as its political position, based on anti-communist ideology, protection of the catholic values and preservation of Slovenian identity. One of the most important political rituals is the Memorial ceremony (*Spominska proslava*) usually also referred to as the Homeguard commemoration. Another important political ritual is Slovenian statehood day on 25th June, a celebration of Slovenian independence⁷ declared on 25th June 1991.

4. The fourth set of rituals has to do with the mythology of returning home and return mobilities. Recent return mobilities have often been conceptualised as pilgrimages to the homeland that include visits to places regarded as sacred and politically important for the diaspora in general as well as for particular individuals. These may include parental home villages, churches, sites and memorials associated with executions. An example of organised and ritualised return mobility is a visit to Slovenia at the conclusion of the Slovenian secondary school in Argentina. I will return to this issue in the concluding section of the article.

Social memories in ritual contexts

Most of the Slovenians maintained a strong anti-communist ideology and political stance and preserved memories of exile due to revolution as the crucial and defining event in their life and one of the core elements in constructing their identity. Narratives and personal accounts of displacement, forced repatriations and secret mass executions, although almost completely erased from official history in Yugoslavia until the 1990s, were preserved among migrants, especially among those who escaped the executions. In the community these narratives were mythologised and became an integral part of their rituals and celebrations, publications, and education. They became

⁷ Among Slovenians in Argentina, it is often referred to as the day of liberation (from communism).

crucial in establishing the sense of a shared traumatic past, of their destiny as exiles, life in the diaspora and the mythology of an eventual return to their homeland.

Marija, for example, gave me the following account of her memories of exile. She was only 17 years old when her family escaped across the Ljubelj pass to Austria and settled in the Vetrinje refugee camp. She witnessed the repatriation of refugee Homeguard soldiers by the British army from the refugee camps to Yugoslavia where they were executed:

In May 1945 we escaped from Slovenia. In Europe the war had finally ended but in Yugoslavia it had only begun. (...) It was very bad until 1946 because they were sending the Homeguard soldiers back home where they were killed. But not only the soldiers, they were also sending back women, children and the elderly.

The repatriation of Homeguard soldiers from the refugee camps by the British army, and the subsequent executions and mass burials are central issues in social memories even sixty years after the events. Accounts of the executions have been included in war commemorations and other ceremonies, including the Memorial ceremony or Homeguard commemoration, organised in Argentina every year in June since 1948. According to Rant (1998, 365), the idea for this commemoration was already mooted by Dr. Debeljak in 1946 when he was preparing an annual calendar for Slovenian emigrants. He marked the 1st of June as the ‘memorial day of martyrs’ because it was in May and June 1945 that the majority of Homeguard soldiers were captured or repatriated and executed (see *Svobodna Slovenija* 3. 6. 1971, 3–4). Initially, the ceremony was meant to be a memorial for all the victims of war and revolution but in actual fact, usually commemorated the ‘fallen Homeguard soldiers’, ‘victims of (the) communist violence’, ‘Slovenian anti-communist fighters, heroes and martyrs’, or ‘Slovenian heroes who fell during the communist revolution and occupation’.

The Homeguard commemoration ceremony typically begins with a requiem mass, followed by speeches, a cultural programme, recitations and plays with themes of war, suffering, exile, repatriations and executions. It usually also includes tributes to particular individuals, often referred to as martyrs and heroes, who were either prominent in the Homeguard anti-communist movement and came to a very violent end or were survivors of the executions. These ceremonies always attract many people and are

well documented in the newspaper *Svobodna Slovenija* (cf. Rant 1998, 365-456).⁸

Similar narratives of the Second World War – of post-war executions, displacement, migration to Argentina and the consequences of the ‘communist revolution’ – are preserved in various political rituals but may also exist implicitly in non-political, religious rituals and in various ceremonies organised by the local communities. The younger generations were brought up listening to stories of war, exile, forced repatriations, tortures and executions (e.g. Mislej 1991, 1992; Rot 1992; Žigon 2001, 136–138; Repič 2006, 2008; Toplak 2008). These narratives usually occur in ritual contexts, in art, publications, and in school programmes. Children have been actively involved in these narratives via school assignments, recitations, performances, plays and other cultural events that represent and internalise these narratives as experiences and collective memories evoking traumas, suffering, and a rationale for the struggle to preserve identity. These narratives knit together members of the community and influence not only contextualisation of the past but also strategies for the future.

Within the framework of the community’s ideology and identity politics, social memories are related to hegemony, power structures, control and the struggle over their representational value. Memories represented in oral accounts and publications, or in various rituals, reflect internal power relations and identity politics as well as processes of identity building. In the diasporic context it is rather difficult to distinguish the individual from the collective level since they tend to overlap in structure (flow of narrative), representation (symbols, content of narratives) and agency (internalization, rejections or modification of socially conveyed experiences and ideology).

Roots and homeland

Spatial concepts and representations of origin, such as roots, home and homeland, are symbolically asserted through rituals, and are inherent in the notion of identity and in everyday life. In the diaspora, which implies forced cultural ‘deterritorialisation’, a sense of being uprooted (see Kearney 1995, 557), nostalgia or socio-cultural ambivalence, together with spatial concepts are redefined as symbolic markers and even containers of social identities

⁸ Here I do not give a detailed account of the Homeguard commemorations, as they deserve a special analysis.

(cf. Olwig 1997; Mlekuž 2001; Repič 2012). Various symbols, images, stories, myths and socially communicated and remembered experiences merge in the concepts of origin, home and homeland (Rapport and Dawson 1998; Ahmed 1999; Chapman 2001) and represent relentless cognitive mapping in which individuals and the community position themselves between place of origin and place of residence.

During my fieldwork in Argentina, the houses and community centres I visited were filled with symbolic representations of Slovenia, paintings depicting the Slovenian cultural landscape, political symbols such as flags, pictures and postcards of towns, villages and churches, Slovenian publications, calendars and even tourist souvenirs. Homeland is often a central issue in the community's rituals, but is also reflected in schools, publications, art and cultural events. When I was invited to visit a Slovenian association in San Martín, Buenos Aires, for a Christmas concert, the first thing I noticed in the community centre were two large coats of arms on the wall, one of Slovenia and another of the local association. One part of the building was intended for casual meetings and Sunday breakfasts after mass. It contained a kitchen, a bar and a large room with chairs and tables. It was decorated with a Christmas tree and different emblems, such as paintings with motifs of exile and of Slovenia, memorial plaques, posters, and tourist souvenirs from Slovenia. Hung on the wall was also a cloth upon which had been embroidered the poem 'Zdravljica', the Slovenian national anthem, by France Prešeren. Next I was shown a *patio*, an open courtyard, dominated by two large linden trees. The trees were planted to provide shade but linden was chosen because it has an important position in Slovenian history, folklore and mythology⁹. There was also a large hall for cultural and sporting events, performances and celebrations. Adjacent to the building was the 'Gregorij Rožman' Slovenian school with three classrooms and a small library containing maps of Slovenia, Argentinean and Slovenian flags and books on religious, historical and political topics.

In Slovenian schools in Buenos Aires, Mendoza and Bariloche, generations of children have been taught the geography and history of Slovenia, its language, traditional culture, music and folk songs. In schools,

⁹ The linden tree is often used as a symbol of Slovenia. It has a special role in literature (for example in Fran Levstik's novel *Martin Krpan*). A linden leaf was also promoted as a symbol of Slovenia in tourist advertisements in the early 1980s, and has been regarded as an unofficial national symbol.

during various events at the associations, in religious and other rituals, the importance of preserving relations with the homeland is often reaffirmed, either explicitly or symbolically through, for example, Slovenian music, food or folklore. As a crucial task of the community and individuals the preservation of Slovenian identity is laden with moral connotations:

Our parents entrusted us with preserving 'Slovenianness'. They had suffered greatly, they were exiled, arrived here with nothing. And yet they had raised us with love for our homeland... Now we try to pass that on to our children.

Return mobilities

Myths of roots, homeland and returning home are intrinsic to social memories and the processes of establishing identity in the diaspora and manifest themselves in various rituals that strengthen a conceptual connection with Slovenia for both individuals and the community. The notion of return was also a theme in diasporic myths until Slovenia became independent, at which time various forms of return migration, as well as other forms of mobilities to the homeland began to take place. Among the different terms used by Slovenians in Argentina to describe this phenomenon we find 'tracing roots', 'searching for roots' or more simply 'returning home'. Often however, especially for the younger generations, moving to Slovenia is not understood as return, but usual migration because of the poor economic, political and social situation in Argentina, particularly after the state bankruptcy in late 2001.

The recent proliferation of diaspora studies has proved effective in placing significant emphasis on the myths of return (see Anwar 1979; Clifford 1997) and many other forms of returning, ranging from tourism, holidays, family visits, and pilgrimages to an actual return migration. Analysis of the emic perspective of migrants who believe they are returning to their homeland, enables an exploration of the ontology of return (cf. King and Christou 2011, 452), thus widening the concept and enabling a better understanding of how homeland, as a cultural and moral reference point, as well as the mythology of return, are imagined in the diaspora.

In the late 1980s Slovenia went through a period of intense democratisation and in 1991 it declared independence from Yugoslavia. The Slovenian community in Argentina was very active in support of independence. Most of the people in the community acquired Slovenian

citizenship and many engaged in return mobilities. Return migration started just before the declaration of Slovenian independence in 1991 but reached another peak after 2002 because of the economic crisis in Argentina. Over the past twenty years most Slovenians in Argentina have established some sort of relation with families in Slovenia, have frequently travelled 'home' and several hundred have even moved to Slovenia. One person who migrated to Slovenia in 1990 expressed his perception of ambivalent belonging in the following way:

After [the Slovenian] independence some of us returned to Slovenia. I have returned although I was born in Argentina. However, my spiritual homeland has always been Slovenia.

Return is more than just the end of the life-long exile even though some might understand it that way. Andrej, who was only a small child when his family left Slovenia, explained his understanding of return as follows:

My wife and I have always contemplated that the natural ending of our life path that took us away from Slovenia in our childhood would be to return home.

In fact, the majority of the recent 'return migrants' were not actual returnees, because they were born and raised in Argentina, but many perceived their migration to Slovenia as returning home.¹⁰ They settled in Slovenia for various reasons, such as study and better overall economic and social conditions but also because they had internalised ideas of roots and emotional attachment to the homeland through living in the diaspora.

Not only migration, but ordinary visits are conceptualised as 'returning home' and may even resemble pilgrimages. A case in point is the month-long group excursion to Slovenia, organised at the end of the Slovenian high school year in Argentina and known as RAST (*Roj abiturentov srednješolskega tečaja*). Since 1992 the conclusion of the school year has been celebrated at an event organised by United Slovenia followed by a month-long excursion to Slovenia. This trip is a reward for the effort not only of finishing school but above all of preserving Slovenian identity. It is a sort of pilgrimage to Slovenia, a rite of passage. Students usually visit some of the important places they learn about in school or from their families. For example, they

¹⁰ See studies on the return migration of Slovenians (e.g. Lukšič-Hacin 2002; Toplak 2004; Čebulj Sajko 2004; Repič 2006).

visit executions sites in Kočevski rog and the monuments to the memory of the executed Homeguard soldiers, meet their relatives, visit the home villages of their parents and usually even climb the highest Slovenian mountain Triglav.¹¹ This ‘pilgrimage’ has some very pragmatic consequences, such as getting acquainted with the possibilities of return migration.

The mythology of return to Slovenia entails the *construction of homeland* as well as the process of *home-coming* manifested in return mobilities (cf. Ahmed 1999; Ahmed et al. 2003; Olwig 2002; Stefansson 2004; King and Christou 2011). Migrants and their descendants have centred their identity, their social memories and present life on the notion of a place of origin that is also a moral destination, meticulously constructed in the diaspora and in their rituals.

Conclusion

This article explores the Slovenian diaspora in Argentina and the role of its ritual activities tools for establishing and maintaining social memories and connections with the homeland, whether these be mythological or in the form of contemporary transnational connections with Slovenia and return mobilities. In diasporic contexts the concepts of roots and homeland are ritually imbued with cultural and moral connotations, such as the imperative persistence of ‘Slovenianness’ in the diaspora. I primarily focus on the role of rituals in the social and ideological reproduction of community and identity. For this purpose I have provided a brief description of various different ceremonies and commemorations pertaining to war, post-war events and exile, the history of the diasporic community and the establishment of expatriate associations, religious holidays and even pilgrimages of return. All of these rituals, however, have social and political connotations. In diasporic context, they are used to preserve as well as relentlessly redefine and recontextualise social memories and the mythology of homeland and return.

REFERENCES

- 50 let Slovenske vasi. 2002. Buenos Aires: Društvo Slovenska vas.
Ahmed, Sara. 1999. “Home and Away: Narratives of Migration and Estrangement.”

¹¹ Triglav is also a national symbol, depicted on the state flag.

International Journal of Cultural Studies 2 (3): 329–347.

- Ahmed, Sara, Claudia Castañeda, Anne-Marie Fortier, and Mimi Sheller, eds. 2003. *Uprooting/Regrounding: Questions of Home and Migration*. Oxford and New York: Berg.
- Anwar, Muhammad. 1979. *The Myth of Return. Pakistanis in Britain*. London: Heinemann.
- Arnež, Janez. 1999. *Slovenski tisk v begunskih taboriščih v Avstriji 1945-1949*. Ljubljana and Washington: Studia Slovenica.
- Brubaker, Rogers. 2005. "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28 (1): 1–9.
- Chapman, Tony. 2001. "There's No Place Like Home." *Theory, Culture & Society* 18 (6): 135–146.
- Clifford, James. 1997. "Diasporas." In *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration*, edited by Montserrat Guibernau and Jon Rex, 283–290. Cambridge, Oxford and Malden: Polity Press.
- Corsellis, John. 1997. "The Slovene Political Emigration 1945-1950." *Dve domovini/Two Homelands* 8: 131–159.
- Čapo Žmegač, Jasna. 2010. "Return Migration: The Changing Faces and Challenging Facets of a Field of Study." *Ethnologia Balkanica* 14: 227–245.
- Čebulj-Sajko, Breda. 2000. *Razpotja izseljencev: Razdvojena identiteta avstralskih Slovencev*. Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU.
- . 2004. "Etnologija in povratništvo." *Dve domovini/Two Homelands* 19: 197–211.
- Debeljak, Tine. 1994. "Slovenski srednješolski tečaj ravnatelja Marka Bajuka v Buenos Airesu." In *Življenje in delo Slovencev v Argentini (po letu 1945)*, 42–48. Ljubljana and Washington: Studia Slovenica.
- Dežman, Jože, ed. 2008. *Poročilo Komisije Vlade Republike Slovenije za reševanje vprašanj prikritih grobišč 2005–2008*. Ljubljana: Družina.
- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 1993. *Ethnicity and Nationalism. Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Pluto.
- Ferenc, Mitja. 2005. *Prikrilo in očem zakrito: Prikrita grobišča 60 let po koncu druge svetovne vojne*. Celje: Muzej novejšje zgodovine.
- Gmelch, Georg. 1980. "Return Migration." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 9: 135–159.
- Golob, Tea. 2009. "Slovenian Migrants in Transnational Social Spaces: Exploring Multilayered Identifications and Ambivalent Belongings." *Anthropological Notebooks* 15 (3): 65–77.

- Jansen, Steff, and Staffan Löfving. 2009. "Introduction: Towards an Anthropology of Violence, Hope and the Movement of People." In *Struggles for Home: Violence, Hope and the Movement of People*, edited by Steff Jansen and Staffan Löfving, 1–23. Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books.
- Kearney, Michael. 1995. "The Local and the Global: The Anthropology of Globalization and Transnationalism." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (4): 547–565.
- King, Russel, and Anastasia Christou. 2011. "Of Counter-Diaspora and Reverse Transnationalism: Return Mobilities to and from the Ancestral Homeland." *Mobilities* 6 (4): 451–466.
- Kocmur, Marjan. 1965–71. *Odprti grobovi*. 4 volumes. Buenos Aires: Editorial Baraga.
- Lukšič-Hacin, Marina. 1999. "Enodimenzionalno pojmovanje nacionalne identitete nasproti heterogenosti etnične identitete pri izseljencih." *Glasnik Slovenskega etnološkega društva* 39 (3–4): 76–82.
- . 2002. "Povratniki kot del migracijskega toka." *Dve domovini/Two Homelands* 15: 179–193.
- Mislej, Irene. 1991. "Slovensko šolstvo v Argentini." *Slovenski koledar* 38: 187–190.
- . 1992. "Slovenski tisk v Argentini po drugi svetovni vojni." *Dve domovini/Two Homelands* 2–3: 185–194.
- Mlekuž, Jernej. 2001. "Prostor na gala plesu in bojnem polju etnične, narodne ter nacionalne identitete: Izbrani teoretski vidiki." *Glasnik Slovenskega etnološkega društva* 41 (1–2): 55–61.
- Olwig, Karen Fog. 1997. "Sustaining a Home in a Deterritorialized World." In *Siting Culture: The Shifting of Anthropological Knowledge*, edited by Karen Fog Olwig and Kirsten Hastrup, 17–38. London and New York: Routledge.
- . 2002. "A Wedding in the Family: Home Making in a Global Kin Network." *Global Networks* 2 (3): 205–218.
- Povrzanović Frykman, Maja. 2004. "Transnational Perspective in Ethnology: From 'Ethnic' to 'Diasporic' Communities." In *Transnational Spaces: Disciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Maja Povrzanović Frykman, 77–100. Imer: Malmö University.
- Rant, Jože, ed. 1998. *Zbornik dela v zvestobi in ljubezni – Zedinjena Slovenija 1948–1998*. Buenos Aires: Društvo Zedinjena Slovenija.
- Rapport, Nigel, and Andrew Dawson. 1998. "The Topic and the Book." In *Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement*, edited by Nigel Rapport, and Andrew Dawson, 3–17. Oxford and New York: Berg.
- Repič, Jaka. 2006. 'Po sledovih korenin': *Transnacionalne migracije med Argentino*

- in *Evropo*. Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta.
- . 2008. "Shifting Homes and Identities: Being Slovenian in Argentina and Argentinean in Slovenia." In *MESS and RAMSES II. Vol. 7, Mediterranean Ethnological Summer School*, edited by Jaka Repič, Alenka Bartulović, and Katarina Sajovec Altshul, 169–185. Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete.
- . 2010a. "Ambivalent Identities Emerging in Transnational Migrations between Argentina and Slovenia." *Dve domovini/Two Homelands* 31: 121–134.
- . 2010b. "Konstrukcija prostora in kraja pri transnacionalnih migracijah med Argentino in Slovenijo." In *Ustvarjanje prostorov*, edited by Mirjam Mencej et al., 162–188. Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete.
- . 2012. "Les Slovènes d'Argentine: le concept de patrie dans la construction d'une communauté diasporique." *Ethnologie française* 42 (2): 231–240.
- . 2013. "Prazniki, socialni spomin in oblikovanje slovenske skupnosti v Argentini." In *Politika praznovanja: Prazniki in oblikovanje skupnosti na Slovenskem*, edited by Božidar Jezernik, 153–172. Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete.
- Rihtman Auguštin, Dunja. 2000. *Ulice moga grada: Antropologija domačeg terena*. Beograd: Čigoja štampa (Biblioteka XX vek).
- Rot, Andrej. 1992. "Slovenski tisk v Argentini po drugi svetovni vojni." *Dve domovini* 2–3: 209–235.
- Safran, Wiliam. 1991. "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return." *Diaspora* 1 (1): 83–99.
- Schneider, Arnd. 2000. *Futures Lost: Nostalgia and Identity among Italian Immigrants in Argentina*. Oxford et al.: Peter Lang.
- Simonič, Peter. 2009. *Kaj si bo narod mislil? Ritual slovenske državnosti*. Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete.
- Sjekloča, Marko. 2004. *Čez morje v pozabo: Argentinci slovenskih korenin in rezultati argentinske integracijske politike*. Celje: Fit media.
- Stefansson, Anders H. 2004. "Homecomings to the Future: From Diasporic Mythographies to Social Projects of Return." In *Homecomings: Unsettling Paths of Return*, edited by Fran Markowitz and Anders H. Stefansson, 2–21. Lanham MD: Lexington Books.
- Sulič, Nives. 1983. *Thank God I'm Slovenian*. Ljubljana: Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete.
- Švent, Rozina. 2007. *Slovenski begunci v Avstriji 1945–1950*. Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU.
- Toplak, Kristina. 2004. "Dobrodošli doma? Vračanje slovenskih izseljencev v

- Republiko Slovenijo." *Dve domovini/Two Homelands* 20: 35–51.
- . 2008. 'Buenas Artes': *Ustvarjalnost Slovencev in njihovih potomcev v Buenos Airesu*. Ljubljana: Založba ZRC SAZU.
- Vertovec, Stephen. 1999. "Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22 (2): 447–462.
- Zajec, Milan, France Kozina, and France Dejak. 1998. *Ušli so smrti: Poročila treh rešencev iz množičnega groba v Kočevskem Rogu*. Celovec, Ljubljana and Dunaj: Mohorjeva založba,
- Žigon, Zvone. 1998. *Otroci dveh domovin. Slovenstvo v Južni Ameriki*. Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU.
- . 2001. *Iz spomina v prihodnost. Slovenska politična emigracija v Argentini*. Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Jaka Repic is an assistant professor and researcher at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. He completed his PhD thesis in 2006 with research on the Slovene diaspora in Argentina and contemporary return mobilities. His earlier work includes research of rural-urban migration and ethnic interactions in shantytowns in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, and ethnicity issues among Roma people in Slovenia. His research interests are transnational migrations, Slovene diaspora, mobility, urbanisation, and interethnic relations.

MIGRATION AND RITUAL – REACTUALIZATION OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN A NEW CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Maria Kissikova

Abstract

This article presents a case study based on the story of a woman who immigrated to the USA. In the new environment she had to learn and assume, in one way or another, different behavioral patterns and cultural standards.

The objective of the text is not to reveal new and specific patterns of social inclusion in a different cultural environment. It is rather an attempt to see how this woman (A.A.) tries to give a new meaning to her own identity and changes her hierarchy of values in order to be accepted in the community. The focus of the research is on religious identity as a specific collective identity that meets the needs of A.A. as regards this community and her self-definition. This new religious identity uses ritual to enter everyday life (time and space).

What kind of religious identity becomes important, what kind of rituals does she (A.A.) practice, what is their function? I expect the answers to these questions will confirm my hypothesis that the religious has its specific role in the context of immigration and that ritual is a mechanism of learning the new culture and rearranging the unfamiliar environment into a familiar shape.

Key words

Migration, religion, (re)socialization, conversion, alternation.

This text presents research in progress which results in more questions posed than answers offered. I will present one case study through which I will try to explore more general processes and tendencies which exist in the contemporary postmodern world – identity crises accompanied by seeking new foundations of identity, both resulting from adaptation to a new cultural and social environment and reactualization of religious identity which result in a significant identification model.

This is a story of one 38 year-old woman (I will call her A.A.), a Bulgarian who married an American, immigrated and settled in the USA. The transition turned out very traumatic for her. After the first months of

difficult adaptation and almost complete isolation she gradually began to become more involved in the new social environment. The key to her new social position turned out to be religion and particularly her introduction to a religious community. In this case study, the blending of migration and ritual occurs in the context of the religious. A change in the social and cultural environment (due to voluntary migration) provokes a series of problematic situations and identity crises whose solution¹ is found in the activation of religious identity (previously manifested to a much lesser degree in A.A.'s life). The intensification of religious feeling and introduction to a religious community results in a change of religion. The conversion of A.A. finds its confirmation in the practice of ritualization of almost all aspects of her everyday activities (for more details see Durkheim 2001, Weber 1968).

Methodologically my research is based on qualitative methods: structured and non-structured interview, observation, participant observation. It covers a relatively long time span (longitudinal): the observation was made about a year and a half ago and the interview some months later. It is important to note that because of my personal connection with the informant I had the opportunity to observe the whole transition involving giving new meaning to and emphasis on religion for more than 3 years.

The main research problem in which I am interested is exactly how religious identity was activated as a result of the change of social and cultural context and how the need for an intensification of the religious provoked a change of religious identity². The most visible change in religiousness in its everyday aspect is the ritual articulation of faith and religion in both its individual and community manifestations.

A contemporary context (postmodern, dynamic, global, pluralistic) highlights change to a much greater degree than stable landmarks. Immigration belongs to the processes of the broadening and intensification of community networks in a global aspect³ – the mobility of capital, goods and people is the essence of globalization (Krasteva 2006, 50–51). Immigration flows are characterized by extreme dynamics and their management has

¹ In Old Greek 'crisis' means 'decision'.

² During the time of interviewing the informant clearly realized that she was going through a process of religious conversion, which had not reached a completion (i.e. she was not baptized in the new religion). Now, in the summer of 2013, the conversion is already a fact.

³ There is a more detailed definition of globalization in Steger 2003.

become a priority for a number of countries which are target of immigration, especially after September 11, 2001. I will not delve into the problems of the administration of immigrants by the USA here⁴, although, bearing in mind the case study under examination it is important to note that because she arrived there as a wife of an American citizen the informant has not faced special bureaucratic problems related to her stay in the USA.

The dynamics provoked by global social processes affect individuals and they experience the change as a crisis of identity. This is particularly true of collective identities which are closely related to economic, social, political and cultural processes in the given social community (Petkova 2000, 112). Available models of thought, behaviour and relation to the outer world are falling apart and this provokes identity problems and crises (Erikson 1968), which force individuals to accommodate to the changing cultural environment quickly by actively searching for new landmarks (Petkova 2000).

One of the possible ways out of such identity crisis is to engage with a religious community. World religions and other confessions rely on traditional rules of social behaviour and offer an established model of identification with a particular community.⁵ Diana Petkova points out that *closeness* and *charismatic leadership* are among the specific characteristics of the new religious doctrines that attract more and more followers. In times of hard social transformation religion offers non-disputable answers (Petkova 2000, 138–139). The appearance of many new religious doctrines and movements as well as the increasing popularity of Islam coincide with processes of globalization and correspond with the re-thinking of nationalism as constructive idea. Individuals find it more and more difficult to identify themselves with nation as an “imagined community” (Anderson 2006) and are prone to directing their loyalty to religious communities.⁶

In this aspect my case study corresponds to a much broader range of problems and processes. Settlement in a new social and cultural environment

⁴ For further details about USA policy in this respect, see Zhileva 2006.

⁵ The topic is discussed in depth by Weber 1992, a classic in the field of religious studies.

⁶ A wide range of literature on the links between globalization, nationalism and religion exists. Urs Altermatt compares nationalism and religions on the basis of their structure and functions and analyses them as structural isomorphic phenomena (Altermatt 1998, 136). Benedict Anderson approaches nationalism as cultural system developed against cultural systems of *religious community* and *dynastic realm* which were taken-for-granted before the eighteenth

places my informant in a situation of culture shock (that lasted about a year and a half). The Dutch social scholar Geert Hofstede compares culture shock to the condition of a small child, when one has to learn the simplest things again. This leads to feelings of embarrassment, helplessness and even hostility (Hofstede 2001, 292). Alfred Schütz presents the foreigner as a person in individual crisis who does not share “trustworthy *recipes*” of the community he or she comes to and for whom *thinking-as-usual* does not function (Schütz 1944, 501–502, author’s italics).

In the first phase of her stay in the foreign cultural environment A.A. turned out to be in almost complete social marginalization – a “prisoner” in her home⁷, unemployed, without social contacts (except for her husband and relatives from Bulgaria through the Internet) and without a personal income. That is to say, her everyday life was mostly characterized by **what she was missing**, the lack of everything that had defined her identity before and had given meaning to it. To paraphrase Schütz, the history of the new group would never become an integral part of her biography and A.A. directs her efforts to building up a common present and future existence (Schütz 1944, *ibid.*). She actively began to overcome these missing links one by one and during the first 12-18 months she improved her knowledge of English, started working, and obtained a driving license and a car. However, what A.A. was still missing was a social environment and this confined her to a marginal position. “Once crystallized, it [identity] is maintained, modified and even reshaped by *social relations*” (Berger and Luckman 1966, 173, italics by me – M.K.). In short, A.A. was involved in the process of giving new meaning and new definition to her identity (her landmarks and values) while the basic circumstance necessary for the successful realization of such a process, that is social environment and social encounters, was still missing.

It is therefore not by chance that A.A. gradually directed her attention to religion as something eminently social (Durkheim 2001, 11), both as regards

century – something that turns into feature of nationalism after that (Anderson 2006, 12, Anderson’s italic). Eric Hobsbawm also discussed the link between nation and religious identity, without generalizing or looking for causality (Hobsbawm 1996, 78). The place of religion – and Islam in particular – in contemporary processes of globalization is addressed by Diana Petkova (Petkova 2000). She pays special attention to the crises of national identity in the context of globalization processes and emphasizes the substitution of this identification by other collective identities. See also Steger 2003 and Barber 1995.

⁷ She could not leave it for basic reasons: the couple lived in a suburb, she did not have a car, nor could she drive.

religious ideas and their ritual manifestations. Religion structures identity in a traditional way and provides basic values in the contemporary postmodern situation. In the opinion of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, “the individual’s “real” name is the one given to him by his god. The individual may thus know who he is by anchoring his identity in cosmic reality, protected from both the contingencies of socialization and the malevolent self-transformation of *marginal experience*” (Berger and Luckman 1966, 100, italics by me, M.K.). In the case of A.A. religion is an important marker of identification even before the transition to the new cultural and social environment. But the new circumstances give an additional stimulus for manifestation of the religious, in order to overcome marginal experience and acquire the desired legitimate collective and personal identity.

The traditional religion of A.A. is (Eastern) Orthodox and she considered herself a believer long before the process discussed here started. She confirmed her belief through being baptized and ritually including herself in the community of believers (about 25 years ago). Most probably part of the reason for the religious conversion of A.A. can be found in the characteristic features of Orthodox Christianity and especially in its historical manifestations in the Bulgarian context.⁸ Yet, the factor that mostly provoked A.A.’s religious conversion remains immigration and her need to *reidentify herself* and *rsocialize* in the new cultural environment (Berger and Luckman 1966, 156–163, italics by me – M.K.). “It is only within the religious community, the ecclesia, that the conversion can be effectively maintained as plausible” (Berger and Luckman 1966, 158). A.A. found herself in the new religious community by chance (or not by absolute chance) and what attracted her interest initially was the fact that the church was tolerant to other religions and accepted members of different confessions. In addition, it was not necessary for new members to be converted in order to

⁸ For a long period of time, during the Ottoman rule, Christianity was not the dominant religion; it was followed by a period of repression against the public manifestations of religiousness in Bulgaria. There followed a period of the recovery of religious institutions but also of a new schism in the church, etc. This gave a special reflection on religion and church and determined the way they function today. A very high percentage of the Bulgarian population state they are Eastern Orthodox Christians (75% according to the last census), but the church has an extremely low authority and believers who know the canon, go to church and take part in church community life are an exception. At the same time there is an extreme attitude against other religions and the possible conversion from Orthodox Christianity to a different religion. More on this topic may be found on the site of the National Statistical Institute (e.g. www.censusresults.nsi.bg/Census/Reports/2/2/R10.aspx?OBL=PDV# – for Plovdiv region).

become part of the religious community. This situation corresponded to her identity in other fields of social activity. But while in everyday relations she was marginal, a foreigner who had no way to appropriate the past of the new community and its culture, as a neophyte in the religious community she is “a man without a history” by default (Schütz *ibid.*), but this is a positive and valuable experience.

Taking part in the religious community happened gradually and more and more actively – attendance at church services twice per week, participation in the church chorus, inclusion in the mentoring program of the church, involving attendance at family religious meetings once per week (as a guest)⁹, taking part in church education courses, participation in other church activities as different donation campaigns, parties, religious meetings, etc. The intensity of religious feeling and active participation in social interaction mutually nurture each other and turn into more and more stable markers for her identity. Religion not only helped A.A.’s social integration but gave an overall organization to her everyday life – she prays several times per day (in the mornings, evenings and before eating), reads the Bible every day, follows the food taboos of Christianity (observing all fasts during the year) and donates money to the church. “Worshipping the god” (Gottesdienst), as Max Weber calls it (Weber 1968, 26) also determines social activity and everyday activity of A.A. This change in religious identity is not considered by her as a sharp transition, as breaking a religious tradition and involvement in another; it rather turns out to be a final result of the more and more intensive manifestation of religious nature in her, a higher level of religious involvement. Before immigration A.A. also prayed, fasted, visited churches and granted money to churches but this happened much less often (less often and with less money; e.g. before she observed only Easter fasts and now observes all fasts).

Such an attitude to religion represents religious change as a natural transition from the previous identity to the present one. Scholars who are working on such issues make a distinction between the terms ‘alternation’ and ‘conversion’ at a theoretical level. Usually the term ‘conversion’ refers to the radical change of world views and identities, linked with a conflicting, exclusive relationship towards the past and former commitments, whereas the term ‘alternation’ refers to less radical forms of religious and ideological

⁹ At a later stage she may become the host of such meetings.

change that are more inclusive regarding former commitments (Wohlrab-Sahr 1999, 353). Wohlrab-Sahr¹⁰ sees ‘conversion’ as the *symbolic battle* associated with a sharp conflict and break with past attitudes and relations; in this case religion is a symbol of *radical difference*. ‘Alternation’ underlines the *combination* of the old and the new, the author relating this to *syncretism*. Relations with the past are not broken; they turn into prerequisite for the religious transition in the present.

A.A. gives a new meaning to her religious concepts, though not going beyond the frames of Christianity. The example mentioned above shows the search of a *link/connection* between the former and the present religious identity – observing the fasts which started even before the migration of A.A. to the new cultural and social environment, but later on to the Long Lent came the other food restrictions throughout the year. What is more, for the informant the fasts continue a week longer, because she tries to observe the requirements of both confessions – the fasting starts according to the calendar of the one confession and ends up according to the other one¹¹. Despite the canonical differences between Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism, A.A. does not view religious change as a conflict change, as a sharp confrontation between the former and present identity. This is rather an enhancement, a strengthening of religious feeling under the pressure of social marginalization in which she turns out to be involved, a stronger expression of her faith. Religion brings new structural organization into her everyday life, thus ritually affecting all aspects of her activities.

¹⁰ Wohlrab-Sahr studies more specifically the religious conversion in Islam – a transition bearing rather negative meanings. In the Western world Islam nowadays is thought as an absolute negative projection of the Western world, as a symbol of everything alien. In the cases which the author has studied, the conversion from Christianity to Islam is a result from a specific biographical experience, but the general conclusion is that the adoption of Islam is the religious reaction against a socialization that failed. The adoption of Islam is an expression of the most and ultimate degree of drifting away from the own social context. In the case described here the religious transition is of other nature, it has different grounds and is mainly provoked by the migration into a foreign cultural and social environment. However, the distinction between alternation and conversion has its theoretical justification which corresponds to the present case to a great extent and gives me reasons to search the connection between the two (for more information, see Wohlrab-Sahr 1999).

¹¹ For example, the Long Lent begins according to the calendar of the Eastern Orthodoxy; it is connected with important holidays that precede the first Sunday before Lent for instance (when A.A. asks her family in Bulgaria forgiveness) and ends one week later when the Easter in the USA is celebrated.

Becoming part of a religious community is this manifestation of religious identity which was previously unknown to A.A. – belonging to a community was sought, desired and necessary for her at that stage of her life. The shared life of believers gives a feeling of security to A.A. and is a stable mainstay to her identity in crisis. The ritual continuation of her faith gains a deeper sense – not only as a personal contact with God but also as reinforcement of the community of believers (which at that moment was unknown to her). She does not consider the differences between Eastern Orthodox religion and Protestantism as doctrinal, but rather lies in their practical application¹². In Weber’s words, religious activity is practical, it is oriented to “the social and economic requirements of everyday life” (Weber 1968, 160). In this way “Worshipping the God” doubles its manifestations. On one hand, A.A. started thinking of herself not as an individual who believes in God and communicates with Him but also as a member of a community of believers. On the other hand, rituals have individual as well as group manifestations – A.A. prays at home regularly (and repeatedly: before eating or before going to bed for example, and on a specific occasion – she prays for support, health, forgiveness or other), she also visits religious meetings in home environment, where they pray and sing as a group (about 10 individuals); during the weekly sermon the prayer is with a greater number of believers.

Religious singing is also an important part of her everyday activities. It is another example of the religious aspects which link the previous and present identity. While living in Bulgaria, A.A. had made her own living by singing in the church choirs of Orthodox Christian temples (which corresponded also to her professional competence as a musician). The performance of religious chants at home resembles or takes place as a rehearsal: it is a part of her professional activities rather than recreational. In the new cultural environment, the singing of religious songs involves almost all aspects of her everyday activities (individual and group) – with or without a specific occasion, at home, while alone, in the home group (on Thursdays), at the church services (on Wednesdays and Sundays)¹³, at special rehearsals of the

¹² For example, I was present at a weekly sermon which, because the pastor was absent, was performed by his wife – something that cannot happen according to eastern Orthodox tradition – a fact of which A.A. is very well aware but which does not provoke an inner conflict in her.

¹³ Due to her engagement with the choir, A.A. attends three Sunday church services in the morning and another one in the evening.

choir (on Tuesdays), as well as at the numerous non-calendar events and occasions – parties, charity events and other. On the one hand, religious music becomes the basic musical background not only in her working hours but also in her spare time, i.e. as if music loses its sacral measurements and becomes profane/everyday. On the other hand, the inclusion of religious music turns each everyday event into extraordinary, marks it ritually and adds a sacral significance.¹⁴ It is important to point out that church singing in the Orthodox Christian tradition is very different in its musical aspect from those in the Protestant church. Protestant religious music is close in its melody and style to popular American music, which facilitates its (of the religious music) adoption and inclusion in everyday life. Orthodox Church music differs significantly in style, genre and even language from popular music (both Bulgarian and foreign) and to someone outside the church would sound rather exclusive.¹⁵

The case study presented here has specific aspects as well as typical ones. The events shaping the life journey of A.A. somehow placed emphasis on religion; the fact that she is a Christian believer, baptized, observing the main religious canons. The transition to a different cultural environment made her face everyday challenges and additionally focus her attention on religion. This corresponds to general global tendencies – the rising popularity of new confessions and Islam and emphasis on religious identity as main collective identity (for example to the detriment of national identity). In the opinion of Olivier Roy *deterritorialization* is the reason for radicalization of Islam (quoted after Fukuyama 2007). Francis Fukuyama mentions a strange “protestantization” of Islam because religion has started to be considered a matter of subjective opinion, not as observation of social practices determined by the others. Similar processes happened in Christianity several centuries ago. Following a similar mechanism,

¹⁴ These musings are influenced by the ideas of prof. Todor Iv. Zhivkov about ritual and its role in the activities of the everyday human being (Zhivkov 1977, 83 ff; 142).

¹⁵ I am certain that a musicologist may analyze in depth and more comprehensively the similarities and differences between religious singing in Orthodox Christianity and Protestantism as well as between the Protestant singing and pop music. My observations in this case study are those of a musical amateur. My assumption is that the musical specificity of Protestant singing contributes to its easy introduction into everyday activities. Though, in fact, the reasons for this may be rather diverse (for example the influence of the social environment which cultivates (or not) a taste for this type of music, or the musical history of North America where gospel and spirituals stimulate the occurrence of new musical genres in popular music).

immigration to a different cultural and social environment for A.A. provoked intensification of religiousness: on individual level by giving a new meaning to the relation with God as being direct and immediate; on group level through formation of a strong sense of belonging to the religious community.

The present text represents a case study which should be analyzed in the broader context of postmodern global society, as a separate fragment, which adds specificity and meaning to the theoretical models. The specific biographical choice of A.A. is included in a much broader range of issues: activation of migration flows and their administration, integration, assimilation or isolation from the new alien (and the old ones), coping with identity and public crises, the resumed interest to different religious doctrines which much more successfully satisfy the needs of sense, order and community, etc. The actualization of the religious and the change of religious identity may be considered as a specific focus, as a privileged point of view,¹⁶ from where we may look aside to global issues of society and to communities of a different nature (family, religious, national, regional, etc.), as well as to each individual, who through his everyday choices copes with different challenges. This text should be read as a fragment in a more comprehensive discussion on the issues like migration, resocialization and the role of religion in this process, as a start of a scientific dialogue where to look for theoretical and practical verification of the developed theses.

Acknowledgements

The participation in the conference and hence the publication of this article was supported financially by the project “The religious Identity – theoretical and empirical aspects” (НН11ФИФ9).

REFERENCES:

- Altermatt, Urs. 1998. *Etnosocializam v Evropa [Ethnonationalism in Europe]*. Sofia: Gal-Iko.
- Anderson, Benedict. 2006. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso.

¹⁶ A.A. herself has a privileged point of view, as she maintains two different world pictures (former and present) and in this sense she is in an empowered position. For more information see Raychev 2000.

- Barber, Benjamin. 2001. *Dzhihad i Mak-Svyat [Jihad vs. Mac-World]*. Sofia: Kritika i humanizam.
- Berger, Peter, and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *Social Construction of Reality: a treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. New York: Doubleday Anchor book.
- Durkheim, Émile. 2001. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Erikson, Erik. 1968. *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: W.W Norton.
- Fukuyama, Francis. 2012. "Identity and Migration." In: *Liberalen pregled (Liberal Review)*, May 2007. <http://www.librev.com/index.php/--/75-2009-06-17-08-28-46>.
- Hobsbawm, Eric J. 1996. *Nacii i nacionalizam ot 1780 do dnes. Programa, mit realnost [Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality]*. Sofia: Obsidian.
- Hofstede, Geert. 2001. *Kulturi i organizacii. Softuer na uma [Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind]*. Sofia: Klasika i stil.
- Krasteva, Anna, ed. 2006. *Figurite na bezhaneca [Refugee`s Figures]*. Sofia: NBU.
- Petkova, Diana. 2000. *Nacionalna identichnost i globalizacia [National Identity and Globalization]*. Plovdiv: Kompas P.
- Raychev, Andrey. 2000. *Privilegiovani gledni tochki: kniga, koiato za malko da nareka "Sociologia na martvia chovek" [Privileged Points of View: a Book I was about to call "Sociology of Dead Man"]*. Sofia: R&S.
- Schütz, Alfred. 1944. "The Stranger: An Essay in Social Psychology." *American Journal of Sociology* 49, 499–507.
- Steger, Manfred. 2003. *Globalization. A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Weber, Max. 1968. *Sociology of Religion*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Wohlrab-Sahr, Monika. 1999. "Conversion to Islam: Between Syncretism and Symbolic Battle." *Social Compass* 46, 351–362.
- Zhileva, Elena. 2006. „Bezhaneci i sigurnost” [Refugees and Security]. In: *Figurite na bezhaneca [Refugee`s Figures]*, edited by A. Krasteva, 113–136. Sofia: NBU.
- Zhivkov, Todor. 1977. *Narod I pesen [Folk and Song]*. Sofia: BAS.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Maria Kissikova graduated from "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv in the major Ethnology in 2002. She was awarded a PhD degree in Folklore Studies

in 2008. She has become an Assistant Professor since 2010 at the Department of Ethnology, Faculty of Philosophy and History, “Paisii Hilendarski” University of Plovdiv. Scientific qualification: nationalism, ethnicity, globalization, social psychology, stereotype, prejudice, intercultural dialogue.

SEASONAL LABOUR MIGRATIONS (*GURBET*) IN THE CENTRAL BALKANS AND THEIR ASSOCIATED RITUAL CYCLES

Petko Hristov

Abstract

Seasonal labour migration of the male population away from the home villages has existed for centuries in a number of regions in the Balkans, and is traditionally referred to as *gurbet*. The prolonged absence of men from their home places gave rise to significant transformations both in the traditional festive calendar cycle and in lifecycle rituals, concentrating them in certain seasons of the year. What's more, new calendar feasts were established, modelled upon traditional ones but having 'migrant' specifics. Rituals for seeing migrants off and welcoming them back were also created and "attached" to particular feasts.

In this article, I present the results of my fieldwork research in Western Macedonia and Western Bulgaria, among communities with a tradition of seasonal labour migration.

Key words

Labour migration, identity, culture of migration, *gurbet*, life cycle rituals, weddings, Shopluk, Central Balkans.

The tradition of temporary labour migrations, particularly among men, has existed for centuries in a number of regions in the Balkans. The model, according to which men earn money somewhere 'away' or 'abroad' (in the neighbouring region, the big city, another state or country or 'somewhere in the Balkans'), but invariably return to their home places and families 'here', is known in different Balkan languages as *gurbet/ kurbet/ kurbéti*, or through the South-Slavic term *pechalbarstvo* (Hristov 2008, 217). Even though in the Balkans the term *gurbet* unites a wide range of labour mobility patterns, it is what Martin Baldwin-Edwards successfully calls "old-fashioned temporary migration", "where the migrant's identity is closely linked to the country of origin" and which is significant for extended periods in the history of entire regions, regardless of ethnic and religious affiliation (2002, 2). The

Balkans offer a remarkable variety of similar traditional patterns of labour mobility – from the seasonal mobility of shepherds, agricultural workers and master builders to the temporary absences from home of craftsmen and merchants – with the goal of gaining wealth and supporting families back home. The names and distinctive characteristics in different regions are diverse, but all these patterns share a number of common typological features that make them an important part of what we could call a “Balkan culture of migration” or “Balkan culture of *gurbet*”, following the example of Caroline Brettell (2003, 3).

This Balkan version of the ‘mobility culture’, practised by generations of men who earned their livelihood away from home, caused a number of transformations in the entire model of traditional culture in these regions, changes related to the temporary absence of males from the village. In a number of places, these transformations affected the ways of making a living and material culture, as well as everyday gender stereotypes and the division of labour between men and women, social organisation, the feast calendar and the rituals related to a person’s life cycle.

Traditional patterns of economic migrations in the Balkans are impressive for their variety and importance in the social and cultural history of all regions in South-Eastern Europe. Despite the turbulent historical destiny of the Balkan peoples – marked throughout the past 200 years by numerous economic and social catastrophes – *gurbet* mobility has never ceased and has been accompanied by an exchange of ideas, information, technologies and cultural patterns. For centuries, specific regions of the Balkans in Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Northern Greece, Turkey and South-East Serbia have been the main places for such seasonal or temporary labour mobility, either ‘sending’ or ‘receiving’ migrants.

There are still remarkably few works of comparative research about *gurbet* in the Balkans. One significant challenge for researchers would be to explain whether these traditional patterns of ‘life in motion’ are being reproduced and transformed under the conditions of globalisation and EU expansion, which give more opportunity for labour mobility in a pan-European perspective. However, such research has yet to appear. Greece would perhaps provide a good case study from this point of view. From being a ‘source’ of emigrants in the decades after World War II (see Vermeulen 2008, 18–36), it became an attractive centre for Balkan *gurbetchias* after 1991. Today the migration stream is reversing again – many Greeks leave

their motherland as victims of the economic crisis, departing as economic migrants for places as far away as Australia.

The purpose of this article is to focus on seasonal and temporary men's labour migration (*gurbet*) in its socio-cultural and ethnological aspects, taking as an example the central part of the Balkans. This region is the part of the peninsula where today the frontiers of three states come together – the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Macedonia. The area is known as *Shopluk* – a historical region without clearly-defined borders and contains a variety of local cultural features (Hristov 2004; Malinov 2008). In spite of this, in the context of regional specifics for the Balkans, it shows some common and stable cultural traits, even though the local population has shared various different national identities; over the last 140 years some parts of this area have changed their state affiliation five times (Hristov 2004, 69–80). Among these stable traits of social life in the *Shopluk* region throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is the temporary labour migration of the male population that has shaped the traditional cultural model of local communities. In previous studies of migrations in the Balkans (see Palairt 1987, 225–235) this region has only received an occasional mention. As a basis for comparison I will use materials from my fieldwork during the summers of 2005 and 2009 (Hristov 2010a) in the *Miyak* region of northwest Macedonia, famous in the past for its ethnic and religious diversity and for the mass labour mobility (seasonal and temporary) of its male population. It is there, in Northwest Macedonia, that the state borders of Albania, Republic of Macedonia and the newly proclaimed Republic of Kosovo converge today.

Seasonal and temporary labour movement in the Balkans is a social process that developed at varying speeds during the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Within the borders of the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century, the main 'streams' of temporary labour migration headed towards the capital city *Tsarigrad* (Istanbul) and the other big cities of the Empire; they also made their way to Wallachia and Serbia, to central Europe, and less frequently to Asia Minor, Egypt and Persia.

In the early decades of the pre-modern age, the main form of seasonal migration in the agrarian sphere was the movement of the labour force from the mountains (areas which, according to Fernand Braudel, were characterised by their ‘archaism and poverty’) to the rich plains and river valleys, mainly during the harvest seasons (*‘na zhetva’*) – a process typical for the entire Balkan-Mediterranean range (Braudel 1998, 30, 40–43, 51–53). For example, the main destinations for agrarian seasonal labour mobility from the mountainous central part of the Balkans (the so-called ‘Shopluk’) were Wallachia (*‘Vlashko’*) and the big farms in Dobrudzha and the Thracian Valley. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the men from entire villages in the Bulgaria-Serbia border region (regions of the Timok river, Godech, Berkovitsa, etc.) worked on the farms of Wallachian *chokoyas* (Hristov 2010b, 199).

Historical patterns of labour mobility that preceded the classic *gurbet* are represented by examples of transhumant shepherding. Seasonal shepherding/sheep-breeding (with a calendar framework between the feasts of St. George in May and St. Demetrius in October), along with different combinations of agrarian labour, was commonplace throughout the centuries of the Ottoman Empire and its rule in the Balkans. Enormous flocks of sheep were moved from high mountain pastures to warm southern valleys during winter and back during early spring. Most often this was done by hired shepherds led by the rich owners (*kehayas*). Part of these groups of Wallachians, Aromanians, Bulgarians and Karakachans had the privileged *dzhelepkeshan* status of suppliers for the Ottoman army over the centuries (Grozdanova and Andreev 1986, 121).

For the rich shepherds among the Mijaks in Western Macedonia, the summer pastures that surrounded Galichnik and Lazaropole alternated with the winter pastures in the Salonika plain. A considerable proportion of these temporary migrants owned shops (*dyukyan*) selling dairy products (milk, white and yellow cheese, etc.) and sweets in the big cities and capitals of the Balkans, thus creating a market for the produce of the famous Miyak *kehayas*. It is not a coincidence that one of the best-known researchers of labour migrations in the Balkans, Michael Palairet, mentions Galichnik as an ‘archetypal *pechalbar* community’. Even though this village is currently deserted, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries up to 90% of its men were away on *gurbet/pechalba* in Salonika, Istanbul, Sofia, Belgrade, Bucharest and even Egypt (Palairet 1987, 44).

Agrarian and pastoral labour mobility, in respect both of the peculiarities of agricultural production and its market and of the policies of the Ottoman Empire, had its specific age and gender characteristics in different regions of the Balkans. The female version (similar to the '*descending to Romelia*' in Bulgaria during harvest) was predominantly for young unmarried women, because traditionally, after marriage the bride went to live at her husband's home, and in the regions with male *gurbet* the women took care of the family's land and livestock.

All these agrarian migrations were ended by the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 and the new political boundaries that divided and separated the territory of the former Ottoman Empire.

Craftsmen – especially masons – in a number of mountain regions in the Balkans have a tradition of temporary labour migration, from a few months to a few years. Often their seasonal travels aiming at *pechalba* ('gain for living') are also related to the agrarian mobility of the mountain population that was trying to overcome the shortage of land (Palairret 1987; Brunnbauer 2004, 141–142). The labour mobility of the artisans has its own specifics as well, particularly among the builders, potters, bakers and tinkers, who travelled around the entire peninsula. With regard to this aspect, several regional centres in eastern Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Epirus (see Nitsiakos 2000) were formed, which 'emitted' waves of men going to *gurbet* every year throughout the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century.

Traditional seasonal labour migrations of men in Bulgaria and Macedonia are not only a part of the centuries-long common history of different ethnic, religious and language communities of the Balkans. In the mountain regions of the central part of the peninsula, *gurbet* of craftsmen was both widespread and traditionally prestigious (Bobchev 1902, 107; Petrović 1920, 18; Cvijić 1931, 134). This applied especially to the region known as Shopluk: legends are still told of masters who '*could shoe a flea and split the sole leather into nine*' (Cvijić 1906, 194).

These masters travelled 'from early spring to late autumn' all over the Balkan peninsula: from Serbia (Morava region, Shumadia, Belgrade) and Wallachia to Istanbul and Asia Minor (Smirna) as builders (*dyulgeri*), masons (*dzidari*), tile-makers (*tsiglari*), potters (*kalyavci*) and *tsrepari*

(making flat clay baking pots: *tsrepnya* or *podnica*), and also as stone-cutters from some villages (see Nikolić 1910, 29; Mironova-Panova 1971, 65; Palairet 1987).

The seasonal ‘exodus’ of mountain male populations (*‘u rabotu’* – ‘to work’) to other parts of the Balkan peninsula made for stability at a time of complex family households (*zadruga* type) and for increasing the importance of women’s position in the family (Brunnbauer 2004, 144). However, the deeply-entrenched traditional social role models for men and women in this patriarchal socio-cultural milieu inhibited to a certain extent rapid modernisation in these pastoral local communities. It is a fact, though, that entire villages were left in women’s hands for entire seasons. Michael Palairet quotes Irechek, who calls Koprivshtica in Bulgaria ‘a female town during winter’ (Palairet 2002, 173). In addition, men’s labour mobility, their seasonal absence from the local village community and their continuous work away from the home region also resulted in the great strength of kinship networks in these regions. Even when settled in the big cities some decades later, as refugees after World War I or as settlers in the years of accelerated urbanization after World War II, these migrants constructed proverbially efficient social networks for mutual help, based on kin and/or local origin.

As time passed in the regions with traditional male labour mobility, local cultural tradition was transformed according to the men’s seasonal absences from their home places. In the Shopluk, the builders’ groups (*tayfa*) started their journey on some of the great spring feasts around *Dzhurdzhovdän* (St. George’s Day), but according to tradition men were solemnly seen off by their families on the first Monday of Long Lent, the so called *Chist Ponedelnik* (‘Clean Monday’ in local tradition). By the middle of May – St. Constantine and Helen’s Day – they were already at work (*‘u rabotu’*) (Petrović 1920, 14). Their earliest return was around St. Demetrius’s Day or *Randzhelovdän* (St. Michael the Archangel’s Day in November). That is why the most important family-kin feasts (of the *svetac* type, the feasts of the family patron-saints, see Pesheva 1960, 739) were grouped in the period from St. Dimitri’s Day to St. John’s Day in January (see Hristov 2001, 193). Weddings were similarly concentrated in the winter period and in this region children were mostly born during autumn.

Local cultural tradition shows a stable ‘migrant’ ritual complex, connected with seeing off the groups of men leaving on *gurbet*. Seeing off the migrants took place in the following way. The oldest woman of the household

would scatter live coals from the hearth on both sides of the house gate. The men had to cross over these in order to acquire magical protection. 'Seeing off' the groups of men as they left for *gurbet* was an important ritualistic activity, involving female tears and wishes for great gain (*pechalba*).

In other regions of traditional seasonal labour mobility, the yearly feast cycle was reversed in intensity. Among the Miyaks in western Macedonia, weddings were held only once a year, on the day of the village church celebration (St. Peter's Day in Galichnik, St. Elijah's Day in Lazaropole, etc.) when the young men returned to their homes. If the young couple (*verenici*) did not manage to marry on this day, they had to wait for an entire year until the next church celebration; the only 'reserve' option that was allowed by tradition was that of the feasts dedicated to the Virgin Mary (Hristov 2010a, 147). Even as late as the mid-twentieth century these mountainous villages were entirely closed and endogamous. For some of these villages in Western Macedonia this endogamy was even inter-village, but in a local circle of neighbour villages. As a rule, young men returned home to find brides only 'among their own', both in the village and the regional context. According to respondents, even today local women marry during the summer when the descendants of the former *pechalbars* from Europe, America and Australia return to their homes to find wives.

The century-long traditional model of men's labour mobility was changed drastically during the 1960s, when a number of Western European countries invited in 'guest workers' from the Mediterranean countries – including Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia – turning men into legal temporary immigrants. A considerable proportion of these workers stayed in the host countries and the process then continued, as a result of family reunification, with most Western European countries successively becoming countries of immigration (Guentcheva, Kabakchieva and Kolarski 2003). During this period, temporary migrants from the territory of (former) Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey settled down permanently in Western Europe. This radically changed the model of the (temporarily) separated families in the regions I have studied. The traditional *gurbet* model of seasonal and temporary migrations and labour outside the region was transformed from the beginning of the 1960s into the *pechalbar* model of *Gastarbeiter* culture, especially in Serbia and Macedonia. Among Macedonian Muslims (so-called *Torbeshi*) in Western Macedonia, however, weddings are still held once a year, in August, when the young men come

back home to the mountain villages from *gurbet* in Northern Italy.

From the early 1990s, this pan-European process of labour mobility was actively joined by Balkan countries like Albania, Bulgaria and Romania which, until then, had been closed within their centralised economies and state-regulated labour movements. Time will tell whether the majority of these migrant workers will stick to the circular migration model of temporary labour mobility (see Baldwin-Edwards 2006, 9), which has its background in the traditional Balkan *gurbet*, or whether they will become permanent immigrants in the host countries.

REFERENCES

- Baldwin-Edwards, Martin. 2002. *Immigration, Immigrants and Socialisation in Southern Europe: Patterns, Problems and Contradistinctions*, Keynote lecture on Academic Symposium on Immigration in Northern versus Southern Europe, Netherlands Institute at Athens, 27th-28th November 2002. http://www.mmo.gr/pdf/publications/publications_by_mmo_staff/IMMIGRATION%20lecture%20NIAv6.pdf.
- . 2006. "Patterns of Migration in the Balkans". *Mediterranean Migration Observatory*, Working Paper No. 9. aei.pitt.edu/7045/01/mmo_wp9.pdf.
- Barkley, Henry C. 1876. *Between the Danube and Black Sea*. London: Murray.
- Barth, Frederik. 1969. "Introduction." In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, edited by Frederik Barth, 9–38. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Bobchev, Stefan. 1902. *Sbornik bălgarski juridicheski obichai [A Collection of Bulgarian Legal Practices]*. Vol. II. Sofia: Pechatnica na P. M. Bezaytov.
- Braudel, Ferdinand. 1998. *Sredizemno more i sredizemnomorskijaj sujat po vremeto na Filip II [The Mediterranean Sea and the Mediterranean World at the Time of Philip II]*. Vol. I. Sofia: ABAGAR.
- Brettell, Caroline. 2003. *Anthropology and Migration: Essays in Transnationalism, Ethnicity and Identity*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.
- Brunnbauer, Ulf. 2004. "Environment, Markets and the State: Human Adaptation in the Balkan Mountains, 19th – early 20th Century." *Ethnologia Balkanica* 8: 129–154.
- Cvijić, Jovan. 1906. *Osnove za geografiju i geologiju Makedonije i Stare Srbije [The Basics of the Geography and Geology of Macedonia and Old Serbia]*.

- Beograd: Srpska Kraljevska akademija.
- . 1922. *Balkansko poluostrvo i južnoslovenske zemlje: osnovi antropogeografije* [The Balkan Peninsula and the Land of the Southern Slavs]. Vol. 1. Beograd: Knjizarnica Gece Kona.
- . 1931. *Balkansko poluostrvo i južnoslovenske zemlje: osnovi antropogeografije* [The Balkan Peninsula and the Land of the Southern Slavs]. Vol. 2. Beograd: Knjizarnica Gece Kona.
- Grozdanova, Elena, and Mihail Andreev. 1986. *Bălgarite prez XVI vek. [Bulgarians during the 16th century]*. Sofia: Izdatelstvo na OF.
- Guentcheva, Rossitza, Petya Kabakchieva, and Plamen Kolarski. 2003. *Migration Trends in Selected Applicant Countries*, vol. 1: *Bulgaria*. The Social impact of Seasonal Migration. Vienna: IOM. pedz.uni-mannheim.de/daten/edz-k/gde/o4/IOM_I_BG.pdf.
- Hristov, Petko. 2001. "Ahnenkult in Westbulgarien: das Fest des Schutzheiligen." In *Vom Nutzen der Verwandten. Soziale Netzwerke in Bulgarien (19. und 20. Jahrhundert)*, edited by Ulf Brunnbauer and Karl Kaser, 187–199. Wien: Böhlau.
- . 2004. "Granicite na Shopluka i/ili shopi bez granici" [Frontiers of 'Shopluk' and/or Shops without Frontiers]. In *Skrivene manjine na Balkanu [Hidden Minorities in the Balkans]*, edited by Biljana Sikimić, 67–82. Beograd: Balkanološki institut SANU.
- . 2008. "Trans-border Exchange of Seasonal Workers in the Central Part of the Balkans (19th – 20th Century)." *Ethnologia Balkanica* 12: 215–230.
- . 2009. "Borders and Identities (Difficulties and Perspectives Faced by Comparative Ethnological Studies of the Border Regions on the Balkans)." *Etudes Balkaniques* 3: 109–126.
- . 2010a. "Trans-Border Migration: the Example of Western Macedonia." In *Migrations from and to Southeastern Europe*, edited by Anna Krasteva, Anelia Kasabova and Diana Karabinova, 141–150. Ravenna: Longo Editore.
- . 2010b. "Valahia" ca destinație importantă a muncit orilor sezonieri (pečalbari) din partea centrală a Balcanilor." In *Teme în antropologia socială din Europa de sud-est. Volum dedicate memoriei Profesorului Paul Stahl*, edited by Stelu Șerban, 194–295. București: Paideia.
- Irecek, Konstantin. 1899. *Knjazhestvo Bulgaria [Kingdom of Bulgaria]*. Plovdiv: Hristo G. Danov
- . 1978. *Istoriya na balgarite [History of the Bulgarians]*. Sofia: Bulgarska akademija na naukite.

- Kearney, Michael. 1997. "Migration." In *The Dictionary of Anthropology*, edited by Thomas Barfield, 322–324. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Malinov, Zorancho. 2008. "The Macedonian Shops (*Shopi*): Borders, Identity and Perspectives." In *Dynamics of National Identity and Transnational Identities in the Process of European Integration*, edited by Elena Marushiakova, 424–436. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Manolova-Nikolova, Nadya. 1997. "Sredna Zapadna Bălgaria 1877-1879: Prehodăt mezhdū dve epohi v Trănsko-Brezniškoja kray" [Midwest Bulgaria, 1877-1879: The Transition between two Epochs in the Trăn-Breznik Region]. *Rodina*, 3–4: 159–173.
- Mironova-Panova, Stoyanka. 1971. *Transkiyat kray [Region of Tran]*. Sofia: Izdatelstvo na OF.
- Nikolić, Vasa. 1910. "Iz Lužnice i Nišave" [From Luzhnica and Nishava]. *Srpski etnografski zbornik* Knj. 16. Odelj. 2. Život i običaji narodni, Knj. 9.
- Nitsiăkos, Vassilis. 2000. "Singéneia kai schéseis paragoyís sta bouloúkia tis Ipeírou." *Ethnology* 8: 5–12.
- Palaret, Michael. 1987. "The Migrant Workers of the Balkans and Their Villages (18th Century – World War II)." In *Handwerk in Mittel- und Südosteuropa*, edited by Klaus Roth, 23–46. München: Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft.
- . 2002. *The Balkan Economies c. 1800-1914: Evolution without Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pesheva, Rayna. 1960. "Edin starinen semeen praznik: Praznuvane na svetec v Severozapadna i Zapadna Bălgaria" [An Ancient Family Feast: Celebrating the Svetec in Northwestern and Western Bulgaria]. In *Ezikovedski-etnografski izsledvanija v pamet na akad. Stojan Romanski* [Linguistic and Ethnographic Studies in Memoriam of Acad. Stojan Romanski], edited by Vladimir Georgiev, 731–754. Sofia: Bulgarska akademija na naukite.
- Petrov, Gyorche. 1909. "Emigrantskoto dvizhenie za Amerika v Makedinija" [Macedonian Emigration to America]. *Kulturno edinstvo* VII-VIII: 3–6.
- Petrović, Jelenko. 1920. *Pečalbari, naročito iz okoline Pirota [Pečalbars, Particularly from Pirot district]*. Beograd: Tipografija.
- Vermeulen, Hans. 2008. "The Greek Labour Diaspora in Europe." *Migrance* 31: 18–36.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Petko Hristov has a PhD in Ethnology and is an Associate Professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Over the past few years, his main scholarly interests have included the study of labour migrations in the Balkans; the construction of social networks among trans-border migrants, in both the past and present; family and kinship in Balkan traditional societies and the construction of identity with the help of culture and traditional religiousness.

Petko Hristov is the author of *“Communities and Celebrations. The Sluzba, Slava, Sabor and Kourban in South Slavic Villages in the First Half of the Twentieth Century”*, Sofia: Ethnographic Institute with Museum, 2004. He is editor of the collections *“Balkan Migration Culture: Historical and Contemporary Cases from Bulgaria and Macedonia”*, Sofia: Paradigma, 2010, *“Migration and Identity: Historical, Cultural and Linguistic Dimensions of Mobility in the Balkans”*, Sofia: Paradigma, 2012, and co-editor (together with Biljana Sikimić and Biljana Golubović) of the collection: *“Labour Migrations in the Balkans”*, In: Studies on Language and Culture in Central and Eastern Europe (SLCCEE), Band 18, München-Berlin: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2012.

SYNCRETISM IN AN ETHNIC CELEBRATION AMONG DESCENDENTS OF IMMIGRANTS IN ISRAEL

Rachel Sharaby

Abstract

This article focuses on the meaning that the descendents of immigrants from North Africa to Israel attribute to their traditional holiday, the Mimouna, and how they construct their ethnic identity. Discussion of this issue is important in that it illuminates the dynamics of the ritual, the way in which traditional rituals and celebrations survive in modern society and the intergenerational relations in immigrant families.

The findings confirm the claim that syncretism was created in the development of the Mimouna in Israel, i.e. a combination of cultural elements and the creation of a new tradition. The revitalization and development of a syncretic ethnic identity among descendents of immigrants in the case of the Mimouna is explained by the spiritual and family functions that the Mimouna fulfilled, and especially by political activism. The syncretic model confirms studies that discuss the behavior of second and third generation immigrants. However, it differs from the theoretical outline of the 'first-and-a-half generation' model that presents poles of behavior: assimilation or resistance.

Key words

Ethnicity, second generation and first-and-a-half generation immigrants, celebration, syncretism, identity politics, tradition.

Introduction

Rituals change constantly, and are dynamic by definition. Small changes do not affect the identity of the ritual, whereas transformation may change it (Langer et al. 2006). The present article illustrates this phenomenon and describes how immigrants from North Africa celebrate their traditional holiday, the Mimouna, in Israel. This discussion focuses on intergenerational relations in the immigrant families and the way in which traditional rituals and celebrations survive in modern society.

A wave of selective return to their traditional roots began among immigrants from North Africa to Israel beginning in the early 1970s. This

was expressed in mass worshipping on the graves of sages who came from North Africa, evolution of ethnic music, traditional premarital rites, roots journeys in North Africa, rise in the political power of the Shas party whose nucleus is comprised of immigrants from North Africa. Their traditional holiday, the Mimouna, was also renewed, and evolved into a national Israeli holiday.

This article will focus on how descendents of immigrants from North Africa celebrate the Mimouna holiday, and on their new cultural interpretation of the holiday. Research on immigrants differentiates between immigrant generations (Lev Ari 2012). The first generation is the generation of the parents who chose to leave their country of origin and settle in a new country. Their descendents, on the other hand, immigrated at different ages, from childhood to various stages of adolescence. This group is called first-and-a-half generation, i.e. immigrants who immigrated as mature children (aged 8 or more) or adolescents, after being educated and having undergone socialization processes in their country of origin (Cohen and Haberfeld 2003; Lev Ari 2010; Remennick 2003).

Studies on second generation immigrants (who immigrated when younger than 8 or were born in the new society) found that many reported a dual identity. For example, most second generation Cuban and Mexican immigrants in the United States were absorbed rather well when they adopted the general American identity (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Zhou 1997). However, most of them identify with their parents and tradition in certain events and according to their convenience. Park (2008) found that second generation Asian immigrants in the United States defined themselves as Asian-Americans. This dual identity enabled them to identify with the Asian heritage and concomitantly to feel as an integral part of the multicultural American society (Lev Ari 2012; Park 2008).

The absorption of first-and-a-half generation immigrants (from the age of 8) may be more problematic than the absorption of the second generation. These immigrants are characterized by extreme responses: they may try to solve the identity crisis in their integration into the host culture by increasing their efforts to integrate, succeeding in acquiring education and social mobility. Others may express resistance to speaking in the language of the absorbing society, to adopting its cultural values and may even develop behaviors of at-risk youths, including violence and delinquency (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Anti-ethnic activity towards the absorbing society has

been observed among young immigrants from minority groups in Western countries, whose physical „visibility” exposed them to discrimination (Remennick 2003).

The theoretical outline of the first-and-a-half generation model presents two behavior poles: assimilation or resistance. The importance of the present article is in that it proposes a complex cultural behavior model of syncretism, which also characterizes second generation immigrants who are usually assimilation-oriented. I claim that the stereotypic attitudes towards immigrants from North Africa, their concentration in peripheral settlements and the socioeconomic gaps also among the second generation (Sikron 2004: 246; Tessler 2007) contributed to revitalization and strengthening of an ethnic identity, which is syncretic in essence.

Theoretical framework

Syncretism means a mixing of different religious and cultural elements and the creation of a new tradition (Stewart and Shaw 1994). The idea is that religion, culture and ethnicity are pure and independent entities that can be mixed upon contact, like biological varieties (Leopold and Jensen 2004a, 2). The term syncretism usually refers to synthesis of religious forms, but cannot be separated from the social and cultural aspect, since preservation of religion is an integral part of social behavior. Furthermore, what appears to be a religious act at a particular time and/or in a particular place, can be considered a cultural act in a different time/place (Stewart and Shaw 1994, 10).

The concept of syncretism also refers to cultural and social changes in general. Anthropologists use it to describe different traditions in fields such as: language, art, philosophy, political ideologies or economic systems (Barnard and Spencer 1996, 274; Seymour-Smith 1986, 540).

Syncretism can indicate a process of change in the personal and the group identity, as well as the configurations of this process (Leopold and Jensen 2004b). It comprises part of the negotiation between identities under situations such as occupation, commerce, immigration, religious dissemination and ethnic marriages. Syncretism can occur consciously, but often develops unintentionally (Leopold and Jensen 2004a, 3). Identifying a ritual or tradition as syncretic helps monitor the history of religions and cultures and understand that they have complex origins and are reconstructed via processes of selection and synthesis (Koepping 1994).

This process involved processing, interpretation, adaptation of

traditional symbols and customs to the new culture and the adoption of foreign contents (Sharaby 2011). The process occurs mainly in minority groups (syncretism from the bottom), and variations of tradition and modernity are created (Gusfield 1973; Shils 1981, 333–341). Cultural and ritualistic-religious merging is regarded as a way to oppose different forms of control, as a sign of cultural existence and as a way for political expression and national identity (Stewart and Shaw 1994). Thus, hegemonic customs are not absorbed simply by passive acculturation. Culture is not a coherent structure that is passed from one generation to the next, but is rather an outcome, at any given moment, of historic and cultural processes (Stewart 2004, 274–277).

According to the syncretic model, the cultural values of the dominant group also change (syncretism from the top), and the result is a compromise, cultural diversity and a change in the cultural repertoire of the absorbing society. Such a viewpoint supports a research approach, which has evolved since the early 1990s, which challenges the traditional theoretical assumption of the ‘melting pot’ and linear assimilation of immigrants (Basch et al. 1994; Alba and Nee 1997; Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2003). The unique research contribution of the syncretism model in situations of immigration is therefore, that it illuminates the sometimes crucial part of immigrants in moving the boundaries between the center and the periphery (Alba and Nee 2003; Huntington 2004).

Research goal and methodology

In this article I try to show an additional phenomenon of ritual dynamics, which Langer et al. (2006) termed “transfer of ritual.” This concept refers mainly to transferring a ritual from one context to another, or more generally, a change in the social context surrounding the ritual, which influences its internal dimensions.



The present research contributes to understanding the elements of identity and ethnic revitalization among descendents of immigrants, a subject which has not been studied extensively. A broad research literature discusses religious and ethnic revitalization movements that developed during the twentieth century (Nagel 1996; Wicherkiewicz 1996; Hunt and Lightly 2001). These and other studies demonstrate that the revitalization of ethnic and religious movements are a product of modernity itself, and reflect the limitation of rationality in responding to the need for common feelings and for coping with private and collective disasters (Schnapper 2005).

Late modernity adopts globalization processes, which according to investigators influence the shaping of identity (Giddens 1990; Castells 1997, 11). In certain ways they also influenced cultural unity, but in others they had the opposite effect. They revitalized old identities and afforded inspiration for new identities, through the creation of difference and diversity (Cornell and Hartmann 1998, 236).

Researchers emphasized that members of ethnic groups are actively involved in the reconstruction of identity, and that ethnic identities change in space and in time (Schermerhorn 1978; Cornell and Hartmann 1998). In this process, local groups struggled to create their histories and way of life out of local and foreign materials, with renewed processing and their own interpretation (Bradley 1987; Sahlin 1994).

The case of the Mimouna holiday as an important cultural-ethnic symbol in the identity of immigrants from North Africa is unique, since this is an ethnic revitalization of immigrants whose nationality (Jewish) is identical to that of the majority in the absorbing society. It is therefore expected that tension between opposing trends will appear in the ethnic revitalization of the Mimouna holiday: on the one hand, use of ethnic revitalization as an electoral instrument for expression of protest and “identity politics,” and on the other hand, use of ethnic revitalization as a political demand for inclusion in the national identity. It is assumed that belonging to the same nationality and the political strengthening of educated youths among the immigrants from North Africa in the local government and in the parliament (Yaar and Shavit 2003, 1238) will increase their demand for expansion of the boundaries of the cultural space in Israel and its reshaping.

Different qualitative methods were combined when carrying out the present research. I performed content analysis of articles that appeared between 1967-2012 in the Israeli newspapers: *Yediot Aharonot*, *Ma'ariv* and

Ha'aretz. Some of the articles will be presented. I shall indicate that after a media silence during the 1950s and 1960s, the Mimouna holiday became a reported holiday from the 1970s and on, and the media fulfilled an important role in its mobility into a national event.

My extended family includes relatives who immigrated from North Africa to Israel in the 1950s. They live in different places, mainly in peripheral settlements, and they and their children were an unending source for interviews and participant observations of the celebrations. Through these numerous relatives, I reached additional interviewees, via the snowball effect. I carried out a total of about thirty in-depth, semi-structured interviews, with men and women, mainly immigrants from Morocco, members of the first-and-a-half, the second and the third generation. The age of the interviewees ranged from 20 to 65, they have different professions and some of them are students.

I attempted to examine ritual syncretism among the following generations of immigrants through the viewpoint of the interviewees. I shall briefly review the way in which the holiday was originally celebrated among the Jewish communities in North Africa and during the initial period after their immigration to Israel, in order to understand the syncretic aspects of the Mimouna holiday.

The Mimouna: Liminality and fraternity

The Mimouna is an important religious holiday in the Jewish communities of North Africa (the Maghreb) and is celebrated after the end of the holiday of Passover. One of the accepted explanations for the name "Mimouna" is luck, and the North African Jews believed that this day was fitting for being happy and blessing the year (Maman 1991, 87–88), since the Mimouna holiday takes place in the spring, which is the season of harvest. This is an important season for farmers, as it marks the beginning of harvesting grains, which are essential for their existence, their livelihood and for storing provisions for the winter. Although the North African Jews were mainly merchants and craftsmen, they celebrated a holiday related to agricultural productivity due to their high economic dependence on the produce of the Muslim farmers. They, in return, supplied them with different services (Goldberg 1974, 621–622).

A semiologic analysis of the broad ritual system of the Mimouna holiday, which is beyond the scope of the present article, indicates that it is

abundant with liminal elements and ritual eclecticism, which characterize a state of passage, according to Turner's analysis (1967, 93–111). A clear distinction existed in the Jewish communities of North Africa between the customs of the eve of the Mimouna and those of the following day.

The rituals of the eve of the Mimouna took place mainly in the 'private sphere' and included festive praying at the synagogue, blessing by the rabbi, a holiday table laden with symbols and the traditional pastry – the mofleta, which is a thin fried dough eaten after dipping in butter and honey, so that there will be a sweet year. Holy songs were sung on the eve of the Mimouna, guests were received, matchmaking was made between families, etc. The peak of the evening was a ritual for kneading the dough of the first bread, which symbolized passage from Passover to regular days, and enabled eating bread after the ten days of Passover during which eating bread was forbidden.

On Mimouna day the Jews of the North African communities did not work. Families and their guests spent time outdoors, made the blessing of the trees and dipped their feet in water. In addition to the vegetables that symbolized spring and the renewal of nature, water was thus an additional major symbolic element of the Mimouna day, symbolizing hope for economic plenty. The celebrators spent the day of the Mimouna in the parks, eating, singing, playing music and dancing.

Different sources (Goldberg 1974) indicate that one of the major messages of the holiday in North Africa was unity and solidarity. The motif of hospitality that characterized the eve of the Mimouna was egalitarian, and everyone, Jew or the Muslim neighbor, could come, without invitation. The doors were open until the late hours, and people went from one house to the next for a short visit, in order to bless and be blessed. The children also went around between houses and received sweets. There was fraternity in the mutual visits and the 'open door' custom gave even people who were at odds to become friends again.

An 'invisible' holiday

Paradoxically, in spite of the physical visibility of the immigrants, they are 'invisible' in the absorbing society. "Similarly to visibility, invisibility is the fruit of social construction. It ascribes, pushes the individual to a place of negation and absence" (Lomsky-Feder et al. 2010, 17). The historic process that will be described henceforth will clarify the status of the Mimouna

holiday as an 'invisible' holiday in the Israeli public, during the first decades after their immigration from North Africa.

The mass immigration to the State of Israel after its establishment in 1948 brought 740,000 immigrants. Of these, 54.6% were of North African and Asian ethnic origin. The immigrants from Morocco were the largest community of those originating in North Africa, and comprised 58.5% (Lissak 2000, 3–10; Lasker 2006). Ethnicity was a major part of the social and cultural basis during that period. The groups of immigrants from Europe and America (Ashkenazim) were not required to define themselves in ethnic terms, and their culture was identified as Israeli. In contradistinction, the groups of immigrants from Asia and Africa (Orientals) were perceived as ethnic (Goldstein 1985, 238–240).

The Jewish national and cultural hegemony after the establishment of the State of Israel was based, similarly to Gramsci's (1971) model, on compatibility between the axes on which hegemonic struggles are conducted: the economic organization, the political level and the cultural-ideological level (Filk 2006, 16). During the 1950s and 1960s, this hegemony activated a cultural strategy of assimilation in the absorption of immigrants, especially Orientals. The immigrants were forced, according to this model, to relinquish their culture of origin and separate identity, and to acquire the culture of the absorbing society (Leshem 2003, 28).

In the concepts of Shields (1992, 3–28), the dominant culture that defined itself as a 'high culture,' constructed the cultures of the peripheral cultures of the immigrants from Asia-Africa as 'popular culture,' i.e. a low culture. Because of this paternalistic viewpoint, the immigrants were required to cast away their 'negative' cultural characteristics: language, music and literature. The immigrants were perceived as requiring modernization, re-socialization, and were pressured to adopt the dominant Israeli culture, which was essentially East European (Dahan-Kalev 2007). The North African immigrants were channeled to development towns on Israel's geographic margins, and ethnic inequality was perpetuated (Zameret et al. 2009).

The stereotypic attitude towards the culture of the immigrants from Asia-Africa influenced their negative self-image, and many thought that the customs of the past should not be continued in the new society. This viewpoint led to 'disappearance' of the Mimouna holiday until the late 1960s. Interviewees told that during those years, the holiday was celebrated only within the framework of the close family, and they were ashamed to wear

traditional clothes. Hannah, who immigrated from Morocco at the age of 10, told:

I remember that my mother would make a limited Mimouna, so if we wore a traditional dress on the holiday, it would have created a certain problem, because this would have been to dress like a Muslim. Even without that, we were looked upon with disdain at the beginning.

Only in the late 1960s, by a syncretic process which will be described henceforth, and whose socio-political causes will be analyzed, did the Mimouna turn into a central cultural symbol in the ethnic identity of descendents of the immigrants from North Africa, and into an important component of the Israeli canon.

From the periphery to the center and syncretism from the top

The dynamics of the movement of the Mimouna from the periphery to the center is fascinating, and the turning point in its evolution was in 1966.¹ Approximately three hundred young celebrators, who originated from the city of Fes in Morocco, most of whom were born in Morocco and meet the definition of the ‘first-and-a-half generation,’ gathered in the Herzl Forest in Jerusalem in order to renew the tradition of the Mimouna day outdoors. The celebration was initiated by Saul Ben-Simchon, one of the activists of the “Association of Immigrants from Fes in Israel.”

Ben-Simchon discussed the cultural motive for renewing the Mimouna celebrations in Israel and said:

The slogan of a merging of diasporas, in those days, meant that I must merge in the establishment – I am no longer me, I am he, and I am as nothing in the face of the establishment togetherness. In Israel, at that time, there existed extreme cultural monolithicism, but we wanted the political right to be different, to be who I am, what we... The Jews of Morocco came to Israel in order to be Jews according to the tradition of the ancestors and the Bible, and what we had here did not satisfy us. We therefore had the desire to stress the unique, and this

¹ Siso, Amram. 1967. “The Mimouna in the Sanhedrin Park in Jerusalem.” *Ba’maaracha* 1: 10, 21; “The Mimouna Celebrations will Encompass 30,000 Participants this Year.” 1970. *Yediot Aharonot*, April 7, 19 (Hebrew).

uniqueness, in my opinion, is good... At first this was definitely a political-social attitude (Ben-Simchon 1990, 15).

From Ben-Simchon's sayings I conclude that the initiative to renew the Mimouna was 'from the bottom,' from among the descendents of the immigrants from Morocco, and not 'from the top,' from the country's leaders. Ben-Simchon's goal in the revitalization of the celebrations in the public form stemmed mainly from political motives. He regarded the celebrations as an important means for creating an encounter between immigrants from North Africa, who had dispersed after their immigration to Israel, and to cultivate their culture and ethnic identity. With this encounter and the social cohesion, he wanted, together with his young friends, to demonstrate power and to protest against being positioned, together with their parents, at the political, economic, cultural and spatial margins of Israel.

The initiative to renew the Mimouna celebrations can thus be viewed as an act that was integrated in protest activities (Wadi Salib and the Black Panthers) which were organized by youths from North Africa, especially from Morocco, from the late 1950s, in poor neighborhoods (Yaar and Shavit 2003). These protest patterns are characteristic of young immigrants from minority groups, who are exposed to discrimination (Remennick 2003).

After the first festive encounter was successful, the celebrators decided to continue. In 1967 the Mimouna celebration was held in a larger park in Jerusalem, and about five thousand immigrants from Fes and their friends took part.² In the third year, 1968, within the framework of the celebrations of the twentieth Independence Day of the State of Israel, the "Association of Immigrants from Morocco in Israel," headed by young leaders including Ben-Simchon, adopted the Mimouna day celebrations, and that year it was celebrated in the Sanhedria Park, where about ten thousand people participated.³ In the fourth year, 1969, about twenty thousand people from around the country participated in the celebrations,⁴ and Ben-Simchon expressed the hope of the organizers "To introduce this pleasant and colorful

² Ben-Simchon, Saul. 1970, 3-4; "On the Celebrations in Sanhedria Park." *Yediot Aharonot*, May 2, 1-2 (Hebrew).

³ Barash, Menachem. 1968. "Immigrants from Morocco Celebrated the Mimouna Holiday." *Yediot Aharonot*, April 22, 4 (Hebrew).

⁴ "15 Thousand to the Mimouna Celebrations in Jerusalem." 1969. *Ha'aretz*, April 10, 4; "20 Thousand at the Mimouna Celebrations in Jerusalem." 1969. *Ha'aretz*, April 11, 3 (Hebrew).

holiday into every home in Israel...”⁵

Because the number of participants in the Mimouna celebrations in Jerusalem grew steadily every year, in the early 1970s the celebrations were moved to different large places in Jerusalem. In parallel, the “Association of Immigrants from Morocco in Israel” organized celebrations around the country, which also drew thousands of people.⁶ The organizers acted to increase the number of celebrators and to include different groups. The organizers regarded this diverse mass of people as a measure for the success of the celebrations and as a means for advancing their demand to afford the Mimouna national legitimization.

The goals of the organizers were reflected in the messages of the celebrations, their patterns and contents. They repeatedly expressed their aspiration to turn the Mimouna into a general holiday, and its values into a factor that unifies the Jewish people.⁷ Sam Ben-Shitrit, one of the leaders of the “Association of Immigrants from Morocco in Israel,” said, for example: “We took the Mimouna as a platform for bringing people together.”⁸ By disseminating the Mimouna’s messages of unity, they actually wanted to demonstrate ethnic presence and show that their cultural heritage is part of the national canon.

The large scale of the celebrations, and celebrators not of North African origin, as well as the participation of public figures, gradually led to the institutionalization of the Mimouna and broad public recognition of the Mimouna as a national Israeli holiday. The Mimouna was not celebrated in the past in *kibbutzim* (collective settlements) that were established by immigrants from Europe and South America. However, in recent years the number of *kibbutzim* that hold Mimouna celebrations has been increasing.⁹

⁵ Barash, Menachem. 1969. “15 Thousand Celebrated the Mimouna.” *Yediot Aharonot*, April 11, 4; “Celebrations of the Mimouna in Jerusalem.” 1969. *Ba’maaracha*, 97: 21 (Hebrew).

⁶ Hasson, Nir et al. 2005. “The Mayor of Dimona: Between One *Mofleta* and the Next Everyone Knew that Revitalized Zionism is in Dimona, Yerucham, Kiryat Shmona.” *Ha’aretz*, May 1, 13a; Zuri, Matan et al. 2007. “The *Mofleta* in the Field.” *Yediot Aharonot*, April 10, 4 (Hebrew).

⁷ Barash, Menachem. 1970. “Mimouna Celebrations – A Picnic of Happiness and Joy.” *Yediot Aharonot*, April 19, 6; Barash, Menachem. 1973. “Tens of Thousands Celebrated the Mimouna in the Capital.” *Yediot Aharonot*, April 25, 9 (Hebrew).

⁸ Ettinger, Yair. 2011. “Sam Ben-Shitrit, How is the Mimouna Related to Issues of Conversion.” *Ha’aretz*, April 26, 2 (Hebrew).

⁹ Ashkenazi, Eli. 2008. “To the Sound of Celebrations the Mimouna Entered the Kibbutz Yard.” *Ha’aretz*, April 25, 6; Shani, Rami. 2012. “Cooperative Mimouna: 50 Kibbutzim will Celebrate the Mimouna.” April 13, *Walla News*, 2. <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/90/2524586> (Hebrew).

The Mimouna turned into a link in the national days of commemoration and holidays in Israel. Since the early 1970s, the Mimouna has been recognized as an acknowledge day of vacation for civil service workers,¹⁰ and has been awarded cultivation and generous institutional funding at the municipal and the national level.

Syncretism from the bottom

In order to justify the term ‘holiday’ as it was originally, and to afford it a spiritual value, the organizers made an effort to expand the traditional elements in the Mimouna celebrations and present the culture and achievements of North African Jewry in the past and in the present. However, the holiday customs were transcribed to a different time and to different conditions. They underwent change and were afforded a new interpretation in Israel.

Observations in the homes of families, and articles in newspapers,¹¹ show distancing from religious elements that originally existed on Mimouna eve, for example the festive prayer in the synagogue and the rabbi’s blessing. Tradition was weakened upon immigration to Israel, a change took place in the family structure and the older generation lost its authority. Family, acquaintances, neighbors, friends and politicians come to the homes of the families. A large part of the public is not of North African origins, and claims to come in order to honor the members of the family which he knows and to partake of the holiday delicacies, especially the *mofleta*. The guests are received in traditional dress that was brought upon immigration, or which was bought during roots journeys to Morocco. Authentic Moroccan Mimouna eve music, as well as Israeli songs, are played in the background, since, according to the interviewees, the younger generation does not connect to the authentic Moroccan music.

Morocco-born interviewees, as well as members of the first-and-a-half and the second generation, stressed that they think it is important to pass the tradition of the Mimouna to the next generation. As explained by Yossi:

¹⁰ *State Service Regulations*, chapter 32: vacation days, section 32, 41: optional days/32.411a, Jewish Holidays.

¹¹ Ruso, Nira. 2010. “Around the *Mofleta*.” *Yediot Aharonot*, April 6, 12; Glickman, Eitan, and Yaron Sasson. 2011. “In Charge of the Mimouna.” *Yediot Aharonot*, April 24, 6–7; Abramov, A. 2012. “Casablanca, the *Mofleta* Version.” *Yediot Aharonot*, April 15, 15; Bar-Haim, Gabi. 2012. “Roots Journey to the *Mofleta*.” *Yediot Aharonot*, April 15, 15 (Hebrew).

About 300 guests will come to the Mimouna at our family home. The purpose is to pass the roots on to the children and preserve the tradition.

Ayala told:

The parents tried to preserve the tradition as much as possible, and for us too it was very important to pass it on to our children. We see that they attribute great importance to the Mimouna, and it is an integral part of their lives. For example, this year my soldier son is doing more turns of duty in the army so that he can have a day off for the Mimouna, because it is important for him to be at home on this day.

Many families of North African origin serve bought and prepared traditional foods, as well as Israeli foods: burecas, croissants and sweets. The custom of placing a jar of milk on the table as a symbol for economic abundance was not so well preserved, nor was the custom of placing a fish on the table as a symbol for fertility. Shula explained:

Today we do not place these things on the table, and have no explanation for this, we simply stopped, as if this does not really mean anything to anybody. Today we have a new generation that does not understand the entire significance of the Mimouna, as we do.

Mazal said that she does not have gold coins, as did her mother, in order to put them in a plate with flour. She uses chocolate coins as a substitute, which she spreads on the table. This improvisation demonstrates the broad interpretation given today to the customs of the Mimouna holiday, in accordance with the new circumstances.

The celebrators which I observed conducted conversations on politics, recipes, etc. However, the topic of matchmaking, which was central in the meetings of the families in North Africa, was not raised. The main impression I gained from the ritual was: Israeli hospitality with ethnic refreshments. Celebrators who immigrated to Israel from Morocco when they were teenagers said that, on one hand, they think the holiday is important for continuation of tradition, unity and family get-togethers, and that they gladly accept the fact that this holiday has become public, but on the other hand, expressed sorrow over the loss of customs that have disappeared, possession

of the holiday by politicians and the change in its religious nature.

The generation that immigrated to Israel at age 8 said, for example:

I love to celebrate at home, and here too there is a pleasant atmosphere. However, in Morocco I would be more excited. I was a small child, I remember the dough, the preparations for the holiday... My sweetest memory is my deceased father reading aloud from the Bible. Today the holiday has become more Israeli. It has been turned into something that does not really aggrandize it, for example the politicians who walk around here.

On the day of the Mimouna, the main activity of the celebrators in Israel is expressed in barbeques in parks. However, traditional dishes are also served, brought in picnic boxes. The music is diverse: original Moroccan songs performed by Moroccan bands, which are integrated with Israeli music, as well as trance songs, Israeli and Mediterranean music performed by famous bands and singers. The organizers of the celebrations indicated that this music is more familiar to the youths and makes them happy.

The Israeli nature of the Mimouna holiday stems from the participation of many Israelis who are not of North African origin in the celebrations, as well as from mixed ethnic marriages. Liat, whose parents immigrated from Iraq, said:

I did not know anything about the Mimouna until I married. At the beginning, I would join him for the celebrations as his wife, and then I simply fell in love with this holiday and today I prepare the Mimouna exactly as it is traditionally. I make mofletas and feel that this is my holiday, just as everybody else's.¹²

Avi explained:

Today there is a new generation, and there are many who did not marry Moroccans, and this made a difference, because not all preserved the holiday. There is different music, different drinks are placed on the table, traditional dress is no longer worn, because it is not appropriate.

The syncretic process in the Mimouna developed because the second and third generation of immigrants from North Africa choose to preserve the

¹² Goel, Beno, and Noam Bakran. 2008. "Mofleta Alert." *Yediot Aharonot*, April 25, 5 (Hebrew).

holiday customs selectively. Yossi, a football coach, said:

*We have still not become liberated from the way we were accustomed to celebrate the holiday in our parents' home. Today this is a national holiday that symbolizes joy.*¹³

Many of the second and third generation immigrants from North Africa choose to celebrate the holiday in parties, and rent catering for preparing the food most identified with this holiday – the *mofleta*. Adocate Ami Savir said that he ordered 500 *mofletas* for the party he held at his home, where the guests danced to the sounds of Hebrew music played by a DJ. Savir explained that it is difficult to maintain the authenticity of the holiday among members of his generation, but added:

*We are the second and third generation of Moroccan Jewry, we have returned to our real roots. In the previous generation they tried to blur tradition, and there were also constraints, but we have a different approach: without roots there is no continuity.*¹⁴



Another expression for the inclusion of the Mimouna in Israeli culture is its permeation into the clubs culture. *Mofletas* and traditional sweets are sold in these places, the staff wear typical holiday dress, and some songs in Moroccan are played over the loudspeakers. Event producers tell of a modern

¹³ Shalom, Efrat. 2003. "Milk and Honey and DJ." *Ha'aretz*, April 21, d1, d4 (Hebrew).

¹⁴ Hasson, Nir. 2004. "When Politicians no Longer Come it's a Sign that the Charm of the Mimouna has Gone." *Ha'aretz*, April 13, 4a; Mozagovia, Natasha. 2004. "King of Pitas ate *Mofletas*." *Yediot Aharonot*, April 13, 12–13 (Hebrew).

Mimouna party that is held today in other places as well, with Moroccan decorations, *mofletas*, belly dancers and a DJ who plays current Moroccan music.

One club owner said that the Mimouna turned into an Israeli holiday a long time ago. One of the organizers indicated that the fact that masses of Israelis today celebrate the Mimouna, including the youths in clubs, does not necessarily mean that they are part of the real holiday experience. The party animals have no special identification with the Mimouna, but rather this is for them another reason to party.

Summarizing discussion

In this article I showed an additional phenomenon, “transfer of ritual” (Langer et al. 2006) in the dimension of space, i.e. in a state of passage incurred during immigration. The article focused on the way in which the descendents of the immigrants afford new interpretation to the holiday rituals and construct their ethnic identity, a topic that has not been investigated sufficiently to date.

Among those who immigrated with their parents when they were eight years old or older, who fit the definition of first-and-a-half generation, I found a ritual behavior pattern that is composed of syncretism, which means a mixing of cultural elements (Stewart and Shaw 1994). The syncretic model differs from the theoretical delineation of the ‘first-and-a-half generation’ model which presents poles of behavior: assimilation or resistance.

The findings confirm the claim that ‘syncretism from below’ was created among these descendents, in all dimensions: traditional and Israeli foods, traditional and Western dress, ethnic and Israeli musical performances, celebrators from different ethnic groups, location of the celebrations at homes and in parks as in North Africa, but also in banquet halls, clubs and discotheques. Clearly modern elements have been added to the original holiday patterns, such as hosting politicians and reporting of the celebrations by the media. It can also be seen that the weakening of the religious tradition goes hand in hand with the disappearance of religious customs in the Mimouna holiday. The Mimouna has thus turned, to a great extent, from a religious holiday into a mass celebration.

Shlomo, who immigrated from Morocco in his youth, expressed his opinion on the new style of the Mimouna:

This is a generation that has become free of resistance to its family and the customs of its ethnic community, and today celebrates the holiday without reservation and from a comfortable place. Of course, the result is synthesis between the clear Israeliness of this generation and the old tradition of the parents.

The trend for cultural change and preservation is also apparent among the second generation, whose orientation is usually one of integration in society. Among their young children there is today also a tendency to value authentic elements. Marks et al. (2007; Lev Ari 2010) claimed that the first generation influences the following generations and tends to transmit their ethnic identity to them. Nonetheless, socio-psychological studies (Lev Ari 2010; Tur-Kaspa et al. 2004) indicate that other socialization agents, such as the education system, have a significant influence on their identity.

The social celebration thus plays a major role in passing on tradition. In addition to new elements that were added, the meanings which members of the generation attribute to the ethnic symbols have also changed. The customs that were preserved raise the thought that perhaps this is a modern expression using traditional elements. The ethnic celebration thus enables the descendants to experience continuity and revitalization simultaneously, and comprises a platform for dialogue between tradition and modernity.

It therefore appears that, similarly to other societies that absorb immigrants (Rumbaut 1997; Levitt 2001), a strong desire to become integrated in the dominant culture does not contradict the empowerment of separate ethnic awareness and pride. This phenomenon is called “the new ethnicity” and indicates the selective growth of a distinct awareness and identity among immigrant communities (Bennet 1975).

Revitalization and a syncretic ethnic identity is explained, in the case of the Mimouna, also by the spiritual and family functions which the Mimouna fulfilled: immigrants from North Africa found that these celebrations gave them an opportunity for social encounters with their relatives, who were dispersed upon arrival in Israel. The need to preserve some of the customs is also the result of the great uniformity of modern society and the need to feel their uniqueness and their ethnic origin.

Modernization also created a great need to return and grasp at beliefs that afford meaning and fill the void. Similar studies show that cases of revitalization of ethnic and religious identities do not disappear in modern

democratic societies, but rather multiply and strengthen. Movements of ethnic and religious revitalization are products of modernity itself, and today reflect the limits of rationalism (Schnapper 2005).

The findings of the present study indicate that resistance and political activism comprised a central factor in the ethnic revitalization and its syncretic expressions. The exclusion and marginality in the absorption of the immigrants from North Africa motivated youths, especially those who meet the definition of ‘first-and-a-half generation,’ to renew the Mimouna celebrations in the public sphere during the late 1960s. They wanted to demonstrate political power through these celebrations, and to protest against their exclusion. Such behavioral expressions are characteristic of young immigrants from minority groups, who are exposed to discrimination (Remennick 2003).

A political change took place in Israel in 1977, which ended the long-standing political and cultural power of the ruling party – Mapai, and in which a right-wing party, the Likud, gained power for the first time. The Oriental population, in particular the immigrants from Morocco, which strengthened the Likud party’s demographic power (Sikron 2004, 59), tilted the outcome of the elections (Filk 2006, 123–124). Their support of the right-wing party was regarded as a protest against the old and patronizing establishment, which they regarded as responsible for their discrimination.

The political change increased the representation of youths, representatives of immigrants from North Africa, in the parties and in the parliament, and accelerated the entrance of the Mimouna into the cultural mainstream. Renewal of the Mimouna also served the political interests of heads of state and party representatives, who did not pass by any opportunity to appear and influence the mass of celebrators.¹⁵ With their presence and their speeches they afforded national legitimization to the holiday, and helped in a process of ‘syncretism from the top.’

Revitalization of the Mimouna and the movement toward the center raised the political and cultural prestige of immigrants from North Africa and their descendants. The cultural pluralism that evolved in Israel since the political change in 1977 contributed to this change. The ideology that

¹⁵ Wolf, Pinchas. 2012. “Mimouna in the Shadow of Elections: Where will the Knesset Members Celebrate?” *Walla News*, April 14, 1. <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/9/2524429>; Wolf, Pinchas, and Shalv Tal. 2012. “The Mimouna Celebrations: The Politicians Stormed the *Mofletas*.” *Walla News*, April 15, 1–2. <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/9/2524700> (Hebrew).

demanded assimilation of immigrants was exchanged, at least partially, with a more liberal ideology, after which ethnic groups became more aware of their rights and began to promote identity politics. The demand of immigrants from North Africa to expand the boundaries of the cultural space in Israel and reshape it increased. Thus, their ethnicity did not turn into a cultural sub-identity, but rather into an integral part of the national identity and the definition of Israeliness.

In the case of the Mimouna, identities politics indicate that a 'low,'absorbed, culture is not as weak as it is depicted, and may integrate within the hegemonic culture and may even influence it (Williams 1977). Such a viewpoint empowers the absorbed person, and views the immigration process as an ongoing negotiation that may yield achievements for an ethnic minority group. Nonetheless, it is clear that this is not a 'victory' of a marginal group, but rather a constant struggle over the construction of power, voice and identity (Castronovo 1997).

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the Research Committee of the Ashkelon Academic College, Israel.

Photos courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office.

REFERENCES

- Alba, Richard, and Victor Nee, 1997. "Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration." *International Migration Review* 31 (4): 826–874.
- Alba, Richard, and Victor Nee. 2003. *Remaking the American Mainstream*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Barnard, Alan, and Jonathan Spencer, eds. 1996. *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Basch, Linda, Nina Glick-Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc. 1994. *Nations Unbound*. New York: Gordon and Breach.
- Bennet, John, ed. 1975. *The New Ethnicity: Perspectives from Ethnology*. St. Paul: West Publishing.
- Ben-Simchon, Saul. 1990. "The Mimouna Holiday among the Jews of Morocco". In *The Ethnic Holiday in Israel*, edited by Rina Sharet, 13–16. Tel-Aviv: The

- General Histadrut and the Ministry of Education (Hebrew).
- Bradley, James. 1987. *Evolution of the Onondaga Iroquois*. Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press.
- Castells, Manuel. 1997. *The Power of Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Castronovo, Russ. 1997. "Compromised Narratives along the Border: The Mason-Dixon Line, Resistance, and Hegemony." In *Border Theory: The Limits of Cultural Politics*, edited by Scott Michaelsen and David Johnson, 195–220. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Cohen, Yitchak, and Yinon Haberfeld. 2003. "Economic Integration among Children of Israeli Immigrants in the United States." *International Migration* 41 (4): 141–159.
- Cornell, Stephen, and Douglas Hartmann. 1998. *Ethnicity and Race*. London: Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Pine Forge Press.
- Dahan-Kalev, Henriette. 2007. "Research on Orientals in Sociology: The Moroccans as a 'Case' of the Case." *Peamim* 108: 126–187 (Hebrew).
- Filk, Danny. 2006. *Pluralism and Hegemony in Israel*. Tel-Aviv: Rasling (Hebrew).
- Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press.
- Goldberg, Harvey. 1974. "The Mimouna and the Minority Status of Moroccan Jews." *Ethnology* 17 (1): 75–87.
- Goldstein, Judith. 1985. "Iranian Ethnicity in Israel: The Performance of Identity." In *Studies in Israeli Ethnicity*, edited by Alex Weingrod, 237–258. New York: Gordon and Breach.
- Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Gusfield, Joseph. 1973. "Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change." In *Social Change*, edited by Eva Etzioni-Halevi and Amitai Etzioni, 333–341. New York: Basic Books.
- Hunt, Stephen, and Nicola Lightly. 2001. "The British Black Pentecostal 'Revival': Identity and Belief in the 'New' Nigerian Churches." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24 (1): 104–124.
- Huntington, Samuel. 2004. *Who are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Koepping, Klaus-Peter. 1994. "Manipulated Identities: Syncretism and Uniqueness of Tradition in Modern Japanese Discourse." In *Syncretism/Anti Syncretism*, edited by Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw, 161–177. London: Routledge.
- Langer, Robert, Dorothea Luddeckens, Kerstin Radde, and Jan Snoek. 2006.

- “Transfer of Ritual.” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 20 (1): 1–10.
- Lasker, Michael. 2006. *Israel and the Immigration from North Africa: 1948-1970*. Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University (Hebrew).
- Leopold, Anita Maria, and Jeppe Sinding Jensen, eds. 2004a. “General Introduction.” In *Syncretism in Religion*, edited by Anita Maria Leopold and Jeppe Sinding Jensen, 2–12. New York: Routledge.
- Leopold, Anita Maria, and Jeppe Sinding Jensen. 2004b. “Religions in Contact: Power Syncretism and Creolization: Introduction to Part IV.” In *Syncretism in Religion*, edited by Anita Maria Leopold and Jeppe Sinding Jensen, 142–159. New York: Routledge.
- Leshem, Eli. 2003. “Israel as a Multicultural State in the Early Twenty-first Century.” In *Cultural Variance as a Challenge to Human Services*, edited by Eli Leshem and Dorit Roar-Striar, 13–111. Jerusalem: Magnes (Hebrew).
- Lev Ari, Lilach. 2010. *Second Generation and First-and-a-half generation of Israelis in North America – Identity and Identification*. Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, The Rappaport Center (Hebrew).
- . 2012. “Does Gender have an Effect in the Second Generation Immigrants? Identity and Ethnic Identification among Descendents of Israeli Immigrants.” *Sugiot Hevratot Be’Yisrael* 14: 208–236 (Hebrew).
- Levitt, Peggy. 2001. *The Transnational Villagers*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lissak, Moshe. 2000. *The Great Immigration in the 1950s*. Jerusalem: Bialik (Hebrew).
- Lomsky-Feder, Edna, Tamar Rapoport, and Lydia Ginsberg. 2010. “Introduction.” In *Visibility in Immigration*, edited by Edna Lomsky-Feder and Tamar Rapoport, 17–39. Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute and Hakibbutz Hameuchad (Hebrew).
- Maman, Aaron. 1991. “Mimouna – the Story of the Name and the Origin of the Holiday.” In *Researches on the Culture of the Jews of North Africa*, edited by Issaschar Ben-Ami, 85–95. Jerusalem: Va’ad Ha’maravim (Hebrew).
- Marks, Amy Kerivan, Laura A. Szalacha, Meaghan Lamarre, Michelle J. Boyd, and Cynthia García Coll. 2007. “Emerging Ethnic Identity and Interethnic Group Social Preferences in Middle Childhood: Findings from the Children of Immigrants Development in Context (CIDC) Study.” *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 31 (5): 501–513.
- Nagel, Joane. 1996. *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and Resurgence of Identity and Culture*, New York: Oxford University Press.

- Park, Jerry Z. 2008. "Second-generation Asian American Pan-Ethnic Identity: Pluralized Meanings of a Racial Label." *Sociological Perspectives* 51 (3): 541–561.
- Portes, Alejandro, and Rubén G. Rumbaut. 2001. *Legacies: The story of the Immigrant Second Generation*. Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Remennick, Larissa. 2003. "The 1.5-Generation of Russian Immigrants in Israel: Between Integration and Socio-Cultural Retention." *Diaspora* 12 (1): 39–66.
- Rumbaut, Rubén G. 1997. "Assimilation and its Discontents: Between Rhetoric and Reality." *International Migration Review* 31 (4): 923–960.
- Sahlins, Marshall. 1994. "Cosmologies of Capitalism: The Trans-Pacific Sector of The World-System." In *Culture Power History*, edited by Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley and Sherry B. Ortner, 412–455. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Schermerhorn, Richard Alonzo. 1978. *Comparative Ethnic Relations*. Berkeley: University of Chicago Press.
- Schnapper, Dominique. 2005. "Ethnic Revival and Religious Revival in Providential Democracies." In *Comparing Modernities*, edited by Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Yitzak Sternberg, 205–221. Boston: Brill.
- Seymour-Smith, Charlotte. 1986. *Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology*. London: Macmillan.
- Sharaby, Rachel. 2011. "Dual Liminality: Marriage Rituals of the Mountain Jews in a Changing Social Context." *Journal of Ritual Studies* 25 (1): 25–44.
- Shields, Rob. 1992. *Places on the Margin*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Shils, Edward. 1981. *Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sikron, Moshe. 2004. *Demography: Populations of Israel – Characteristics and Trends*. Jerusalem: Carmel (Hebrew).
- Stewart, Charles, and Rosalind Shaw. 1994. "Introduction." In *Syncretism/Anti Syncretism*, edited by Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw, 1–26. London: Routledge.
- Stewart, Charles. 2004. "Relocating syncretism in social discourse." In *Syncretism in Religion*. edited by Anita Maria Leopold and Jeppe Sinding Jensen, 264–285. New York: Routledge.
- Tessler, Ricki. 2007. "Oriental Elites – Establishment and Extra-establishment." In *New Elites in Israel*, edited by Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Yitzak Sternberg, 277–300. Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik (Hebrew).
- Tur-Kaspa, Michal, Dana Pereg, and Mario Mikulincer. 2004. *Psychological Aspects*

of Identity Formation and Their Implications for Understand the Concept of Jewish Identity: A Review of the Scientific Literature. Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, The Rappaport Center for Assimilation Research and Strengthening Jewish Vitality (Hebrew).

- Turner, Victor. 1967. *The Forests of Symbols*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Wicherkiewicz, Tomasz S. 1996. "Ethnic Revival of the German Minority in Poland." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 120: 25–38.
- Williams, Raymond. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wimmer, Andreas, and Nina Glick-Schiller. 2003. "Methodological Nationalism and Beyond." *Global Networks* 2 (4): 301–334.
- Yaar, Ephraim, and Zeev Shavit. 2003. "Processes and Trends in the Collective Identity." In *Trends in Israeli Society*, edited by Ephraim Yaar and Zeev Shavit, 1197–1262. Tel-Aviv: Open University (Hebrew).
- Zameret, Zvi, Aviva Halamish, and Esther Meir-Glitzstein, eds. 2009. *Development Towns*. Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi (Hebrew).
- Zhou, Min. 1997. "Segmented Assimilation: Issues, Controversies, and Recent Research on the New Second Generation." *International Migration Review* 31 (4): 975–1008.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Lecturer at the Department of Sociology, Ashkelon Academic College and the Interdisciplinary Social Sciences Department, Bar-Ilan University. Received a bachelor's degree with honors in Jewish history and philosophy, a master's degree in Jewish history and a Ph.D. in sociology and anthropology from Bar-Ilan University. Published four books and dozens of articles in journals and scientific congresses in Israel and abroad. Her studies focus on immigration, women from traditional societies, intercultural encounters and syncretism.

**INHABITING DIVIDED TERRITORIES:
'COMING HOME' AND
'RETURNING TO THE HOMETLAND'.
HEIRS AND RITUALS ON BOTH SIDES
OF THE BULGARIAN-TURKISH BORDER**

Meglana Zlatkova

Abstract

The paper presents a case study of some aspects of waves of migration between Bulgaria and Turkey from the viewpoint of different generations. The state border was crossed several times by groups of Bulgarians and Turks during the twentieth century when migrations were forced as a result of political decisions. The border constitutes a new division of space and constructs territories as part of the collective memory of different national communities. In this article, the problem of migration is presented from the perspective of settlements close to the political border which offer images of the next generations of migrants, who are willing to re-discover the dividing line between the two states and to re-think the boundary.

Key words

Migration, border, generations, heirs, symbolic forms, rituals, mobility.

Migration is a focal point of interest for ethnologists and anthropologists not only and not mainly as a movement of groups and cultural models but also as a translation or misunderstanding of signs and symbols or finding new meanings and uses for what is considered as a heritage. The division of Eastern Thrace, which had been historically considered one territory, among Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey as a result of the Balkan wars and WW I meant not only new borderlines and exchanges of population. The re-settlement was also a re-writing of people's biographies and a re-configuring of their choices in life, not simply in terms of a place to inhabit but also with reference to a sense of belonging, of sharing or distinguishing with the help of memory, of accepting or rejecting one's heritage. It is the liminality of the settlements in these territories close to the Bulgarian-Turkish border which is the focus of discussion here.

This paper aims to present the case of the ‘inhabiting’ of the divided territories close to the border in both Bulgaria and Turkey by the heirs of the migrants. The case will be analyzed on two levels: first, by defining heirs and territories as stories about the **forbidden** border – the transgression on the narration level, and second, as civic rituals and forms of cultural exchange in the twenty-first century.

On the level of collective identity-construction at the beginning of the twentieth century the Myth of Bulgaria was created which envisaged a lost entity of the national territory and its lost heirs – ethnic brothers and sisters, living in the neighbouring Balkan countries. That starting point requires a specific approach to studying migration by the national ethnologies in South-Eastern Europe as the ‘returning’ of people to home countries after the wars and the exchange of population and establishment of (new) states during the entire twentieth century. The adaptation and integration in the new (home) societies were approached from an essentialists’ viewpoint as gathering together the community and transmitting the cultural heritage (traditions) coming from the past. That academic discourse on migration was a form of explanation of numerous after-wars waves of exchange of the population among Balkan countries resulting from international peace agreements.¹ The new arrivals from the territories which remained outside the state borders were introduced to the rest of Bulgarians as Bulgarians from the heart of the Bulgarian territory – historical regions of Thrace and Macedonia. The state as an institution and all Bulgarians as a community were expected to help these people to start their new life in the motherland Bulgaria. To homogenize the communities and to re-construct the territories divided between neighbours the Bulgarian State established new civic rituals aimed at commemorating the past² and defining identities.

My research is focused on the symbolic and cultural dimensions of migration in two cases of transborder migration in the Balkans: the case of

¹ The exchange of population between Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey started during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and finished in 1925 with a new wave after the Angora agreement. Another agreement known as ‘Mollov-Kafandaris’ (1927) regulates the ‘returning’ of Greeks from Bulgaria to Greece.

² For the commemorative practices and rituals, and the activities of the association of the two groups in the frame of the project, as well as the historical context, see the analyses and research results of the members of the research project: Valentina Ganeva-Raycheva (Ganeva-Raycheva 2011, 2012) for Thracian Bulgarians and Magdalena Elchinova (Elchinova 2011) and Nikolay Vukov (Vukov 2012) for migrants to Turkey.

the Bulgarian refugees from Eastern Thrace and their descendants and the case of the Bulgarian Turks, resettlers and migrants to Turkey from the mid-20th century until today.³ The specific research focus here is the two sides of the border and the intercultural interaction of migrants and their heirs.



Pic. 1. Map of Bulgaria and border region with Turkey.

After 1989 the social sciences and humanities in Bulgaria have been applying different approaches in migration studies⁴ while trying to provide concepts of explanation and interpretation of the various effects of the social and cultural changes in Bulgaria and the region. Magdalena Elchinova (2009) applies an anthropological approach and critically discusses the state of the art of migration studies in Bulgaria and reflects on the “discovery”

³ The larger context of this point of view is a research project “Resettlers and Migrants on Two Sides of The Bulgarian-Turkish Border: Heritage, Identity, Intercultural Interactions” funded by the National Science Fund, Bulgaria. The project aims “at studying comparatively the refugee and migration processes from Turkey to Bulgaria and – alternatively, in a historical perspective and with regard to the diverse forms of migration today. This will permit us to outline the typology of resettling in the European context, as well as to trace the processes of community formation and applying the symbolic resources of these communities for the construction of cultural heritage at local and national levels” (http://2sidesborder.org/index_en.html). The results of the common fieldwork of the author and Stoyka Penkova are presented in this paper.

⁴ One of the scholars in the field of migration studies in Bulgaria whose research and publications influenced this study is Anna Krasteva (2004, 2006, 2012a).

of anthropology in Bulgaria in its connections with ethnicity and migration as research problems. The distinctive aspect in this field in the Bulgarian national context, in her view, is that migration is studied much more as cases, with fieldwork for short periods of time and in certain local communities, using the concepts of community, ethnicity and identity. Elchinova shows the need for a theoretical rethinking in comparative and interdisciplinary perspectives of the concepts dealing with migration as a dynamic social and cultural phenomenon of the postmodern world of networks, movements and exchange.

The approach presented here takes an activist position in relation to the concept of heritage and the mechanisms of the legitimisation and recognition of different groups throughout the interaction between the ‘newcomers’ and the ‘host-society’ on the level of ritualized memory. The interesting cases of ‘coming (migration) home’ and ‘returning to the homelands’ as foreigners are used to analyze the divided spaces of the border areas in terms of constructing places, (new) festivals and holidays and accepting/using the local culture as ways to express identities. The terms ‘home’ and ‘homeland’ are used in the specific context of the migration movements between Bulgaria and Turkey. ‘Home’ is used here as a birthplace, country,⁵ and ‘the homeland’ refers to the national states, where the majority are Bulgarians or Turks. The idea of the home (mother) land exists in both national ideologies⁶. Returning to the homeland is problematic from the viewpoint of national myths – as real and symbolical movements of migrants and their heirs. Bourdieu’s metaphor, which describes the possible modifications of the ‘contradictions of inheritance’⁷, has been employed in the research when it comes to the ways of using heritage – here we refer to two target groups: (1) migrants and their descendants in Edirne, and (2) the ancestors of the immigrant refugees from Thrace in Tsarevo and in the Strandzha Mountain region.

Case studies highlight the specificity of bequeathing and inheriting at a personal level in people’s everyday practices, but also at the levels of institutions and symbolisation. The key concept for interpretation is **border**. The division of the space and (re-)constructing the territories, migration and

⁵ ‘Rodno mjesto’, ‘bashtino ognishte’ in Bulgarian and ‘memleket’ in Turkish.

⁶ ‘Majka rodina’ in Bulgarian and ‘Anavatan’ in Turkish.

⁷ For methodological notes and analyses on ‘contradictions of inheritance’ in this context, see Bourdieu 1993, Zlatkova 2012, Penkova 2012.

inhabiting the places will be presented here by three figures and ways of overcoming: (a) forbidden border, (b) imagined entity of divided territory (Eastern Thace) and (c) ritualised returns of heirs.

Instead of offering short historical notes on the two cases I will use two versions of the stories recorded during fieldwork, which present ways of interpretation of the traumatic experience of the political division of the areas between Bulgaria and Turkey after the WWII. The narratives here are re-worked by the collective memory forms⁸ of interpreting the symbolical border to be crossed by descendants of the resettlers and refugees.

The first story is offered by a 30-year-old man who migrated from Kyrzhali, Bulgaria, to Edirne when he was 10 years old.⁹ After he narrated his autobiographical case of how his family crossed the border, the interviewed person shared the story about the “end of the entity of Thrace”. He learned about it after the re-settlement. Similar stories were recorded in many border areas in Strandza and the Sakar Mountain regions and still exist as the narrative practice and common knowledge of the people living on both sides of the borderline, in Bulgaria and in Turkey.

After WWII the borderline divided the local people and one village with Turkish population remained in the Bulgarian territory while one Bulgarian – in Turkey. With an additional agreement the two countries decided to exchange the populations. People were settled in their neighboring village and the boundary definitely was closed. But the animals continued to return in their ‘homelands’, in the houses where they were accustomed to live. The border officers complained to Bulgarian and Turkish authorities that they are not cowboys, but border police of the states and asked for help. The two states arranged the animals’ exchange and they finally stopped crossing the border.¹⁰

⁸ There is a substantial corpus of research materials and interpretations on collective memory and the sites of memory, as well as on rewriting history. The authors, who postulate the tradition in this intellectual field of contemporary history and define the terms we now use, are Maurice Halbwachs (1980) and Pierre Nora (1997, 2004).

⁹ Interview with E. V. taken in Turkey in 2011.

¹⁰ The interview with M. H. is in Turkish and the version here is normalized and translated. The historical evidence which confirms such stories can be found in the official diplomatic correspondance between the two states.

People migrate, they are able to change their homes, and they establish boundaries and protect them. But borders are the most fragile line in human relationships and an object of desire to be crossed and overcome.¹¹ That way of interpreting the **forbidden border** kept alive the sense of resistance and symbolical denying of the boundaries by setting the new orders and new communities in a situation of conflicting political ideological discourses. People could be divided, convinced, constructed, unified, stopped by the border, but the sense of belonging is a strong impulse of the work of memory and interpretation and rituals.

The other image of the divided territory, which could be found on the narration level, is the image of **Thrace as an entity**, which exists regardless of the human lines and borders splitting its territory between three states. These kinds of stories¹² are also re-worked by the collective memory on a symbolical level as ‘discovering’ the ‘lost’ (birth) place. Even if migrants or refugees cannot find the way to their homelands because of the newly established and closed borders, different moving objects on the traditional roads and directions in the region substitute for the people.

The narratives are usually centered on an object (a shepherd’s staff, for example), signed with personal initials or a lost animal (usually a lamb), marked by its owner, dropped into a spring or a river or lost in Turkey or Bulgaria. In a short period of time it is discovered by someone else in Bulgaria or Turkey or vice versa and recognized by the owner (even if the owner is on the other side of the border). The sign and the mark are the evidence, which can prove that the object or the animal belonged to a person who had left the place. The story is usually interpreted in terms of the division of geographical space vs the entity of a cultural space of a historical region. On the surface people are not allowed to return to their homelands but under the ground there is still a system of ways, caves and underground rivers that facilitate transmission of messages from the one side of the border to the other and bring ‘news’ to the descendants from the places where their parents used to live.

¹¹ Irena Bokova describes a similar way of interpretation of the sense of lost entity of Thrace in the collective and individual memory in some settlements in the border regions in Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey – children play in the islands of the Maritza, a border river for the three states (Bokova 2012a).

¹² The stories are widely distributed in different regions, but what is important here is the way that they are used by the heirs of migrants as a strategy of self-identification as descendants of the so-called Thracian Bulgarians, and they have been recorded in Bulgaria.

Sharing this knowledge and using these symbolical representations of migrations is a mechanism to remember the place of origin and to transmit the sense of belonging to one territory, to link the future generations and to support the sense of community in the new environment. The stories are not only a significant part of the collective memory of the group but also an element of the local culture, folklore and cosmology, which have been ethnically homogenized by the national state during the entire twentieth century and especially in its second half.

After the World War II, for almost half a century, the border between Bulgaria and Turkey had another ideological dimension: it represented **The Iron Curtain**. Thus, the people settled and stopped moving, but the objects, images, memories, and narrations continued to transgress this multidimensional boundary and to present symbolical returns and construct communities but in a new environment.

In the last decade of the twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first century people re-started their movement across the border – Turks from Bulgaria settled in Turkey¹³ and many Bulgarians were able to go and visit their ancestors' homes as tourists. These movements will be discussed here from the point of view of forms of ritualizing the 'returning' based on the concept of heritage and heirs and instrumentation of border transgressions, and particular attention will be paid to settlements where people who have recently arrived live nowadays. Currently there are a large number of people with dual citizenship residing in Turkey – Turkish and Bulgarian. These are people who can freely cross the political border and/or live in both countries.

Crossing the border as a ritualized movement or as an image construction will be discussed with the particular cases in mind of two towns close to the state border: Edirne in Turkey and Tsarevo in Bulgaria. Both have received refugees and migrants in various twentieth-century migration waves; neither is a border town proper¹⁴ and life in them is dominated by the respective centres of the two states – Sofia and Istanbul. The framework of the research problematizes the border by way of re-considering the notions of 'heritage' and 'identity' while exploring migration and town spaces. I

¹³ For more about the 'Revival process' and the migration of Turks, called re-settlers, to Turkey, see Maeva 2006, Elchinova 2011, 2012.

¹⁴ For detailed analysis of the topic of mutual recognition of the people in towns close to the border, see Zlatkova 2012.

consider heritage in terms of the 'heirs' who make the town spaces their own, while utilizing the two cultural models in which they have been socialised, but also in terms of using this heritage to construct identities and shape the memory of places and events through rituals and practices of recalling.

Definding 'heirs' – some theoretical and methodological notes

During fieldwork we were faced with a variety of **contradictions** in the process of mutually signifying and giving an importance to the different dimensions of the **heritage**. That is why Pierre Bourdieu's metaphor describing different forms of 'contradictions of inheritance' (see Bourdieu 1993) was an appropriate activist approach to the problem of migration and inheriting social and cultural models from the first and to the **next** generations. Ritualized forms of crossing the border are part of the institutional life of both migrant groups and have a place in the personal experience and memories of the people inhabiting the border territories. The 'dream' of returning to the predecessors' home is transmitted among the following generations by organized excursions/expeditions of the descendants.¹⁵

It is time to mention that the study considers generation as a typological positioning of migrants in the change of place of residence, a positioning which signifies the cultural and social effects resulting from the interaction with the new environment. The 'first generation' is the generation of transition. Its representatives are the ones to transfer and translate the ('native') cultural context in the new society and find a place in that new society. Empirical observations of the case of migrants in Turkey¹⁶ gave us grounds to introduce in the course of fieldwork a similar delineation within the group of 'the second generation' of migrants and to talk about

¹⁵ Very interesting information about the forms of visiting the birthplaces in Turkey and the construction of spaces of commemoration and festive life by the so called "Thracian Bulgarians" associations is presented by Valentina Ganeva Raycheva (2011, 2012), as a result of her participant observation and long-term research. The ritualisation of familial memory by revisiting the birthplaces of refugees from Eastern Thrace is discussed by Rashkova (forthcoming).

¹⁶ The research methodology involves the application of several methods which distinguish different forms of liminality among mobile people. Observations of urban space in different towns are used along with the method of mental maps that aims at highlighting sites and spaces according to the perceptions of locals and strangers. Another key method in our research is the in-depth (autobiographical) interview, with the help of which we analyse the strategies of border crossing and liminality in an autobiographical reading of representatives of the target groups

‘the generation in their 20s’ and ‘the generation in their 30s’ in the sense of ‘social generation’, i.e. a particular social group possessing similar or ‘neighbouring’ (as the word is used by Bourdieu) social and biographical life chances. With the ethnic Turks migrating from Bulgaria to Turkey the first generation is, in a historical perspective, a ‘third generation’ (in the grid of historical generations) – the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of migrants who have only a symbolic link to ‘the country of origin’ but who use this link as an important category in the process of self-identification.¹⁷ In the case of Bulgarians in Bulgaria the heirs nowadays are fourth or fifth generation.



*Pic. 2. St. George's Orthodox Church.
Edirne, Turkey, 6 May 2011.*



*Pic. 3. The Orthodox Church of Saints Konstantin and Elena.
Edirne, Turkey, May 2009.*

‘Returning’ from and to Edirne

Edirne, Odrin or Adrianopolis is a Turkish town where many migrants from the Balkans found their new homes in the twentieth century. However, the community of ethnic Bulgarians is nowadays represented by no more

and their ways of converting cultural capital. Some 100 standardised and 15 semi-structured interviews with young people, descendants of settlers [from Bulgaria in Turkey], were carried out. With reference to “*les contradictions de l’héritage*”, the method of discourse analysis (e.g. of the media and of political and ideological discourses) is paramount as it allows the researcher to trace the ideological constructs of both types of migrants.

¹⁷ See more on this in Zlatkova, Penkova 2011, 2012.

than a dozen members living there and the town is constructed as a symbolic place of collective memory by the ritualised return of the 'heirs', celebrations of mainly religious (Christian Orthodox) festivals, and visits to the places connected with the Bulgarian 'traces' such as the two Bulgarian Churches, the Memorials of Balkan Wars, etc. The 'return' of heirs also takes the form of 'expeditions' made by the children and grand-children trying to find the birthplaces of their ancestors and remnants of their houses, schools and churches in the villages nearby, where their families were living almost a century ago. An essential element of the trip is a visit to the two Orthodox Churches in Edirne which evoke the memory of Bulgarians in Eastern Thrace.

Another form of 'return' of the next generations to Edirne (mainly children of school age from Bulgaria) is participation in folklore festivals, festive life and cultural events.



*Pic. 4. International Folklore Festival, Edirne, April 2010.
Children from Yambol, Bulgaria.*

As a place of collective memory of the Bulgarian nation state, the town of Edirne is a part of the imagined topography of 'Bulgarianness' and Bulgarian communities that have remained 'abroad'. Nowadays, this topos is used by the tourist industry and the town is included in most of the tours as an important destination. People go there not only for sightseeing and visiting the significant places but also for shopping.

The mechanisms of remembrance and return to Bulgaria, physically and symbolically, of another set of migrants studied – Turks settled in Turkey –

will not be presented in detail here.¹⁸ What is important for this research is how and why the children of migrants are willing or not to ‘return’ to Bulgaria. It turns out that people belonging to this generation, who are also Bulgarian citizens, prefer to go to Bulgaria to visit their grandparents, to have fun in the disco and clubs in Svilengrad, the town nearest to the border, and, in long-term perspective, to study at the universities. For that reason we chose the group of students at the University of Edirne and several Bulgarian universities in Plovdiv and Varna. We call their (family) strategies in (Bourdieu’s term) “educational tourism”¹⁹ – students with dual citizenship come to Bulgaria to study ‘prestigious’ subjects such as Medicine and Engineering. Some of their motives are: to have fun, to avoid the military service in Turkey, to find a bride or a husband, to obtain an EU university diploma.

Another form of return to Bulgaria lies in the perception of the neighbouring country in which their parents were born. They have inherited a type of cultural capital or heritage, but they re-work the image on the symbolic level from their liminal position of being second generation. That is the reason to study how the children of migrants construct images of Bulgaria in Edirne, the town in the region closest to the border which is also a university centre. The locality²⁰ here is emphasized as a place of memory and of the socialization of newcomers. Precisely from this point of view it is interesting to present examples of our empirical results. It was important to compare the attitudes of Turkish students in Bulgaria to those of their peers at the University of Thrace in Edirne in relation to the images they have of Bulgaria and Bulgarians. To paraphrase this slightly, it means to pose the question of whether children of migrants share the same stereotypical knowledge which is manifested by most of the Turkish students, or whether they know Bulgaria better. To this aim we included in our survey questions

¹⁸ On this topic, see Vukov 2012.

¹⁹ The results of this research are presented in Zlatkova, Penkova 2012.

²⁰ The locals in Edirne can still recognise the settlers by their determination to build their own homes. The most frequent version of a biographical strategy after moving to Turkey shared by the migrants from Bulgaria as well as by the locals who discuss them goes along these lines: all the members of the family would get jobs and would earn quickly enough money to buy their first flat; then they would invest into a cooperation for a second and a third property. More than twenty years after 1989, the mental cartography of Edirne keeps the memory of the last large-scale emigration of people from Bulgaria and the Balkan Peninsula because of their identification with one of the residential areas, ‘the neighbourhood of the re-settlers’.

that place the students in the position of a tour guide: they were asked to choose places in Edirne which they link to Bulgaria, on the one hand, and, on the other, places to which they would take Bulgarian tourists.

Images of Bulgaria and Bulgarians – the border perspective

Part of the cultural capital of the children from the second generation who live in the border regions connected with Bulgaria is related to the knowledge of the ‘other’ (Bulgarians). This is why our research at the ‘other’ (Turkish) side of the border focused on explicating stereotypical knowledge of Bulgaria and Bulgarians, employing the method of mental mapping of Edirne through the ‘places’ and the modes of inhabiting them. The Turkish students respond in a ‘standard’ manner because they themselves are foreign to the town and are getting to know Edirne via its public spaces and central city topoi. These places are legitimated as urban heritage and/or are part of the national narrative of Turkey – museums, monuments, places of memory, etc. Other responses related to the places most frequently visited by Bulgarian tourists: Selimiye mosque and Bulgarian churches in Edirne, which are part of that ‘knowledge’ (recognizing your own and the foreign through the importance of the religious focus which is transformed into a monument of cultural heritage);²¹ and also the market places – shopping centers and the covered market.

The responses of the children of migrants from Bulgaria currently enrolled in the Thracian University in Edirne who participated in our inquiry there present an interesting case. Most of them, just like their counterparts, are not from Edirne originally. They have real life experience connected with Bulgaria: they visit Bulgaria (and the birthplaces of their parents and grandparents – still family property), and they even indicate that they practise the Bulgarian language. They choose the same places as representative of the image of Bulgaria and Bulgarians. The border and the checkpoints Kapıkule and Kapitan Andreevo are stable images in their responses.

²¹ The so-called Bulgarian churches – those of Saint George and Saints Konstantin and Elena – have been restored as cultural monuments.

With this second generation of migrants to Turkey, the image of Bulgaria is associated with the border²², with **the state** – Bulgarian and Turkish (museums, consulate, churches), but not with **birthplace** or a place where they had spent half their lives and a place to which they would like to **return** after retirement (as with the generation of their parents).

In other words, for the young generation – the children of migrants – the important life and social choice is not necessarily connected with staying in Turkey, although they do consider it as a possible life-choice for mobile people. This fluidity entails simultaneous processes of **going/return** and **simultaneous inhabiting of the multidimensionality of spatial boundaries** on the part of the ‘second generation’. Here we find yet another type of **‘cross-border returns’** – **their very questioning** by the ‘inheritors’ of migrants from Bulgaria to whom the contradictions of inherited spatial and temporal boundaries provide the social conditions for the opportunity to cross them.

Tsarevo – migration of Bulgarians towards Bulgarian

The space of Strandzha as part of the region of historical Thrace is presented through some strategies of inheriting and validating identities and communities at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The ‘contradictory successors’ of Thracian Bulgarians, refugees from Turkish Strandzha, are characterised by: 1. The fluidity and complexity of position patterns in the network of social actors, and 2. Aspects of transforming the cultural capital in the construction of heritage at a local level through the creation of local brands (e.g. dancing on fire or oak-tree honeydew honey), the organization of children’s or folklore festivals, the initiation of projects resulting in transborder collaboration, the performance of rituals of recalling (e.g. excursions to one’s birthplace), etc.

The strategies of the descendants of Bulgarians from the region of Eastern Thrace in Tsarevo and the region of the Strandzha mountains and in the direction to Edirne are already part of the official local policies of the municipality. Under the legitimate form of projects for transborder collaboration, a number of projects for cultural exchange gained popularity

²² This experience of crossing the border does not appear in the responses of students with single citizenship because, even if most of them study Bulgarian, they indicate that they have not been to Bulgaria yet. The visa arrangements in place limit access for these students, which is not the case for their peers who freely cross the border in both directions.

too, once crossing of the border was eased and Bulgarian citizens were allowed to travel freely to Turkey.



Pics 5, 6. The First Celebration of the Strandzha Folklore Festival, Tsarevo, June 2010.

Although the ‘homecoming’ of the descendants to the border areas such as Strandzha is similar to the excursions organised by other Thracian associations²³, this act of border crossing is also an act of investment in social capital. The mediators between the totally unfamiliar ‘homecomers’ and those accommodated in the Bulgarian houses were the migrants from Bulgaria and the Balkans.

“Les contradictions de l’héritage” – strategies of converting heritage into capital in Tsarevo. New leaders of associations – “the contradictory successors.”

I regret I didn’t pay enough attention to grandma’s tales about the old days. I never had the time and now it’s too late – grandma’s gone.

(from an interview with Zlatka Lozanova,²⁴ 2009)

At the beginning of the 21st century, there was a generational change in the chairpersons of Thracian associations in the villages and towns in the Burgas region but what has been defined as new activities consist most often of assistance in filling in declarations of owning properties in Turkey and of

²³ The Associations are part of the Union of Thracian Associations – a national organisation of the descendants of the studied group.

²⁴ Zlatka Lozanova is the current chair-person of the Association in Tsarevo and is the owner of a real-estate agency in the town.

‘excursions to the native lands’²⁵ – Edirne and Istanbul or the Strandzha villages near-by, on the other side of the border. Apart from that they keep the institutionalised forms of celebrations and commemorations marked in the calendar of the Union of Thracian Associations at a national level.

After visas were waived for Bulgarians visiting Turkey, one of the first tasks of the restored associations was to organise ‘the return to the native lands’ for the third generation, who crossed the border by means of the symbolic link of other people’s recollections (their grandparents’) and experience (the refugees’). The Thracian heritage for this and the subsequent generations acquires symbolic efficacy through this ritualised return: they are worthy successors of their ancestors, they collect soil from the native lands and bring it to the graves of the deceased grandparents, and they construct narratives, restoring the social and familial network by means of researching properties. This heritage is also converted from cultural into economic capital since the descendants can sell the seaside properties that the refugees received as compensation from the state.



*Pic. 7. The last Charon House in Kiten in 1960's.*²⁶

²⁵ In-depth research and participant observation are being carried out by Valentina Ganeva-Raycheva and Natalia Rashkova in the framework of the current research project. For more details, see Ganeva-Raycheva 2011, Rashkova 2011 (forthcoming).

²⁶ The house no longer exists. The picture was taken in the ethnographic town exhibition in 2009.



Pics 8, 9. Charon Houses in Tsarevo 2011.

Youth associations of Thracian Bulgarians – the ‘new young’

To us, an important focus in our research on the strategies of handing over the Thracian heritage at a local level was the Youth association of Thracian Bulgarians founded in 2008. While the older generations of descendants can sell the Charon house²⁷ of their grandparents and convert the symbolic capital into economic capital, for the 16-20-year-olds, being members of the association is a form of investment in social capital. To their parents, this type of continuity means an increase of symbolic capital. Most members of the association (around 40 in the year 2010) take part in a folk group, either affiliated to the Tsarevo culture house or self-taught.

The current young descendants from Tsarevo and the region are reconstructing the recollection of the resettlement but it has to be mediated; it is a heritage they have to discover and keep. The middle generation, economically active, is ‘taking advantage’ of the symbolic capital of the Thracian heritage by selling properties their parents received as compensation from the Bulgarian state, and is very much interested in having their properties in Turkey restored to them. For a while, this campaign was a tool for maintaining the social network and establishing a link between the generations; the descendants were in the role of researchers, who had to find their relatives, to work with archives, to take part in ‘expeditions to their native lands’, etc.

²⁷ The ‘Charon house’ is a type of module house. Houses of this kind were constructed in order to accommodate the refugees from Macedonia and Aegean Thrace and were financed by the so-called Refugee loan that Bulgaria received from the League of Nations. The houses were named after the French banker René Charon, who was made responsible for the refugees in Bulgaria.

Conclusion

Even though they are two different types of town, both Edirne and Tsarevo are towns close to the border, which construct and negotiate spaces of migration that are fluid, yet localised through urban sites. In the twentieth century, the policies in the two nation states encouraged the homogenisation of the population and the construction of town communities. Opening the border and allowing the Bulgarian nationals to go to Turkey freely made it possible for the descendants to physically return there and ‘discover Bulgarian sites’ there. What has happened in the past twenty years is that these two towns close to the border are no longer an ‘end’; they have become a ‘beginning’ and an ‘opportunity’ and have started constructing themselves as territories of capital exchange and border crossing. The youngest generations are crossing the borders freely from both sides; their visits to the homelands of the ancestors are rather movements of post-modern mobile people of the 21st century than returns across the ‘forbidden border’ as was the case during the entire 20th century. The border constructs myths, practices, rituals and symbols that interpret the movements of people in relation to the environment and territory. When the border is strictly protected and crossing it is forbidden, the movement is on a symbolic level. When people start to move again, due to political changes, the return is ritualized on the one hand, and is simply a matter of postmodern mobility on the other. Migration is not only a change in the place of living, but is also a dream of return, and it involves the construction of new symbolic forms of identity, the conversion of cultural capital and investment in social capital. Migration is also a reason to create rituals that construct identities and communities and codify changes in the social and cultural life-worlds.

REFERENCES

- Bokova, Irena. 2012. “Trakiya – geografska oblast, politicheski granitsi i simbolni teritorii” [Thrace: a Geographic Region, Political Borders and Symbolic Territories]. In *Migratsii ot dvete strani na balgaro-turskata granitsa: nasledstva, identichnosti, interkulturni vzaimodeystviya* [Migrations on Both Sides of the Bulgarian-Turkish Border: Heritage, Identities, Intercultural Interactions], edited by Valentina Ganeva-Raycheva et al., 220–236. Sofia: IEFSEM-BAS. <http://2sidesborder.org/Resettlers and Migrants/>

index.html#/10.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1980. *Le sens pratique*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.

———. 1993. “Les contradictions de l’héritage.” In *La Misere du Monde*, edited by Pierre Bourdieu et al., 711–719. Paris: Editions du Seuil.

Elchinova, Magdalena. 2011. “Migratsiya i konstruirane na nasledstvo” [Migration and Construction of Inheritance]. In *Godishnik na departament ‘Antropologiya’* [Yearbook of the Department of Anthropology], Vol. 3, edited by Irena Bokova. Sofia: NBU (electronic volume).

———. 2012. “Preosmislyane na travmatichniya opit vuv vsekidnevните diskursi: narativite na izselvaneto na bulgarskite turtsi v Turtsiya v perspektivata na vremeto” [Rethinking Traumatic Experience in Everyday Discourses: Narratives of Out-migration of Bulgarian Turks to Turkey from a Diachronic Perspective]. In *Migratsii ot dvete strani na bulgaro-turskata granitsa: nasledstva, identichnosti, interkulturni vzaimodeistviya* [Migrations on Both Sides of the Bulgarian-Turkish Border: Heritage, Identities, Intercultural Interactions], edited by Valentina Ganeva-Raycheva et al., 21–31. Sofia: IEFSEM-BAS. [http://2sidesborder.org/Resettlers and Migrants/index.html#/22/](http://2sidesborder.org/Resettlers%20and%20Migrants/index.html#/22/).

Ganeva-Raycheva, Valentina. 2011. “Migration, Memory, Heritage: the Example of the Thrace Bulgarians, Descendants of Refugees and Resettlers from Eastern Thrace.” *Bulgarian Folklore* 5 (special edition): 48–66.

———. 2012. “Migratsii i institutsii: politiki i praktiki pri konstruirane na pamet” [Migrations and Institutions: Politics and Practices of Constructing Memory and Identity]. In *Migratsii ot dvete strani na bulgaro-turskata granitsa: nasledstva, identichnosti, interkulturni vzaimodeistviya* [Migrations on Both Sides of the Bulgarian-Turkish Border: Heritage, Identities, Intercultural Interactions], edited by Valentina Ganeva-Raycheva et al., 169–197. Sofia: IEFSEM-BAS. [http://2sidesborder.org/Resettlers and Migrants/index.html#/170/](http://2sidesborder.org/Resettlers%20and%20Migrants/index.html#/170/).

Halbwachs, Maurice. 1980. *The Collective Memory*. New York: Harper & Row.

Krasteva, Anna. 2004. “Ot etnicheski kam migratsionni izsledvaniya” [From Ethnic to Migration Studies]. In *Ot etnichnost kym migratsiya* [From Ethnicity to Migration], edited by Anna Krasteva, 5–6. Sofia: New Bulgarian University, Planeta 3.

———, ed. 2006. *Figurite na bezhanetsa* [The Figures of the Refugee]. Sofia: NBU.

———. 2012. “Granitsi ili globalizatzia: balkanski dilemi” [Borders or Globalisation: Balkan Dilemmas]. *Sotziologicheski problemi* 1-2: 86–112

- Maeva, Mila. 2006. *Bulgarskite turtsi-preselnitsi v Republika Turtsiya (Kultura i identichnost) [Bulgarian Turks – Out-migrants to the Republic of Turkey (Culture and Identity)]*. Sofia: IMIR.
- Nora, Pierre. 1997. *Kolektivnata pamet [Collective Memory]*. Sofia: Kritika i Humanisam.
- . 2004. “Svetovniyat vuzhod na pametta” [World Rise of Memory]. In *Okolo Pier Nora. Mesta na pamet i konstruirane na nastoyashteto. [Around Pierre Nora. Sites of Memory and the Construction of the Present]*, edited by Ivaylo Znepolski, 19–35. Sofia: House of Human Sciences and Society.
- Penkova, Stoyka. 2012. “Sotsioanaliza na granichnostta: vurhu dva kazusa ot dvete strani na bulgaro-turskata granitsa” [Social Analysis of Liminality: Two Cases on Both Sides of the Bulgarian-Turkish Border]. In *Migratsii ot dvete strani na bulgaro-turskata granitsa: nasledstva, identichnosti, interkulturni vzaimodeistviya [Migrations on Both Sides of the Turkish-Bulgarian Border: Inheritance, Identities, Intercultural Interactions]*, edited by Valentina Ganeva-Raycheva et al., 61–74. Sofia: IEFEM. <http://2sidesborder.org/Resettlers and Migrants/index.html#/62/>.
- Rashkova, Natalia. Forthcoming. “Ritualizatsiya na rodoviya spomen (po rodnite mesta na bezhantsite ot Iztochna Trakiya)” [Ritualising the Familial Memory. In Birth Place of Refugees from East Thrace]. *Godishnik na Departament po antropologiya na NBU* [Yearbook of the Department of Anthropology at NBU], vol. 5.
- Vukov, Nikolai, and Lina Gergova. 2010. “Publichni etnicheski prostranstva i turisticheski marshruti (Plovdiv i Odrin),” [Public Ethnic Spaces and the Routes of Tourists (Plovdiv and Edirne)], a presentation at the conference *Public Spaces of Bulgarian Towns: Inheritance and Development* conference, Blagoevgrad, 26th-27th Oct. 2010.
- Vukov, Nikolai. 2012. “Resettlements, Memory and Commemorative Returns: the Noting of the “Revival” Process in Bulgaria and the Politics of Memory.” In Ganeva-Raycheva, Valentina, et al. *Migration, Memory, Heritage: Socio-cultural Approaches to the Bulgarian-Turkish Border*, 137–150. Sofia: IEFSEM-BAS. <http://2sidesborder.org/migration EN/index.html#/140/>
- Zlatkova, Meglena. 2011. “The Urban Palimpsest, or How to Study Cities in Transition: On a Possible Ethnosociological Approach in Urban Studies.” In *Readings in the History and Culture of the Balkans in Support of University Teaching*, edited by Margarita Karamihova, 271–284. Sofia: Paradigma.
- . 2012. “Towns Close to the Border: Spaces of Migration and Heritage. The cases

of Edirne, Turkey and Tsarevo, Bulgaria.” In Ganeva-Raycheva, Valentina, et al. *Migration, Memory, Heritage: Socio-cultural Approaches to the Bulgarian-Turkish Border*, 65–98. Sofia: IEFSEM-BAS. <http://2sidesborder.org/migration EN/index.html#/66/>.

Zlatkova, Meglena, and Stoyka Penkova. 2012. “The Children of Migrants: Cultural Heritage Strategies and Types of Crossing the Bulgarian-Turkish Border.” In Ganeva-Raycheva, Valentina, et al. *Migration, Memory, Heritage: Socio-cultural Approaches to the Bulgarian-Turkish Border*, 174–198. Sofia: IEFSEM-BAS. <http://2sidesborder.org/migration EN/index.html#/176/>.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Meglana Zlatkova, Ph.D., is Principal Lecturer in the Department of Ethnology at the University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria. She graduated in Ethnology and defended her PhD thesis in Sociology. She teaches courses in Urban Studies, Ethnosociology, Visual Anthropology, and Project Methodology and conducts the Summer Fieldwork for the students. She has an academic interest in urban studies and urban space, visual anthropology, and identity and cultural heritage. Her publications are in the fields of ethnosociology of the city (authored book), visual studies, cultural heritage and identity, migration studies and project culture. She has held visiting and research fellowships in France, Romania, Hungary, and Slovenia.

NATIONAL COMMEMORATIVE MEETING ON PETROVA NIVA, BULGARIA: LOCAL/NATIONAL & TRADITIONAL/MODERN¹

Lina Gergova

Abstract

The paper is based on fieldwork research conducted within the project “Resettlers and Migrants on Two Sides of The Bulgarian-Turkish Border: Heritage, Identity, Intercultural Interactions”. It aims to present a key gathering of the descendents of refugees from East and West Thrace in Bulgaria.

The National commemorative meeting on Petrova Niva, regarding its origin, history and status, is an interesting mixture of a kin gathering, national commemoration, folk festival, religious congregation and cultural-political event. In my paper I will consider some aspects of this gathering from the point of view of the oppositions ‘local-national’ and ‘traditional-modern’.

Key words

Festival, national commemoration, political event, tradition and modernization.

The National Commemorative Meeting on Petrova Niva is a successful example of a meeting of diverse trends in contemporary national, local, traditional and religious festivity. It is one of many cases of crossing of the local festive cycle and linearity of national events. The current analysis is based on fieldwork materials collected in 2009 by the author at Petrova Niva and various published representations of the celebrations (newspaper articles, memoirs, etc.) as well; this is an attempt at rationalizing of the interactions between tradition and modernity, on one hand, and national and local, on the other, in the contemporary festivity construction process.

¹ The study is a part of my work on the project “Resettlers and Migrants on Two Sides of The Bulgarian-Turkish Border: Heritage, Identity, Intercultural Interactions,” funded by the Bulgarian National Science Fund.

The traditional² is closely connected with the local as far as the tradition relies on kinship networks (White & Jorion 1992), local geography and community in general – together with its dynamicity and variability. In the traditional rituality the local geography (in connection with toponymic notions) and the division of the area in terms of sacred, domestic or not-cultivated spaces have special importance. The rituality (in the sacred time and space) produces hierarchy within community in its current and past framework, i.e. including dead ancestors.

On the other hand, the traditional is linked with religion, as official and popular systems, and the family – as preserving and transmitting knowledge and set of practices (Radcliffe-Brown 1952). The appearance of the modern state, urbanization processes, increased mobility, common education and even women's emancipation are among the reasons for the decline of patriarchal celebrations of the saints – patrons of the kin or the settlement and visits of kin consecrated grounds. As regards Bulgaria, the role of the socialist cultural-festive system should be underlined because it moved the stress from the religion to the community, nation and society in general.

The modern – on the contrary – is connected with national as far as nation and nationalism are modern phenomena (Anderson 1983; Gelner 1983; Smith 1998; see also Llobera 1999). The modern is preserved and maintained by the official institutions, not within patriarchal hierarchies connected with the kin or the village. The modern festivity ostentatiously combines the mainstays of society – army, clergy, intelligentsia, political elite, and people.

Eventually the ritual complex considered here is also an invented tradition (Hobsbawm 1983) which connects the ritual with social remembering (Misztal 2003). The perspective of memory is also very important as far as we speak about a commemorative meeting. Therefore the analysis of the National Commemorative Meeting on Petrova Niva, as a complex of rituals and as cultural and political events, could follow various directions. I will try to present the general mosaic of pieces of traditional,

² The terms 'tradition' and 'traditional' are the object of wide scholarly debates – perhaps since Hobsbawm's 'invention of traditions' (Hobsbawm 1983) (see also Bruns 1991). Here I use these terms to describe some cultural phenomena, repeated over the years, that have been documented by ethnographers in the 19th and in early 20th century before general industrialisation and urbanisation in Bulgaria.

modern, national and local in the phenomenon of the commemorative meeting and to arrange these pieces in terms of actors, uses and spaces.

* * *

In 1903 the so called Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising broke out in many places in Macedonia and Thrace. In the narrative of the lost territories and division of the Bulgarian nation this not entirely successful uprising is quite important. After that and especially after the Balkan wars (1912-1913) hundreds of thousands of people (according to official data about 220,000) living in present Turkey and Greece migrated to Bulgaria. That migration is considered mostly forced and it is the process which is at the basis of the community-building process of so called Thracians or refugees from Thrace. Today the descendents of the Thracian refugees live in almost all big cities in Bulgaria as well as in plenty of small towns or villages – in the towns they usually occupy a particular neighborhood but many villages are inhabited only by them mainly after emigration of Greeks or Turks.

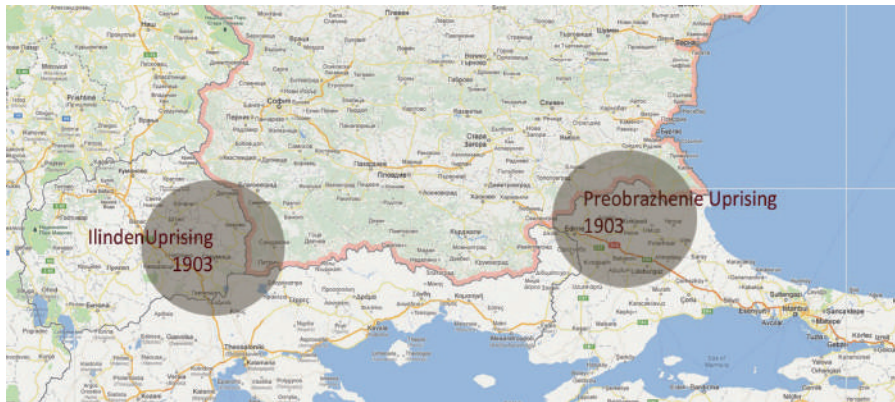


Fig. 1. Map of contemporary south-western and south Bulgarian borders (with Macedonia, Greece and Turkey) and places of Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising in regions of Macedonia and Thrace, 1903.

Petrova Niva is a place in the Strandzha Mountains in South-Eastern Bulgaria. It is a historical site because there between 11 and 13 July 1903 the delegates of Bulgarian Internal Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Organization (IMARO) announced the outbreak of an anti-Ottoman uprising,

aimed at liberating southern Thrace from Ottoman rule, and proclaimed the Strandzha Republic.

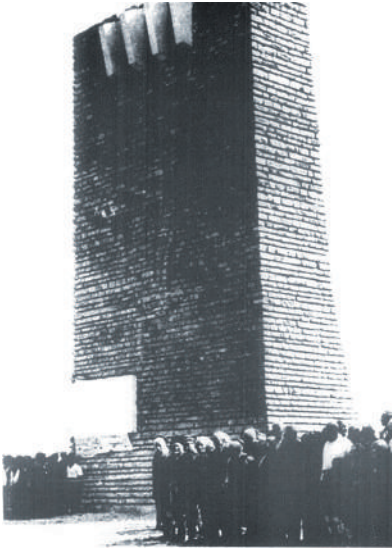


Pic. 1. A historical photograph of the Congress on Petrova Niva in 1903.

There are a lot of historical sites in Strandzha connected with the Preobrazhenie Uprising – birth places of the heroes, places of important battles or secret meetings, etc. Most of them are marked by memorial plates but they are rarely an object of special commemoration. Perhaps, after Petrova Niva, the most important are the places connected with the death of two rebels Pano Angelov and Nikola Ravashola – in the village of Brashlyan (where the battle took place in 1903) and in the town of Malko Tarnovo (where the rebels were buried afterwards). None of these places is an object of national commemoration but rather of local celebrations.

There is a variety of objects connected with the movement of the Thracian refugees flow after the wars and annual commemorations take place on them – Ilieva Niva, Madzharovo, Bogorodichna Stapka, etc., however they are dedicated to the trauma of being driven out, to the civil victims of persecution, to gratitude to Bulgaria for accepting them.

The first commemorative meeting on Petrova Niva took place in 1928. At this meeting one of the leaders of the uprising brought the only one remaining flag – now it is in the National Museum of History. In 1950s a monument to the rebels on Petrova Niva was erected. In 1953 the Thracian Cultural-educational Associations and the resettlers from Thrace collected money and put a memorial marble plaque to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the uprising. The monument was erected in 1958 and it was inaugurated on 16 August – some surviving rebels attended the ceremony.



Pic. 2. The monument of 'preobrazhentsi' on Petrova Niva with the last surviving rebels, 1958 (Apostolov 2002, 39).

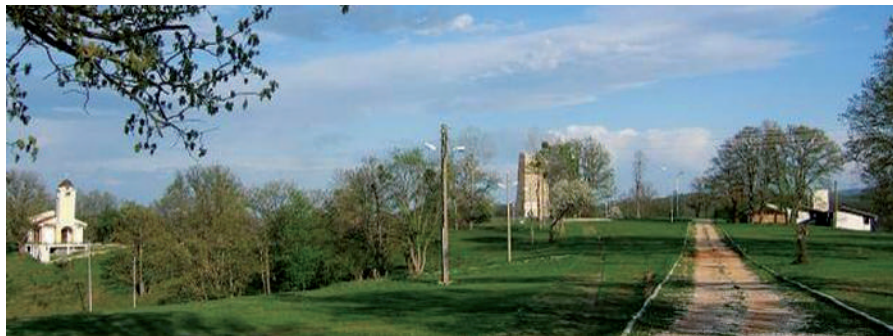
(like Sts Constantine and Helen, St. Pantaleon, St. Marina). Afterwards she has been recognized as patron of the region because, according to her vita she was born in Edirne Thrace – they call her also 'Thracian martyr'.



Pic. 3. The first commemoration, on occasion of 25th anniversary of Preobrazhenie Uprising, 1928 (Apostolov 2002, 39).

A hut from the beginning of the 20th century was restored and a museum was opened as well. So a set of sacred places is formed and these places are the infrastructure of the commemorative meeting, which could be seen above on the photo and on the map (Pic. 4 and Fig. 2).

Some similar infrastructure complexes could be found also on other



Pic. 4. Complex on Petrova Niva, 2009.

places connected with Thracian commemorations. On Ilieva Niva, for instance, there are a monument, chapel and fountain; at Madzharovo there are a monument and a chapel with a charnel house, etc. Through building of such



Fig. 2. Complex on Petrova Niva.

complexes, a palette of approaches to the place has been developed – as a historical past, realms of memory, religious pilgrimage or a place for cultural representations. Furthermore daylong celebrations could be organized in various stages.

The significance of this infrastructure could be found also comparing the usual program with the program of celebrations dedicated to the 110th anniversary of the Preobrajenie Uprising – although the events are enriched they took place within the same spaces – stage, chapel, museum, and monument.

Usual program of
the National commemorative
meeting on Petrova Niva

1st Day

10:00 – Folk music on the stage (all day)
11:00 – Press conference
14:00 – Requiescat at the *St. Petka* chapel
20:30 – Official opening of the event;
Military parade
21:00 – Concert

2nd Day

10:00 – Folk music on the stage (all day)

* * *

By its establishment, history and condition in the present the National Commemorative Meeting on Petrova Niva is a mixture of kin meeting or meeting of fellow villagers, national commemoration, folk festival and cultural-political event. Moreover it is not the only place with a commemorative meeting dedicated to Thracian resettlers and memory – as I already mentioned, there is a national network of commemorations, monuments, etc. However that on Petrova Niva is a part of the national calendar, it is held usually on the weekend after 19 August – Transfiguration of Jesus, O.S., when the uprising broke out.

The first impression of a visitor is that he/she is at a traditional fair – the field is like a marketplace – it is full of booths with sweets, clothes, toys, souvenirs and so on. Many small pubs and beer shops attract people. Groups

Program of
the National commemorative meeting
on Petrova Niva dedicated
to the 110th anniversary
of the Preobrajenie Uprising
(17th-18th August 2013)

1st Day

10:00 – Folk music on the stage (all day)
11:00 – Conference “110 years of Ilinden-Preobrajenie Uprising”, organised by the Thracian Scientific Institute at the Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria
14:15 – Movie about Ilinden-Preobrajenie Uprising
17:00 – Memorial run ‘Petrova Niva’
19:30 – Requiescat at the *St. Petka* chapel
20:00 – Actor reconstruction ‘The Congress – 1903’
20:30 – Opening of commemorative event at the memorial (military fireworks celebration; military parade)
21:00 – Holiday concert featuring ensemble ‘Strandzha’

2nd Day

10:00 – Folk music on the stage (all day)

of musicians walk around and entertain visitors. Participants come from the whole country but mainly from the region of Burgas and Malko Tarnovo. They stay in tents, in their cars or buses for the whole weekend. They are usually in organized groups of 10 or more people. There is also a folk festival and many groups of folk singers and musicians also come in order to attend it. The folk festival is on the first day of the meeting and it attracts amateur groups which are considered to be connected with Thrace. So to the infrastructure of the meeting on Petrova Niva I should add a stage as well. In this sense, the commemorative meeting follows the logic of the so called Strandzha *panagir* which are traditional for the region – they are local meetings at a chapel or a monastery (more about *panagir* see Gergova 2009).



Pic. 5. Petrova Niva during the days of the commemorative meeting, 2009.

Among the visitors many political activists could be found – mainly from Thracian associations and nationalistic parties, but also individual actors selling books or giving speeches. The representatives of political parties could be seen also in the church during the service, at the monument during the ceremony of wreath-laying and official opening of the meeting. The political activists use the pathos of the event and try, on one hand, to attract followers and, on the other – to affirm their positions on the stage of nationalism among the other actors there. Not least, I should admit that the links with political parties give the chance to many people to visit the commemorative meeting because the parties' clubs organize free transport (to the not easily accessible location of Petrova Niva). Political uses of the event cover also the official opening ceremony – it is a small meeting including political speeches given by representatives of the local political elite and a military fireworks show. Thus the national celebration does not differ much from other official feasts, including in the big cities and in the capital.

The official program starts on the first day with a press conference in the museum where the major of Malko Tarnovo, the leaders of Thracian associations and some local artists and scholars meet media representatives. Then the folk festival starts its program on the stage. It is not like the other folk festivals in Bulgaria because the element of competition is missing. A liturgy is held at noon – the church is not big enough, so only the officials attend the service. The service is dedicated to the victims of the Preobrajenie Uprising and the repressions after that. The folk festival continues in the afternoon till the evening when the official opening of the meeting starts. The ceremony is just like the others on the national holidays in Bulgaria – political speeches, *zarja-proverka* – a ritual evening roll call of honour, wreath-laying. On two days of the meeting the fair and camping are the most visible and active parts of the events. Most of the visitors are there – eating, drinking and having fun.

The narratives of the commemorative meeting are mainly two. The first one is the narrative of Thracian refugees and their associations – it is about the repressions, murders, and trauma. The other one is that of the institutions and officials – the story of heroes and the uprising. Moreover – the local people, from neighbouring villages, narrate their own stories about the uprising and heroes, concerning local geography and descendents of rebels. These narratives are more concrete and are much involved in the repertoire of local storytellers and musicians.

The resettlers' narrative could be heard in the songs in the folk festival, in conversations of visitors, in the speeches of their leaders. The institutional one is visible in the museum and on the monument, in the media as well. The connection between them could be found in the so called Strandzha Marseillaise, the anthem of the uprising, the song “Yasen mesetz” (see also Buchanan 2007). A folk song with original lyric and borrowed melody, “Yasen mesets” refers both to local as a text and imagery and national through its functioning as an anthem and is made up of clichés which refer to ‘awaking’ of the nation, specific heroism and national liberation struggles of the 19th century in general (more about the story of that song, its creation and distribution in Bubalov 1986). Trauma and heroism interflow in these narratives and thus the commemorative meeting on Petrova Niva is recognized by various audiences – descendents of Thracian refugees, locals, and fans of history and historical reconstructions.



Pic. 6. Krum Strashni committee at the Military Club – Shumen presented reconstruction ‘The Congress – 1903.’

The celebrations in 2013 on the occasion of the 110th anniversary of Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising are especially solemn. Since the celebration includes some scenic elements many groups (of dancers, singers or actors) prepare a special program. That indicates the function of the commemorative meeting as a place for promotion of the amateur groups from the community centers in the villages and towns where descendents of Thracian refugees live as well as from the Strandzha villages that have become symbols of the Preobrazhenie Uprising (Brashlyan, Stoilovo, Zabernovo, Kondolovo, Malko Tarnovo, etc.).

* * *

The name of the Commemorative Meeting in Bulgarian is “*sabor-vazpomenanie*”, the word *sabor* is also used for folk festival, however, by its status the National Commemorative Meeting on Petrova Niva is not a folk festival. The festival part is not actually an important part of the structure of the meeting – it is just a spectacle where guests become actors. It is perhaps also a way for the descendents to return to the mythical time of the ancestors and to pay tribute to them. As I already mentioned, the commemorative meeting could be considered as a worship of ancestors – and these ancestors are actually grandparents. This moment of paying tribute to the direct ancestors is quite traditional and very different from national commemorative events. It seems that the Commemorative Meeting on Petrova Niva is a mixture of both types.

So it is also a modern phenomenon the message of which from the very beginning is both on the local and national level. In the traditional culture we can find commemorations of events or persons as well but they combine the local and the universal, not the national – and the events and persons are more mythological or religious. Moreover – in traditional culture the ‘witnesses’ of the event and heroism could not attend the commemoration – as happened on the first commemoration meeting in 1928. The frequency of celebrations in the past at intervals of every 5 or 10 years is also an evidence of the non-traditionalism of the event, i.e. its connection with historicity of the Bulgarian society not with the agricultural cycle of the traditional societies.

On the national level the Commemorative Meeting on Petrova Niva could be seen as a point on the map of key places for national memory. In the 1920s-1930s the other places of Bulgarian heroism were established and the monuments on Shipka and Oborishte were erected, nationwide celebrations of Revival leaders and national liberation heroes started on many points in the country. On the other hand, up to the present the Strandzha and Thrace heroes have not been very popular – especially on the background of the heroes of the April and Ilinden Uprisings. In this sense, the local character of the event is largely preserved over the years. However I would say that the National commemorative meeting on Petrova Niva is the main among all commemorative meetings dedicated to heroes and victims from Thrace. That is the one that is dedicated, except to the victims, to the heroes of the Preobrajenie Uprising and thus it forms the image of Thrace not only as a land of martyrs but a land of heroes as well.

Another level of connection between local and traditional – on the one hand, and national and modern – on the other, are features of the audience – local or connected with the region audience comes to that place while the national audience is informed through the media. Here I should also point out the audience types which attend the meeting. These are officials, participants in folk program, descendents of people from Strandzha and Thrace, tourists from the whole country, but mainly from Burgas and Yambol regions. In this sense, the meeting is a mixture of traditional kin meeting or meeting of fellow villagers (as far as the people from Strandzha and Thracie consider themselves as fellow villagers, as a community sharing different heritage, fate and trauma) and a media event.

On other hand, the present meeting on Petrova Niva could be compared with so-called Strandzha *panagirs* (fairs) which are dedicated

to a saint. St. Petka is considered to be the patron of Thracian resettlers because she is a martyr from the region, therefore the church on Petrova Niva is dedicated to her. So on first sight the commemorative meeting could be seen as *panagir*, especially if we concern the fair element that has been mentioned already. Of course during the socialist times the religious element was missing, so this seemingly traditional element of the meeting is actually quite new. The localism of the event is underlined by the fact that the National Commemorative Meeting on Petrova Niva is a part of the cultural calendar of Malko Tarnovo and it is naturally connected with the Summer Cultural Holidays of the municipality. At the same time it is also a part of the calendar of Ministry of Culture but mainly as a part of general national commemorations rather than as a special event.

The political uses of the commemorative meeting are on the border between traditional and modern. Whereas the presence of local and national political elite leaders could be qualified as continuation of the tradition of manifestation of local leadership at village or regional meetings, the visit of groups of representatives of political organization ring the meeting closer to the nature of political meeting.

It is possible to characterize as traditional the elements of the commemorative meeting such as the fair, the pilgrimage to St. Petka, with some reservation – as a folk performance, especially spontaneous performances of musicians out of the program, the food and revelry. Other elements belong more to a modern type of event: participation of politics and troops, media interest, presence of a monument and reverence for it, educational and cultural function of the museum. The National Commemorative Meeting on Petrova Niva is linked with a historical but not with a religious or a mythological event, so it transfers the audience to a particular historical moment with all accumulated mythology and symbolism and all, largely clichéd, messages. On the other hand, it also has some specific features of the contemporary folk festivals: the type of organization, specificity of performances, relation performers (in broad sense: musicians, politics, priests, military) – audience (Pejcheva 2008, Ivanova 2002). The Commemorative meeting could be interpreted as a specific type of event which is typical for modern societies and – exactly – the nation-state. This kind of fairs makes superficial the well perceived relation between local and national and traditional and modern.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Apostolov, Stamat. 2002. *Za svobodata na Trakia [To Freedom of Thrace]*. Sofia: Libra Scorp.
- Boyadzhieva, Stoyanka. 2001. "Sybori i simvoli" [Festivals and Symbols]. In *V pamet na Petar Dnekov. Traditsiya, priemstvenost, novatorstvo* [In Memory of Petar Dinekov: Traditions, Continuity, Innovation], edited by Konstantin Kosev, 207–214. Sofia, AI "Prof. Marin Drinov".
- Bruns, Gerald L. 1991. "What Is Tradition?", *New Literary History*, 22 (1), 1–21.
- Buchanan, Donna A. 2007. "Oh, those Turks! Music, Politics, and Interculturality in the Balkans and Beyond." *Balkan Popular Culture and the Ottoman Ecumene*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 3–54.
- Bubalov, Ivan. 1986. "Yani Popov i negovata pesen 'Yasen mesetz'" [Yani Popov and His Song 'Yasen Mesets'], *Balgarski folklor*, 2, 58–67.
- Gellner, Ernest. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gergova, Yana. 2009. "The Inherited Cult of Saint Pantaleon in Strandzha." In *Balkan and Baltic States in United Europe. Histories, Religions, and Cultures*, edited by Ekaterina Anastasova and Mare Kõiva, 238–244. Sofia: 'Marin Drinov' Academic Publishing House.
- Hobsbawm, Eric J. 1983. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions." In *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger, 1–14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hristov, Petko. 2004. *Obshtnosti i praznitsi [Communities and Feasts]*. Sofia, Open Society.
- Ivanova, Radost. 2002. "Saborite za narodno tvorchestvo – edna nova traditsia" [Folk Festivals – a New Tradition]. In *Folklor, traditsii, kultura. Yubileen sbornik v chest na Stefana Stojkova [Folklore, Traditions, Culture. Anniversary Collection in Honour of Stefana Stojkova]*, edited by Stoyanka Boyadzhieva, Doroteya Dobрева and Svetla Petkova, 324–330. Sofia, AI "Prof. Marin Drinov".
- Keremidchiev, Yanko. 1999. "Parvoto chestvane na "Petrova Niva" [The First Commemoration on Petrova nova], *Trakiya* 16: 4.
- Llobera, Josep. 1999. *Recent Theories of Nationalism*. Working Papers, Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials, 164.
- Misztal, Barbara A. 2003. "Durkheim on Collective Memory." *Journal of Classical Sociology* 3 (2): 123–143.

- Peycheva, Lozanka. 2008. *Mezhdú seloto i vselenata: Starata folklorna muzika ot Bulgaria v novite vremena [Between the Village and the Universe: The Old Folk Music from Bulgaria in the New Times]*. Sofia, AI “Prof. Marin Drinov”.
- Radcliffe-Brown, Alfred R. 1952. *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*. London: Cohen & West.
- Redmond, Gerald. 1971. *The Caledonian Games in Nineteenth Century America*. Fairleigh: Dickinson University Press.
- Smith, Anthony D. 1998. *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*. New York: Routledge.
- White, Douglas R., and Paul Jorion. 1992. “Representing and Analyzing Kinship: a Network Approach.” *Current Anthropology* 33: 454–463.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Lina Gergova has a B.A. in Ethnology, MA in Intercultural Communication (Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv) and a PhD in Folklore Studies (Institute of Folklore – BAS). She is a specialist in the field of everyday and festive urban culture in post-socialist/post-Soviet space. Many specializations abroad (Austria, Italy, Slovakia, Estonia), teaching experience in Bulgaria and Lithuania, Marie Curie fellow in Estonian Literary Museum – Tartu, working on urban festivity (2010-2012). Currently assistant professor at Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Author of the book “*Ethnic Stereotypes in Everyday Culture*” (in Bulgarian, Sofia: Paradigma, 2012). Winner of the prize for young scholar of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences 2013.

**RITUALS OF MIGRANT COMMUNITIES:
CULTURAL INTERACTION AND
PRESERVATION OF TRADITION**

RITUALS AND CUSTOMS IN AN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY

David Stanley

Abstract

Scholars of immigration, ethnicity, and acculturation often confine their inquiries to a single ethnic group within a community that is dominated by a majority group with higher status and a longer history than that of the newly arrived. Such studies are usually limited in scope and may be simplistic, since the experience of immigration and acculturation is so complex and situational. This is particularly true of multiethnic communities, in which people from many different nations, traditions, and religions live and work close by each other. This essay seeks to examine the interactions, positive and negative, among various ethnic groups in one place and one time: Carbon County, Utah, in the western United States, between the 1880s and the 1920s.

The essay demonstrates the existence of some tension, not only between minority and majority groups but among the ethnic groups themselves. Nevertheless, cooperation among ethnic groups was commonplace and widespread, and it touched activities ranging from foodways to music and dance. Ethnic groups learned from each other, helped each other acculturate to the new environment, and supported each other in labor actions, church activities, and education. The study concludes that the complexity of ethnicity and the immigration experience demands that scholars look at the entire community rather than a single group.

Key words

Ethnicity, immigration, acculturation, foodways, music.

It is often said that the United States is a 'nation of immigrants.' That is entirely true, since even 'Native Americans' – Indians – are immigrants, having come from Asia fewer than 20,000 years ago. This idea applies, of course, to every nation in the Western Hemisphere, from Canada to Argentina, as well as for Australia and New Zealand. In the age of globalization, it is also becoming true for more and more nations in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Massive numbers of guest workers, immigrants, and refugees – and the families and relatives who follow them – have created multiethnic, multicultural societies throughout the world. For example, before the global recession, thousands

of Poles migrated to Ireland to seek work. Some left quickly; some lived there for years, saving money, intending to return home. Some have settled down, rearing English-speaking children and intending to remain in Ireland. So it is with North Africans in France, Central Americans in Spain, Turks in Germany, Albanians in Greece, Tibetans in India, and people from all over the world in the United States and Canada.

Most studies of migration, immigration, and ethnicity have looked at members of a single ethnic group living as outsiders in a society new to them. Such research often focuses on concepts like ‘adjustment,’ referring to the process by which a new immigrant learns the ways of an unfamiliar culture; ‘adaptation,’ when an immigrant changes behaviors to fit in more comfortably; ‘acculturation,’ the process by which immigrants gradually absorb and carry out the cultural and behavioral standards of the new culture; ‘assimilation,’ when the immigrant leaves behind some or even most of the ways of the old country and increasingly blends in with the new culture; and ‘retention,’ referring to the particular customs and behaviors from the old country that are held onto and maintained the longest (often religion, food, and holidays) compared to those that are not retained (costume, for example).

But what happens in a community of **many** ethnic or minority groups? How do these groups influence each other and interact with each other as well as with the dominant or majority culture? Do the immigrants live in separate communities or are they mixed together? Are they rivals or do they cooperate? Do they adopt customs from each other, or only from the dominant group? These questions are every bit as relevant today in Europe and other parts of the world as they were a century ago in North and South America.

To answer some of these questions, it will be useful to look at an example from the United States, from a pre-World War II community that drew migrants from all over Europe, from Asia, and from Mexico, Central and South America, and Canada: Carbon County in the state of Utah, amid the Rocky Mountains in the western part of the U.S. The county was first settled by Euro-Americans in the 1880s when coal was discovered and the first railroads were constructed. The demand for coal in the American West – for home heating and cooking, industry (especially steel production), railroad fuel, and other uses – created jobs that in turn attracted men – and a few women – to the area. Many of these were unskilled immigrants with little or no education and little or no English. They came from all over

Europe, especially the southern and eastern parts (Italy, Greece, and the old Austro-Hungarian Empire); from Asia, particularly China and then Japan; from Central and South America; and from many parts of the United States and Canada.

The result was a remarkably diverse population. In most cases, immigrant workers, who were mostly single men, grouped together in boarding houses or small homes rented from the mining company. The groupings were sometimes voluntary, sometimes imposed by the mine corporation, so that 'Greek Town,' 'Chinatown,' and similar community names were commonly heard. Nevertheless, members of different ethnic groups worked and attended church together; their children attended school together; and they encountered each other in shops, in the street, and at dances and concerts.

Because most studies concerning the history of immigration and ethnicity have concentrated on a single suitably defined and easily identifiable group positioned in a community, rural or urban, where another larger group dominates, scholars have tended to view the minority community as a homogeneous entity defining itself in contrast to the majority group, particularly in the development of a consciously asserted ethnicity. Especially has this been the case with North American studies, most of which have viewed ethnicity as a phenomenon applicable to individuals of a particular racial, national, or religious background with behaviors or self-conceptions substantially different from those of the 'WASPs,' the White, Anglo-Saxon, mostly Protestant majority.

This insistence on the isolation of the ethnic group vis-à-vis a dominant majority has been maintained regardless of the particular metaphors used by the researcher. Peter Kivisto has referred to "the lack of conceptual clarity informing ethnic theory as it is applied to the American landscape," a lack reflected in "the recurrent recourse to a wide range of metaphors to depict this ethnic experience, the most prevalent including the melting pot, the transmuting pot, the ethnic mosaic, the tapestry, the symphonic orchestra, and the salad bowl" (Kivisto 1989, 11). Each of these metaphors – whether based on notions of acculturation and assimilation, cultural pluralism, or democratic tolerance – suggests, as with the salad ingredients, that each ethnic group is an independent entity, an ingredient defined in relation to the larger mass, the salad.

Examples of these assumptions may be found in the work of American folklorists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One of the founders of the American Folklore Society, W. W. Newell, called in 1888 for research into the diverse (and separate) traditions of “Negroes,” “Indian Tribes,” and the “Lore of French-Canada, Mexico, etc.” (Newell 1888, 1). The most influential American folklorist of the twentieth century, Richard Dorson, spent much of his fieldwork life in areas rich with a diversity of ethnic groups, ranging from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan to Calumet and Gary, Indiana. Yet in works such as *American Folklore*, *Land of the Millrats*, and *Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers: Folk Tales of Canadians, Lumberjacks & Indians*, he generally examined ethnic traditions either as survivals from the Old Country or as responses to the new environment. These expressive forms – songs, stories, jokes, and customs – were consistently described by Dorson as specific to a particular ethnic group and rooted either in old ways or in reaction to the dominant American middle-class, Anglo culture. Speaking of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Dorson admitted that members of different ethnic groups “mingled and intermarried,” yet he nevertheless insisted that “the members of the different nationality groups make no exchange of their European folk traditions, which remain in completely separate compartments” (Dorson 1959, 136–37). Later in his career, he found multiethnic festivals in the Calumet-Gary region of Illinois and Indiana distasteful because they tended toward homogenization: “...the more the ethnic groups asserted their identity,” he said, “the more alike they appeared.” And he added: “In standardizing the ethnic blocs, community sponsors hid varying degrees of ethnic consciousness, smoldering animosities between and within ethnic ranks, and differing emphases on aspects of expressive cultures” (Dorson 1981, 113).

Most folklorists and historians, in their research, fieldwork, and writing, understandably concentrate on one ethnic group at a time. In part, this habit may come out of a desire to investigate the traditions and behaviors of one’s own ethnic group and heritage, to dig down to one’s own roots. Also, concentrating on a single group may seem more manageable, both in the library and in the field. Finally, scholars may be influenced by the increasing recognition and popularity of the concept of ethnicity and ethnic identity in a world of globalization and homogenization. In turn, many now assume that a particular set of behaviors is *prima facie* ethnic expression, so that polka music and dance are conceived to be German or Polish or Czech or

even Italian, rather than a complex combination of central European music traditions.

Surprisingly, the pathfinding work of the Norwegian sociologist Fredrik Barth, who asserted that ethnicity is most suitably viewed in terms of boundaries between groups, has contributed to the perpetuation of these assumptions. Barth's metaphor of the boundary has led researchers to seek out terminology, customs, and performances that can be viewed metaphorically as lines, edges, or walls, a habit that has led to the description of ethnic groups as physically separated from other groups, most notably the Anglo majority. Metaphorical habits all too often become scholarly givens, so that research in ethnicity is now frequently viewed assumptively as the charting of boundaries, divisions, and separations.

That these assumptions are a misinterpretation of Barth's work is obvious from his statements about what he called "complex poly-ethnic societies." To Barth, societies of this kind have exceptionally effective boundary-maintaining mechanisms because the proximity of a number of distinct groups in one area encourages stereotyping of the other groups, solidifying of ethnic identity within one's own group, and conceptual stability. "Where these conditions obtain," says Barth, "ethnic groups can make stable and symbiotic adaptations to each other." As one type of interdependence, Barth says that groups "may provide important goods and services for each other, i.e. occupy reciprocal and therefore different niches but in close interdependence" (Barth 1969, 19, 21).

This perspective has relevance to a wide variety of situations. Not only is there interaction, transmission, and influence across cultural boundaries in multiethnic communities such as large cities worldwide, but the idea of multiethnic interaction may also be applied to rural localities like Carbon County that attracted, for economic reasons, multiple ethnic groups within short time periods. As communities throughout the world become increasingly multiethnic, they offer rich opportunities for research using a more flexible approach to the study of ethnic expressiveness.

Between 1883 and 1924, Carbon County was characterized by neither a clear-cut majority group nor a single oppressed and disadvantaged minority group. Rather, the county attracted men and women of several dozen different nationalities. Although the state's Mormon majority, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are largely northern European in origin, they were – and are – distinctly a minority in Carbon

County, so political, social, and economic power has swayed and shifted over the years. So, too, has the nature of ethnic identity and ethnic definitions, especially in foodways and music.

By one account, twenty-six different nationalities and nearly that many languages could be identified in the coal-mining and railroading town of Helper, population about 3000, in 1920 (Madsen 1947, 22). The most numerous were Greeks, Italians, Serbs, Czechs, Bohemians, and Japanese, along with Finns, Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, French, Spaniards, Slovaks, Germans, Moravians, Hungarians, Poles, Russians, Croatians, Bosnians, Syrians, Lebanese, Turks, Chinese, and Mexicans. Ethnic boundaries in this region were hardly stable or well established, for both internal and external reasons. The immigrants, adults and children alike, tended to view all fair-skinned speakers of English as what they called 'Americans,' which was almost always synonymous with the Mormon population, many of whom had themselves immigrated into Carbon County not many years before. Included in this grouping of 'Americans' were people of Welsh, Irish, Scots, and English ancestry as well as Germans, Norwegians, Swedes, and especially Danes, some first-generation, some second- or third-generation. Regardless of ethnic heritage, a substantial number of these 'Americans' were non-Mormon in religion as well.

Perhaps in retaliation, the so-called 'Americans' referred to all others with the blanket term 'foreigner,' regardless of citizenship or birthplace. Along with the usual ethnic epithets was the universal adjective 'dirty,' as in 'dirty Greek,' 'dirty Wop' (Italian), or, improbably, 'dirty Jap.' Immigrants and their children were also called, even more improbably, 'darkies' (Stipanovich 1975, 64). Moreover, the division of the Carbon County world into darkness and light was complicated by further misapprehensions. All Slavs, for example, were called 'Austrians,' even though more than half came from regions not under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Central Europeans of all kinds were called 'Bohunks,' a strange verbal mingling of 'Bohemian' and 'Hungarian.' No distinction was made between native language, ethnic history, or religion, so that Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs were lumped together as Austrians, to their considerable discomfort.

One Yannis Mandanas, an immigrant from the island of Crete, recalled working as a miner in Carbon County in 1909:

I sometimes got in fights with other Americans and even other Greeks, but not with Cretans. There were a lot of Cretans there at the time working in the mines. We had our own life there, with kafeneia [coffee shops] and a Greek restaurant. The Americans didn't like us much and later there was some trouble with the sheriff because he said we were Catholic, he didn't know any better and put us together with the Italians in his own mind. I didn't give a damn (Patterson 1989, 115).

Another second-generation Greek recalled hosting a reception for football coaches from the region and hearing one of the coaches praising “all this great Italian food” (N. Papanikolas 1987).

This lumping together of ethnic groups by the ‘Americans’ tended to exacerbate historical and political antipathies, especially because of the tendency for Mormons to view themselves as a distinct ethnic group within a national context. Even with groups with a common language and religion, there were divisions. Mainland Greeks resented Cretans and vice-versa because of historical differences over republican vs. monarchical rule and because mainland Greeks had unwittingly been strikebreakers when Cretans and others struck the copper mines of Salt Lake County in 1912 (H. Papanikolas 1976, 419; Powell 1985, 10). Northern and southern Italians also disliked each other; the southern Italians sneered at the northerners as *mangiapolenti*, “cornmeal eaters” (Siporin 1992, 84), and even founded separate fraternal lodges (Notarianni 1975). Slavs and Italians had fistfights on Main Street in the city of Price when Italy battled the Austro-Hungarian Empire during World War I.

Yet in times of crisis, many of these immigrant groups came together for the common good – and in fact it is surprising how much common cause, rather than competition, that immigrants created with groups other than their own. Italians and Greeks together led a series of strikes between 1902 and 1933, strikes largely resisted by the local Mormons because they feared giving immigrants more power and because they saw their part-time earnings (most were miners in winter, when demand for coal was high, and farmers in the summer) threatened by men who wanted year-round work (Watt 1997, 177–178). The unmarried status of most of the immigrant workers also led to a certain commonality, as in railroad gangs made up of Japanese and Greeks. As Helen Papanikolas said, “The early association of Greeks and Japanese lasted during their prolonged bachelorhoods. They

wrestled, vied with each other in feats of strength, and were favorite card-playing companions” (H. Papanikolas 1976, 414). One reminiscence from that period recalled the near-lynching of a young Greek man after he took an ‘American’ girl ‘not quite of age’ out of town on the stagecoach. Greeks and Italians together resisted the mob that formed, and one Italian commented, “If it would happen to a Greek it could be an Italian next” (H. Papanikolas 1954, 153).

Another influence on the shifting boundaries of ethnic identity was the church. The Catholic churches served Croats, Slovenes, Italians, Latinos (from Mexico, Central and South America, and the southwestern United States), French, Irish, and native-born Americans; the Greek Orthodox churches in Salt Lake City and Price were used not only by mainland Greeks and Cretans but by Serbs and perhaps by Russians and other eastern Europeans. Yet in Joseph Stipanovich’s words, “These churches did not (...) function as ‘melting pots’ where ethnic differences were dissipated, as has been postulated by some scholars. Except for the Mass, the people used the church in ethnic groups, not as a congregational whole” (Stipanovich 1976, 378). Nevertheless, the seating together in the same building of Cretans and mainland Greeks, of northern and southern Italians, of Croats and Slovenes, and the need to raise funds to erect and maintain buildings and to support priests, must have further contributed to the flexibility of ethnic boundaries. Similarly, coffee houses, restaurants, saloons, and food stores served a variety of ethnic groups. As Barth says: “...ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of social interaction and acceptance, but are quite the contrary often the very foundations on which embracing social systems are built” (Barth 1969, 10).

In schoolyards, the resentments between native-born and immigrant children, between ‘Americans’ and ‘foreigners,’ was often expressed in fighting, in taunts, and in stereotypical ascriptions. Helen Papanikolas recalled Mormon children shouting “Dirty foreigners!” and receiving the reply, “Mormon hicks!”

“Wear your religion [i.e., a cross] ‘round your necks!”

“Wear your religion ‘round your ass!” [a reference to the sacred temple garments worn by devout Mormons]

“Dirty Greeks! Dirty Wops! Dumb Bohunks! Go back where you come from! Sappy Japs!”

“This ain’t your land. It belongs to the Indians. Mormon shit-asses. We were born here same as you!”

(H. Papanikolas 1980, 250).

The adults had similar derisive opinions. The Mormon-American style of celebrating Easter with candy, decorated eggs, Easter baskets, and crepe paper drew disdain from Greeks (Lines 1987). They also referred to the Mormons as ‘unsalted,’ referring to the blandness of food and personality, and commented that their pale eyebrows looked like those of a roasted pig. Other statements included, “They have water in their veins” and “Their faces would crack if they smiled (H. Papanikolas 1971, 62).

It should be clear that this mining region supported a variety of ethnic groups that constantly realigned and redefined themselves according to both esoteric (supporting the in-group) and exoteric (demeaning the other) factors (Jansen 1959). Self-ascription was flexible and dependent on both situation and context; at one moment an individual might see himself or herself as a ‘foreigner’ or be seen by others as a ‘darkie.’ At another, he or she might be Greek or Austrian. Later, it might be Cretan or Serb. At any time, he or she might develop an alignment with a traditional enemy, or, alternatively, historical resentments might be increased by current political, social, or economic conditions. Boundaries between ethnic groups might be well defined by neighborhood: the city of Helper had its Wop Town, Bohunk Town, and Greek Town. But in smaller communities near the mines lived a sometimes chaotic and bewildering variety of nationalities, languages, and religions, all mixed in together.

Helen Papanikolas recalled that her mother, who spoke some Italian, owned a ‘dream book’ that enabled her to interpret dreams and omens. She was visited frequently: “Women – Italian, Cretan, Roumeliot [people from the stretch of southern Europe between Albania and Istanbul, including mainland Greeks], French, even the lank-haired American woman next door who was married to a morose Greek barber – came to have Emelia read in her dream book (H. Papanikolas 1980, 246–247). And Sarah “Killarney” Reynolds, another neighbor, played Irish tunes on the accordion and explained American customs and cures to the newly arrived Greek women. She also taught American cooking styles, so that a typical immigrant kitchen in the neighborhood might feature foods ranging from traditionally ethnic to the ubiquitous open-faced roast beef sandwich with brown gravy (H. Papanikolas 1980, 248).

Other foodways altered the boundaries of ethnicity as well. The Japanese boarding house, where bachelor miners lived, served an American breakfast of bacon, eggs, and pancakes and provided white bread with cold cuts of meat for sandwiches to take to the mine; supper, however, was traditional Japanese. A young Japanese-American girl was frequently invited to an Italian friend's house for lunch, which was typically bread with gravy and fried potatoes (Kasai 1987). The accordion-playing Irish woman taught her Greek neighbor how to make Irish fruitcake but also American cookies and even pies. From other neighbors, the Greek housewife absorbed Italian antipasto and sausage-making as well as the preparation of French custards (H. Papanikolas 1987; Lines 1987).

Food was obtained from an equal variety of sources. A Greek family recalled buying cheese from Italians and garden produce and apples from French families, and trading Greek vegetables for Italian bread cooked in backyard domed ovens (H. Papanikolas 1987; Lines 1987). Bakeries, often operated by Greeks or Italians, prepared a variety of breads and holiday specialties to suit ethnic preferences but also made American-style doughnuts, sweet rolls, cookies, cakes, and pies. One woman reminisced, "In a little hillside bakery, in Greek Town, two Italian bakers named Cianfichi and Chiavini complicated an incongruous situation by making incomparable French bread" (Hanson 1972, 267). This ever-changing and wholly adaptable menu, shifting as it did from family to family, points to the most important fact of ethnic expression: the attitudes and values incorporated in the tale, the song, the custom, the food, rather than the thing itself. As Steve Siporin has observed, "It is the *quality* of the ingredients and *care* of preparation – rather than the eating of specifically Southern Italian dishes as they were prepared in San Giovanni in Fiore, the home village [of the Nicolavo family] – that expresses the deeper continuity between the life of the Nicks [the family's Americanized name] today and that of the Nicolavos for centuries past. For instance, when *casseri* cheese (a Greek cheese) was discovered in local stores, it was found to be superior to locally available parmesan or romano. It became the main 'grating' cheese for the Nicks, even though *casseri* cheese is not Italian. It is the concern with quality in food elements and preparation (a traditional attitude) which has continued as a deeper value than given dishes (the content)" (Siporin 1990, 9).

Another domain that demonstrates the shifting boundaries and the dependence on context of these multiethnic communities is music and dance,

two of the most publicly expressive forms of folklore. Many immigrants brought with them musical instruments or ordered them from import houses or music stores after their arrival. Recordings from the various old countries were readily available, and saloons and coffee houses often had phonographs, which were in constant use. Traveling troupes of musicians, singers, dancers, and puppeteers passed through, and the importance of musical instruments is surely demonstrated by their frequent inclusion in posed photographs of young immigrant men, along with bottles of liquor and firearms as signifiers of worldly success and acculturation.

Miners and railroad workers sang and played instruments in their boarding houses as well as in places of recreation. Their fraternal lodges, sometimes in cooperation with the mining or railroad company, built dance halls and recreation centers to entertain the workers and keep them out of trouble (*A Brief History* 1930, 19). The dances and musical performances tended to be panethnic, with tunes drawn from a variety of ethnic groups, even when the sponsors might have preferred a more strictly traditional performance, featuring music from a single culture. That is to say, private musical expression in the home or saloon was usually ethnic-specific; public performance of music and dance was multiethnic, mixed with American popular music and dance forms. Brass bands, often sponsored by the mining company or town, were common, especially among Italians. Not infrequently, the bands played for striking workers as well as for parades and Sunday concerts, and there are numerous reports of an Italian brass band being hired to play at the depot when 'picture brides' (young women known to their fiancés only by their photographs) arrived from Greece as well as from Italy (H. Papanikolas 1975, 115).

Other bands were multiethnic; a photograph from the Western Mining and Railroad Museum in Helper shows the Castle Gate Brass Band, circa 1915. The faces of the men are young and middle-aged, broad and narrow, blonde- and dark-haired, dark- and light-eyed, clean-shaven and luxuriantly mustachioed – surely a cross-section of the immigrant population of the time. In a similar vein, a surviving photograph from the same museum of Helper's 1943 American Legion baseball team (state champions!) has the players' names neatly typed on paper below the photograph: Rolando, Kavanaugh, Jones, Sillitoe, Hansen, Borla, Aplanalp, Busato, Migliacco, Dimick, Pessetto, Tonc. The coach was George Pizza. Some commentators would be tempted to leap at the obvious: the melting pot in sportive action. Yet the fellowship

of the band or the team or the workplace might be forgotten in work strife, union activity, competition over courtship, family battles, and the all-too-familiar ethnic stereotyping of the saloon and the street.

Dance bands, too, were formed, and were a vital part of the panethnic society of the mining camps, since the Saturday-night dances, along with movies and baseball games, were the most important occasions that brought together members of the community. Bands might have members from a single ethnic group, sometimes from several. They often traveled from one town or mining camp to another, playing for dances. The music was derived primarily from the phonograph and radio, but it was often mixed with polkas, schottisches, and waltzes, which were not only significant expressions of ethnicity but implicit recognition of the diversity of the community. Simultaneously, numerous forms of music from Europe and Asia were rediscovered and imported, ranging from the archaic chanting of Chinese poetry called by the Japanese shigin to the adoption of 'button boxes' (accordions with buttons rather than piano keys) by Slovenian musicians – who had learned to play from an Italian – in response to their felt need to reinvent old-country traditions.

We can see, then, that some ethnic identifiers are held within the group; others are shared. At times, a custom, ritual, or festival is identified with a single group, such as the Finnish sauna. At other times, a festival such as Easter is celebrated by almost every group. When December 13 came, it was Santa Lucia for Swedes and Italians (though pronounced differently) and Szent Luca for Hungarians, all celebrated in distinctive ways within the group. Calendrical rituals, from New Year's to Christmas, showed a similar variation, with Saints' Days like the Virgin of Guadalupe observed almost exclusively by Mexicans. Others – May Day, All Soul's Day – were widely celebrated, though ethnic practices varied. And some American observances were totally unfamiliar: imagine an Irish immigrant's reaction to the American version of St. Patrick's Day, a European Catholic's or a Mexican's response to the American Hallowe'en, or any immigrant's response to such unfamiliar holidays as Valentine's Day, Independence Day, and Thanksgiving.

These examples may suggest how reliant on context and situation ethnic expression must be. Generated from an individual's knowledge of cultural tradition yet delicately responsive to the opinions and reactions of both 'Americans' and other ethnic groups, ethnically loaded cultural expressions – taunts, stereotyping, foodways, music, and dance – rely upon

but also redefine the fluid boundaries dividing these groups to accommodate changing ideas and cultural needs.

INTERVIEWS

- Kasai, Alice. 1987. Interview with David Stanley.
Lines, Mary Pappas. 1987. Interview with David Stanley.
Papanikolas, Helen Z. 1987. Interview with David Stanley.
Papanikolas, Nick. 1987. Interview with David Stanley, June.

REFERENCES

- A Brief History of Carbon County*. 1930. By the Teachers, Pupils, and Patrons of Carbon District. N.p., n.p.
- Barth, Fredrik. 1969. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*. Boston: Little Brown.
- Dorson, Richard M. 1959. *American Folklore*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1981. *Land of the Millrats*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Hanson, Virginia. 1972. "I Remember Hiawatha." *Utah Historical Quarterly* 40: 265–274.
- Jansen, William Hugh. 1959. "The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore." *Fabula: Journal of Folklore Studies* 2: 205–211.
- Kivisto, Peter. 1989. *The Ethnic Enigma: The Salience of Ethnicity for European-Origin Groups*. Philadelphia: Balch Institute.
- Madsen, C. H., ed. 1947. *Carbon County: A History Compiled by Interested Carbonites*. April, 1947. Mimeographed typescript, n.p., n.p.: 22. University of Utah Marriott Library, Special Collections.
- Newell, William Wells. 1888. "On the Field and Work of a Journal of American Folklore." *Journal of American Folk-Lore* 1: 1.
- Notarianni, Philip F. 1975. "Italian Fraternal Organizations in Utah, 1897-1934." *Utah Historical Quarterly* 43: 172–187.
- Papanikolas, Helen Z. 1954. "The Greeks of Carbon County." *Utah Historical Quarterly* 22: 143–164.
- . 1971. "Greek Folklore of Carbon County." In *Lore of Faith and Folly*, edited by Thomas E. Cheney, 61–77. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
- . 1975. "Utah's Coal Lands: A Vital Example of How America Became a Great

- Nation." *Utah Historical Quarterly* 43: 104–124.
- . 1976. "The Exiled Greeks." In *The Peoples of Utah*, edited by Helen Z. Papanikolas, 409–435. Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society.
- . 1980. "Growing Up Greek in Helper, Utah." *Utah Historical Quarterly* 48: 244–260.
- Patterson, George James, Jr. 1989. *The Unassimilated Greeks of Denver*. New York: AMS Press.
- Powell, Allan Kent. 1985. *The Next Time We Strike: Labor in Utah's Coal Fields, 1900-1933*. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press.
- Siporin, Steve. 1990. "'Our Way of Life Was Very Clear.'" *Northwest Folklore* 8: 3–18.
- . 1992. "Folklife and Survival: The Italian-Americans of Carbon County, Utah." In *Old Ties, New Attachments: Italian-American Folklife in the West*, edited by David A. Taylor and John Alexander Williams, 80–93. Washington, D. C.: Library of Congress.
- Stipanovich, Joseph. 1975. *The South Slavs in Utah: A Social History*. San Francisco: R & E Research Associates.
- . 1976. "Falcons in Flight: The Yugoslavs." In *The Peoples of Utah*, ed. Helen Z. Papanikolas, 363–383. Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society.
- Watt, Ronald G. 1997. *A History of Carbon County*. Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

David Stanley is Professor of English Emeritus at Westminster College in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, where he taught for nearly twenty years. His fields of interest include folklore, American literature, and the history and culture of the western United States. He has edited *Cowboy Poets & Cowboy Poetry* (University of Illinois Press, 2000) as well as *Folklore in Utah* (Utah State University Press, 2004). He has also produced two recordings: *Listening In: Storytelling in Utah* (Utah Arts Council) and *Cowboy Poetry Classics* (Smithsonian Folkways). Professor Stanley (Ph.D., University of Texas at Austin) is also the author of nearly one hundred articles, essays, and reviews. He has served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in India and a Fulbright Scholar in Japan and Hungary.

THE VIEW FROM THE MIGRANT'S WINDOW. INTERACTIONS OF THE ESTONIAN AND SWEDISH RITUAL YEAR¹

Mare Kõiva, Andres Kuperjanov

Abstract

Ethnicity is one of the many factors that influence the celebration of feasts and feasting customs. This article examines how 20th century Estonian migrants in Sweden have expressed their ethnicity in feasting customs. As an ethnic group Estonians share many similarities with Swedes. Some of the differences in the past stemmed from their status as exiles – people celebrated not only calendar feasts but also feasts connected with important national symbols, such as the anniversary of the Estonian Republic. Estonian migrants interacted with local Swedes, the context of celebration was dynamic and also influenced the choice of ritual food. Estonian emigrant cultural and community life highlighted the different choices made by the emigrants and the contrasts between them and the host society.

Semistructured interviews with migrants conducted in the 1990s covered topics related to folklore, ethnic identity, national feasts, emigration to and adaptation within Sweden, and visits to Soviet Estonia. Analysis of the data produced a conceptualization of influences acting on the choice of feasts and feasting customs in the group.

Key words

Swedish Estonians, holiday celebration, ritual year.

1. Introduction

Ethnicity is a complex and dynamic concept that represents differences among groups interacting with each other within a nation-state and population. When an ethnic group migrates to another location, they will face unequal access to social positions and resources. This causes people to regard ethnicity as a dynamic system to be expressed situationally:

¹ This project was supported by the Estonian Science Foundation grant 8137, IUT 22-5. The first version of the paper was presented at the 8th Annual Conference of the SIEF Working Group 'The Ritual Year' in Plovdiv, 2012.

when together with other in-group members and following their ethnic traditions, but not at all times. Eric Hobsbawm (1983, 4–8) divided the modern invented traditions into those establishing or symbolising social cohesion, those establishing or legitimising relations of authority, and those inculcating beliefs, value systems, and conventions.

In the early 20th century, Estonians as an ethnic group shared many similarities with Swedes, especially in the Estonian western coastal areas which had a significant Swedish population. Centuries of cohabitation led to mutual cultural influences. The Swedish minority population (self name *aibofolke* (island People), Estonian *rannarootslased* (Coastal Swedes), Swedish *estlandssvenskar* (Estonian Swedes)), established there in the 11th century, fled to Sweden during 1943-1944 (Russwurm 1855; Hjemdahl and Andresson 2005; Arjakas 2011). Estonia itself was a dominion of the Swedish kingdom between 1561-1721. Estonians call this period the “good old Swedish times” (*vana hea Rootsi aeg*). In that period, the system of folk schools was established and many economic innovations were introduced. Later, when Estonia was annexed to the Russian empire, times became harder for the mainly Estonian rural population. It is known that during the Great Northern War (1700-1721) refugees fled from Estonia to Sweden, and later from under Russian domination, mainly for economic reasons, in order to escape serfdom or the 25-year military service. However, before the Second World War only a few hundred ethnic Estonians lived in Sweden. During the war many Estonians rented boats or ships, and fled across the sea to Sweden. There were cases of chain migration - prospective migrants learned of opportunities and received initial support arranged through social relations with earlier migrants and relatives. Many also followed the impersonally organized route of migration, exemplified by the arrangements for selection, transportation, reception, instruction and placement made by the International Refugee Organization. In 1943-1944 the number of Estonian migrants increased to nearly 20,000 and with the birth of new generations in the 1950s and 1960s this figure rose to 30,000 (Estonians in Sweden 2010). During the whole of the twentieth century Sweden was one of the most popular migration destinations.

Migrants who arrived in Sweden during the Second World War faced a number of limitations, primarily because they were directed to settle in rural areas or industrial areas and smaller towns and villages, whereas they preferred urban areas with better possibilities for employment (cf Israeli

migration from the Soviet Union in the 1990s, Fialkova and Yelenevskaya 2011, 142).

Ethnicity is one of the many factors that influence the celebration of feasts and feasting customs. This study seeks to understand how ethnicity was interpreted, expressed, and enacted through the system of national, religious and international feasts as celebrated among Swedish Estonians and their interaction with the Swedish host society's holidays. Some of the differences stemmed from the Estonians' status as exiles. People celebrated not only calendar feasts but also feasts connected with important national symbols such as the anniversary of the establishing of the Estonian Republic or the founding of the University of Tartu. Estonian migrants interacted with local Swedes which meant that the context of celebration was dynamic. This provides us with the view from the window of the migrant on the Estonian and Swedish ritual year and on the interaction between both communities.

Research material

The study is based on fieldwork conducted between 1996-1999 among different Estonian communities living in South Sweden, around Lund and Malmö. Informants were found through community networks, organizations and cultural societies that served the target groups, and using a snowball sampling technique. Semistructured interviews lasting from 60 minutes to 3-4 hours were used for data collection. Interviews were conducted at mutually agreed-upon locations such as the library of the Institute of Finno-Ugric Research of the University of Lund or at participants' homes, in the Estonian House. Some collective or group interviews were also held in Estonian cafes.

Interviews were audio-recorded on minidisk or videotaped. Sometimes both methods were combined to capture the situation in detail as, for example, when photo albums were displayed. All interviews were recorded in Estonian. One reason for the choice of language was the fact that generally these people communicated with Estonians in the Estonian language, even though they communicated with their children and grandchildren and other interest groups in Swedish.

The pretested open-ended questionnaire covered topics including folklore, ethnic identity, national feasts, emigration to and integration in Sweden, and visits to Soviet Estonia. Detailed information was solicited about folklore adapted from and within the Swedish community. One fascinating

aspect was local folklore produced by the Swedish Estonian community, including jokes and personal experience narratives (see Kõiva 2002).

2. Identifying Swedish calendar feasts

Second World War refugees believed at first that the situation was transitory and that they would soon be able to return to their homeland and continue their lives. However, some two to three years after the end of the war information began to appear in periodicals about other countries, possible future destinations for the emigrants. Newspapers and calendars would publish overviews of the history, way of life and economy, culture, climate, etc. of different countries, as well as small comparative dictionaries. Thus about half the content of calendars, previously filled with Estonian ethnic material – history, literary texts, cuisine, etc. – now consisted of solid practical information.

We will now present an overview of the distinguishing features of the Swedish folk calendar (excluding holidays and celebrations related to the royal family) introduced in the early twentieth century to the Estonians as ‘useful-to-know’ information (Stockholm 1945; 1948).

January 13, St. Knut’s Day, marks the end of Christmas and is usually celebrated with a colourful party for the children, where all the tasty decorations from the Christmas tree are finally eaten. After the party, the Christmas tree is thrown out, often in cities onto the streets, from where the street sweepers clean them away.

Easter is celebrated by eating eggs. In earlier times there were also often competitions to see who could eat the most eggs. Eggs are painted on Easter Saturday either with merry drawings or bright colors. The festive table is decorated with birch branches, but because of the early time of year, they are without leaves. Instead, the branches are adorned with multi-coloured feather clumps, producing a merry bouquet of branches. The festive table is also enlivened with the Easter puppet witches (*paskkõring*), riding on a broom with a coffee pot and cat. Old tales relate that on the night before Great Thursday all witches hurry to a meeting at Blakulla mountain. This explains their symbolic participation in the festivities.

The first of May and the evening before (*valborgsmässafton*) is a celebration of youth when all students don white hats, which they wear until October 1st. The term ‘student’ includes everyone who has graduated from high school and has the right to enter university. On the night before 1 May,

people burn mayfires and dance. On May Day, there are usually processions of working people.

Pentecost carries no special significance, unless perhaps for the confirmed who are blessed in church on that day. The confirmation party is held with presents and flowers.

St. John's Day or Midsummer (*midsommardagen*) is one of the most beautiful holidays of the year. All over the country, in every population centre and in city parks (in Stockholm – Skansen) a pole is erected (*Majstang*), which is decorated with green wreaths and ribbons.

Crab carnivals in August. September is the season of eating sour fish *surströmming* – a food repulsive in its smell alone.

St. Martin's Day is celebrated by eating a Martinmas goose, especially in Skane, and another important food is goose blood soup (*svartsoppa*).

Before Christmas, St. Lucia's holiday is celebrated. In the darkest season, on December 13, the bringer of light arrives. The Maiden Lucia is dressed in white, a handsome girl who early in the morning, wearing a wreath with candles and carrying a tray with coffee, wakes all the sleepers and offers them coffee and buns. Lucia is often accompanied by the star boys, also in long white shirts, wearing white conical hats decorated with sharp-pointed stars and holding staffs with stars affixed to the top.

This is how every household celebrates their Lucia day. Bigger cities and centers conduct a so-called beauty contest to choose their Lucia and on St. Lucia's Day a festive procession moves through the town with a big crowd.

Name days are more important than birthdays (Stockholm 1948).

This short list outlines the main differences in calendar customs, highlighting holidays either ignored by or celebrated differently by Estonians. Additionally, celebrations of special significance have been noted. The purpose of providing Estonians with such information was to raise ethnic competence and create a context for successful assimilation into the new society. The celebrations listed above are still part of the living tradition and many are considered special Swedish holidays.

3. Calendar holidays of Swedish Estonians: transplantation and adaptation

Freshly emigrated Estonians followed the patterns of the ritual year typical of the country they had left behind – for most, the independent Estonian Republic. The Estonian national system of holidays had formed

during a period of nearly 15 years. During the late 19th and early 20th century the nomenclature of feasts in Estonia had changed dramatically. In addition, after Estonia gained independence in 1918, the structure of state and national feasts underwent major changes, with the importance of religious feasts constantly decreasing under the influence of a secularised society. In 1935 the state had 14 official feasts. Changes in the economy as well as urbanization eliminated many agrarian rituals and festivities. The early 20th century also saw the invention of many new feasts (Mother's Day in 1935 and May Day) (Kõiva 2013).

The behaviour of diaspora groups is determined by memory strategy, community context and economics. Some of the holidays most important in emigration had become national holidays only after a period of unofficial celebration in the 1930s (e.g., Victory Day in 1934). According to T. Kreegipuu, ostentatious celebration of national holidays began only in 1935 (Kreegipuu 2010, 71). The brief five-year period prior to the Second World War when these holidays were celebrated was central in the context of remembering and celebrating holidays of the ritual year. It was the model for the traditional Estonian calendar and a symbol of statehood both for the diaspora community and for those living in the annexed homeland.

The 1997 identity survey conducted by psychologists Aune Valk and Kristel Karu-Kletter seemed to indicate that Estonians in Stockholm and Lund celebrate only Christmas, Easter and the anniversary of the Republic of Estonia in the Estonian House (Valk and Karu-Kletter 2000, 181). However, our fieldwork in the 1990s pointed to active or passive celebration of many more holidays and to participation in the ritual year systems of both Estonian and Swedish communities.

Common events also included some of the major calendar feasts. There are clearly distinguishable ways of celebrating the ritual year: holidays celebrated in the family circle and holidays celebrated together in Estonian Houses and other public forums of the Estonian communities. In everyday life Estonians studied in Swedish-speaking schools, just as most adults worked in Swedish-speaking workplaces and followed Swedish customs.

We are next going to have a look at a selection of celebrations of the ritual year which bear traces of transplantation and adaptation: the 'oh-so-Swedish' St Lucia's Day, holidays significant for both ethnic groups, such as Midsummer and Christmas and personal holidays characteristic of the 20th century and significant for both ethnic groups, such as Women's Day,

Mother's Day, Father's Day and May Day².

3.1. Differences: holidays important to Swedish or Estonian communities

St. Lucia's Day. This is a very definitely Swedish custom, celebrated in schools everywhere. According to Agneta Lilja (Lilja and Tidholm 2013) the first recorded appearance of a white-clad Lucia in Sweden dates to the 18th century: it took place in a country house in 1764. Agneta Lilje comments that the custom did not become universally popular in Swedish society until the 20th century, when schools and local associations in particular began promoting it. Stockholm proclaimed its first Lucia in 1927.

First encounters by Estonians with the celebration of St. Lucia in a domestic setting varied. One of the humorous common experience narratives of the community tells how, on a dark December morning, there was a sudden knocking at the door and in stepped the mistress of the house, wearing a nightshirt, candles on her head, buns and coffee on a tray. Those in the room were convinced that the woman had gone crazy but it turned out to be a strange Swedish custom. Today live candles are replaced with battery-powered ones. Some of the interviewees had grown up with this custom and it has spread more widely since. In their school years the whole school would come together to organize their Lucia procession (Hiimäe 2012).

People remember from their time at school or later at work typical festive processions where the St. Lucia was followed by a procession of her crowned handmaidens with candles, star-boys dressed in white and wearing white crowns, dwarves and others.

They are singing and there are candles on Lucia's head. Maidens walk around and there are dwarves and gingerbread and so on. So that is one definite custom. Nothing much special is done at home, but there are families where the wife wears a wreath with candles and in the morning goes to greet her family, so this sometimes happens. We have never done this, but it's in the schools. Here at the church right next to us every year they hold a very beautiful Lucia concert.

First of all a Lucia procession comes into the church. The maidens go upstairs onto the balcony. The church is all dark at first and the choirs and

² Celebration of 1 May, both as May Day and International Workers' Day, a holiday uniting customs widely different in their time of origin and social context has been analysed in another article (Kõiva 2013).

conductor from one school give a concert. Then there are all the gingerbread men who sing – there are choirs of boys and of girls, mixed choirs and it is very-very beautiful (FAM 282).

The Lucia festival includes coffee and saffron-buns (*lussekatter*) and is one of the most emotion-filled winter holidays in Sweden and Swedish settlements (concerning Finnish Swedes, see Wolf-Knuts 2007).

St. Martin's and St. Catherine's Day, holidays with an elaborate masking and mumming tradition and songs, soon lost their Estonian flavour. Sweden and its neighbours lacked the tradition of masking in November, unless we consider the imported festival of Halloween which in 2013 even featured on the list of Swedish holidays. In Sweden, especially in Skane, St. Martin's Day is celebrated by eating a Martinmas goose on November 11. Another important food is blood soup (*svartssoppa*). The Martinmas goose was known also in Estonia. The Estonian community reminiscences that at first they attempted to introduce to or teach Swedes the Estonian masking tradition. For example, a music teacher taught local children mumming songs and urged them to go mumming. Lacking wider support, the custom was given up. Probably the timing did not help nor the setting which was a relatively stable and closed, uninnovative village milieu (FAM 283, FAM 349). Thus, the attempted introduction remained an experiment of the emigrant group.

Advent. In Sweden Advent marks the start of Christmas festivities. Interestingly, this was one feast common to but celebrated very differently by various ethnic groups. The Estonian pre-war community did not celebrate Advent at home. In interviews, people often emphasised the difference: "Swedes decorate their windows with electric candelabras, they light the special Advent candles in a four-pronged candelabra, but we do not." Many older interviewees made the generalisation that you could recognise Estonians' homes by the fact that they did not have a candelabra with Advent candles in the windows. However, many well-integrated Swedish Estonians admitted to having Advent candles in their windows.

I have not yet used electric fir-tree candles, but I do use electric candles during Advent. Then I put in the window, even in several windows, candles which I light in the evenings, or at least every Advent Sunday, I light the candles, but the closer Christmas comes, the longer they burn. As soon as it gets dark I turn the electric candles on (FAM 282).

Empirical observations confirmed that on December evenings most interviewees had candles burning on their windowsills and homes were being decorated for Christmas. Advent was a time when the dark streets were decorated with lights or with candles. It was typical that the fronts of the restaurants and the stairs of houses were candlelit. It was also the time when Christmas trees were decorated for the city. Another means of counting the days until Christmas was with Advent calendars containing chocolate or sweets under small paper-windows for each passing day until Christmas Eve. These calendars were introduced in the 1930s (Liman 2012) and were very popular during the 1990s. The Advent calendar was one of the most popular gifts for the home among Estonians, for whom it was a novelty. Many of the decorations listed then seem commonplace today, but, for example, trees, tenement walls and streets decorated with electric lights were the rare exception in Estonia at the time as was the lighting of live candles, either indoors or out, during dark December with its shortening days. Thus, many of the Advent customs were for Swedish Estonians a symbol of a peaceful and well-off Sweden. We would even go so far as to call taking part in the traditions a matter of pride. Whether the custom was followed or not was certainly influenced by factors other than ethnic conservativeness or ‘going with the times’.

3.2. Holidays significant for both ethnic groups

Midsummer customs shared a similar fate and people had to adapt to Swedish customs. In the 1950s a law determined that St. John’s Day was to be celebrated on the Saturday or Sunday closest to June 24 (Liman 2012). The celebrations usually involved picnics and singing. Lighting campfires was forbidden and could only be done with special dispensation from the fire department. For Estonians Midsummer acquired an easygoing manner – “Well, we will celebrate it among ourselves in some rural location”, which is not much different from the Swedish custom. Fire-making traditions are kept up by Danes and Estonians in Denmark or near its border.

A key element of Swedish Midsummer is the maypole, common in the wider North and Central European cultural region. Every city or village erects a midsummer pole (*midsoomarstång*) or a Maypole (*majstång*), which is decorated with green wreaths, colorful ribbons and flags. In 1998 fieldwork was conducted in Lund at Midsummer. Local Estonians and most of the Swedish citizens left the city for celebrations in the countryside or

their commune, where they had an allotment (i.e., vegetable garden plot). Midsummer in the city attracted a great number of people for a picnic at the enormous maypole. The Swedes who gathered there included representatives of the city, members of folk ensembles and some from mixed families; most attendants from the Estonian community were newer immigrants wishing to participate in the Swedish Midsummer festival. People danced around the maypole. Among other dances the frog dance (*Små Grodorna*) was performed when not only small children but also adults hopped around the maypole in frog-style. One of the attractions organized for foreigners and ethnic minority groups was having a picture taken with blond dancers in folk costume.

Christmas celebrations have little regional variety among European nations, displaying only minor differences in customs. However, within a single ethnic group the celebrations vary to a great extent. Ethnic markers can differ even among members of the same generation, let alone between younger and older generations. This may be observed in the case of several important holidays where political views led to the celebrating of occasions such as Women's Day or May Day in the form of International Workers' Day with processions, which many native Estonians considered unacceptable. Similar surprising differences emerged with respect to Christmas: "The Swedish custom is to write poems on the presents, rhymed and self-made poems, but we have not copied that custom", with some people elaborating that it was practiced, but: "not in our family." This estimation seems to contradict the Estonian custom of adding to gifts postcards with verses and poem excerpts (Kõiva et al. 2004). Verses were rightfully part of every kind of salutatory cards, portrait photographs and so on.

The diaspora community developed the custom of sending greetings for holidays, especially Christmas, in the form of a card or cardboard covers with a pasted-in, or otherwise attached family photo or other informative personal photo. Such cards replaced letters and could relay news to relatives, acquaintances or schoolmates quickly. The custom was adopted from the Swedes, Canadians and others, but for some reason did not spread to Estonia before the 1990s.

Estonian Christmas Eve traditions entail visiting the cemetery and lighting a candle on graves. After that people go to church to celebrate Christmas Eve. In Uppsala there is an Estonian church. When there was no mass in Estonian or it was at an inconvenient time, people attended the mass

at the Dome Church, singing the same Christmas songs in Swedish. People have pointed out that during the sixty years they have lived in Sweden, the number and proportion of church services in Sweden has increased.

In the family circle the central custom involved everyone making a present for everyone else while parents organized a 'Santa Claus' for the children, typically an older family member, a grandmother, uncle, father, or mother. The costume and mask of Santa Claus have undoubtedly been subject to considerable evolution, just as have children's reactions to strangers. For example, children of the 1950s-1960s are characterised as being timid. The mask and fur coat scared children, who would hide behind the sofa as long as Santa Claus was in the room, with only their noses poking out.

The range of foods accompanying customs is an intra-family strategy solved according to possibilities, the choices being influenced by what people can skilfully prepare or are used to. The family that has the stronger celebration pattern usually prevails. In the late 1990s, Estonians believed widely that the best gifts for diaspora Estonians were salted herring, spiced brislings, black rye bread and white vodka. The context of this belief lay in the fact that these were thought to be the most desired, characteristic and unavailable foodstuffs in their new home country. If we draw a line between so-called imaginary ethnic food and daily foodways, it is obvious that an important component of all holidays was the right holiday food, influenced by everyday eating habits and culinary practices, and the restricted ability to practice ethnic culinary traditions. Ethnic foods are a distinct category not merely in the heads of researchers. They are emphasised in the descriptions of group members themselves.

In the case of festive food, ideals combine with ethnic, age-suitable and economic choices. For example, older informants eat less and as a rule prepare fewer or simpler foods. Many of our interviewees, for example, used not only deep-frozen, partially- or fully pre-prepared foods but also foods specific to various celebrations, some of them stored away several years before. We can surmise that the custom of, for example, preparing fewer or easy-to-digest foods for Christmas was established by the 1990s. The general opinion was that in earlier times, that is when their parents themselves were younger, festive foods were more varied and took longer to prepare:

Mother made her own paté. This took several evenings. Then Russian salad (rosolje) and herring, but these things we have

abandoned. We eat twice: first we eat the ham hot and of course blood sausages are also heated. So once during the day and once during the evening. So everything has been split between the two times, so that you don't eat everything at once or one thing after another. Otherwise you will be sitting all day at the table (FAM 282).

People become used to ethnic differences, learn to eat new food, but it is interesting to note that Estonians retained the so-called urban foods (if food choices can be divided into urban and rural), while the more archaic, robust farmer foods were neglected. A good example would be the very special Swedish traditional food *lytfisk*. This is dried fish which is put into water to soak before Christmas Eve. Stories of Estonians' first encounter with this ethnic food are dramatic, but by today it has become a customary part of people's diet with some people accepting it as a Swedish specialty. "You buy dried fish from the shop, set it to soak and prepare it with a good sauce, although far from all Swedes eat it. They just don't like the taste." On the other hand: "But this is not something I prepare at my home and my daughter's husband's family does not eat it either."

If available, salty salted herring, strong Estonian-made mustard, sauerkraut and salted cucumbers are bought, meat jelly is prepared and sweet-tasting Swedish foods are avoided. The differences between Estonian and Swedish choices may concern particular types of foods or may sometimes lie only in different seasoning habits.

Differences in ethnic food dishes for Christmas are described as follows:

Swedes do not eat sauerkraut, they eat brown cabbage – caramelised cabbage with syrup. It tastes a little sweet. It's a side dish. Otherwise they eat whatever they want on Christmas Eve. People can have salmon or turkey if that's what they find tasty. Maybe turkey is more according to the American tradition – so, all kinds of things are eaten. But very traditional people eat at least a little soaked fish with sauce and potatoes. The dessert is riz a la Malta. This is rice porridge with orange pieces. I know it's a kind of traditional dessert.

Food may be prepared or presented in different ways:

They prepare the ham beforehand and then baste it with mustard

and whatever slop they put onto it. The ham then has a kind of crust and I think they eat the ham cold.

Estonians commonly eat ham hot:

We boil the ham on Christmas Eve.

Differences are also characterised:

They do not like our Christmas foods, for example. Naturally, blood sausage belongs to Christmas, [while] we do not like blood soup (FAM 282).

There are several ways to acquire ethnic food in the community. „Diligent people make their own sauerkraut. We, the rest, go out and buy it (*Laughs*)” (FAM 282). Most people either buy from health food shops, from Germany, from Hungary, or acquire similar products made elsewhere. For home celebrations to which community members are invited everyone may agree to bring something, e.g. pies or sandwiches, with, usually, only salads prepared on the spot. Ethnic food can also be bought from community members, so-called mistresses or masters of the household who are experienced in the preparation of wholesale quantities and are recognised by the community in this role, sometimes just for one specific food. People of such renown were also asked to prepare festive tables or meals.

The ladies of the house are closely associated with a significant hallmark of the cultural landscape, the Estonian House where every event has its leading lady. Participation fees go towards purchasing necessary components. Large-scale communal activities involve teams of assistants who ensure that all foods are ready and the table suitably laid. Estonian Houses are places where the expression of ethnicity is welcomed.

3.3. Holidays significant for both ethnic groups, characteristic of the 20th century

International Women’s Day is a holiday with a peculiar origin. In 1909, Rosa Luxemburg proposed 8 March as the international day of women’s solidarity. In 1910 the decision was approved in Copenhagen, in 1911 Women’s Day was celebrated in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Denmark, and a few years later also in Russia. In 1975, during International Women’s Year, the United Nations began celebrating International Women’s Day on 8 March. In Soviet Estonia, Women’s Day became a national holiday

in 1965 and was stereotyped as a typical soviet state holiday, although eventually organized efforts led to it becoming an important family holiday. In practice, this meant official meetings at the workplace and a party in the family circle. As Mother's Day was not celebrated in Soviet Estonia, customs related to that day were partly transferred to Women's Day, with support from schools and other organisations: there were celebratory meetings and concerts, children prepared presents for mothers and grandmothers. Since a gift of flowers was obligatory, there was a special market day for florists and pro-active flower-growers. The northern relatively cold climate meant that flower prices were up, not to mention difficulties with supply. Women and girls of all ages and statuses received flowers while in the family circle men did women's work. Both at work and home, a festive table with cakes and pies was prepared. A national holiday, unfortunately, also gave licence to abundant alcohol consumption, leading to many jokes and parodies about men getting too drunk on women's day.

In the 1990s, as Estonia restored its independence, Women's Day attracted ridicule and parodies, but by the end of the decade the day became popular again – as an informal holiday for taking flowers to friends and colleagues and doing something festive together.

In Sweden Women's Day was celebrated and diaspora Estonians joined in:

I say, here in Lund they often celebrate that international women's day. That's mostly lectures and maybe a presentation and something like a festive meeting. Anyway, it's quite interesting as I have sometimes gone to listen (FAM 283).

Mother's Day was celebrated for the first time in Estonia in the summer of 1922 in Uderna. Thanks to the support of societies and schools, Mother's Day gained popularity fast and also received the support of the local churches. Activists started to publish guidelines for organising the celebration, with sample speeches and presentation repertoires. From 1935, the celebration of Mother's Day on the second Sunday of May was directed by the National Agency for Propaganda (*Riiklik Propagandatalitus*) and the Committee of Folk Culture and Education (*Rahvakultuuri ja Rahvahariduse Nõukogu*). The celebration meetings and events became very official and very solemn. In 1935, it was proposed that mothers should receive a gift, for example of forest flowers, that dedicated songs be sung, and that special

mother-signs be designed and produced by the temperance society. From that point onwards, the day was celebrated in opera houses, theaters and over the radio with a thematic programme.

In Soviet times, many families followed the suggestion dating from the 1930s that forest flowers be gifted. This marked it apart from other holidays when cultured flowers were the norm. Naturally, not all families celebrated Mother's Day as it had had a very short time to make the transition from a national holiday to a family tradition (Kõiva 2013). Mother's Day became an official holiday again in 1988, celebrated in preschool and school, a day dedicated to respect towards mothers. Here and there, candles are lit at graveyards. In the family circle, Mother's Day is celebrated with greetings and a festive table, flowers, cultured rather than wild, and occasionally gifts.

Those emigrating to Sweden continued to observe Mother's Day as it was celebrated by Swedes as well. Mother's Day was introduced into Sweden in 1919 and is celebrated on the last Sunday in May. It became widely celebrated in the 1930s when promoted in the schools and churches. The custom evolved in much the same way as in Estonia. A brochure was published outlining appropriate ways of marking the day – flying the flag, serving mother breakfast in bed, giving her a day of rest, singing songs and reading poems, asking forgiveness and promising to mend one's ways. Grown-up children living away from home were encouraged to send greetings (Liman 2012).

In the Estonian Swedish community Mother's Day celebrations were supported by the girl guide movement which, for example, organised in Lund a celebratory meeting. They prepared a ceremonial programme with a speech and floral buttonholes to be pinned to the mothers' chests. The day before, as in Estonia so also in Sweden, the forest was searched for liverwort flowers and, if possible, branches of birch were used to decorate indoors. Some girl guides would prepare the rooms, while others were practicing the programme and making other preparations. The preparation day was characterised as follows: "So it was an activity that took the whole day" (FAM 283).

The interviews revealed the fact that celebration at home was centered on a festive table, including pies or cake, and gifts of flowers. Since adult children often live far off or even abroad, congratulatory phone calls are important. Empirical observations in 1998 confirmed the descriptions provided in interviews. We accompanied a grandmother on her visit to her

daughter's home in a village near Lund and took part in the celebrations for Mother's Day in a family with four adult children. We spent hours talking and jesting at a festive table laid by the husband, although with significant help from his spouse. Children and grandchildren were not present but called and had sent flowers. The callers offered congratulations, asked about the health of their mother and exchanged news, giving credence to the appraisal "This is like a day of communicating".

In the 1990s, people aged 60 years and over did not consider it done to give presents on Mother's Day. But they did point out another phenomenon of commercialisation:

Businessmen want us to buy gifts but on principle we have usually not done this. Instead I have always told my children to send a card and call if they have the time. This is what I am interested in. No need to buy a gift to keep businessmen happy. That would be too much (FAM 282).

Liman also confirms that "Over the years, commercial interests have played an increasing part in promoting Mother's Day", adding that "nowadays a present is virtually obligatory" (Liman 2012).

Father's Day first spread from the United States to Europe in the early 20th century but the celebration became widespread in the 1970s, although on very different dates. In the early 20th century Estonia did not celebrate Father's Day. After Soviet annexation there was an unsuccessful attempt to turn the Army Anniversary on February 23 into Father's Day. Today, Father's Day is celebrated in Estonia on the second Sunday of November and it is to date rather an institutional holiday celebrated in preschools, school, the army and other organisations. It has been claimed that the model for celebrating Father's Day was copied from Finland (Kõiva et al. 2004).

In Sweden, Father's Day has been celebrated since 1930 on the second Sunday of November. Again, the day became popular because both school and church organizations supported the concept. The celebrations became more personal in the 1960s.

Swedish Estonians adopted the celebration of Father's Day from Swedes and started to celebrate it as a family holiday. Father's Day is modeled on Mother's Day with phone calls, cards and a special cake as important components. Children away from home either call or send

postcards but, at least in the 1990s, presents or romantic acts were not common practice.

Here in Sweden we discovered there is also a Father's Day, so there were always cards on that day. Cards for Father's Day and cards for Mother's Day. Father and mother both still have a pack of cards from the time we came to Sweden. They may not have kept every single one, but they did keep many (FAM 283).

3.4. Establishing social cohesion among Swedish Estonians

K. Jordan and others (2009: 377) point out that successive waves of immigrants transform the landscape through the construction of public and private spaces, expressing their cultural heritage by altering their physical environment. Decisions made inside the ethnic community influence the behaviour of group members, including retaining the culture, but such commonly created cultural landscapes undoubtedly carry political connotations. The Estonian space in Sweden consists of clubs and societies, cafes working in Estonian Houses, churches with services, Estonian-owned areas outside urban space (e.g., Metsakodu – the Forest Home near Tidaholm in Västergötland, Veskijärve Mill-Lake near Gnesta in Södermanland and the summer home of the Society for Helping Estonian Children in Kärr-Sämstad, by the bay of Gullmaren in Bohuslän (Estonians in Sweden 2010). All of these used to be extremely important sites for community get-togethers, group activities and organizing summer camps. These important cultural and social locations safeguarded the introduction and survival of Estonian-style holidays in Sweden (cf Hobsbawm 1983, 11).

The Estonian community already celebrated holidays of national importance in camps for displaced persons (DP) camps in Germany and continued the traditions in the new cultural space.

[...] some kept hoping that we would soon get back to Estonia, that Estonia would become independent eventually. We also held a formal meeting in honor of the anniversary of the Republic of Estonia and what did we all have in the early years, not worth talking about. "Maybe one more year. Next year the blue-black-white will again fly above Toompea." The speeches ran more or less like that.

Then war started in Korea. People became afraid that soon

the Russians would come, conquer Sweden and so on, so that we should move on to Canada. Very many did go. Perhaps ten thousand left Sweden, for Canada, America. We almost left, too, but then life became so smooth in Sweden that our parents decided to stay on here in Sweden (FAM 292).

The continuity of the Estonian state was preserved in the Lund Estonian House, as in other Estonian communities, by the festive celebration of the national holidays of the Estonian Republic and other important dates: the signing of the Tartu Peace Treaty, the anniversary of the founding of the republic, the anniversary of the founding of the cultural landmark, Tartu University, certain national holidays celebrated together, such as Christmas. The Estonian House was a popular place and used for social events, feasts, funerals and so on, cultural and educational purposes such as meetings of the scientific society, for drinking coffee or beer, for sporting activities and gambling, for making music, for school lessons, barbecues, making food, reading, etc. It was open to all members of Estonian society, young and old, and rented to outsiders when not in use.

In 1996 we attended popular venues like the café club and various communal meetings, including the Christmas gathering of about a hundred younger and older community members. The Christmas evening was very similar to a common organisational Estonian-style gathering in Estonia. The gathering featured a decorated fir tree and live candles. Entrance fees were used by mistresses of the house to prepare a Christmas table, foods to be served festively on tables covered with white tablecloths. The program was dominated by piano and flute music, a short reading from the Christmas gospel and a table of food to be shared by all. The Santa Claus wore a long red coat and white beard, distributed raffle gifts and then left to the reciting of the parody verse “Santa Claus, shut the clap” (*“Jõuluvana ära plära”*). An important event was the presentation of an award to the best young speaker of the Estonian language.

In 2009, the Estonian House in Lund opened a website that mediates news and adverts which used to be relayed only through the local Estonian newspaper or telephone calls. The website indicates that the consistency and structure of events has remained unchanged since 1996. As in the past, the Estonian House continues to guarantee cultural continuity through its monthly Wednesday meetings in the Estonian House café, monthly beer

evenings, gatherings of Estonian Students in Lund, lectures by the Scientific Society, an annual meeting and trips into the neighbourhood. Calendar events have stayed the same, too. On 20 February, there is the celebration of the anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Estonia, usually now attended by a representative of Estonia or a member of the government. In November, a festive gathering with a keynote speech and music celebrates the anniversary of Tartu University. Early December sees the traditional Christmas get-together, around 20 December a Christmas church service is held, followed by coffee for the members of the congregation at the Estonian House. Innovations introduced in 2010 include a Lucia coffee with mulled wine and Lucia pastries and celebration of Advent with having coffee and baking gingerbread. The latter event is organised by young families that have recently moved to Sweden and is an indication of the ease with which the newest migrants adapt to Swedish customs.

4. Conclusions

At the present time, Estonians live mostly in the larger Swedish cities (Estonians in Sweden 2010). The migration patterns vary. Some people come for economic reasons, other to study for a while. Most families are monoethnic. Among our informants there were two mixed Estonian-Swedish families, but the male partners embraced a fully Estonian lifestyle and participated also in the public events of the Estonian House. The interviewed Estonians represented the Second World War wave of immigration from Estonia. Their parents had either been born in Estonia or moved into Estonia after the establishment of the independent Republic of Estonia in 1918. Respondents had high school or university education, and were mostly pensioners, most still active socially in the Estonian House in Lund. Even today, some of the interviewees belong to the board of the Scientific Society, the committee of their local Estonian House, the pensioners' club, etc. This all indicates that the continuation of ethnic traditions and the stability of cultural life which started after the war period is firmly established and on-going.

The Estonian community is so small it is always questionable whether it is even noticeable in the host society or whether, on the other hand, it is not too similar to the host society. Conceptualizing the influences on the choices of feasts and the ways of feasting in this ethnic group we can reach the following conclusions:

1) It is obvious that the urban discourse is very important for this study. The diaspora communities act mostly in the city environment. Thus the ritual year celebration is placed in the broader context of urban popular and state festivities. In the case of the Lund community the city, or university city mentality is more in evidence than village mentality. Estonian expatriates in Lund had an extremely important role in shaping the mentality and practices of not only the Swedish but the global Estonian diaspora.

2) The interviews show that most immigrant Estonians worked daily in mostly Swedish urban communities. State schools, continuing education, working life and many Swedish institutions helped people to adapt in Sweden and integrate with the Swedish community. Through organisations people participated in celebrating Swedish national holidays and promoted festivals. Due to the importance of personal choices there is a variety of celebration patterns. For example, depending on certain political or vocational choices people took part in the holiday celebrations of a particular group or party. In this context we could mention Women's day and May Day.

3) Looking at the list of public holidays in Sweden in 2013 highlights the dynamics and changes as compared to the post-war period: it includes a number of secular holidays introduced in the early 20th century by various public organisations (May Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day), as well as St. Valentine's Day introduced in the late 20th century from Scandinavia. Older folk celebrations in the calendar include Midsummer Eve and Midsummer Day, conditionally also New Year's Eve and New Year with its globalised celebrations with both ethnic traits and unique customs. A brand new 21st century holiday introduced in 2005 is the National Holiday of Sweden introduced in accordance with international trends (Pettersson, Ulfstrand 2007). The majority of public holidays are church holidays (Epiphany, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, Easter Monday, Ascension, Pentecost, All Saints, Christmas Eve, Christmas, St. Stephen's Day).

St. Knut's day and the Lucia festival, which were included in the Estonian calendar of 1948, have been abandoned. Obviously, diaspora groups interacted with the dynamic Swedish calendar tradition.

4) Feasts are divided into those which are celebrated either publicly or privately. This means that people act both within the framework of family and at the community level. Community meant and still means the Estonian House and cultural groups attached to it. The community celebrated together the most important holiday of the year, Christmas, which observations

confirm to conform to the Estonian organisational celebration of Christmas. Another important function of what has been the celebration of holidays dedicated to the Estonian Republic's state and cultural achievements – the political side of the ritual year.

The underlying model for holidays was the idealised version of the Estonian Republic's calendar system dating from 1935 and later. At that time, celebration of holidays on the national level was elaborate and grandiose. The same model and the same holidays were considered important and their celebration was continued as much as possible in Sweden. Holidays have an important role in retaining, reinforcing and stabilising several components of identity (language, festive system, food, etc.). Within the family circle, however, national holidays are in the background and the front stage is taken by holidays emphasising entertainment, togetherness and human values, in particular old customs either in the style of the 1930s or presented more innovatively. Microscopic differences are perceived as ethnically important or marking and distinguishing from other groups, while variance within the ethnic group is accepted as permissible deviation.

There are many relations between the experiences of the group and individuals who share sociopolitical, economic or cultural processes in the urban environment. Comparison of data from Estonian webpages from the 1990s demonstrates that the main festivals and their patterns have remained unchanged. The context of Estonian cultural and community life in Sweden highlights the contrasts with the host society. At the same time the migrants describe and compare the processes in the host community where many changes have taken place – important national holidays include important church holidays but not the holidays dedicated to historical anniversaries, moreover such unique holidays as Lucia's Day are not among the public holidays, while Valentine's, Mother's Day and Father's Day are.

The dynamics are best summed up by something one of our key informants said:

“(Laughs.) But many customs have disappeared now, from Swedes and other people. But at that time, fifty years ago, that was the custom (Anu Klaar, FAM 292).

SOURCES

Audio recordings 1996-1999 = FAM

REFERENCES

- Arjakas, Küлло. 2011. "September, 2011. Rannarootslased Eestis. Rannarootslaste eestvõitleja Hans Pöhl (1876-1930)." www.koolitaja.ee/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Rannarootslased.pdf.
- Estonians in Sweden 2010*. Estonian Embassy in Stockholm. www.estemb.se/estonia_and_sweden.
- Fialkova, Larisa, and Maria Yelenevskaya. 2011. "Immigrants in the City: from Exploration to Domestication." *Israel Affairs* 17 (1): 142–163.
- Hiiemäe, Mall. 2012. "Kui me tulime Rootsii..." Eesti jõulutraditsioonidest võõrsil." *Mäetagused* 50: 141–158.
- Hjemdahl, Andres, and Camilla Andresson. 2005. *Den andra stranden*. denandrastranden.com.
- Hobsbawm, Eric J. 1983. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions." In *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger, 1–14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jordan, Kirrily, Branka Krivokapic-Skoko, and Jock Collins. 2009. "The Ethnic Landscape of Rural Australia: Non-Anglo-Celtic Immigrant Communities and the Built Environment." *Journal of Rural Studies* 25: 376–385.
- Kõiva, Mare, Taive Särg, and Liisa Vesik. 2004. *Berta: Eesti rahvakalendri tähtpäevade andmebaas*. Tartu: Tiigrihüpe, Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum. folklore.ee/Berta.
- Kõiva, Mare. 2002. "The Big Snowstorm I. The Spreading of Personal Experience stories about Soviet Estonia among Estonians in Sweden." *Folklore: EJF* 21: 98–137.
- Kõiva, Mare. 2013. "Calendar Feasts: Politics of Adoption and Reinstatement." In *Estonia and Poland: Creativity and Change in Cultural Communication*, edited by Liisi Laineste, Dorota Brzozowska and Wladislaw Chlopicki, 187–210. Tartu: EKM Teaduskirjastus.
- Kreegipuu, Tiiu. 2011. "Tähtpäevakalendri kujunemisest Nõukogude Eestis aastatel 1945-1985." *Tuna. Ajalookultuuri ajakiri* 14(2): 68–90.
- Lilja, Agneta, and Po Tidholm. 2013. *Celebrating the Swedish Way – Traditions and Festivities*. Stockholm: Swedish Institute. issuu.com/swedish_institute/docs/197465_celebrating72dpi.
- Liman, Ingemar. 2012. *Traditional Festivities in Sweden*. Stockholm: The Swedish

Institute.

- Pettersson, Ann, and Anna Ulfstrand. 2007. "A Celebration of the National in the Name of History and Antiracism." In *The Ritual Year and the Ritual Diversity. Proceedings of the Second International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year*, 22–28. Göteborg: Institutet för språk och folkminnen. Dialekt-, ortnamns- och folkminnesarkivet i Göteborg.
- Russwurm, Carl. 1855. *Eibofolke, oder, Die Schweden an den Küsten Ehstlands und auf Runö*. Leipzig: Reval.
- Stockholm 1945 = Välis-Eesti kalender-käsiraamat 1945. Stockholm: Välis-Eesti Kirjastustoimkond, 1944.
- Stockholm 1948 = Välis-Eesti kalender-käsiraamat 1948. Stockholm: Välis-Eesti Kirjastustoimkond, 1948.
- Tidholm, Po. 2004. *Lucia*. Stockholm: Swedish Institute. sweden.se/eng/Home/Lifestyle/Traditions/Celebrating-the-Swedish-way/Lucia/.
- Valk, Aune, and Kristel Karu-Kletter. 2000. "About the Importance of the Meaning of Ethnic Identity: Strength and Meaning of Ethnic Identity among Resident and Emigrant Estonians." *Trames*: 169–185.
- Wolf-Knuts, Ulrika. 2007. "Sveta Lucija, kraljica luči. Legenda in folklor o sveti Luciji" [Saint Lucy, the Queen of Light. The Legend and Folklore of Saint Lucy]. *Traditiones* 36 (1): 59–71.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Mare Kõiva, PhD, is the leading researcher of the Department of Folkloristics at the Estonian Literary Museum, with her scientific focus on incantations and folk healers, folk religion, Estonian diaspora, mythology and contemporary folklore.

Andres Kuperjanov, MPhil, is a researcher at the Department of Folkloristics, Estonian Literary Museum. His current research involves ethnoastronomy, tree lore, Estonian diaspora.

CALENDAR CUSTOMS IN THE LATVIAN VILLAGE OF TIMOFEYEVKA IN SIBERIA

Aigars Lielbārdis

Abstract

Timofeyevka is a Latvian village in the Vengerovsky district, almost 500 kilometres from the regional centre of Novosibirsk in the Russian Federation. The village was founded around 1895 by emigrants from the territory of present-day Latvia. The heritage encountered in Timofeyevka is still considered characteristic of Latvian traditional culture, especially that of the Latgale region (the Eastern part of Latvia), but has merged with Slavic traditions in certain seasonal celebrations.

The calendar customs in Timofeyevka are represented by winter, spring and summer celebrations but there is almost nothing regarding autumn. The largest celebrations in winter are Christmas (masked processions), and to a lesser extent New Year's Eve. Epiphany is also celebrated (crosses are drawn on doors), as are Candlemas Day and a pre-Lenten celebration (characterised by sleigh rides and bonfires). In spring the people of Timofeyevka celebrate Easter (egg dyeing, swinging, hitting with pussy willows). In summer the celebrations include Pentecost (decorating with birches, commemorating the dead in the cemeteries) and the summer solstice celebration (bonfires, pouring water on one another). Neither autumn field work nor its completion as a special period of the cycle of a year is characteristic in the stories of Timofeyevka narrators, yet a very special phenomenon in autumn is the commemoration of the dead through psalmody or the Office of the Dead.

The beliefs encountered in Timofeyevka are still considered characteristic of Latvian traditional culture, especially that of the Latgale region. They have merged with Slavic traditions in relation to certain seasonal celebrations (Easter, Midsummer night, Pentecost). Timofeyevka is one of the richest Latvian villages in Siberia in terms of its traditional cultural heritage.

Key words

Latvian Diaspora, Siberia, Timofeyevka, Calendar Customs.

Timofeyevka is a Latvian village in the Vengerovsky district of the Russian Federation and lies almost 500 kilometres from the regional centre of Novosibirsk. The village was founded around 1895 by emigrants from the territory of present-day Latvia. The traditions encountered in Timofeyevka

are still considered characteristic of Latvian culture, especially that of the Latgale region (the Eastern part of Latvia), but they have merged with Slavic traditions in the case of certain seasonal celebrations.

The main purposes of Latvian migration at the end of the nineteenth century were the lack of free land and the lack of possibilities to provide for family. The government of the Tsar offered free and fertile lands in Siberia to migrants from other provinces of Russian Empire from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. According to the research of Vilberts Krasnais there were about 200,000 Latvian immigrants to the territory of present-day Russia, Belorussia and Ukraine during the 1920s (Krasnais 1938, 130). At the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century Timofeyevka was one of the largest Latvian settlements in Siberia – with 114 farms and 540 inhabitants (Skrinda 1910). The first large and spontaneous wave of migration of farmers from the Ludza district in the Eastern part of Latvia to Siberia took place in 1895-1896 (Kikuts 2011, 44). The majority of the Timofeyevka founders who moved to Siberia in search of land, independence and prosperity came from this district. Contacts with relatives in Latvia ceased due to the founding of the independent republic of Latvia in 1918 and the formation of the Soviet Union in 1922. These relations were not re-established and it should be noted that there was no contact between Latvia and Timofeyevka until today.

Study of the Latvian Diaspora in Siberia in the first half of the twentieth century was undertaken by Kārlis Šķilters (Šķilters 1928), Augusts Melnalksnis (Melnalksnis 1933, Melnalksnis 1938) and Vilberts Krasnais (Krasnais 1938). During the Soviet era, although it was forbidden to take an interest in Latvians living in Siberia, Ingvars Leitis, Uldis Briedis, Vaira Strautniece and Andris Slapiņš nevertheless visited Latvian villages in Siberia in the 1970s, documenting evidence of Latvian culture with photographic, audio and film records. A study about the Latvian village of Lejas Bulāna was published under the guidance of Vaira Strautniece in 1995 (Strautniece 1995). In 1996-1997 Roberts Kīlis conducted fieldwork in the village of Augšbebrī (Kīlis 2002). In 2000 the historian Jāzevs Brolišs published a historical-philosophical essay about Latgalian in Siberia up to 1938 (Brolišs 2000). Since 2004 Lidija Leikuma and Aleksejs Andronovs have been studying the language and history of Siberian Latgalian. In 2012 Mihail Kolotkins' study of Latgalian in Siberia was republished (Kolotkin 2012).

Folklore materials in Timofeyevka were collected in two complex fieldwork trips in 2004 and 2006 which were organized by the Archives

of Latvian Folklore at the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, on the one side, and the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Latvia, on the other. In 2011 the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art published a book 'Latvians about Latvians: Siberia. Timofeyevka' (Lielbārdis 2011) which was devoted to the Latvian culture and heritage of this village. In 2004 170 inhabitants lived there and 66 of them called themselves Latvians and the same number spoke Latvian very well (Mežs 2011, 73–74). The members of this Latvian society, mostly the senior generation, became the main group of respondents for researchers from Latvia.

According to the Estonian folklorist Kristi Salve, calendar customs involve three basic functions: time marking, magic, and entertainment (Salve 1994, 160). The content of calendar customs, as it was noted by the Latvian folklorist Beatrise Reidzāne (Reidzāne 2008, 233), is built on the same principles involving: ritual acts and interdictions, sacral meals and forecasting.

The corpus of Latvian folklore took shape and greatest number of records was collected in the second part of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century. The collection in the Latvian Folklore Archives shows that Latvian culture mostly is rooted in a rural setting, and this finding is confirmed by folklore evidence from the Latvian diaspora in Timofeyevka. This article contains the folklore materials collected in Timofeyevka supplemented by the information collected and recorded in Latvia thereby giving the study a comparative dimension. Contrary trends in the preservation and functioning of traditional cultural material, namely 'freezing and merging,' can be observed in Timofeyevka as well as in other Siberian villages. Self-imposed isolation and an emphasis on the community's otherness in comparison to people of other faiths or linguistic groups can guard a tradition from outside influences for a certain time. On the other hand, economic, political, and other types of contact between communities guarantee that the minority culture will eventually merge with its surroundings (in this case, Slavic and Soviet traditions) both in terms of time and space. The closer and more frequent this contact becomes, the more quickly the cultures merge. The language and the relatively broad body of traditions in Timofeyevka have remained intact largely because of the village's location away from large cities and major roads. Some traditions in Timofeyevka – such as Easter, Pentecost, and Midsummer – have merged with corresponding Slavic traditions but, despite their being altered, have nevertheless remained in active use.

The calendar customs in Timofeyevka are more strongly represented by winter, spring and summer celebrations, and there is almost nothing in autumn. However, although neither autumn field work nor its completion as a special period of the cycle of a year is characteristic in the stories of Timofeyevka narrators, yet there is a very special autumn phenomenon – the commemoration of the dead through psalmody or the Office of the Dead.

Christmas is celebrated twice in Timofeyevka and other Latvian villages in Siberia, once according to the Gregorian calendar used by the Catholic Church and a second time according to the Julian calendar used by the Orthodox Church. The same is true of other holidays. At Christmas, the residents of Timofeyevka brought an evergreen tree into the house and decorated it with candies. They fasted before Christmas and received Communion on Christmas Eve. They ate a special wafer called *kaladas* which is described in this way in a record made in Latgale at the beginning of the 20th century:

'Kaladas' ('wafer') – a blessed bread, made of wheat flour and is very thin – like a sheet of paper. There are different Christmas themed pictures on the wafer. One should fast before eating them (Čudare-Eriņa 2005, 144–145).

On the night before Christmas (as well as the night before Easter) the women of the village gathered together to recite prayers and sing sacred songs throughout the night.

Masks and masked processions (mummers) were popular at Christmas, and this tradition is also popular in Latvia. The most typical masks in Timofeyevka were the bear, the old woman, and the devil. The bear costume was made by turning a sheepskin coat inside out. Hosts treated the mummers to food and drink, and the mummers brought along a special bag in which to put tasty foods. Mummers in Latgale used such bags to collect food up until the turn of the 20th century and even into the late 20th century.

The Latvians living in Timofeyevka also predicted the future at Christmas and New Year's Eve. In the past during Christmas time people used to throw a boot over gates. On whichever side of the gates it fell there would be a marriage later. Or another example: people went to take water from an ice-hole in a river. If one did not meet anybody on the way back home, luck would be one's companion. If one met somebody who was shouting and swearing, disaster would be one's companion. But if one met somebody who

asked for water – drunkenness would be the companion. Fortune-telling by throwing one's shoes over a fence was also practised in Latvia, although in Timofeyevka the shoe was replaced by a more wintry felted boot.

The day before Christmas Eve was called *Kūčas diena* (Kuca Day). Its name is derived from *kūča* – a meal made of barley – and it is a traditional food at the winter solstice. *Kuca* Eve both as to name and similar functions and content is known by Latvians, Lithuanians, Russians, and Byelorussians (Lideks 1990, 8), indicating that the tradition is quite widespread and supposedly indicates a common heritage.

The celebration of Christmas and other festivals contain contradictions. On the one hand, the festivals are closely related to Christian church themes and morality, but on the other they can be joyous occasions. Once Christmas was considered to be the most cheerful festival in Latgale (Čudare-Eriņa 2005, 152), and according to respondents in Timofeyevka it was the same there also.

New Year's Eve is generally marked by a celebration at the local cultural centre or a carnival, as it is in Timofeyevka and other Latvian villages in Siberia.

The next celebration is **Epiphany** – in Latvian *Zvaigznes diena* or *Kreščīne*, on 6 January. On this day people drew crosses and wrote the first letters of the names of the Three Kings on doors and posts. The sign of the cross was made over doors, windows, and even livestock to protect them from illness.



Pic. 1. Three crosses and letters of Three Kings on the doors over of the Pāvels Rudušs' head. Photo by Janīna Kursīte, 2006.

Candlemas Day, in Latvian *Sveču diena* or *Gromneica* in Timofeyevka, follows Epiphany and falls on 2 February. Candles are still blessed on this day in Latgale. There is an identical belief both in Latvia and in Timofeyevka: “If a cock can drink water in a cockloft on Candlemas Day, the following year will be a prosperous one” (Šmits 1940-1941, 4: 1789).

Next is a **Pre-Lenten** celebration, called *Aizgavēņi* or *Metēņi*. In Timofeyevka on this day people drove sledges and made straw bonfires. Straw burning and driving with horses was quite common in Pre-Lenten celebration in the whole of Latvia (Līdeks 1990, 120–124).

Fasting (Lent) precedes **Easter**, which in Catholic communities marks the end of winter and the beginning of spring. Potatoes, cabbages, and other vegetables were eaten during Lent, but meat was not eaten. Easter was one of the largest and most important celebrations of the year, and it is still celebrated in Timofeyevka up at the present day. People boil eggs and dye them in onion skin or another red color, and then they visit neighbours and crack the eggs against each other. If one person cracks another’s egg, he/she takes and keeps the opponent’s cracked egg. But nowadays only children go from house to house calling out “Christ is risen!” The response is “Truly, He is risen!” The children are given meat pastries, candies, and eggs.

Catholics spent the night before Easter and other holidays at church. But the church in Timofeyevka was destroyed before World War II. During the Soviet era these gatherings took place in the home of one of the female believers. Nowadays, however, this tradition is no longer practised in Timofeyevka.

Along with language, Catholicism is one of the cornerstones of Latvian identity in Timofeyevka. As the faith has been passed down from generation to generation, it has found refuge in various objects of the religious cult. For example, one of the oldest residents Vera Loča (born in 1928) has a prayer book and rosary brought from Latvia long ago, which she keeps folded in a handkerchief.



Pic. 2. Vera Loča’s Rosary. Photo by Janīna Kursīte, 2006.

She also has a blessed branch of pussy willow and Communion wafers from Novosibirsk. On Palm Sunday such blessed willows were placed under the coffin of a deceased person and burned. The grave was also smoked, or fumigated, before the coffin was let down into it. Blessed willows were also fed to livestock. Willows that had been used to hit and wake people on the morning of Palm Sunday were then taken to church to be blessed, and such pussy willows were called blessed herbs. It was common to recite the following verse while hitting people on the morning of Palm Sunday. The narrator Vera Loča tells:

Vierbu, vierbu!

Vierba syta, na es sytu.

Veseleiba vydā,

Slimeiba uorā!

Vierbu, vierbu

Vierba thrashed, not me,

The health in the inside,

The illness out!

The older generation in Timofeyevka celebrates this holiday according to the **new style**, even though all they have available are Orthodox calendars. Therefore, in order to know the correct date for each celebration, they count weeks.



*Pic. 3. Blessed pussy willows at Jana Kravale's home.
Photo by Janīna Kursīte, 2006.*

For example, **Pentecost** (in Latvian *Vasaras svētki*) falls seven weeks after Easter. At both Easter and Pentecost there has been a merging with

Slavic celebrations. Pentecost has merged with the Slavic celebrations *Semik* and *Troitsa*. This is the time of year when Slavs commemorate their deceased parents. Pentecost is the only time of year when the people of Timofeyevka go to the cemetery to commemorate their dead. All the villagers and visiting relatives gather at the cemetery, eat a meal next to the graves of their loved ones, and remember them. They leave a full glass and something to eat on top of the grave. This tradition has strong parallels with Latvia's cemetery celebrations, but in Siberia this tradition has taken on Slavic features, such as the feeding of the dead at the gravesite. However eating in cemeteries has been done in Latgale too – at the funeral the relatives of the deceased person treated the funeral guests to beer, bread and cheese right at the grave (Uļanovska 1891, 347).

At Pentecost people decorate their homes with birch boughs, a tradition that is common among both Latvians and the Slavs living near Timofeyevka (Fursova 2003, 9).

Even though the older generation in Timofeyevka celebrates **Midsummer**, in Latvian *Jāņi* or *Jāņa diena*, on 24 June, the event is also celebrated on 6 July. Cows were decorated with flowers at Midsummer, as at Pentecost. Groups of people walked through the village, stopping at their neighbours' windows to sing, receiving meat pastries and eggs in return for their songs. Cheese was also made for Midsummer and bonfires were lit.

Both Christmas and Midsummer are times for fortune-telling, especially among girls and young women. The narrator Zinaida Ivule (born in 1932) tells:

We put our crowns of flowers in the river and watch them floating away. We put them in one by one and watch whose crown floats the furthest. We follow along on the banks of the river, but only the devil knows where they end up. Maybe that's where a suitor will come from.

Such fortune-telling was also known in Latvia (Līdeks 1990, 61).

Water was particularly significant at Midsummer – washing oneself in a spring or in dew, as well as taking horses to swim during the night, was thought to bring beauty, health, and success. Zinaida Ivule explains that splashing around with water at *Jāņi* brings rain:

As soon as you start splashing around, it immediately starts raining. Maybe this – Jāņi – is God's holiday. There's no rain, but

as soon as you start splashing water, the clouds start forming. Even the adults splashed water. They splashed, and it always started raining. If there's no rain, there's no hay, no bread.

Although splashing water on this day was also known in Latvia (Jansons 1937, 7), it was not a very widely practised tradition, and influence from the surrounding Slavic environment can be observed in this case (Fursova 2003, 55). Some of the narrators have already switched from using the name *Jāņa diena* to the Slavic name *Ivan Kupala*.

Both the Latvians and the Slavs considered the night before Midsummer to be a very active time for witches and sorcerers. It was common in this region for youngsters to gather in groups, search for witches, and try to chase them away or otherwise harm them. But nowadays this activity has turned into a destructive form of entertainment, in which they try to damage the property of other villagers. This night is called the Devil's Night (in Latvian *Velna nakts*, in Russian *Chortova noch*), when youngsters scatter piles of firewood, drag away wagons, etc. Such activities also take place in other Latvian villages throughout Siberia. Narrators in Timofeyevka stress that this activity is typical of Russians. This tradition is borrowed from the Slavic environment near Timofeyevka (Fursova 2003, 62–63).

In the Latvian cycle of seasonal holidays **autumn** is associated with the completion of field work, the marking of this time, and preparation for winter. This is also the time of the spirits and the time to commemorate the dead, in Latvian *Veļu laiks*. Special singings of the psalms “The Office of the Dead” were organised at this time of year in Timofeyevka as well as in Latgale to commemorate the dead. Such events commonly took place on 1 November (All Saints' Day), 2 November (All Souls' Day), and throughout the month of November in Timofeyevka. This tradition of singing the Office of the Dead, which was established by the Jesuits in the late 18th century, is still alive in both Timofeyevka and Latgale (Lielbārdis and Boiko 2011).

Finally we can conclude, that several layers of folklore heritage, including seasonal holidays, can be observed in the Latvian community in Timofeyevka:

1) The heritage that has been preserved from the country of origin, Latvia, which includes both (a) traditions from various parts of Latvia and (b) the influence of Catholicism in Latgalian culture. Seasonal holidays

include holidays that are closely associated with the Catholic church calendar, because the inhabitants of Timofeyevka are Catholics. In the late 19th century, but also up to the present day, Catholicism marked a person's ethnic affiliation. This is one of the conditions that allowed the different, namely Latvian and Latgalian, identity to be preserved in the midst of a Russian environment.

2) Slavic traditions have influenced Latgalian culture in the past (a) before the wave of emigration in the late 19th century and the resulting establishment of Timofeyevka, when the people of Latgale had close ties with the nearby Belarusian, Polish, and Russian traditions and languages. The second, newer layer of Slavic influence in Timofeyevka (b) is associated with the influence of the surrounding Slavic environment and Soviet traditions mainly after World War II, which is manifested in the contacts the villagers have with other communities and other villages as well as the influx of Slavic people into the village of Timofeyevka itself.

The beliefs encountered in Timofeyevka are still considered characteristic of Latvian traditional culture, especially that of the Latgale region. They have merged with Slavic traditions in relation to certain seasonal celebrations (Easter, Midsummer night, Pentacost). Timofeyevka is one of the richest Latvian villages in Siberia in terms of its traditional cultural heritage.

REFERENCES

- Brolišs, Jāzeps. 2000. *Latgales latviešu likteņi Sibīrijā*. Rēzekne: Latgales kultūras centra izdevniecība.
- Čudare-Eriņa, Bronislava. 2005. "Svētki un svinamās dienas Latgalē." In *Nomales identitāte*, edited by Inese Paklone, 141–209. Rīga: Madris.
- Fursova, Elena. 2003. *Kalendarnye obyčaji i obrjady vostochnoslavjanskij narodov Hovosibirskoĭ oblasti [Calendar Customs and Rites of East Slavic Peoples in Novosibirsk Region]*. Novosibirsk: IAE SO RAN.
- Jansons, Jānis Alberts. 2010. *Latviešu masku gājieni*. Edited by Gatis Ozoliņš. Rīga: Zinātne.
- . 1937. *Maģija latviešu tautas tradīcijās*. Rīga: Valters un Rapa.
- Kolotkin, Mihail. 2012. *Latgal'skie poselency v Sibiri*. Achinsk & Sankt-Peterburg: Filologicheskij fakul'tet SPbGU.

- Krasnais, Vilberts. 1938. *Latviešu kolonijas*. Rīga: Latvju Nacionālās Jaunatnes Savienības izdevums.
- Ķīlis, Roberts. 2002. Nodomu valoda: atbildība un vairošana Babraukas ciema iemītnieku stāstos. In *Cilvēks. Dzīve. Stāstījums*. Edited by Agita Lūse, 81–94. Rīga: Latvijas antropologu biedrība; LU LFMI.
- Ķikuts, Toms. 2011. “Dokumentāro avotu liecības par Latgales zemnieku izceļošanu uz Sibīriju 19. gadsimta 90. gados un 20. gadsimta sākumā.” In *Latvians about Latvians: Siberia. Timofeyevka*, edited by Aigars Lielbārdis, 31–47. Rīga: LU LFMI.
- Lielbārdis, Aigars, ed. 2011. *Latvians about Latvians: Siberia. Timofeyevka*. Rīga: LU LFMI.
- Lielbārdis, Aigars, and Mārtiņš Boiko. 2012. *The Office of the Dead in Latgale*. Rīga: LU LFMI.
- Līdeks, Osvalds. 1990. *Latviešu svētki. Latviešu svinamās dienas*. Rīga: Latviešu folkloras krātuve.
- Melnalksnis, Augusts. 1933. “Kolonijas, latviešu.” In *Latviešu konversācijas vārdnīca*. Edited by Arveds Švābe, Aleksandrs Būmanis, Kārlis Dišlērs, 17113–17142. Vol. 9. Rīga: A. Gulbja apgāds.
- . 1938. “Sibīrija.” In *Latviešu kolonijas*. Edited by Vilberts Karsnais, 286–342. Rīga: Latvju Nacionālās Jaunatnes Savienības izdevums.
- Mežs, Ilmārs. 2011. “Statistiskās ziņas par Sibīrijas latgaliešiem: Timofejevkas etnodemogrāfiskais apskats.” In *Latvians about Latvians: Siberia. Timofeyevka*, edited by Aigars Lielbārdis, 69–81. Rīga: LU LFMI.
- Reidzāne, Beatrise. 2008. “Latviešu svētku un svinamo dienu nosaukumu etimoloģijas, to problemātika.” *Letonica* 18: 232–246.
- Salve, Kristi. 1994. “Lībiešu tautas kalendārs.” In *Lībieši*, edited by Kersti Boiko, 160–179. Rīga: Zinātne.
- Skrinda, Kazimirs. 1910. “Weiskupa ceļš pa Sibīri”. *Drywa* 35: 4.
- Šmits, Pēteris. 1940–1941. *Latviešu tautas ticējumi*. 4 vols. Rīga: Latviešu folkloras krātuve.
- Strautniece, Vaira. 1995. *Lejas Bulāna – latviešu ciems Sibīrijā*. Rīga: Zvaigzne ABC.
- Ulanowską, Stefaniję. 1891. *Łotysze Inflant polskich*. Krakow: Drukarnia Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Aigars Lielbārdis, Dr. Philol. from University of Latvia, Faculty of Humanities, researcher in folkloristics since 2005 at Archives of Latvian Folklore, Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art at the University of Latvia. He is author of two books: *Lielbārdis, Aigars, ed. 2011. Latvians about Latvians: Siberia. Timofeyevka. Rīga: LU LFMI*; *Lielbārdis, Aigars, and Mārtiņš Boiko. 2012. The Office of the Dead in Latgale. Rīga: LU LFMI*. His scientific interests are in the fields of Latvian charming tradition, calendar customs, and traditional music, Latvian Diaspora.

THE RITUAL CALENDAR OF MIGRANTS: MOTIVES AND THE PROCESS OF MODIFICATION, FUNCTION AND EFFECT

Tatiana Minniyakhmetova

Abstract

This paper examines the ritual calendar of Udmurt migrants. The migration process under consideration occurred from the 16th to the 19th centuries, when they were forced to leave their native lands. During this period most of the Udmurt population lived in rural and wooded areas and villages were usually organized by kinship or ancestry. When they settled new lands, the names of their former villages were given to the new ones. Sometimes new waves of migrants joined existing settlements, and consequently a village could consist of two or more kinship groups. Furthermore, the migrants established new worship and sacred places in the newly settled lands with the same names as they had used before, and arranged the rituals according to their former calendar. They organized rituals devoted to the abandoned gods, spirits, and holy places of their former homeland. Hence the migrants formed a new ritual calendar. These extra ritual events required their own places and dates for worship and prayer. In time, new infrastructures, both social and spiritual, were established.

Key words

Udmurt migrants, settlements, new calendar, rituals, abandoned gods and spirits.

Migration processes are ordeals. Motivations for migration are various, constantly dependant on political and economic realities, and migratory movements have been a persistent component of the human condition. In any case, migration means crucial life changes; the migrants find themselves within a strange and foreign social milieu, in an either neutral or perilous environment. In spite of everything, the migrants must adapt themselves to new surroundings and circumstances.

My research is devoted primarily to the ritual calendar of the Udmurt migrants. The mass migration of Udmurts from the former Vyatka and

Kazan' provinces occurred in the 15th and 16th centuries and continued until the 19th century, when they were forced to leave their homelands due to their unwillingness to be Christianized. During the period under consideration, most of the Udmurt population lived in rural and wooded areas, and villages were usually organized by kinship or ancestry into so-called *Vorshud* groups. Thus they settled new lands, and their villages were given the same names that they had had before. Sometimes new waves of migrants joined existing settlements, and consequently a village could consist of two or more kinship groups. Even after establishing settlements in new lands, the inhabitants of a village might leave them to find a new region and begin all over again. Within a village with two or more kinship subdivisions (i.e. *Vorshuds*), each subdivision, which could consist of many families, settled together, and their part of the village constituted an 'end' (*pum*) which shared the *Vorshud* name of their kinship subdivision. (Although the branching out of the *pums* suggests village streets, they were organized differently, with the eldest member's family housed in the centre and the others around him.) Furthermore, the migrants established new worship and sacred places in the newly settled lands with the same names as they had used before and arranged the rituals according to their former calendar. Besides this, it was necessary to treat natural objects in their close environment correspondingly, which meant to 'domesticate' the strange spirits of rivers, mountains, groves, ravines, and so forth. At the same time, they organized rituals devoted to the abandoned holy places and deities of their former homeland. Hence the migrants formed a new ritual calendar and corresponding ritual practice. The extra rituals to honour the gods of their former homeland required their own places and dates for worship and prayer.

On the one hand, for those settlements in which inhabitants represented one kinship organization, it was easier to establish new worship sites. In contrast, in those settlements with two or more kinship organizations, it was necessary to establish such places of worship according to kinship subdivisions. In addition to all of this, however, the villages were established among strange and unknown peoples like the Bashkirs and Tatars, who are Turkic-speaking and Muslim. Therefore, on the other hand, it was hard for those settlements consisting of a single kinship group to withstand the forced Islamization and thus assimilation with the Turkic peoples.

In time, new infrastructures, both social and spiritual, were established, and it is still conceivable that they developed after the same pattern as the

old social and spiritual infrastructures (based on the peculiarities of the *Vorshud* subdivision) that they had had in their former homeland, and also that the new calendar was formed according to the principles of the old one. However, no system of beliefs with numerous ritual practices common to all Udmurts had ever formed; each local group had developed more or less differently in this respect, particularly in regards to the protector and progenitor of its lineage, the ancestral spirit of 'god' also called the *Vorshud*.

Traditionally the calendar year consists of two important parts, winter and summer, although there are actually two other seasons, spring (*tuly*) and autumn (*siz'y*l). The two halves of winter and summer are perceived as two symbolic 'years': 'the winter year' (*tol*) and 'the summer year' (*guzhem*). The winter year is perceived as something closed or locked, like a room one wishes to enter; in autumn when cold weather is coming and snowfall begins, one says, 'We are entering into winter' (*tole pyris'kom*) as if one was entering a locked room, and in spring when the weather becomes warmer after the snow melts, one says, 'We are leaving winter and entering summer' (*guzheme potis'kom*) with the sense of 'going outdoors' or 'going into the street', as one does at this time. The notion of dividing the calendar year into two years which parallel each other is evident in the ritual calendar, where the rituals of the summer year mirror those of the winter year (Minniyakhmetova 2000, 20; Chernykh 2002, 184–185).

The traditional folk calendar encompasses a number of calendars which function simultaneously. These include solar, lunar, ritual, festival, economic (agricultural, related to crop production and livestock breeding), and seasonal-temporal calendars as well as those dealing with natural phenomena (phenological, climatic and weather calendars), transitional periods, and hunting, gathering, fishing, and the fur trade. Also included are the Julian calendar and the Gregorian calendar, which was adopted in Russia in 1918 (Minniyakhmetova 2000, 35).

Nowadays the meaning of the word 'month' (*tolez'*) is that found in the official calendar. In the traditional folk calendar, however, this concept of *tolez'* could refer to a period of variable rather than fixed length. It is mostly of fixed duration in the solar calendar; for example, the periods of winter and summer solstice were well known. Nevertheless, even during this fixed period the prayer ceremonies could not be performed on the same day every year; the days of prayer also depended upon the day of the week. For instance, no worship or prayer rituals could be organized on Tuesdays, commemorative

events had to be held on Thursdays, and so forth. Thus the period of prayer connected to the winter solstice lasted for a week, and was named the ‘month of winter praying’.

The Udmurt heathens had a five-day week, and some days were not eligible for prayer rituals (see above). The fifth day, *Arn’anunal* (lit.; *arn’a* – ‘week’, *nunal* – ‘day’; i.e. ‘Sunday’), was the last day of the week and the one most favourable for prayer. Under the influence of the Orthodox calendar and later the calendar of the Soviet era, two more days, Saturday and Sunday, were added to the traditional week. Nowadays, Friday is called *Udmurt arn’a* (‘Udmurt week’ or ‘Udmurt Sunday’), and the name for the official Sunday is the one used for the last day of the former Udmurt week (*Arn’anunal*), or in some local traditions, *Zhuch arn’a* (lit.; ‘Russian week’ or ‘Russian Sunday’) or *Bazar* or *Bazarnunal* (‘market’ or ‘market day’).

Therefore the main traditional events in the year, corresponding to the winter year and the summer year and taking the solar calendar into account, were the winter and summer solstices. Certainly the most significant form of worship, the ‘great’ or ‘common worship and prayer ceremonies’ (*Bydzhym / demen vös’ / kuris’kon*), so named because thousands of Udmurts from different *Vorshud* groups prayed together, took place at these times of year. In these worship ceremonies, the Udmurts performed auspicious rites, prayed, and made major offerings to their gods and spirits.

The situation at the summer solstice was slightly different, since there were traditional festive periods which lasted two weeks and included many different kinds of rituals. This period is therefore named the ‘praying month’ (*Vös’ tolez’*) or the ‘month of great praying’ (*Bydzhym vös’ tolez’*). For instance, there were some days devoted to a special purpose in the summer solstice period: the birth of water (*Vu vordis’kon*), the birth of the Earth (*Muzyem vordis’kon*), and prayers and offerings for greenery (*Kuar vös’yan*). At this time there were events devoted to the progenitor and protector of the *Vorshud* group, when every family and kinship unit performed a ritual in a house of worship called *Kualae pyron* (lit.; ‘entering into the *Kuala* and praying’) to honour the spirit or ‘god’ of their own *Vorshud*. This ritual, in which they exchanged the old conifer twigs for fresh birch or linden twigs, was very important because it was the chief calendar event for the *Vorshud* group and conducted in the *Kuala*. Every time they prayed there, people mentioned the ancestral *Kuala* from the homeland of the first migrants (Kosven 1931, 21). In addition, people conducted ceremonies specific to the village as well

as worship common to all of the villages in the district (*mer / mör vös*) or territory (*el'yn vös*). Every event was accompanied by special offerings and prayer ceremonies devoted to a certain spirit or god. Soon after all the prayer ceremonies were concluded, an organized festive and sportive event took place with music, dances, riding, running, and other kinds of competitions. This festival was an officially accepted traditional event in the Soviet period as well, when people celebrated the end of springtime work in the fields. This tradition continues, called *gyron bydton* (lit.; 'the end of ploughing') in some local groups and *sabantuy / gery s'uan* (lit.; 'feast of the plough') in others.

At the winter solstice great winter prayer ceremonies with special offerings were held; therefore this period is named the 'month of the winter praying' (*tol vös*) or some variation thereof (*uram vös*, *mör vös*). The ritual events took place on the streets because, due to high snowdrifts, it was not easy to hold them outside of the villages. Up until the end of the Soviet era, this worship was diminished as much as possible. Certainly people could no longer pray on the street, but only in some small villages consisting of one kinship group (*Vorshud*), where its members had no reason to fear that anybody would report their religious event to the authorities. However, it was allowed to celebrate the coming of the New Year according to the Gregorian calendar, and people used this opportunity for their own interests; beforehand they prayed in their houses and afterwards they celebrated it according to the Soviet rules.

The lunar calendar was flexible, calculated from the first new moon, when the increasing length of the day (that is, the period of daylight) was referred to as *nunallen kuz'yamez shödis'kem bere* (lit.; 'when the lengthening of days will be felt'), or beginning after the old New Year; that is, after the 14th of January, when it is celebrated according to the Julian calendar.

According to the lunar calendar, the first festive event following the first new moon is the celebration of Shrovetide, *vöy tolez'* (lit.; 'butter month'), seven weeks later. In the past it lasted six days, beginning with prayer on *Arn'anunal* and coming to an end with prayer on the next *Arn'anunal*. Nowadays it lasts from Sunday to Sunday (i.e. eight days). On the first Sunday, families pray and invite their relatives over: the youth make merry and ride on sledges, boys visit their girlfriends, etc. The next Sunday the family prays again at the conclusion of Shrovetide, referred to as *vöy kel'yan dyr* (lit.; 'the butter send-off period').

Seven weeks after the sending off of Shrovetide was the celebration of the 'Great Day' (*Bydzhynal*), and this period was called *Bydzhynal tolez'* (lit.; 'the month of the great Day'). The *Bydzhynal* period lasted two weeks and included purification activities, producing new fire, bringing new water, honouring the ancestors, celebrating the coming of the *Bydzhynal*, praying to the progenitor and protector (the God) of the *Vorshud* group in the house of worship (*Kuala*), mumming and guising, feasting, and seeing off the *Bydzhynal*. The summer year began with the celebration of the *Bydzhynal*.

After this came the period commemorating the ancestors, or the commemoration of spring (*tulys kis'ton*), when a family is obliged to mention all of the ancestors who died in the new lands as well as those who died in the former homeland and were buried there.

In the past, there was a special calendar event connected with the spirits of the abandoned homelands.

Every spring in midnight they sacrificed a black goat and entreated the spirits of illness from those places from which their resettled ancestors had come and begged them not to come to the new lands and affect the cattle. This custom is called mor s'yrs ('path of illnesses/sicknesses') (Aptiev 1891, 2).

With the ritual of commemoration the observance of the lunar calendar came to an end. In any case, by this time springtime work in the field, like ploughing and sowing, was allowed to start following the commemoration ritual. All of these activities began with prayer ceremonies, sacrifices, and offerings, and the spirits of the abandoned homelands would be mentioned again.

When all of the sacrifices and prayer ceremonies appropriate to the summer solstice period were done, a form of worship called *Lud* or *Keremet* took place, in which only males participated in the past. *Lud/Keremet* is a sacred grove, *Keremet* being a loan word from the Turkic languages, but an Arabic word in origin — *karāmat* — which means "wonder, miracle or supernatural power of the holy place" (Akhmetyanov 1981, 32). But people worshipped the *Lud/Keremet* not only in the new places; "in their prayers they also mention the *Lud/Keremet* from the abandoned places from which they had resettled" (Emelyanov 1921, 79).

There is a custom which does not coincide with the official calendar in any way. This custom, which had been realized in ritual forms in the

past, falls at the beginning of August. In this rite (*vył'*), people sample the new harvest, the first greens, vegetables, and other crops, and the families or kinship members sacrifice a sheep as usual. In some local traditions this period is known as *Elin*, but the ritual aim and meaning of this festive occasion does not accord with the Orthodox *Il'in den'* (2 August, according to Gregorian calendar). This rite marks the end of the summer year.

The beginning of the winter year does not take place on any fixed date and is connected with the completion of harvest.

In autumn when they finish the field work they begin again to make sacrifices. Almost at the same time they pray in the Kuala and Lud, at the old place; besides this, they mention the dead ancestors (Harva 1911, 28).

Mostly it falls in October and the feasts continue into November. In some local traditions this period is also known as *Pukro*, although there is no notion connecting those prayer and worship rituals to the Orthodox *Pokrov*, which falls on 14 October, according to Gregorian calendar.

When the feast period is over, it is time for the autumn commemoration rituals (*siz'yl kis'ton*) and once again people mention their ancestors, both from the new settlements and the abandoned homelands. This period of commemoration can last even into, but it is supposed to be completed by the winter solstice.

The winter year comes to an end with the celebration of Shrovetide.

In short, the winter year as well as the summer year begins with commemoration rituals after which prayer ceremonies with sacrifices are held, then followed by feasts. There is also an important regulation connected with the beginning of each half of the year that concerns the agricultural and phenological calendars. In autumn, when the grain and other harvest are in the store, some part of them is retained for the next season, to plant and to sow in the spring. From this time until the summer year, it is not permitted to touch or do anything with this part of the harvest, and when the summer year begins there is a special day 'to awake' the grain and to use it.

In general, it is obvious that every step throughout the ritual year was accompanied by productive or protective ritual, and performing rituals connected with abandoned places and their gods and spirits indicates that in the minds and memory of the people the old homeland, the homeland of many previous generations, clearly remained. What kind of phenomenon

is this? How has it continued over many centuries? Surely it is motivated mainly by the mentality and beliefs of these migrants; thus their ritual calendar has survived and is still maintained today.

The traditional beliefs are commonly supported by ritual practice. There are no dogmas in this belief system, and the ritual practice involves not only common prayer and worship, but also eating together, which as usual creates and maintains relationships. The ritual meal creates a special atmosphere for each member of the community and enables them to feel themselves equal to one other, adults and children alike, and in many cases with both the living and the dead. Here one may observe the relationship of the past to the present, its sustainability maintained by ritual practice, and if people preserve this relationship, the community will remain unified and whole. This relationship with their former homelands exists in their memory, and they consider themselves as a whole in connection with them; these Udmurt migrants created a self-perception in which they recognized themselves as genuine, pure, and real Udmurts. Usually during critical life phases “the sense of continuity and with it one’s own history motivates the tending and rebuilding...” (Siikala and Ulyashev 2011, 317). Here we see the unusual occurrence of the tradition keeping its property and basic nature, functioning and developing under new conditions, and as a result it has been modified and continued on in its double capacity.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Molly Carter for useful recommendations for conveying my thoughts and helping to clarify my English.

REFERENCES

- Akhmetyanov, Rafael G. 1981. *Obschaya leksika duhovnoy kul'tury narodov Srednego Povolzh'ya [The Common Vocabulary of the Spiritual Culture of the People of the Middle Volga River Basin]*. Moscow: Nauka.
- Aptiev, Grigoriy. 1891. “Iz religioznyh obychaev votyakov Ufimskoy gubernii Birskogo uyezda” [On the Religious Customs of Votyaks from Ufimskiy Province Birskiy District]. *Izvestiya obschestva arheologii, istorii i etnografii*

pri Imperatorskom Kazanskom universitete [Transactions of Society of Archaeology, History, and Ethnography under the Imperial Kazan' University]. IX (3). Appendix.

- Chernykh, Aleksandr. 2002. *Tradizionny kalendar' narodov Prikam'ya v konze XIX – nachale XX veka. Po materialam yuzhnyh rayonov Permskoy oblasti [Traditional Calendar of Prikam'ye Peoples at the End of the 19th and Beginning of the 20th Centuries. On Materials of the Southern Regions of Perm' Province]*. Perm': Izdatel'stvo Permskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta.
- Emel'yanov, Arkadiy I. 1921. *Kurs po etnografii votyakov. Ostatki starinnyh verovaniy i obryadov u votyakov [Course of Studies on the Ethnography of the Votyaks. Relics of the Ancient Beliefs and Rites of the Votyaks]*. III edition. Kazan': Izdanie Kazanskogo Votskogo Izdatel'skogo Podotdela.
- Harva, Uno. 1911. "Uno Harvan matkamuistiinpanoja" [Notes from Journeys by Uno Harva]. *Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran Kirjallisuusarkisto [Archives of the Finno-Ugric Literary Society]*. Helsinki.
- Kosven, Mark. 1931. "Raspad rodovogo stroya u udmurtov" [Disintegration of the tribal system of the Udmurts]. *Na udmurtskie temy [Issues on Udmurts]*. II: 5–35. Moscow: Zentrizdat narodov SSSR.
- Minniyakhmetova, Tatiana. 2000. *Kalendarnye obryady zakamskikh udmurtov [Calendar Rites of Trans-Kama Udmurts]*. Izhevsk: Edition of the Udmurt Institute of History, Linguistics, and Literature of Ural Branch of Russian Academy of Sciences.
- Siikala, Anna-Leena, and Oleg Ulyashev. 2011. *Hidden Rituals and Public Performances. Traditions and Belonging among the Post-Soviet Khanty, Komi and Udmurts*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society. *Studia Fennica. Folkloristica* 19.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Tatiana Minniyakhmetova, PhD in Ethnology and PhD in Folklore. Research fellow at the Institute of History and European Ethnology at the University of Innsbruck, Austria. Academic interests and fields of research: traditional beliefs of Udmurts and peoples of the Volga-Ural region (Russia), folk calendars, ritual, ritual practice, ritual folklore, the methodology of field work, and diaspora groups. She has conducted about 70 folklore-ethnographic field research projects and is the author of five books and more than a hundred articles.

“WHEN IT’S A FESTIVAL LET’S CELEBRATE!” COMMUNAL FESTIVALS AND FESTAL INTERPRETATIONS IN GYIMES¹

Judit Balatonyi

Abstract

This paper deals with festal culture (with emphasis on the festivals of July 2011) among the interethnic groups of people populating the Romanian Gyimes Valley, including both Roman Catholic and Orthodox practitioners. The communities consist of Romanians, Hungarians and also Romani (Gypsies), who arrived there in several waves. The paper examines the interaction and cultural rivalries of these groups in their festivals and holidays. Also, it examines how certain festival interpretations are created. I do not discuss festivals as a closed structure, separated from everyday ‘ife worlds’, but I do examine the chance of penetrability and the layered and interconnected nature of the festal and everyday spheres. I analyze the following communal celebrations of festivals and holidays: first, the Pentecost Sunday Festival located in Gyimesbükk; secondly, the Gathering of Generations (of forty- and fifty-year-old people) organized on two consecutive weekends in Gyimesközéplak; and finally the Festival of Saint Anthony, also in Gyimesközéplak. The essay examines the practices of the participants and the process by which meaning is ascribed as well as the festal culture drawn and dramatized by them.

Key words

Contemporary festival practice, festivalising, invented tradition, local memory, commemorative ceremony, Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania (Romania).

The present work aims to describe how Hungarians of the Gyimes region celebrate, with special attention to the formation of their festal interpretations, based on the examination of three communal festivals² of

¹ The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013).

² It is important to emphasise that the local definitions of the communal events differ, depending on the ethnic and age groups they belong to. According to the Gyimesian Hungarian and Romanian interpretation, the communal gatherings are holidays with special obligations: these events are linked to a typical mass or at least some religious acts; they are public; they are suitable for communal relations and representations; and participation is quasi-obligatory.

July 2011 in Gyimes (Gyimes in Hungarian, Ghimeş in Romanian)³. The focal point of the article is how people call representations of the festival into being and in what way: whether they are based on the organizers' intentions or whether the festal-interpretations are established by a common signification process. Another important aspect is whether attempts at interpretation depend on the context of the specific event.

I intend to elaborate on three distinct festivals: first, the Pentecostal Festival located in Gyimesbükk;⁴ second, the ceremonial annual Meeting of Generations (of citizens in their forties and fifties) organized on two consecutive weekends in Gyimesközéplak;⁵ and finally the Festival of Saint Anthony (patronal festival) also held in Gyimesközéplak. These festivals have in common their religious concerns and the alternation of family, private and communal spheres. In this regard, I could also discuss the festal character of the Sundays of June and the festive occasions of baptisms, weddings and funerals. However, my aim is not to outline the complete festal corpus of the month. Narrowing the field of research down was motivated by the mere fact that my aim is to examine festivals that are essentially different in terms of their spatiality and 'visibility' – taking into consideration all the internal and external factors that could have an effect on these occasions.

The Pentecost Sunday Festival attracts more than 100,000 people annually; participants are local people, Hungarian pilgrims and tourists from Romania and Hungary. The patronal festival in 2011 counted only 50-100 visitors (mostly inhabitants of the surrounding areas and their kinsfolk), whereas the events of the Meeting of Generations attracted about 500 people: although those celebrated are local people, the celebrators come from all over the region. Although the main concern of the present study is the act of festal organization and the actions of Roman Catholic Hungarians and the Roman Catholic Church in Gyimesközéplak, in the case of the Pentecostal Festival dealing with the role of tourists and pilgrims (Hungarians from other parts

For the Gyimesian Romanian the feasts are particularly essential in spiritual renewal and in the communal reinforcement of national identity and Orthodox religion.

³ Gyimes is located in Romania in the area of the headwaters of the Trotuş River. It consists of three large communities: Gyimesfelsőlok (Lunca de Sus), Gyimesközéplak (Lunca de Jos) – belonging to Harghita County – and Gyimesbükk (Ghimeş-Făget), belonging to Bacău County. The population of the Gyimes area is made up of three ethnic groups: Hungarian, Roma and Romanian. The religious majority is Roman Catholic with a 'Hungarian' national identity.

⁴ Ghimeş-Făget (Bacău county, Romania).

⁵ Lunca de Jos (Harghita county, Romania).

of Romania and from Hungary) and the local Romanians, the role of the local Orthodox Church is unavoidable.

Aspects of the analysis

I would like to emphasize that I am treating festal events as special variants of familiar social-cultural happenings: a festal occasion can be created from a simple event if the social actors redefine simple happenings and place them in a dramatic, ritual context instead of merely presenting them. For this reason I intend to demonstrate how the ‘festivals’ or, e.g., rites of performances are constructed from certain happenings on the level of interpretation.

In this study I will interpret festal events as instances that have their own time structure, in accordance with Nigel Thrift, according to whom performance theories interpret the time conception of the social events in an incorrect way. In his opinion, using the concept of “performance as the liminal phase of the rite” (Thrift 2008, 1–24) is unacceptable. On the other hand, I can only partially accept the use of the Turnerian concept (see Turner 1969, 4–130): based on my fieldwork experiences in Gyimes, it seems that a ritual act can remove the performance (in this instance the festival) from “effective time” and create a distinct ritual time in many cases but not all. For example, the ritual act could interconnect past with present or with future (Barna 2002, 156), but there is a strong chance of performances’ returning to “chaos” instead of creating order over and over again (Pócs 2002, 141). This process highly depends on the main objective of the festival. In the case of a festival with underlying political motivation, for instance, it is understandable that the organiser would try to refer to the glorious past by using some historical symbols or emblems.

Thus we can state that festive occasions provide places for the implementation of political and regional events, economic investments (e.g., in relation to tourism) and entertainment as well (see Sauter 2000; Hauptfleisch and Sauter 2007). The religious, economic and/or entertaining function is accentuated on the occasion of the selected festival. The Pentecostal Festival (a Hungarian event embedded into a Roman Catholic religious context) has a political and religious message in the light of its formulated intentions and interpretations: local Roman Catholic religious leaders, inhabitants and Transylvanian and Hungarian political actors all make continuous efforts to monopolize this festival. However, religion and

politics tend to cross-reference each other. Besides regional and (Hungarian) national political dimensions, we also have to consider the cultural responses of local Romanians and Orthodox religious leaders,⁶ regarding the fact that both the Romanian and Hungarian upper classes want to semiotize and organize local culture (in this case the festivals).

The organizers and the major performers seek to transmit a sort of legitimate representation to the audience via the medium of festal performance: they try to alter or challenge the audience's collective identity and self-image. Another interesting question is whether the planned changes are eventually realized. In my opinion events are not causally determined but each and every event, performance, or ritual must be seen as an autonomic and contingent occurrence (Thrift 2008, 114–119). In the case of the Meeting of Generations, I hope to show that two festive occasions based on the same script can show/produce unique features. I aim to emphasize the singular and nonrecurring character of the festal performances and the dynamism of the events and their interpretation by using the term 'eventness'.⁷ However, the creation and conversion of collective representations are indeed related to the establishment of a temporary "communitas" (Turner 1969, 4–130), and the so-called 'flow state'⁸ is also able to influence this representation. Moreover, it might be succeeded by the understanding of rituals and performances if the 'fusion' of public identities and the identity displayed by the actors take place, and if the audience knows the 'background symbols'

⁶ It is also important to note that the Eastern Church has been present in Gyimesbükk for only about half a century; until the end of the 1940s only the Greek Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Church could be found in Gyimesbükk. In 1948, the Uniate priest was removed as a consequence of the central intervention of the Romanian government and was replaced by an Orthodox priest (Jankus 2008, 97). Therefore it is very important for the local Orthodox Church to make efforts to reinforce its position and take part in the construction of (Romanian) cultural and ethnic identity.

⁷ The 'eventness of being' (*событийность бытия*) is a term coined by Mikhail Bakhtin. He used the concept of 'eventness' to indicate the openness of meanings of a given event. According to Bakhtin the 'eventness' is the capacity for co-being in events (Bakhtin 1993). G. S. Morson also uses Bakhtin's term to describe the world we live in as a "world of eventness, in which narrative is essential". Morson argues that a process (a festival) with numerable unpredictable events, events with real eventness and presentness, give rise to surprise (Morson 1994, 9; Morson 2003). J. C. Alexander, B. Giesen and J. L. Mast reckon the eventness of performance as a catalyst for social change (Alexander et al. 2006).

⁸ Mihai Csíkszentmihályi defines flow as "the state in which people are so involved in an activity (e.g., in a festival) that nothing else seems to matter." The flow state also implies a kind of focused attention (Csíkszentmihályi 1990, 4).

and ‘foreground scripts’. These symbols and scripts construct the conceptual frame of the performances and rites. In my opinion, performances and rites are not interchangeable: the term ritual can only be used in connection with particularly successful performances (Alexander 2004, 530).

The Pentecostal Festival (12 June 2011)

The patronal festival of Gyimesbükk on Pentecost Sunday, as defined by the millennial border of Greater Hungary⁹, has been organized in a heterogeneous field enjoying the honoured attention of the heritage- and experience-tourists (mainly the ‘border-tourists’).¹⁰ The events are organized around three locations: the railway station of Gyimesbükk (act of waiting for the train), the Chapel of Kontumác and the memorial of heroes recovered from its ruins in front of the Chapel (holy mass, festive speeches), and guardhouse No. 30 (ceremonial opening of a bridge). Participants arrive at the locations on foot; this few minutes’ walk provides them with the perfect opportunity to share their impressions related to the specific events with one another, to shape and formulate their opinions, their own festival-interpretations.

Festival *Rusalia*¹¹ (the Pentecostal Festival) and a festival of remembrance for fallen Romanian heroes are organized in parallel with the Hungarian Pentecostal events in the Orthodox Church of Gyimesbükk on the very same date, with the participation of national forces (see Figure 1). A part of the Orthodox believers arrived wearing local national costume; approximately 400-500 people were there. Local Romanians, similar to the Hungarian people of Gyimes, were creating a war memorial on the spot, trying to festivalize a local traditional festival. It is worth mentioning that this is the first year for a long time past that the catholic and Orthodox Easter and thus the Pentecost fell on the same date. Otherwise trying to organize a large-scale, widely attractive national Romanian festival would have been difficult, for it was a festival that was the privilege of only Hungarians in earlier years. On the occasion of the event, local Romanians tried to make themselves as visible as possible: many national television channels were present.

⁹ A border between Romania and the Austrian Monarchy until World War I.

¹⁰ Cultural memory-seeking tourists who are interested in nostalgia for ‘Great Hungary’ and ancient Hungarian culture.

¹¹ *Rusalii în Inima Carpaților*.

Iachim Bacauan, the announcer for Bákó TV, commented on the Pentecostal festival called *Rusalii în Inima Carpaților*¹² as follows: “The presence of the bishop had a specific plus on such a date and settlement, which recently was meaningful for Hungarians. While the festivals were in full swing, just two km. farther, on the so-called millennial border, the Orthodox believers were celebrating the Pentecost on the court of a little church in Gyimesbükk”. Bacauan concludes, “Especially here, in the centre of the Carpathians, God is Romanian.”¹³ Meanwhile Viorel Olah, the priest of the Orthodox minority of Gyimes, was greeting the debut of the religious festival as a supporting gesture for the community, which used to suffer from repression as a consequence of the Unio/Unitus¹⁴ in the 18th century. Music was provided by the folk group *Țărăncuța*¹⁵ from Ágas¹⁶, a group with a leader, Ms. Mariana Craciun (the teacher of the village), whose goals coincide with those of the bishop of Bákó. The teacher visited the programme specifically to spend time with those who try to “celebrate in accordance with their millennial traditions among thousands of Hungarians, who made a dash for the neighbourhood.”¹⁷ As she pointed out, “everything in Romania is Romanian. Wherever we are in Máramaros, Dobrudja, Bákó or Temesvár – it’s Romanian. It is reflected by the national costumes, which we wear. They are very old costumes, there is also a hundred years among them, the identity and traditions of the Romanian folk.”¹⁸

Organizers’ intentions in relation to the history of formation of the memorial

The organization of the patronal festivals in Gyimesbükk date from 2007, when having piled up a large sum of donations for the renovation of

¹² ‘Pentecost in the middle of the Carpathians’.

¹³ Bacau Online TV – online television channel: <http://www.itvbacau.ro/video/Steagurirom%C3%A2ne%C5%9Fti-%C3%AEn-Ghime%C5%9F-F%C4%83get-v3897.html>.

¹⁴ In 1700 “Orthodoxes united with Rome”: that is, a religious union of the majority of Romanians from Transylvania with the Church of Rome. This union was important from a religious, spiritual, cultural, social and political point of view (see Cistelean 2001, 1).

¹⁵ ‘Peasant girl’.

¹⁶ Ágas (Agäs, Bacău County, Romania).

¹⁷ Bacau Online TV – online television channel: <http://www.itvbacau.ro/video/Steagurirom%C3%A2ne%C5%9Fti-%C3%AEn-Ghime%C5%9F-F%C4%83get-v3897.html>.

¹⁸ Bacau Online TV – online television channel: <http://www.itvbacau.ro/video/Steagurirom%C3%A2ne%C5%9Fti-%C3%AEn-Ghime%C5%9F-F%C4%83get-v3897.html>.

guardhouse No. 30, the reconstruction of the building has begun. The process was completed in 2008 and the Kontumác Chapel has been reconstructed as well in 2009; thus the emblematic buildings of the frontier defence in Gyimesbükk and fundamentally the border metaphors of Gyimes have received attention again. In 2008, for the first time in 64 years, a railroad engine bearing the Hungarian coat of arms arrived at the Gyimesbükk station within the framework of the first Pentecost Sunday programme (there was a border-blessing, too). And since 2010 two more such trains have come (*Székely Gyors és Csíksomlyó Expressz*). Tourists arrived at the millennial border on the nostalgia-trains, being interested in the festivities based on the programme description. The arrival of the train is on the last day of the programme in Gyimesbükk.



Pic. 1. Festival Rusalia, 2011.

The passengers then take part in holy worship at the Chapel of Kontumác and in various other preorganized programmes. In 2010 a war memorial was dedicated here. The names of all the fallen soldiers and freedom fighters were written on marble plates, heroes who were born in Gyimesbükk or died there when defending the Gyimes Pass during the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, in World Wars I and II, or in the revolutionary fights of 1956 and 1989. During the construction of the memorial, the ruins in front of the Chapel of Kontumác were transformed into a place of national remembrance and a popular spot for family events of the local Gyimes people.

By creating the Hungarian memorial, the organizers designated a place for the Gyimesbükk, Gyimes and Panhungarian people where they can recall the local cultural heritage of the 'glorious period of Hungary' and commemorate the fallen soldiers transformed into heroes by these ritual circumstances.¹⁹ Another decisive aspect of the construction of the memorial was that earlier in Gyimesbükk only the Romanian heroes of war had a memorial: the tomb of Emil Rebreanu²⁰ on the Regat side of the border with a memorial for the Romanian soldiers fallen in 1914-1916 and 1941-1945. The millennial border of Gyimes (*La granita de 1.000 de ani*) got its own place in the process of nation-construction, too.

At the Romanian memorial many commemoration ceremonies are organized by the Romanians of Bükk with the participation of the Orthodox ecclesia of Gyimesbükk or Kostelek, in collaboration with traditionalist groups. The Hungarian memorial dedicated in 2010 can be interpreted as a kind of anti-memorial; the public rites conducted on this site might be seen as parts of a political anti-cult. For instance, on 6 June 2010 the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania organized a commemoration in Gyimesbükk entitled 'Healing Trianon'. The participants in this political rite used mourning symbols, for example black flags. A few families from Hidegség treated the event as an excursion (they had a picnic, roasted bacon, etc.) and did not reckon it as a festival. The dedication of the heroic monument marked a turning point in the Pentecostal patronal festival of Gyimesbükk. It established and legitimized the cult of the soldiers slain in Gyimesbükk, who "offered their blood for the country and our people."²¹ The family ancestors now became national heroes. The inscriptions of the memorial also promulgate the nationalist context: "Cum Deo pro patria et

¹⁹ Visiting the graves of the heroes is not a habit without antecedents. Locals and members of the "Order of Valiants" (the *Vitézi Rend*) have had the habit of commemorating the patriotic battle (August-September, 1944) for ten years now. The commemoration was initiated by the main organizer of the Pentecostal Festival. On the Bilibók-Peak a cross was erected in memory of the fallen and missing soldiers in the 1990s; in 2006 a veterans' monument was dedicated to soldiers lying in a common grave; and in 2009 a wooden headboard was dedicated. In 2009 the last male veteran died. The locals and the members of a Cultural Foundation (Budakeszi, Pest County, Hungary) placed crosses on the graves of twenty soldiers.

²⁰ Liviu Rebreanu rendered the circumstances of the death of his young brother (Emil Rebreanu) in his novel *The Forest of the Hanged* (1938). Emil Rebreanu was executed during World War I in Gyimes. His monument was intentionally placed on the other side of the border by the (Romanian) locals. It is an "anti-oppression" symbol and literally a memorial place as well.

²¹ A part of the announcement of the festival in 2010.

libertate!”²² The place has been transformed into a “lieux de mémoire” (Nora 1999, 142–157).

During the organizational stage of the events in Gyimesbükk, a group of local and Hungarian organizers showed up whose primary goal was to get Gyimesbükk, in one way or another, to join the religious and political events of Pentecost hallmarked by the patronal festival of Csíksomlyó, and thus to make it become the second largest Hungarian destination of pilgrimage. For this reason they borrowed many of the emblems from the patronal festival of Csíksomlyó. Here I would like to briefly mention the definition of the miracle legitimizing the establishment and cultural use of the memorial (as the miracle of Gyimes is treated as an analogue of the establishing miracle of the shrines and of certain revelations). The matter at hand is briefly that the organizers conceive the organization of pan-Hungarian festal events and the renovation of certain locations and buildings (especially the renovation of Guardhouse No. 30) as a result of divine intervention, the necessary sums coming from donations which they reckon to be tools of the ‘production of the miracle,’ as they refer to it.

This is the representation of the organizers, emphasized by the sponsor-organizers from Hungary. This common conviction has not taken root yet on a wide scale among the local people or the tourists making the pilgrimage to the millennial border. The phrase, “the miracle of Gyimes” may appear in their parlance, but it is mostly the organizers who have tried to emphasize the ‘founding miracle’ of the patronal festival of Gyimesbükk in numerous forums during the festal time. Moreover, in relation to the miracle, festal events can also represent national collaboration, traditionalism, and collective memories, in this case for the pilgrims and the people of Gyimes, at least in the organizers’ view. The above-mentioned categories, however, are extremely dubious. Although it seems unquestionable that the “national collaboration” meant by the organizers refers to a pan-Hungarian collaboration designed to eliminate the present political borders, one can only guess – from the main organizer’s speeches – a particular interpretation of the term ‘traditionalism.’ For him, it means the occasional presentation and the institutionalized teaching of the expropriated customs and cultural features that are supposedly national or local or ethnic (language, religion, local

²² “With God for Country and Liberty”: the slogan of Rákóczi’s War of Independence (1703–1711) that attempted to topple the rule of Habsburg Austria over Hungary.

history, and narratives attached to the millennial border). In other words, the concept of tradition used by him “contains the whole set of ethnic or national self-representations, as well as the collective emblems of the local community by which they turn to their own past: their costume and their system of symbols expressing their community” (Biczó 2008, 283). The national remembrance during the Pentecost Sunday festival is perhaps a piece of “domesticated history” (Fabre and Voisenat 2000) to which the organizers continuously try to add certain events recalling the local history of the Hungarian people of Gyimesbükk (e.g., the frontier defence of Gyimes in 1944). This added dimension is important for the local intellectual class, the religious leaders and also for the politicians coming from Hungary to participate in the programme. While for the local people the national remembrance is a tool of their own legitimation, for the different syndicates from Hungary the ‘domesticated local history’ of Gyimes is also a legitimate source to rewrite their own national past. The programme guides, brochures, emblems and other preparatory materials, and the cultural labels of the patronal festival corroborate the intentions towards national coherence, traditionalism and national remembrance. This is emphasized by the speeches and other statements made during the festival.

Festal performances – participants’ interpretations of the festival

In the following section I am going to present the distinct performances of the Pentecost Sunday in 2011 and I will discuss the participants’ interpretations, mainly those of the Gyimes Hungarians in contrast to the organizers’ intentions. Here I would like to emphasize the eventuality and context-dependency of the interpretations, allowing for the performances. First of all, it is important to note that among the Gyimes people the inhabitants of Gyimesbükk were present in the greatest number on the Sunday patronal festival. From Gyimesközépek (Lunca de Jos) and Gyimesfelsőlök (Lunca de Sus) only a few families took part in the event. This fact can be explained as follows: many of my informants from Hidegség reported that they were informed by the Marosvásárhely radio news or by their friends that the Romanians organized a festival on the other side of the millennial border, too. For this reason a lot of Gyimes people of Gyimesközépek and Felsőlök did not dare to go to the festival. It was not that they feared the local Romanians (surely they respect each other’s communal and family festivals and even take part in them), but the Pentecost Sunday events, they said,

clearly are not calendar holidays but are rather a politicized programme - and it is only the clergy who wants to retain the festival's original religious meaning.

The opening of the festival consisted of the stationmaster's official announcement of the arrival of the train in both Romanian and Hungarian. Then a prayer was given, too, before the first and second train arrived. A group of people from Gyimes gathered together at the station wearing national costumes, some sitting on horseback, some holding flowers and cakes or playing music while they waited for the passengers to arrive at the Gyimesbükk station. Finally, the main organizer delivered his welcome speech.

The organizers of the performance, on the one hand, seemed to use cultural elements from everyday life, so a simple everyday act functioned as a festal occasion, mainly for the benefit of the tourists. On the other hand, they apparently chose aspects of a 'local historical event' caught on film and kept in the memory of the Gyimes people, namely the arrival of Hungarian Royal Army units by train on 11 September 1940. The parallels between the two instances of 'waiting for the train' are obvious; however, according to the interpretation of the Gyimes people, the ritual referred to the latter occasion. The elders watched the arriving trains decorated with the Hungarian coat of arms with a kind of nostalgia.²³ Tourists from Hungary interpreted the act of waiting for the train in a different way. Most of them, similar to the Gyimes people, tended to see it as a temporary reoccupation of one of the easternmost settlements of the former historical Transylvania. The occupation (or reoccupation) of the place occurred during the ritual time of the feast: "the Hungarians reoccupied the millennial border for a day." Thus the feast connected past (1940-1944)²⁴ with present. Other spectators, to be sure, were curious about the festival itself, and waiting for the train was interesting for them as a cultural spectacle.

In the case of the tourists, a typical performance-interpretation took place, too, in that they reckoned that the act of waiting for the train was a manifestation of the hospitality of Gyimes. This kind of identification is

²³ Even the youth in their twenties (most of the men) know local narratives related to the small Hungarian world and they speak sorrowfully about Trianon.

²⁴ By the Second Vienna Award (30 August 1940), Romania was compelled by Germany and Italy to cede Northern Transylvania to Hungary, which it had lost (included the whole Transylvanian territory) in 1920 when the Treaty of Trianon was signed.

a property of the already mentioned tourist-gaze, but it is also telling in connection with the inventiveness of the Gyimes people. (It cannot be coincidental that the preparation of rich meals and the regaling of guests are continuing emblems of Transylvanian or Gyimes country-hospitality, and that they continually recur in various organized programmes, too). Moreover, this interpretation coincided with the organizers' intentions, and the main organizer explicitly emphasized this prefabricated festal interpretation in his speech at the Gyimesbükk station.

Later on, the pilgrims, with a retinue of horsemen, walked to the Chapel of Kontumác and the war memorial, where there was a short folklore programme and a holy mass. Festive speeches were given about the heroes of Gyimes and the importance of the coherence of Hungarians, and different organizations placed wreaths at the war memorial (see Pic. 2). The Secretary of National Defence of Hungary also made a speech (according to the transcript of the programme, he was there in his nonprofessional capacity, therefore not as a political official), in which he emphasized the contiguity of the Pan-Hungarian people and the national remembrance, and introduced the heroes as common national ancestors.



Pic. 2. Holy mass by fallen heroes memorial in Gyimesbükk.

In accordance with the publicity for the festival, the soldiers fallen in Gyimes are national heroes yet unknown soldiers (for the people from Hungary), who represent unity and national bonds. The war memorial was

the locus of remembrance, so it is relevant to talk about those bonds in relation to the heroes. The wordings on the ribbons of the wreaths placed on the memorial were made before the festival, uninfluenced by the speeches and ceremonies, so they are massive fingerprints of the preconceptions of the participants. Indeed they transmit two distinguishable interpretations. On the basis of the words on the wreaths, the relation to the heroes is obvious: personal and official tones alternate in great variety.²⁵ Private persons from Hungary, various organisations, and official institutions give thanks and express their respect for the unknown (ethnically Hungarian) soldiers dying for the country; the locals address them gratefully as deceased heroes of their collective. Nevertheless, the collective representations created in the course of the festive events showed a more heterogeneous face. Although the speech about the heroes was largely influenced by the participants' relation to the festival, by their preconceptions²⁶ and by the publicity for the festival, I still do not consider it as tied to those earlier representations.

The Hungarians of Gyimes commemorated their own local heroes as fallen relatives, as hero-ancestors. They think of the heroes not simply as deceased soldiers but as their kin. A few people of Gyimes were not even familiar with the war memorial in front of the chapel, and according to others the memorial was put there only to be conserved, to be revived again from its ruins in front of the Kontumác Church.

Among the participants from Hungary (who consider themselves Roman Catholics), religious figures of speech – and allusions to Jesus Christ – became apparent after the holy mass and were used characteristically to refer to the heroes who sacrificed themselves for the Hungarian collective.

Insisting on the importance of love and coherence was stressed in accordance with the organizers' intentions. A member of a radical right-wing organization from Hungary highlighted the necessity of Christian compassion and national coherence. A male member of an experimental archeological team formed a different kind of interpretation: according to him the place is appealing to different neopagan movements because of its

²⁵ Some examples of the epitaphs written on the ribbons of wreaths: "Heavenly Mother, save our nation!", "To the memory of heroes fallen in the Gyimesian battles", "Thanks for the heroes! May they rest in peace!"

²⁶ We can see that tourists from Hungary travelling to the patronal festival of Gyimesbükk get to know and more or less discover the area partly through anticipatory frames of description (interpreting the festival); descriptions of travel to Gyimes can be found on many web pages which emphasize the ancient, archaic culture and traditionalism of the Csángós of Gyimes.

karmic nature: he compared the place to Csíksomlyó, Taizé and Stonehenge. According to him the war memorial further deepened the sacrality of the locus.

As we can see, representations of the cult and the memorial of the heroes are extremely flexible. Although they were influenced by the contexts of the event and the intentions of the organizers and participants, the representations of heroes—as they actually were expressed—did not accord absolutely with those original intentions (which are primarily connected to the ‘domestication’ of history with the social or political use of the past).

After the holy mass and festal speeches the participants walked to Guardhouse No. 30 near the millennial border, where a ceremonial opening of a bridge ended the event. The dedicating inscriptions of the bridge over the Trotuş (Tatros) River, which was renovated with joint Hungarian and local resources, promulgate Hungarian-Romanian solidarity (see Pic. 3). In the speeches given at the guardhouse the importance of solidarity was also emphasized by the speakers. The main organizer stressed the advance that was collaboratively achieved by the Hungarians of Gyimesbükk, by Hungary and by the Romanian people. The opening of the bridge remains a vacuous symbol regardless of the intentions related to the whole event and the festal speeches; according to the youth of Gyimes, this procedure did not make any sense, for two reasons. On the one hand, the bridge was renovated in approximately a week, and they did not consider this hasty renovation a real work, as they saw no substantial improvement in the quality of the bridge: the otherwise rusty metal construction got only a coat of green paint. Moreover, the bridge as a remainder of the socialist era (which is thus ideologically overloaded) “hasn’t got any symbolic meaning:”

M. (25):²⁷ There is a bridge. Do you know how the bridge looked a week before?

No.

M. (25): Well, it was put into use in 1956. Then they repaired it in a week’s time. Oh my God!

F. (40, from Hungary): Will it be dedicated then?

F. (25): It will be dedicated, but what the hell do we dedicate?

²⁷ F = Female, M = Male; and the number is the age of the interlocutor.

Forgive me, Your Majesty, for saying so, but what do we dedicate about it, when it has already stood there? Dedication implies a new one, doesn't it? Is it such a symbolic matter?

M. (25): Is it symbolic, bullshit! It survived the Soviet, Romanian time. It has been painted green. It hasn't got any Hungarian symbolic meaning, do you know?

(Gyimesbükk, Bacău County, Romania)

This ideological overload of the bridge was important most of all for the Gyimes people during the interpretation of the ceremonial opening.

The 'antirite' of the Romanians on the other side of the border, of which most of the people were previously informed, was also highly influential. But this Romanian Pentecostal feast significantly defined the interpretation of the ceremonial opening for the nonlocal participants of the Hungarian feast. These participants gathered information and got prepared interpretations ("the Romanians are also celebrating to counter the Hungarians"). A part of the Gyimes people considered the events in Gyimesbükk as a celebration of coherence, apparently not with the Romanians but with the Hungarian motherland. Many pilgrims from Hungary regarded the Pentecost Sunday events only as an ordinary religious pilgrimage with a special location. Many events defined and planned as rites remained stage-like performances at their level of meaning. For example, a Hungarian radical right-wing organization's attempt to replace the Romanian flag with the Hungarian one at the train station was classified as a game, a comic and useless act by the spectators. The very same act was interpreted in the Romanian media as a political one.

After the public part of the events in Gyimesbükk, the pilgrims and non-local participants in the patronal festival returned to their accommodations, the locals to their homes. For the remainder of the evening they rested and gave accounts of the festal spectacles for those who stayed at home.



*Pic. 3.
'Hídavatás' Ceremonial opening of the bridge.*

Collective interpretations of the events were formed and actualized during conversations. To demonstrate the fully developed Pentecostal feast-interpretation, I am going to quote a short dialogue. The conversation happened shortly after an amusement programme in Gyimesközéplok. The hosts of the programme from Gyimes and a male tourist from Hungary talked about the patronal festival in Gyimesbükk. From the words of the Gyimes man and his wife, it turned out that they were not thinking of the festival as a traditional religious festival but as a political event, which was recorded among the local narratives of the border. In the meantime, from the words of the man from Hungary, an interpretation of the festival, which was recurrent and overrepresented among the pilgrims from Hungary, stood out: namely, that the festival is a proper, local Pentecostal patronal festival tradition of the Gyimes people.

M. (60, tourist from Hungary): In Gyimesbükk there's a border.

M. (40): Near the border there's some kind of a celebration, but it's not Pentecost.

F. (50): There is one, it overlaps with the border, but it's not about the Pentecost, is it? [she asked me and at the same time she was waiting for my approval]

M. (60): I don't know from whom, probably I heard from Feri that since the Csángós couldn't get to the festival of Csíksomlyó...

M. (40): But of course they could!

M. (60): ...that's why they arrange this patronal kind of thing on Sunday.

(Gyimesközéplok, Harghita County, Romania)

After the public part of the Pentecostal patronal festival, the events continued in private circles (in the guesthouse of the organizer). Paying guests at the pension continued celebrating with the chief organizer. A few curious passers-by also took part in this private programme. The owner of the guesthouse spoke about the millennial border (promoting the understanding of festival performances), and then the participants prayed together. Thereafter the musicians and dancers who also participated in waiting for the train arranged a dance performance on the stage of the guesthouse. Meanwhile the guests were having a three-course dinner.

The performance quickly changed its own generic frame because a few participating guests had consciously prepared for a collective music session, so they had also brought some instruments along, and several of them had dressed in 'costumes' or had put a shawl on their heads. A man from Budapest, for example, wore a herdsman's shirt from Felszeg. During the second half of the planned programme, these people joined the Gyimes people and they went on playing music together. Besides, they saw the joint playing of music as a ritual performance, which fortified their national and Hungarian identity and recalled their common roots. Whereas the musicians of Gyimes reckoned the performance simply as a task, they tried to keep themselves to the planned programme to fulfil the demands of the customers.

Saint Anthony patronal festival (14 June 2011)

In the following section I am going to discuss the events and representations of the Saint Anthony patronal festival of Jávárdipatak (Valea Iavardi (*Lunca de Jos*), Harghita County, Romania). This festival took place in 2011, although not on Monday, 13 June (Saint Anthony's day) but on Tuesday. The reason for the one-day delay was that on Monday a pilgrim group of Hidegség returning from the patronal festival of Csíksomlyó was received in Saint Stephen I. Church and the local priest wanted to dedicate a whole day to worship Saint Anthony. On Monday, after the holy mass, during the ceremonial reception of the pilgrims, the main spectacle was a dance performance by a group of children (in 2010 it was a children's wedding). Year by year a local contractor provided the participants with a one-course meat dish, and tents and benches were set up for the occasion. In 2011 the local priest offered his own wine and some soft drinks to the audience. Although the 'festal part' of the day didn't occur on Monday, many people held to the custom of the prohibition of work.²⁸

In this essay I am looking for all the new elements, narratives and representations that modify the local interpretation of the Saint Anthony patronal festival. For this, one should consider the role of the tourists who have bought houses in the area and who are not merely inactive participants in the holy mass. The owner of one of the houses is a musician and school headmaster, who occasionally organizes a camp for children in Jávárdipataka

²⁸ But those who had a lot of duties went on working anyhow, referring to the fact that the event was to be held the following day.

along with his circle of friends. This group undertook many tasks during the patronal festival: they decorated the altar with bunches of wild flowers and also made unconventional patronal presents. They exhibited photos taken of local people on the walls of a shed, printed on A4 sheets, and the priest mentioned them during the occasion, as they were considered a great success (see Pic. 4). The photos were distinctly separated from the souvenirs for sale, yet they were not reckoned as liturgic wares. The unconventional patronal gifts and photos fulfilled a double function in the remembrance: on the one hand the photographers perpetuated the common life of Gyimes people (places, scenes and working processes displayed in the photos were transformed into experiences and memories); on the other hand, according to several of my informants, these unconventional patronal gifts also recalled memories of the feast.

After the holy mass, following the anthems, the above-mentioned musician played the hymn *Blessed Virgin Mary* on his shawm.²⁹ The musical religious-political act with which, according to the original plan, he wanted to initiate a group singing, remained a performance and did not become a ritual. Apparently the locals did not feel ‘a community of fate’ with the musician house-owner, his companion and the children camping with them; in fact, the musical performance remained a fragment separated from the semantic field of the holy mass, and no temporary ‘communitas’ came into being. The musical performance was rather identified with well-known attractions (e.g., the singing or dancing performances of children) that may be familiar from other patronal festivals. The ‘show’ character of the musical performance was enhanced by the fact that some other people from Hungary



Pic. 4.
Photos taken of local people printed on A4 sheets on the walls of a shed.

²⁹ Hungarian double reed instrument.

also welcomed the Gyimes people with other musical pieces: while the locals chose the photos most pleasing to them from the temporary exhibitory surface of the shed, children from Hungary performed songs from Gyimes.

The owner of the house and his wife, from this moment on, appeared as the hosts of the patronal festival: they organized an entertainment and invited the two priests who celebrated the mass and their local acquaintances (20-25 people in total). Two representative local musicians played music, and a three-course dinner was served. The meal was not to the taste of the locals, so it cannot be considered a success. The priests and the important guests (i.e. those who helped with the construction of the houses in Gyimes) got more important places at the table and more meat with the soup. The priests left shortly after the meal. The key moment of the patronal party was the Gyimes dance perpetuating the traditions of Gyimes. The hosts from Hungary recorded the tales and beliefs of a local man with a voice recorder and shorthand notes: they asked him about witches and the afterlife (see Pic. 5).

Many verbal representations were expressed concerning the event. The hospitable family from Hungary wanted to express their thanks to the locals 'to return their kindness' and also to indicate to the locals, especially the priests (most of all the local one), that they know the religious customs of Gyimes and that they can 'organize amusement in the Gyimes way' with dancing and singing. They also wanted to let the Gyimes people feel how important their culture is: their music, their dances, even their tales and beliefs. The Gyimes people invited to the amusement referred to the event as an unconventional patronal fest, while the younger ones saw it as a dance-occasion. The children from Hungary camping in the village experienced it as an obligatory camp-duty: they had to take part in the holy mass, help in the decoration of the altar (they picked flowers), prepare the yard for the entertainment and also perform music.

And finally those who were not invited but knew the hosts summarized the



Pic. 5. A middle-aged man talks about "ancient things."

patronal entertainment in this way: “These people from Hungary arranged a dance on Saint Anthony’s feast.” “Mr. So-and-So has played for them for ages so they took him to Hungary, they are connected with him.” “These people from Hungary brought the flowers, treated the priests.” “They were the hosts of the patronal festival...”

Meeting of Generations (18 and 25 June 2011)

The Meeting of Generations of the forty- and then of the fifty-year-olds was arranged on the two weekends after Pentecost: the religious part of the feast was organized at Saint Stephen’s Church in Bükkhavas and the entertainment for the honorees and their spouses was held in the guest-house called *Csillag*. On the second day, following the collective part of the festival, the honored persons treated those who proposed a toast to them in their homes. The week of the meeting was spent mostly in preparation for the event. The celebrating families slaughtered a pig and mixed schnapps, and their relatives ordered bouquets of flowers. The neighbours carefully selected household commodities as presents to reconcile former ‘present-debts.’ Cakes were also made on the basis of the local rules of exchange, but some people made tasteful and decorative sweets on their own. If it was necessary, they borrowed dishes, tableware, or glasses. Many asked for and got a tableware gift which was immediately put into usage.

This feast of generations was introduced by a local priest in the 1980s: every year contemporary meetings were arranged for the forty-, fifty-, and rarely sixty-, seventy-, eighty- and ninety-year-old people. Such an occasion is not a Gyimes-based specialty (see, e.g., Nagy 1994, 384–394). The script of the feast can be considered unchanging. The contemporaries met at the elementary school of Hidegség in the afternoon. Most of them wore local costumes. In doing this, they partly wanted to come up to the pastor’s expectations, but on the other hand we can also see it as a self-representational act: the women were proud of the clothes made by themselves or embroidered by their daughters. The forty-year-old people conversed at first in a classroom, getting attuned to the occasion, while the fifty-year-old people went straight to the cemetery where they placed flowers on the graves of their deceased contemporaries and uttered a collective prayer (see Pic. 6).

The relatives of the deceased responded to the prayers for the salvation of the dead with cakes and drinks (see Pic. 7). Then came the

church-related part of the occasion: the confession, the holy mass and the children's performance. After taking a group photo, the relatives and their acquaintances queued up in two lines in front of the church on the square and gave their bouquets to those being celebrated. The value of the flower, bunch or basket was determined by the closeness of kin. Typically those who gave bigger bunches of flowers were invited to the family celebration on the next day, usually neighbours and the closest relatives. The holy mass and the present-giving were followed by a collective dinner in which those being honoured and their spouses took part. Although it was an optional programme, the appearance was expected: those who had been in mourning for less than six months could excuse themselves from the dinner, or if they still attended, they did not join in the entertainment. Usually one or two members of the age group, usually women, organized the entertainment part of the feast and the homage in the graveyard, gathered money for the mass, bought the decorations for the altar, reserved seats in a restaurant and hired a musician for the dinner, while the priest was responsible for the church observance.



Pic. 6.
They went to the cemetery where they placed flowers on the graves.



Pic. 7. The relatives required the prayers for the salvation of the dead with cakes and drinks.

Women tend to fill the role of the greatest importance in many other religious practices and observances. During a festival, women may temporarily refuse the female roles prescribed by the male-dominant society and religion.³⁰ It seems that weddings, wedding anniversaries, and

³⁰ I think it is worthwhile to pay attention to the nature of 'status-translations' as demonstrated also by László Kürti, which, however, seems an extremely idealistic model but which may prove

occasionally the meetings of age groups are the representational occasions for showing male-female appreciation among the elders. On these occasions, it is expected from the otherwise reserved or occasionally aggressive husband to be as tender as possible towards his wife, to pay attention only to her, to please her, to dance with her.

Although the people of Gyimes assign a predetermined meaning to every constant, fixed element of the contemporary meeting (e.g., prayers near the graves, the homage, the funeral meal, the expression of thanks), in practice nevertheless the ritual acts are changing or expanding and the representations are also subject to change. In the forty-year-old contemporary meeting, one of the honored women, who had lost her father three weeks before, in the presence of her contemporaries, holding the cross of her father's grave, mourned her deceased relative loudly. Following her lonely rite, several people visited the grave of their deceased kin and prayed jointly. The custom of presenting flowers was also modified: several celebrated people got flowers in the cemetery. During the events in the cemetery and the conversations after it, the feast took on a funeral character, the atmosphere of mourning masses prevailed, and in the evening's entertainment only a few were dancing.

However, at the fifty-year-old contemporary meeting, the performance of the relatives' children was emphasized the most. The priest did not allow music in the church; therefore a part of the programme was put off until night fell when the entertainment was scheduled: the previously mentioned brother and sister from Szalamáspatak³¹ prepared a thanksgiving melody ("There isn't any better in the world than my good father") and a music-and-dance performance. They appeared on stage with some local dancers (see Pic. 8). Because of the music-and-dance performance and the large number of fifty-year-olds wearing the Gyimes costumes, the motif of traditionalism became prevailing. The role of the event was determined as a collective celebration of local tradition and the knowledge being passed on to the children.

These meetings also functioned as tourist attractions: several groups of tourists appeared at the ceremony in the church purely out of curiosity.

useful in regard to the Gyimes society. In his paper entitled *Eroticism, Sexuality, and Gender Reversal in Hungarian Culture*, Kürti argues that in patriarchal European societies, men and women established special occasions that temporarily disturbed the roles and rules assigned to the genders as established and received by the society and Church (Kürti 1996).

³¹ Șălămaș (*Lunca de Jos*), Harghita County, Romania.



Pic. 8. Dancing-performance at the evening party.

On the next day, Sunday – as I mentioned before – the family part of the feast followed. The families concerned woke up early in the morning, prepared the necessary dishes (roasted meat, potato salad, etc.). They furnished and rearranged the festal area and set the tables. A large amount of coffee was made by children and they were put in charge of making sure that there would always be fresh coffee to be offered to the arriving guests. The event was missing all sacrality. Several people from among the participants did not even go to the church, as on Saturday – as they said – they had already taken part in the obligatory holy mass. The guests did not arrive at a given time, but in many waves. The members of a celebrating household treated 10-20 guests and families. Because of this, the hosts were on continuous duty, fearing that more guests would arrive at the same time and that there would not be enough clean cutlery, glasses, or coffee, and thus they would disappoint their guests. Coming to the end of the day, they were worried that there would not be enough food. Many consider these gatherings of contemporaries useless and excessive because the preparation of the food means a lot of expense for the family's part of the feast, while for example the collective celebration of wedding anniversaries is considered less wasteful. The preparation and serving of dishes, bunches of flowers to present and the festive clothes are apparently tools for status representation. In case of the observed events in June,

it seemed highly important that the participants were satisfied, and the organizers could measure up to the social and church requirements related to the feast. They were glad because they had a chance to celebrate.

Summary

In this paper I have described three festive events, and we can see every one of them as embedded in special contexts: these events can be interpreted as performances imbued with religious and political intentions. The organizers selected rites from the symbolic treasury of the national (pan-Hungarian) and Gyimesian ones, with ritual requirements (religious elements, traditional emblems, political symbols) that they found convenient (with verified representation). The above-mentioned symbolic treasury is basically the ever-changing collective knowledge (in the case of festivals these are the 'background- and foreground symbols'), to which all the individual ritual occasions – over and above the communal events – and indeed the national symbols could belong. For example, a politically motivated feast can use some gestures of the cult of the dead or of another rite of passage as well. Thus the organizers, working with known, everyday requirements, tried to introduce some kind of a change or difference to the event (these can be direct goals or hidden dimensions): to increase communal cohesion, to strengthen faith, to start a national dialogue about Romanian-Hungarian connections, to let a non-Gyimes group identify its own place and legitimacy in the local society, to help the people of Gyimes with guarding their own 'traditions', or to take possession of the past within a socio-political field. On the basis of all this, we may presume an interpretation on the side of the organizers of the rite that can set a performance to convey certain representations if the symbols related to the rite are known by the audience, and if they can reach a festal atmosphere with the help of other tools (prayer, song, dance, preaching).

I have tried to explore these organizational intentions and I also want to demonstrate that many religious or political groups make their claims to appropriate an interpretation of the celebrations. As we saw, the Pentecost Sunday events in Gyimesbükk are important for both the Hungarians and Romanians of Gyimes, who try to ethnically monopolize the Pentecost Sunday event and the area of the border as well.

Until now there has not been any consensus about whether the chain of acts of the Hungarian Pentecost is a religious observance or a political

event. In the descriptors of the event, the patronal character is dominant, while on the local plane the political meaning prevails. And among the representatives of the local Church and for deeply religious believers, certainly the religious character is the most legitimate. Thus we see that the given forms and effects of the social events are not determined purely by their organizers, given that they are always on the move, and consequently the creating of interpretations is also progressive.

Understanding these various and varying festal interpretations offers numerous problems for the researcher, for one can't reckon with every single festal interpretation, can't see every such debate and know every such discourse on how the canons are forming or changing. Bearing all this in mind, the present paper can only offer a possible interpretation of the festal interpretations of Gyimes.

REFERENCES

- Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2004. "Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance between Ritual and Strategy." *Sociological Theory* 22 (4): 527–573.
- Alexander, Jeffrey C., Bernhard Giesen, and Jason L. Mast, eds. 2006. *Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual*. Vol. 2 of *Cambridge Cultural Social Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bakhtin, Mihail Mikhailovich. 1993. *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. Vol. 10 of *University of Texas Press Slavic Series*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Barna, Gábor. 2002. "Társulati ünnepek és szervezői." In *Rítus és ünnep az ezredfordulón. Tudományos konferencia Marcaliban*, edited by Éva Pócs, 156. Budapest: L'Harmattan – Marcali Városi Helytörténeti Múzeum.
- Biczó, Gábor. 2008. "A 'hagyomány' rehabilitációja mint a lokális identitás megértésének kulcsa a Kárpát-medence vegyes lakosságú közösségeiben." In *Bennünk élő múltjaink. Történelmi tudat – Kulturális emlékezet*, edited by Richárd Papp and László Szarka, 279–287. Zenta: Vajdasági Magyar Művelődési Intézet.
- Bilibok-Bârsan, Petrică-Gabor, Ion ed. 2008. *Vatra satului cu tradițiile, obiceiurile – valorificate în actul predării limbii române*. Bacău: Editura Egal.
- Csikszentmihályi, Mihaly. 1990. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Cistelean, Alexandru. 2001. "A görög katolicizmus a románoknál." *Provincia* (8-9): 1.

- Fabre, Daniel, and Claudie Voisenat. 2000. *Domestiquer l'histoire. Ethnologie des monuments historiques*. Paris: Éditions de la maison des sciences de l'homme.
- Hauptfleisch, Temple, Willmar Sauter et al., eds. 2007. *Festivalising! Theatrical Events, Politics and Culture*. Vol. 3 of *Themes in theatre*. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi.
- Ichim, Dorinel. 1983. *Zona etnografică Trotuș*. București: Editura Sport-Turism.
- . 1987. *Zona etnografică Bacău*. București: Editura Sport-Turism.
- Jankus, Kinga. 2008. "A lélek túlvilági útja a gyimesbükki ortodox hiedelmek alapján." *Studia Ethnologica Hungarica* 8: 93–112.
- Kürti, László. 1996. "Eroticism, Sexuality, and Gender Reversal in Hungarian Culture." In *Gender Reversals and Gender Cultures. Anthropological and historical perspectives*, edited by Sabrina Petra Ramet, 148–164. London, New York: Routledge.
- Mititelu, Cornelia. 2008. *Zona etnografică Trotuș* Partea II, Vol. 4 of *Geografia Turismului*. Iași: Grupa 1442.
- Morson, Gary Saul. 1994. *Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- . 2003. "Narrativeness." *New Literary History* 34 (1): 59–73.
- Nagy, Ilona. 1994. "Korcsoport-találkozó: Adalékok egy antropológiai elemzéshez." *Arrabona* 31-33: 384–394.
- Nora, Pierre. 1999. "Emlékezet és történelem között." *Aetas* (3): 142–157.
- Pócs, Éva. 2002. "Ünnep, rítus és idő szemlélet a parasztság hagyományos kultúrájában." *Közelítések az időhöz* 3: 141.
- Sauter, Willmar. 2000. *The Theatrical Event. Dynamics of Performance and Perception*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press.
- Spotts, Lydia. 2008. *The Csángó in Ghimeș-Faget: Boundary and Ethnic Definition in Transylvania* (Thesis – manuscript, Ball State University, Indiana). http://cardinalscholar.bsu.edu/bitstream/handle/192674/1/S685_2008SpottsLydia.pdf.
- Thrift, Nigel. 2007. *Non-Representational Theory. Space, Politics, Affect*, London: Routledge.
- Turner, Victor W. 1969. *The Ritual Process*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Vámszer, Géza. 1940. "A gyimesi csángók eredete, települési és gazdasági viszonyai." *Láthatár* 8. (3): 73–79.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Judit Balatonyi is a third-year PhD student in the PTE BTK Interdisciplinary

PhD School, Program for European Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, and a junior member of the Department of Ethnography and Cultural Anthropology. She is lecturer in the Department of Ethnography and Cultural Anthropology and in the Institute of Education Department of Romany Studies and Sociology of Education and in the Department of Modern Literature and Literature Theory of the PTE BTK.

TRADITION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF TRADITION: THE EXPERIENCE OF RUSSIAN OLD BELIEVERS IN LATVIA

Nadežda Pazuhina

Annotation

Latvian Old Believers form a relatively closed ethno-religious group which has lived on the territory of contemporary Latvia since the second half of the 17th century. During the 1920s and 1930s (the first period of sovereignty of the Latvian State) Old Believers developed new forms of social activities – collecting cultural material, conducting research into their cultural heritage and making it available in the public arena (through the activities of their NGO's), consolidating Old Believers (through the coordinating work of local communities) and even becoming involved in politics. For the Old Believers this was a period of cultural self-awareness in a situation of cultural interaction with the “secular” world. Special care was taken to preserve the cultural heritage of the Old Believers and to educate the young generation of Old Believers in spiritual matters. The problem of how to preserve past tradition was addressed in the 1990s – when the young generation once again became involved in the life of the community.

Key words

Tradition, reconstruction, Orthodox Old-Believers, identity, cultural practice, religious education.

The Orthodox Old Believers form a particular ethno-confessional group, which has lived on the territory of contemporary Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia since the second half of the seventeenth century. The appearance of the Old Believers in the Baltic area was caused by the intensification of social tensions in Russia in the middle of the seventeenth century. The reforms of Patriarch Nikon caused a schism in the Russian Orthodox Church (Zen'kovskiy 1995, 258-339). Old Believers rejected the church reforms and retained the traditions of pre-reform Russian Orthodoxy (in the terminology of Old Believers – ‘Ancient/ Old Orthodoxy’). Until the manifesto of Tsar Nicholas II on 17 October

1905 the rights of Old Believers, religious as well as civil, were severely restricted.

After the declaration of independence of the Baltic States, the Old Believers were legally recognized there as one of the traditional Christian denominations and were granted all civil rights (Podmazovs 2001, 112–139). The Old Believers in Latvia represent the Bespopovtsy ('priest-less') branch of the Old Believers' movement, i.e. the branch which does not have a priesthood. Today most Latvian Old Believers belong to the Pomorian denomination of Bespopovtsy. Historically there has also been in Latvia a branch of Old Believers known as Fedoseyevian Old Believers (also called Old Pomorians, the denomination which does not practice the church ritual of matrimony). Neither movement has a church hierarchy, and both, therefore, acknowledge only two of the sacraments, Baptism and Confession. According to the Orthodox tradition, these two sacraments could be performed not only by priests, but also by laypersons (by need). In actual religious practice baptism and confession are customarily performed by spiritual fathers, known as *nastavniki* ('teachers').

The 'priest-less' movement of Old Believers emerged soon after the Schism under the influence of the radical eschatological views of those who continued to follow the rites of pre-reform Orthodoxy. Ideas about the coming of 'the latter days' and of 'the kingdom of Antichrist' became the main justification for abolishing the institution of priesthood that had fallen from grace and no longer enjoyed the benefit of apostolic succession (Zen'kovskij 1995, 340–355, 438–466). Contemporary Pomorian Old Believers emphasize that the absence of priesthood does not signify the rejection of the hierarchical principle and unity in the Church – rather, it came about as a result of historical conditions (Zhilko 1996).

Unlike other Russians in Latvia, the Old Believers were always a quite isolated group. This was caused by their specific perception of the 'external' world, in the sense of the world outside the Old Believers' community. This world was interpreted by the Old Believers as the world of Antichrist, so contacts with it should be reduced to the minimum (Shakhov 2001, 85–104). The resulting experience of enforced isolation influenced the development of the collective religious and cultural identity of this group quite strongly. In this context one should note the key role of self-organization as practiced in denominations of Old Believers. The religious community defines not only the religious identity

of the individual believers, but also the processes of socialization among the community's members.

It is also important to point out that the way of life of Old Believers in the cities was quite different from that of Old Believers' parishes in rural areas. As result, the old patriarchal order and the 'natural' distance from the secular world were no longer the main formative influences in the establishment of the group identity of Old Believers. This process could be described as the gradual erosion of borders between the Old Believers and the rest of society. These changes had already appeared by the early twentieth century, but became the object of serious reflection in the Latvian Old Believers' community in the interwar period („Staroobriadcheskie s'ezdy" 1924, 5). The representatives of the Old Believers' community viewed this problem in a very modern way – interwar publications often speak about collapsed links between generations, the secularization of Old Believers and forgotten traditions. The inability of the young generation of Old Believers to follow tradition, or, often, their complete ignorance of tradition, was singled out as the main problem (“Protokol” 1924, 7–9).

In the tradition of Old Believers' religious education is the only way to ensure that each individual member of the next generation of believers will experience their 'natural' bond with the Old Believers as defining their special identity, or, as the Old Believers themselves put it, will understand their calling and their place in the modern world. Understanding of how this 'call' is implemented in real life comes mainly through the process of education, meaning both family education and religious education within the community. Education, which first of all, of course, affects children, and hence the relations between different generations, includes a whole set of different practices. There is no separation between ethical standards and practical communication skills, between “dogmatic of faith” and “practical knowledge” (as Pierre Bourdieu understands the term), that is “practical knowledge” of both religious rites and every day life.

In order to make some historical remarks, I would like to draw attention to the fact that until the beginning of the twentieth century, the cultural practices of Old Believers took place in a form which would safeguard their 'underground' existence in a situation where there was strong external pressure from state institutions. However, when the Old Believers gained legitimate status, under the new socio-political order, they came to the conclusion that their survival depended on whether the younger generation

of believers would be able to learn the values of Old Belief and preserve them as an essential part of their own lives (Frolov 1927, 6).

In the new conditions of the early twentieth century Old Believers were forced both to maintain their position in society and to organize their inner lives in such a way as to protect their brothers in faith from the temptation of becoming too close to the 'secular' world. The Old Believers tried to solve this problem by creating a new approach in religious education. This approach generally contributed to the processes of institutionalization in Old Believers' tradition, which had not been possible under the conditions of repression in the Russian Empire before 1905.

So, for example, in 1927, Ivan Zavoloko founded at the Riga Grebenshchikov Old Believers's school the youth group interested in the traditions of Russian medieval culture known as "The Devotees of Ancient Russian Tradition" [*Кружок ревнителѣй русской старины*]. The organization's main activities were defined as follows: exploration of Russian cultural identity and pointing out of the essence of Old Belief ("Starovercheskij kruzhek" 1927, 2). The group tried to involve young Old Believers from all over Latvia in its activities, as well as to establish contacts with Old Believers abroad. A few branches of the group were opened in the largest Old Believers' centres in Latvia – Rezekne, Daugavpils, Jelgava, as well as in Estonia – in Tartu and Tallinn ("Otchet" 1928, 31). Within the group adult and children's libraries were opened, as well as an icon workshop and a museum with exhibits of materials collected in local history expeditions, including manuscripts, Old Believer dress samples, chant sheets, etc. ("V Kruzhek" 1931, 31).

Group members studied a variety of materials on the history of Old Believers, including a manuscript chronicle of the history of Old Believer parishes in the Baltics. Ivan Zavoloko and his colleagues undertook expeditions to almost all the places mentioned in the Lithuanian (Deguta) Chronograph. Over a twelve-year period (1927-1939), together with a group of activists, Ivan Zavoloko visited nearly all the Old Believer villages in Estonia and Latvia as well as those in Poland and Romania. The group members not only wrote down the melodies of religious chants and collected ethnographic materials. They also gave lectures and performed concerts in Old Believer villages. The Riga Old Believers' group tried to present the results of their research in the public arena. For example, they organized Russian folk art exhibitions (in 1929, 1932 and 1933), held concerts of religious chants in the

Riga Russian club (in 1935, 1936 and 1938). In commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the group an Old Believers' Song Festival was held in 1937 at the Riga House of Blackheads (Pazukhina 2005).

Ivan Zavoloko and the group members reconstructed and wore authentic Russian ethnographic costumes, learned and performed the old melodies of 'sign singing' [*знаменное пение*], not only for audiences of Old Believers, but also at public concerts. They chose to publish albums on embroidery, to print spiritual poetry and music, which could then be put into practice by the younger generation of Old Believers (Zavoloko 1929; Zavoloko 1939; Zavoloko 1933, Zavoloko 1937). This was not yet scientific research into the Old Believers' cultural heritage, but rather its collecting and systematization. However, these were the first serious attempts at understanding the value of the Old Believers' cultural heritage and to find a possible way of saving these values for future generations, which were already growing up in a different cultural environment. It is no coincidence that some of I. Zavoloko's publications have been reprinted today by Old-Believer organizations (Zavoloko 1991, Zavoloko 1998, Zavoloko 2006).



Pic. 1. Ivan Zavoloko and the members of "The Devotees of Ancient Russian Tradition". Expedition. 1930s. Archive of the Ivan Zavoloko Old-Believers' Society (Riga, Latvia).

These activities of the Ivan Zavoloko group show that the cultural heritage of 'ancestors' was interpreted as a basis for the restoration of a 'true' cultural identity, which includes three main components: 1) the faith

of ancestors as 'live' religious practice, 2) the native language, meaning both spoken Russian and Church Slavonic, 3) the traditional way of life. In the 1920s and 1930s educated Old Believers even tried to reintroduce the intangible heritage of the Old Belief into active usage by the young generation of believers. Their main aim was to update the rules of traditional behavior within the existing cultural situation but this also caused a major problem.

The 'revival' of ancient traditions often took the form of reconstruction. In other words, an effort was made to restore the empirically tangible, ethnographical form of everyday life. However, in their real life experience young Old Believers faced other forms of behavior, action and interaction adopted by the society of their own time. The motivation behind the revival of traditions was more of a move towards the younger generation of Old Believers distancing itself from or even showing resistance to standards dictated by modern culture.

Thus, it was the young Old Believers who, during the interwar period, became the driving force in trying to adjust the new educational practices, such as the new methodology of religious studies or the new forms of learning about cultural heritage (expeditions, exhibitions, publications) to fit in with the traditionally existing practices of Old Believers. This process had two results.

First, the Old Believers became aware of the problems that were causing the greatest threat to the preservation of the Old Believer canonical authority, which in turn contributed to the consolidation of the Old Believers' community and led to more effort being put into spiritual and religious education.

Second, the Old Believers sought to represent themselves in society as the real guardians of Russian cultural values, and were thus motivated to cooperate with state institutions and with other Russian social organizations in Latvia. This insensibly reduced the Old Believers' distance from the rest of society and countered the marginalization of their culture as a whole.

The activities of Old Believers' groups, cultural societies and Sunday schools in the 1920-30s changed the focus from the direct tradition of religious practices to knowledge about them, in other words, to the rationalization of religious and cultural experience. As a result, on the one hand, practices appeared in Old Believer culture which allowed the Old Believers to survive in the changing cultural context. On the other hand, in Old Believer cultural practices in general, there was an important shift – from a theological (eschatological) level to a socio-cultural level.

The experience of cultural dialogue during the interwar period has remained in the memory of the Old Believer community as a positive achievement, because even today the most active Old Believers turn directly to this experience in order to encourage the young generation of modern Old Believers to engage in the life of Old Believer parishes.

Today, the Latvian Orthodox Old Believers are united in 70 communities (Shurmel' 2010, 28) that are independent financially, but together constitute a canonical unity – the Old Orthodox Pomorian Church of Latvia. There are also several Old Believers' public organizations: the Old-Believers' Society of Latvia (1908-1940, reestablished in 1994 in Riga), the Ivan Zavoloko Old-Believers' Society (founded in 1999 in Riga), and the Old-Believers' Society *Belovodie* (founded in 2000 in Jekabpils).

Mass media materials in contemporary Latvia indicate that when presenting their public image Old-Believers lay emphasis on the 'tangible' traces of their culture – manuscripts, icons, ancient forms of singing, ancient rituals, ancient stitch-craft and even a specific dialect of the Russian language, containing speech peculiarities inherited from their ancestral homelands.¹ On the one hand, the modern Latvian Old Believers try to develop the image of a united community by emphasizing the historical roots of Old Believers on the territory of Latvia and their tolerant attitude towards that country, which has provided them with civil rights and freedom since its establishment. On the other hand, Old Believers recognize those problems which traditional culture faces in modern times. They try to consolidate their power in order to maintain the heritage of traditions for the young Old Believer generations. The most active Old Believers concentrate, by and large, on religious education, in an attempt to revive the interest of young people in the Old Belief. Seeing that Sunday Schools are not worried about this problem, Old Believers are trying to participate in the development of programs for religious instruction in public schools. The Riga Theological School (founded by the Grebenshchikov Community in 1989) continues its work begun in 2006 and helps to partly compensate for the lack of clerics in

¹ Recently one group of Latvian Old Believers tried to associate with other national minorities in a quite paradoxical way. The Ivan Zavoloko Old-Believers' Society, representing the 'Old-Believer dialect' has joined the Livs and Latgale representatives in the Latvian Society of Regional and Less-used Languages (LatBLUL; www.livodfond.lv). Of course this is only the choice of a small group of people, but it marks an interesting trend – the members of the Old-Believers' Society do not even regard their own language as Russian, but as a specific 'Old Believers' dialect.'

small Old Believer communities in Latvia and abroad. The Grebenshchikov Community, supported by the Central Council of the Old Orthodox Church of Latvia, continues its extensive publishing work, in which satisfying the need for liturgical and educational books is its top priority.



Pic. 2. Members of the Sunday School in the Riga Grebenshchikov Community. 2009. Archive of the Riga Grebenshchikov Community.

Publications in the contemporary Latvian Old Believers' periodicals *Pomorskij Vestnik* (published by the Old-Believers' Society of Latvia) and *Mech Dukhovnyj* (published by the Ivan Zavoloko Old-Believers' Society) show that the dimension of the past in Old-Believer culture is important not only in the sense of the 'great' historical narrative (i.e. the schism in the Russian Orthodox Church and the spiritual opposition history of the first followers of the Old Belief), but also on the micro level – within family history. The family should preserve religious identity and the real linkage to ancestral experience both in every day life, through family customs, for example, and on the discursive level through stories about and memories of the past, as well as in peculiarities of pronunciation and phraseology in the spoken language.

The 350-year-long history of Old Believers on the territory of Latvia is usually given as a clear example of the possibility of successfully preserving one's cultural identity in an environment dominated by people of different nationalities and religions. Looked at from the outside, the Latvian Old Believers represent an ethno-confessional group with a fairly distinct cultural

experience based on religious practices and stable social traditions that have survived in the every day life of Old Believers until the present day.

REFERENCES

- [Anonym]. 1928. "Otchet o deiatel'nosti Kruzhka revnitelej rodnoj stariny." *Rodnaia Starina* 2: 31.
- [Anonym]. 1924. „Protokol I Vselatviyskogo staroobriadcheskogo s'ezda." *Staroobriadcheskij mir* 1: 7–9.
- [Anonym]. 1924. "Staroobriadcheskie s'ezdy v Latvii." *Staroobriadcheskij mir* 1: 5.
- [Anonym]. 1927. "Starovercheskij kruzhok revnitelej russkoj stariny. Bratie-khristiane!" *Rodnaia Starina*. Probnyj nomer: 2.
- [Anonym]. 1931. "V Kruzhke revnitelej rodnoj stariny." *Rodnaia Starina* 10: 31.
- Frolov, Gavriil. 1927. "Zavety stariny." *Rodnaia Starina* 1: 6–7.
- Mech Duhovnyj*, 2000–2009, № 1–29. Online: www.starover-pomorec.lv/starover/newspaper.php.
- Pazukhina, Nadezhda. 2005. "Prosvetitel'skaia, kraevedcheskaia i izdatel'skaia deiatel'nost' I. N. Zavoloko v 1920–1930-e gody." *Tradicionnaia kul'tura Permskoj zemli: K 180-letiiu polevoj arkheografii v Moskovskom universitete, 30-letiiu kompleksnyh issledovanij Verkhokam'ia (Mir staroobriadchestva. Vypusk 6)*. Otv.red. I.V. Pozdeeva. Iaroslavl': Remder, 384–424.
- Podmazovs, Arnolds. 2001. *Vecticiba Latvija*. Riga: LU Filozofijas un sociologijas instituts.
- Pomorski Vestnik*, 1999–2010, № 1–23. Online: www.staroverec.lv/index.php?a=pomor&m=127&l=1.
- Russkij Ezhegodnik na 1940 god*. 1939. Riga.
- Shakhov, Mihail. 2001. *Staroobriadcheskoe mirovozzrenie. Religiozno-filosofskie osnovy i social'naia pozicia*. Moskva: RAGS.
- Shurmel', Irina. 2010. "Staroverov v Latvii bolee 70 tysiach." *Pomorski Vestnik* 22–23: 27–28.
- Zavoloko, Ivan, ed. 1929. *Al'bom starinnykh russkikh uzorov*. Riga: Salamandra.
- Zavoloko, Ivan, ed. 1933. *Duhovnye stikhi starinnye*. Vol. 1. Riga: Rizhskij kruzhok revnitelej stariny.
- Zavoloko, Ivan, ed. 1937. *Duhovnye stikhi starinnye*. Vol. 2. Riga: Didkovskij.
- Zavoloko, Ivan, ed. 2006. *Duhovnye stikhi starinnye*. Riga: Starovercheskoe obshchestvo im.I. N. Zavoloko.

- Zavoloko, Ivan. 1939. *Drevnerusskaia vyshivka*. Riga: I. Zavoloko izdevums.
- Zavoloko, Ivan. 1991. *Istoriia Cerkvi Khistovoj*. Riga: Central'nyj sovet Drevlepravoslavnoj Pomorskoj cerkvi Latvii.
- Zavoloko, Ivan. 1998. *Uchebnik po Zakonu Bozhiiu dlia staroobriadcev*. Riga: Central'nyj sovet Drevlepravoslavnoj Pomorskoj cerkvi Latvii.
- Zen'kovskij, Sergey. 1995. *Russkoe staroobriadchestvo. Dukhovnye dvizheniia XVII veka*. Moskva: Cerkov'.
- Zhilko, Aleksij. 1996. "Staroobriadcheskaia obshchina v Latvii. Ee cerkovnaia sobornost' i iuridicheskaja avtonomnost'." *Staroobriadcheskij cerkovnyj kalendar' na 1997 god*: 89–94.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Nadežda Pazuhina, dr.art, researcher at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology (University of Latvia, Riga). Research fields: history and culture of the Orthodox Old Believers in the Baltic States, history of the Russian minority in Latvia, theoretical approaches to the study of religion and culture. In 2009 was published her monograph *Kulturpraktiken der russisch-orthodoxen Altgläubigen Lettlands. Erfahrungen von Stabilität und Wandel in priesterlosen Gemeinschaften (1920-1939 und 1991-2006)*. Saarbrücken, 271 p. Since 2000 she has been a lecturer at the Baltic International Academy (Riga, Latvia).

THE RITUAL YEAR OF THE CONTEMPORARY POLISH MIGRANT COMMUNITY IN BULGARIA

Katya Mihaylova

Abstract

This paper examines the different calendar festivals celebrated during the year by Polish migrants in Bulgaria as a factor for preserving their ethnic, cultural and religious identity.

The Polish community in Bulgaria presently numbers approximately 3000 people, most of whom live in the big cities. Some of them are the descendants of Poles who migrated to Bulgaria in the nineteenth century, after the uprisings for the liberation of Poland from Russia, Prussia and Austria and in the twentieth century, during its early years or at the time of the Second World War.

The majority of Bulgaria's contemporary so-called 'Polonia', however, are 'love migrants', i.e. mainly Polish women who met their Bulgarian husbands at the Bulgarian seaside and entered into so-called 'beach marriages', or Poles who met their future spouses at university in Bulgaria or Poland and settled in Bulgaria from the 1960s to the 1980s. The study is based on observations of calendar festivals and interviews with the female members of this most typical part of the present Polish migrant community in Bulgaria.

Key words

Migrant community, Poles in Bulgaria, ethnic, cultural and religious identity, calendar feasts.

The Polish community in Bulgaria presently numbers approximately 3000 people, most of whom live in the big cities of Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, and Burgas; there are also some Poles in smaller cities, such as Veliko Turnovo, Rousse, Dobrich, and Stara Zagora. This community might be small but it is particularly interesting for cultural anthropologists, because its members have a strong sense of ethnic, cultural, and religious identity. Some of them are descendants of Poles who migrated to Bulgaria in the middle of the nineteenth century – in the period following the 1848 Uprising of Nations – and, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century

after the suppression of the January 1863 uprising for Polish independence. It is worth recalling here that, after 1772, Poland was three times divided among Russia, Prussia, and Austria, and was actually absent from the map of Europe. It received independence only in 1918. Some other Polish migrants settled in Bulgaria at the beginning of the twentieth century, or during the Second World War.

The majority of Polish migrants nowadays in Bulgaria are, however, “love migrants” (Dohnke 1989; Kaczmarek 1993, 87; Kaczmarek 2002, 202), i.e. mainly women who met their Bulgarian husbands at the Bulgarian seaside, entered into so-called “beach marriages” (Wolak 1989) and settled in Bulgaria from the 1960s to the 1980s. Throughout the entire socialist period, the Bulgarian Black Sea coast was one of the most popular tourist destinations for the countries of the former socialist camp. There are also some Polish ‘love migrants’ who met their future spouses at university in Bulgaria or Poland and settled in Bulgaria. This study is based on interviews with female members of this most typical part of the contemporary Polish community in Bulgaria. A great many of them have lived in the country for more than 30 or 40 years. They are from the middle generation, and almost all have university degrees and successful careers in Bulgaria in various prestigious occupations. The members of the young generation covered by the study come from mixed Polish-Bulgarian families, and were born in Bulgaria.

The findings of the cultural anthropological study indicate that Polish women in Bulgaria manifest their ethnic identity in various behavior models involving lifestyle, diet, leisure, manners, entertaining at home, and relationships with family members, in preserving native language and religion, etc. This is what anthropologists call the primary or primordial character of ethnic solidarity, or even as ethnicity’s innate nature (Schneider 1976). While for the older generation of Polish migrants, ethnicity is a conscious and rational feeling, for the younger generation of people – born in Bulgaria, this is usually an unconscious and irrational ‘primary sense’ (Balikci and Stoyanova-Boneva 1993, 25; see also De Vos 1983).

The cultural and religious identity of Polish women in Bulgaria is manifested especially in the celebration of feasts during the calendar year. Viewed as a cultural fact, feasts and festivals have very rich cultural connotations, and offer an insight into behavior models, mentality and ethno-psychology. They have become an expression and symbol of Polish

ethnicity not least because of the fact that for the Poles they are very closely related to religious cult. The Poles in Bulgaria largely associate feasts of the calendar year and rites of the life cycle, with religion.

Catholic religion is the most important identification marker of the Polish migrant community in Bulgaria and for Poles in a different ethnic and non-Catholic community in general (in some cases even more important than the Polish language). When they live abroad, Poles reconstruct their imaginary 'little homeland' with preserved traditions mainly by means of religion and a largely mythologized heroic past. For the Pole, the love of homeland has been historically associated always with the love of God – e.g. the popular credo *Bóg – Honor – Ojczyzna* (God – Honor – Homeland) or the expression *Matka Boska – Królowa Polski* (God's Mother – Queen of Poland), etc. The self-stereotype *Polska to kościół* (Poland = Church) or *Polak to katolik* (Pole = Catholic), which has been established in the minds of several generations of Poles, is also rated very highly by Bulgarian Poles, and it is pointed out as an "advantage which in hard times unites and greatly helps a nation to recover" (J. M.). When asked in 2002 what she misses of Poland when living in Bulgaria, a Polish woman in Sofia answered:

During communism, I missed Poland very much, but now I do not miss it as before, because now I have a Catholic church here, I have a liturgy in the Polish language at 9 a.m., and I celebrate Polish traditions at home. I also have a portrait of the Pope in the bedroom and I have my own world, my world, my Poland (H. T.).

This interview took place before the death of Pope John Paul II, who was Polish.

It is worth noting, however, that in this respect, the contemporary situation is different for Poles in Bulgaria and Poles in Poland. Sociological investigations in 2002, made by collaborators from the Institute of Sociology in Warsaw University under the guidance of Professor Ewa Nowicka-Rusek, show that religion keeps one of the last positions among the markers of 'Polishness' for present-day Poles in Poland, following those of language, culture, parents' nationality, native place and citizenship. In her comparative studies in 1990, 1999, and 2008 within the framework of the international project *European Values Study*, Professor Aleksandra Jasińska-Kania from the Institute of Sociology in Warsaw University traces the changes of values among Poles in Poland against the background of the overall situation in

Europe. Although, compared to the other European countries, the role that religion has in the value system of Poles has the highest rank in Europe (31%), there has been a steady decrease of this indicator in Polish society over the last twenty years: 51% in 1990 (compared with the 23% average for Europe), to 45% in 1999, and 31% in 2008 (Jasińska-Kania 2009).

Until 1989 the Poles in Bulgaria (especially those in smaller population centers) did not have many opportunities to practise their religion because of the difficult conditions in which the Catholic Church functioned under the communist regime. With the start of the democratic reforms, religion came to play a growing role in the life of Bulgarian Poles and they started consolidating along religious lines too.

A characteristic example of the consolidation of Bulgarian Poles by religious criteria in recent years has been the organization of pilgrimages to the icon of Our Lady of Częstochowa and to her chapel in St. Trinity Catholic Church of the Eastern Rite in Malko Tarnovo, a small town in the Strandzha mountains of Southeast Bulgaria near the state frontier with Turkey. The icon, which was painted in the beginning of the twentieth century, most probably in Lwów, as a copy of the miraculous 'black Madonna' icon in the Polish town of Częstochowa, was donated in 1907 by the Lwów tradesman Walenty Jakubiak to the priests in the Order of the Resurrectionists. The Order was founded in 1836 at the initiative of Polish immigrants in France, and in 1863 Polish priests established in Adrianople (Edirne) a Mission among the Bulgarians in the Ottoman Empire. Between 1907 and 1928, the icon of the 'black Madonna' was preserved and venerated in the famous Bulgarian Catholic High School of the Resurrectionists in Adrianople. The tragic fate of the Bulgarian population in these lands after the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 and the difficult history of the Mission in those times was the reason for the two-fold transfer of the relics, including the icon of Our Lady – in 1928 to Stara Zagora, and in 1960 to Malko Tarnovo. Here, local Eastern Catholics honour the icon up to the present day. On 26 August 1993, the chapel of Our Lady of Częstochowa, the patron of the unification of Christian people, was consecrated in the hope that it would become the Bulgarian 'little Częstochowa' – a place of veneration for all Christians. The pilgrimage, which took place on 9 and 10 June 2001 was attended by women only. It was the first pilgrim journey of Bulgarian Poles in the 150 years of the presence of the Order of Resurrectionists in Bulgarian lands, and it turned into an unforgettable spiritual experience for the entire Polish

community in Bulgaria. The joint processions, prayers and night vigils in the church, the performance of Polish church songs dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the meetings and conversations on religious topics, the participation in the church service for Our Lady and the festive Holy liturgy turned into demonstrations of ethnic identity, and testified to the 'Polonization', and the perception of the 'national' aspects, of the cult of the Virgin Mary in the best meaning of these words. The pilgrimage ended with the sending of a telegram from the pilgrims to Pope John Paul II. On 25 May 2002, during his visit to Bulgaria, Pope John Paul II placed silver crowns upon on the icon images of the Virgin Mary and Jesus and declared the chapel of Our Lady of Częstochowa a national temple of the Catholic Church in Bulgaria – as the 'Bulgarian Jasna Góra.' In a gesture of honour to the icon, Pope John Paul II placed in its chapel his small white cap, with which he travelled in Bulgaria in May 2002. Since that time, the pilgrimages of Bulgarian Poles to Malko Tarnovo have taken place every year.

The Christian feasts of the calendar cycle are also times for expressing 'Polishness.' Polish women living in Bulgaria strive to reproduce the atmosphere and spirit of feast days as celebrated in Poland. They constantly 'return' in time to their childhood and in space to their native land. In this respect, **Christmas** (*Boże Narodzenie*) and **Christmas Eve** (*Wigilia*) have special connotations for the Poles. One of the respondents puts this very eloquently:

I cherish my Polish traditions, over the years, even that tradition, which was romantic for us, our childhood – I wish that the past could repeat itself. Above all, when we are celebrating, especially at Christmas! In Poland, we deeply respect Christmas – it's a family holiday. When I came to Bulgaria in 1979 Christmas wasn't celebrated at all. But I celebrated it – I always took two days off, the first and second day of Christmas. On these two days, I did not go out of my house. I would shut the doors and windows because I didn't want to see people going to work. Back then there was no sense of festivities but I tried to imagine that there was. I pictured the streets in Poland, the street decorations, the people going to Christmas parties, all the excitement. Then when it's time to sit down for dinner, when the first star appears in the sky like the Star of Bethlehem, I always try to have everyone seated at the table around 7 at the latest, and I always say to myself: "People

in Poland are also sitting down for dinner now.” And for me, holidays are associated with the lovely smell of all the cakes we make in Poland. Those are smells from childhood which can never be forgotten (D.H).

Polish identity is expressed also by the symbolic significance of ritual objects in the celebration of the feast, which Poles brought from the home country when moving to Bulgaria. One of the Polish women in Sofia, for example, brought here as a particularly valuable relic, the Christmas tree that she received as her dowry.

In terms of celebration, Bulgarian Poles fall into two groups: those who celebrate according to the Polish customs only, and those who celebrate twice, according to the Polish and to the Bulgarian tradition, or once in a mixed fashion. The first group, significantly fewer in number, is constituted of Poles of entirely Polish families, who – regardless of the fact that they have been in Bulgaria for more than three generations, accept almost nothing from the Bulgarian festive traditions. A Polish woman coming from such a family explained this in this way:

I never celebrate feasts in the Bulgarian manner, but always in the Polish way. The reason is that I am very religious and I don't think that I can feel happy celebrating a Bulgarian feast, because I understand such feasts as a matter of religious faith (H.T.).

The second group includes primarily the mixed marriages, in 90% of which the woman is Polish and the husband is Bulgarian. The festive decoration in the house is Polish, and there are both Polish and Bulgarian dishes on the table. On **Christmas Eve**, people sit at the table after the first star in the sky appears and the celebration starts in accordance with the Polish tradition – by dividing and distributing *oplatek* and with pronouncing wishes for health and prosperity. *Oplatek* is a type of bread made of wheat



Pic. 1. The icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa in St Trinity Eastern Catholic Church in Malko Tarnovo.

Photo: K. Mihaylova.

and baked in thin dough layers with depictions of Gospel scenes upon it. It is used in religious services of the Roman Catholic Church (Communion Bread), but also in Polish traditional culture when celebrating Christmas in the family. An odd number of meatless dishes (7, 9, or 11) are laid on the table – beetroot soup, mushroom soup, carp, the typically Polish sweet cake with poppy seed (*makowiec*) or with honey (*piernik*), etc. In accordance with the Bulgarian tradition, people serve a loaf of bread with a coin in it for luck, beans, lentil, vine leaves with stuffed rice and boiled dried fruit. It is obligatory to taste everything, so that – as the Polish tradition specifies, the new year will be plentiful in everything. It is specially observed that the whole evening is one of calmness, peace and good will among the people present. Everyone is involved in singing the Polish Christmas carols, called *kolędy*, which have a completely religious content, praise the birth of the Savior, and are very close to church songs. By contrast, the songs performed on Christmas Eve in Bulgaria are sung by carol singers called *koledari* who visit the houses, especially in the villages, and are concerned primarily with mythical and heroic motifs. At 12 p.m. the Poles go to the Catholic Church for a service, called *pasterka*. Not everyone attends the service at night, but all Poles in Bulgaria go to the morning festive liturgy on the first day of Christmas.

On **Palm Sunday** (*Niedziela Palmowa*) the Poles visit the Catholic Church to sanctify the palm branches that symbolize Christ's entry into Jerusalem. The branches are usually several meters high and are placed in such a way that they can stand upright. Sometimes – following the old Polish tradition, Polish women in Bulgaria carry miniature 'palms' (which are actually willow branches tied up together with natural or artificial flowers, evergreen branches, and colorful paper ribbons), named in different ways depending on the region where the practice comes from: *bazie*, *kotki*, *bażki*, *bagniqtka*, *kocanki*.

In mixed Polish-Bulgarian families, **Easter** (*Wielka noc*) is usually celebrated twice – eggs are painted twice, sweet bread is kneaded twice, people go to church on the two different dates. "I have the Polish Easter in my soul and I celebrate because of my faith, whereas I celebrate the Orthodox Easter because of the ritual as, for me, the Orthodox feast is mainly a ritual" – this is what one of my respondents shared with me, explaining the acceptance of part of the Orthodox rituals by her comment: "This is not assimilation, but integration" (U.M.). On Saturday, according to the Polish



*Pic. 2. The blessing the Easter candle on Holy Saturday by Priest Krzysztof in St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Sofia.
Photo: K. Mihaylova.*

tradition, eggs, a loaf of sweet bread and other food are sanctified in the church and are then shared by relatives at the festive breakfast on Easter morning. The food is carried in richly decorated baskets that are specially prepared for this purpose. In Sofia in St Joseph's Catholic Church the ritual of blessing the food is performed usually by Polish priests from the Capuchin order. On Holy Saturday, they perform the ritual of blessing the fire, the Easter candle, and the water.

On Easter Day, a Bulgarian tradition is that children knock painted eggs together until they break. On the Monday after Easter, an old Polish tradition requires that boys pour water on girls for the purpose of wishing health – the day is called poured Monday (*łany poniedziałek*). On occasions of a double

celebration of Easter, sometimes respondents have some hesitation in relation to faith:

I celebrate Easter twice. But my Easter usually comes earlier. And, then the hesitation arises – you see, I already eat meat, whilst my Bulgarian brothers still fast. Why has it been calculated in such a way, so that we have different holidays? Are we not all Christians? And the person starts thinking – to eat this meat, or not to eat it?! (D.H.).

When respondents talk about the feasts in the calendar year and about their way of celebration, they usually emphasize their more modest and cursory noting in Bulgaria, as compared to Christmas and Easter. Almost all of the interviewed Polish women share something like this: “Our Christian feasts are more cheerful, lighter and with a more celebratory spirit” (Y.M.). They attribute this not only to the absence of religious feasts in the life of Bulgarians during the totalitarian communist regime, but also to the character of Bulgarians’ religiosity, which they define as ‘external.’The

stereotypical notion of Bulgarian people as atheists remained among the Poles after the political changes in Bulgaria in 1989, and so their attitude to the ways of celebrating Christian feasts by Bulgarians is negative:

Here you cannot experience the feast deeply. The celebrations in Bulgaria are very different from the festive days in Poland – it was like this before and has remained the same until today (M.S.).

or:

For Bulgarians, the feast is mostly entertainment, not faith.

For the Poles in Bulgaria, the feast day has an ethno-defining, but also an ethno-integrating function. Relatives of mixed Polish-Bulgarian families have traditionally gathered together at home for Christmas Eve. In recent years, this tradition is not practised very often, but the meetings and the common celebration of Christian holidays in the Catholic Church and in the Władysław Warneńczyk Polish Cultural and Educational Association are expected. In the Catholic Church in Sofia and Varna every Sunday and on all major Christian holidays a festive liturgy is held in Polish at 9 a.m. Thus, the festive situation becomes the most appropriate occasion for expressing the feeling of ethnic, cultural, and religious affiliation.

Catholicism is increasingly becoming a marker of identity and a way of integration into the Polish homeland, and this applies mainly to the older generation of Bulgarian Poles. The situation is a bit different among the young generation of Poles consisting of children from mixed marriages. This is described eloquently by a final-year student at the high school in Plovdiv:

My mother goes to church every Sunday. She claims that this makes her feel Polish. I go to church too, not because I feel a special need to but only because my mother wants me to go and claims that it's the right thing to do. On the other hand, I myself cannot see any difference whatsoever between Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity. It is faith that really counts (V.N.).

It can be said, however, that where a Polish school exists, the rituals organized for the calendar holidays perform ethno-integrating and socializing, informational and educational functions for the young generation of Bulgarian Poles who were born in Bulgaria. The Polish schools in Sofia and Varna regularly organize Christmas cribs (called *jaselka* and including scenes from the narrative of Jesus Christ's birth); exhibitions with

Christmas decorations; *Mikolaiki* (ritual giving of presents of St Mikolai on 6 December); exhibitions with colorful Easter eggs etc.



Pic. 3. Presenting the scene of Jesus Christ's birth with Joseph and Mary at the Polish School in Sofia.

Photo: K. Mihaylova.



Pic. 4. Children from the Polish School in Sofia prepare the Easter decorations.

Photo: K. Mihaylova.

One of the most popular Polish folk customs **Andrzejki** (30 November) is organized by the primary and secondary school-girls in the Polish school in Sofia. On this day, girls perform different ritual practices and tell fortunes about love and marriage. They all take off their left shoe, arrange their shoes one after another and watch which of them will cross the door threshold first – the girl whose shoe crosses first will be the first to marry. Another fortune-telling practice is to peel apples and watch – the girl who makes the longest peel will have the happiest engagement. They also throw the apple peel behind their left shoulder and see which letter is formed when it falls, as this will be the first letter of the future beloved's name. The most popular fortune-telling practice is 'Wax pouring.' Through the hole of a key, hot wax is poured into cold water. The wax shapes that are formed in this way are placed in front of a sheet or a piece of cloth that is lit from behind and prophecies are made about the future according to the shapes of the shadows.

These are all customs that are typical in Polish tradition and they are observed in order to help the children of mixed marriages "to feel part of one community here in Bulgaria – a community that has also Polish, as well as Bulgarian, roots" – this is what a Polish woman living in Sofia remarks (E.T.). The lessons of religion and particularly the celebrations of the main Christian feasts in the Polish school largely facilitate the transfer

of Polish cultural experience and knowledge, and direct the way of behaving in everyday and festive culture of the young generation of Poles in Bulgaria.

The study of feast days in the calendar year and of the ritual practices connected with them is very important for gaining understanding of the identity of a migrant community in a different ethnic environment, since feasts, as an important part of culture, are saturated with meaning and facilitate the transfer of traditions, values, and norms. In this way, feasts and their celebrations are among the most direct paths to learning about the culture of a migrant community.

REFERENCES

- Balikci, Asen, and Bonka Stojanova-Boneva. 1993. *Balkanski biznesmeni v Kanada (Balgaro-makedonskata etnicheska grupa v Toronto kam sredata na veka) [Balkan Businessmen in Canada (Bulgarian-Macedonian Ethnic Group in Toronto around Mid-twentieth Century)]*. Sofia: LIK.
- De Vos, George A. 1983. "Ethnic Identity and Minority Status: Some Psycho-Cultural Considerations." In *Identity: Personal and Socio-Cultural*, edited by Anita Jacobson-Widding, 90–113. Uppsala: Academiae Upsaliensis; Atlantic Highlands, N. J.
- Dohnke, Bogdan 1989. "Sercowa Polonia." [Polish Emigration because of Love Motivations]. *Gazeta Poznańska* 297, 22.XII.1989.
- Jasińska-Kania, Aleksandra. 2009. "Poles' Values." *Focus on Sociology* 3(23): 8–11.
- Kaczmarek, Urszula. 1993. *Dzieje Polaków na ziemiach bulgarskich [History of Poles in Bulgarian Lands]*. Poznań: ARS NOVA.
- . 2002. *Spod znaku Warneńczyka [Under the Sign of Warneńczyk]*. Poznań: ARS NOVA.
- Schneider, David M. 1976. "Notes toward a Theory of Culture." In *Meaning in Anthropology*, edited by Keith H. Basso and Henry A. Selby, 197–220. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Wolak, Ryszard. 1989. "Pod egidą polskiego króla (Od naszego korespondenta z Sofii)." [Under the Aegis of the Polish King (From our Correspondent in Sofia)]. *Sztandar Ludu* 21, 21.05.1989.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Katya Mihaylova, Ph. D., is Associate Professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with the Ethnographic Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Science. Main fields of research: religious folklore and topics relating to popular Christianity; Slavic mythology; epic performance; folk ballads; calendar feasts; ethnic stereotypes; cultural and religious identity of Bulgarians in Central Europe and Poles in Bulgaria. Single-authored books: *Stranstvashtiyat slyap pevets prosyak vav folklornata kultura na slavyanite* (The Wandering Blind Singer-Beggar in the Slavic Folk Culture, 2006, in Bulgarian); *Dziad wędrowni w kulturze ludowej Słowian* (The Itinerant Mendicant Singer in the Folk Culture of the Slavs, 2010, in Polish). Co-authored: *Balgarski narodni baladi i pesni s miticheski i legendarni motivi* (Bulgarian Folk Ballads and Songs with Mythical and Legendary Motifs, vol. 1–2, 1993-1994, in Bulgarian); *Pobratim. Balgari po cheshkite zemi* (Bulgarians in the Bohemian Lands, 1994, in Bulgarian).

THE CHALLENGES OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR MINORITIES IN EUROPE. THE EXAMPLE OF *HITIMA* OR *HATIM*: A CELEBRATION AND A RITE OF PASSAGE FOR YOUNG MUSLIMS OF FRANCE AND BULGARIA

Marie-Laure Boursin Lekov

Abstract

The *hâtima* (in Arabic), whose etymology means ‘conclusion’ and ‘epilogue’, is an Islamic ritual closing the course of religious education. It usually involves young adolescents, boys and girls, ten to fifteen years old at the time when they finished reading the Koran.

In European contexts where Islam is a minority religion and church and state have become separated, the religious institutions of extracurricular teaching organize this festival each year. This ritual is celebrated in France by people of the Comoros, who prepare for it at the *shioni* (Koranic school), while Bulgarian Muslims prepare for it during a SIP (*Svobodno-Izbiraem Predmet* – optional course). It is named *hitima* by the Comorians and *hatim* – *хатим* – in Bulgaria. In this article, we will first present Muslim education in Islamic institutions, while highlighting the social and historical contexts: the immigration and the 1905 Law in France and the Ottoman rule and communist era in Bulgaria. Then we will observe how this annual celebration is organized in both countries as a rite of passage, which strengthens the sense of community. Finally, we shall examine how it contributes to the transmission and the construction of religious identity in a minority context, where such transmission is not entirely assured.

Key words

Festival, religious education, rite of passage, *hatim*, *hitima*, Bulgaria, France, transmission.

Introduction

Following my Ph.D. thesis¹, I intend this article to explore a new topic of research: the *hâtima* as a religious education celebration. The reason why

¹ 2012, *Construction of Islamic Identity: Religious Learning in the Muslim Institutions (Mosques and Koranic Schools) and Family*, 465 p., supervisor Abderrahmane Moussaoui, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Aix Marseille University, France.

I am focusing on this festival is because it is to found in both my fieldwork countries: France and Bulgaria. If the socio-historical contexts, which I will address, are very different, they nonetheless offer the opportunity to examine the issue of the migration of religious ritual. That is to say, how a festival –in this case the *hâtima*, practiced by a religious minority that arises from immigration or from a ‘legacy’ of Ottoman presence – takes shape and adapts to a specific context.

The *hâtima* (in Arabic), whose etymology means ‘conclusion’ and ‘epilogue,’ is an Islamic ritual closing the course of religious education. It usually involves young adolescents, boys and girls, ten to fifteen years old at the time when they finished reading the Koran. The *hâtima* is also something close to a test, after the completion of which the applicants are granted a diploma. This festival is organized by various religious Institutions providing extracurricular teaching and is celebrated each year. In France, the people attending it are almost exclusively of Comorian origin and the applicants prepare for it at the *shioni* (Koranic school). In Bulgaria, it is attended by people of Turkish origin as well as by Bulgarian Muslims. The preparation and the event itself can also constitute an optional course in public schools – a *SIP: Svobodno-Izbiraem Predmet* – and usually take place at the mosque, *djamiya* in Bulgarian.

The vernacular equivalent of *hâtima* is, in Bulgarian, *hatim* –a term inherited from the Turkish presence, and in Comorian *hitima*.

The genesis of this research goes back to 2004, when I was doing fieldwork at Satovcha for my Ph.D. in Anthropology, in the Rhodopi Mountain – south-western corner of Bulgaria, near the Greek border. At that time, I learned that *hâtima* were being organized for Muslim Bulgarian children. This information quite surprised the young researcher that I was, in fact, as the only time I had heard of this ceremony being celebrated was in France, by people of Comorian origin, not by Muslims from North Africa, whose population in France is larger. In the French context, the *hâtima* is considered a Comorian particularity. In terms of religious organization, the Comorian community, mostly of French nationality, is highly structured, particularly in Marseilles (in southeastern France), to such an extent that they constitute an “example for religious worship” often envied by other African and Maghreb communities (Geisser 2009). For this reason, some families of North African origin register their children for the *shioni* in order for them to be able to attend the *hâtima*.

This article will consider the issue of institutionalization among minority religious bodies within the European context. It will also seek to understand how people are able to organize religious transmission through such a festive event as the *hâtima* that could be analysed as a rite of passage.

One might ask if a comparison between French and Bulgarian Muslim populations, given the very different socio-political contexts, is entirely pertinent. I believe that it is, in fact, as those very contexts will allow us to highlight the *hâtima* as a religious education festival, which contributes to the transmission and social construction of a religious identity in a minority context, where such transmission is not entirely assured.

In order to show how both the issue of institutionalization and a comparison between Bulgarian and Comorian communities are relevant, I must first contextualize my fieldwork. To do so, I will provide some data on those populations and will discuss the different legislative contexts of denominational education. In a second part, I will make an ethnographic analysis of the *hâtima* ritual and draw a comparison between the two fieldwork results.

As mentioned above, this research is still a work-in-progress, whose ambition is to provide a few exploratory insights about global and local issues pertaining to the migration of a ritual.

I. Contextualization

1. Populations

In France, the history of Muslim immigration is older than is commonly believed, and is characterized by continuity, as explained by Jørgen Nielsen. In fact, there were, in France in the 19th century, Muslim students, businessmen and political exiles. Furthermore, even before the First World War, work-related immigration was a significant element. The most important part of the ‘Muslim population’ in France came from Algeria, while the Kabyle people were the only ones to immigrate *en masse* (Nielsen 2004).

The Muslim population migrated primarily from the old colonies in North Africa, at the beginning of the 20th century, a movement that intensified after the Second World War. The Sub-Saharan and Turkish immigration began in the 1960s. Both became larger in the 1970s. Some among those populations started to invite their family and the migration became a continuous flow (Nielsen 1987). Today, the estimated number of Muslims

living in France is five to six million, which amounts to between 8.3% and 10% of the population.² The majority of Muslims in France hail from North African and practice the *Maliki*³ rite, while the Comorian Muslims practice the *Shafi`i* rite. In both cases, the rite they practice in France is similar to the one practiced in their country of origin.

In order to draw any conclusions about the Muslim presence in France and given the fieldwork exploited in this article, it seems necessary to add a few details about the Comorian immigration in France. It became really important – with whole families starting to immigrate – after the independence of Comoros in 1975. Between 1980 and 1991, 9459 Comorian people immigrated to France (Vivier 1996, 7). In 1990, according to Comorian census data, 11 568 people born in the Comoros were residents in metropolitan France. In 2007, of the 150 000 Comorians living outside their country, 60 000 to 100 000 were actually living in metropolitan France, according to various estimates. Since the 1980s, the number of Comorians living in the Paris region, around 40 000, has been presumably higher than the number of Comorians living in the Bouches-du-Rhône and Marseilles – around 30 000 (Blanchy 1998). Studies made on the Comorian migratory phenomenon show a discrepancy between the different influxes coming from the four islands that form the Comoros: Ngazidja (Grande Comore), Nzwani (Anjouan) and Mwali (Mohéli) and southeastern most Mayotte (Maore) (Vivier 1996).

As for Bulgaria, most of the Muslim population originates primarily from the Ottoman Empire. However, some researchers agree that the presence of Muslims in Bulgaria is older (Norris 1993; Eminov 1997). The origins and ethnic appellations of Muslims living in the country are made even more complex by Bulgarian history and more particularly by the communist state that lasted for half a century. According to the 2011 census, the estimation of the proportion of Muslims is around 10% –

² According to the French law of 6 January 1978 (Article 8), it is “forbidden to collect or process personal data that reveal, directly or indirectly, the racial or ethnic origins, the political, philosophical, religious opinions or trade union affiliation of persons”. Therefore, the Muslim population can only be estimated from the cultural origin of the individuals and from the number of assumed conversions.

³ The Maliki rite is one of the four main schools of law in jurisprudence (*fiqh*) within Sunni Islam, the others being the *Shafi`i*, the *Hanafi* and the *Hanbali*.

based on their own declaration⁴. It is comprised of four groups: the Bulgarian Muslims – also called *Pomaks*⁵, the Turks, the gypsies and the Tatars. People of Slavic origin are generally designated as ‘Muslim Bulgarians.’ They predominantly practice the *Hanafi* rite – the same as the one practiced in Turkey.

In France, the Muslim population is of migratory origin, but more than two thirds is now of French nationality. In Bulgaria, the Ottoman expansion left permanent Muslim populations. They are called, and call themselves, Turks, because they still use this language in close circles. Many of them also possess Bulgarian citizenship. The *Pomaks*, who, it should be remembered, do not speak Turkish but Bulgarian, sometimes even speak regional dialects.

In both contexts, the majority of Muslims is Sunni and represents 10% of the population. Their minority status and the history of their presence both influence the process of institutionalization. If the historical, legal and political contexts can explain the presence of a ‘Muslim population’ in Europe, it is also particularly interesting to consider how religious education itself is organized, whether it is originated in immigration to Western Europe or inherited from the Ottoman presence in the case of Eastern Europe.

2. A presentation of religious education in France and Bulgaria

Confronted with the necessity of educating ‘faithful’ young people in a society where they are a religious minority, Muslim communities in Europe must propose an education, while at the same time trying to deal with the limits imposed by laws and institutions.

⁴ As far as the other religions are concerned, 76% of the population claims to be Orthodox, 0.9% Catholic, 1.1% Protestant, 0.2% other. Jewish and Gregorian Armenians are too few to be taken into account. In terms of ethnicity, 84.7% of the population who responded to the question claim to be Bulgarian, Turkish 8.8%, Roma 4.8% and 0.7% other. It should be noted that 7% of the overall Bulgarian population do not declare any religion and 4.7% claimed not to have any religion during the 2011 census and respectively 10% did not wish to answer the question on ethnicity. The results of the 2011 Census are available on Internet on the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute Site: www.censusresults.nsi.bg/Reports/2/2/R10.aspx (accessed 5 September 2011).

⁵ The Muslim populations of the Balkans whose “ancestors had converted” – are seen as renegades associated with the Turkish enemy (Popovic 1997). The existing controversy regarding the specific term ‘Pomak’ is a good example of it. The origin of this word varies according to researchers and the ideology they adhere to (Vavasis 2007, 60; Agoston-Nikolova 2001; Gözler 2001, 89; Tsibiridou 2000, 42–43). This controversy, for which we cannot propose real answers, reveals the reinterpretations of history and the various social representations. However, they agree on one point – that the ethnonym ‘Pomak’ has always had a negative connotation.

France and Bulgaria are both Member States of the European Union and, as such, they have to ensure that their laws and constitution guarantee freedom of worship. In both countries, there is a clear separation between state and religion.⁶

France

In France, the process of secularization, which began during the French revolution, came to an important stage with the Law of 9 December 1905 on the separation of church and state. Concerning religious education, the law's consolidated version of 29 July 2005 states that: "religious instruction may not be given to children between the ages of six and thirteen years who are enrolled in state schools, except outside of class."

Recently and massively arrived Muslim populations can usually only have access to an institutional Muslim teaching outside of school. It is dispensed at the so-called Koranic schools or mosque. The teaching includes exegesis, reading and recitation of the Koran, Arab language and Muslim Law (*fiqh*).

In the 1980s, in order to respond to the growing need for religious transmission among permanently settled populations, voluntary associations were created. Within them, teachers do not necessarily possess a degree; they can be the children's parents and are usually paid through subscriptions. No precise educational program has been established, since it is based on private initiative.

I shall only refer here to the fieldwork I undertook in a Comorian Koranic school, a *shioni*, in Marseilles, because the North Africans that I met in mosques do not practice the *hâtima*.

⁶ Bulgaria recognizes freedom of religion as a fundamental right and states that all religions are free and equal (Art.13 of the Constitution. See the website of the Bulgarian Parliament, at the constitution page: www.parliament.bg/bg/const (accessed 7 August 2010)). In France, the 1905 law on the separation of church and state and the constitution guarantee "the free exercise of religion", but "the Republic does not recognize, pay or subsidize any worship" (Art. 1 and 2 of Law 1905. See the law of 9 December 1905 in effect, on the Legifrance site in: laws and regulations: www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT00000508749 (accessed on 10 August 2011)).

Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, beginning in 2002, religious instruction was provided in two ways: as an optional course – *Svobodno-Izbiraem Predmet: SIP*, financed through non-governmental organizations and as a compulsory optional course – *Zadeljitelno-Izbiraem Predmet: ZIP*. In both cases, religious instruction is provided in Bulgarian.

The highest authority, the Grand Mufti of the Bulgarian Republic, distributes, through his foundation, subsidies to the regional Muftis, who share them between the different religious authorities in the provinces. A convention between Bulgaria and Turkey allows the partial funding of Muslim teaching in Bulgaria – see the document below: *Islamic institutions in Bulgaria*.⁷ Although it almost disappeared under the communist regime, this structured organization has been revived since the fall of the Berlin Wall (Popovic 1997). It is based on a legacy of Ottoman organizations. The teachers' salary (teachers are called *hodja*) varies and it is often necessary for the *hodja* to find a second job.

To be allowed to teach, a teacher must have achieved a baccalaureate degree in one of the four schools, which provide an option for religion. The number of people to ask for those options – SIP and ZIP – has considerably increased and, in practice, the *hodja* begin to teach after having followed eight to nine months of training at the religious school of Sarnitsa (in southeastern Bulgaria) (Alexiev et al. 2007).

My fieldwork refers to the Muslim Bulgarians, in the Rhodopi Mountain, at Satovcha, 28 km northeast of Gotse Delchev. Unfortunately, during my Bulgarian fieldwork, I did not have the chance to observe a *hatim*, since my thesis topic did not focus on this ritual. For the purpose of this article, I also choose to use the private filming of an *hatim* in Vaklinovo (situated in the Rhodopi Mountain), as ethnographic material illustrating my argument.⁸

⁷ I cannot submit a similar diagram for France, due to a very informal organization based on the 1901 law about non-profit associations, including religious ones. In addition, Islamic religious education is not recognized by the State and is not nationally structured.

⁸ Other *Hatim* videos are available on Internet: “*Hatim - Du'ā*. Children during the Koranic course of the village Ribnovo – 20 March 2011” on Youtube Site: www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5BR221yLxs (accessed 10 October 2012). Ribnovo is in Blagoevgrad Province, 47 km from Satovcha. “*Hatim* Kochan's village – April 18, 1992” on Youtube Site: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zfxad5HSveQ (accessed 10 October 2012). Kochan, 7 km from Satovcha.

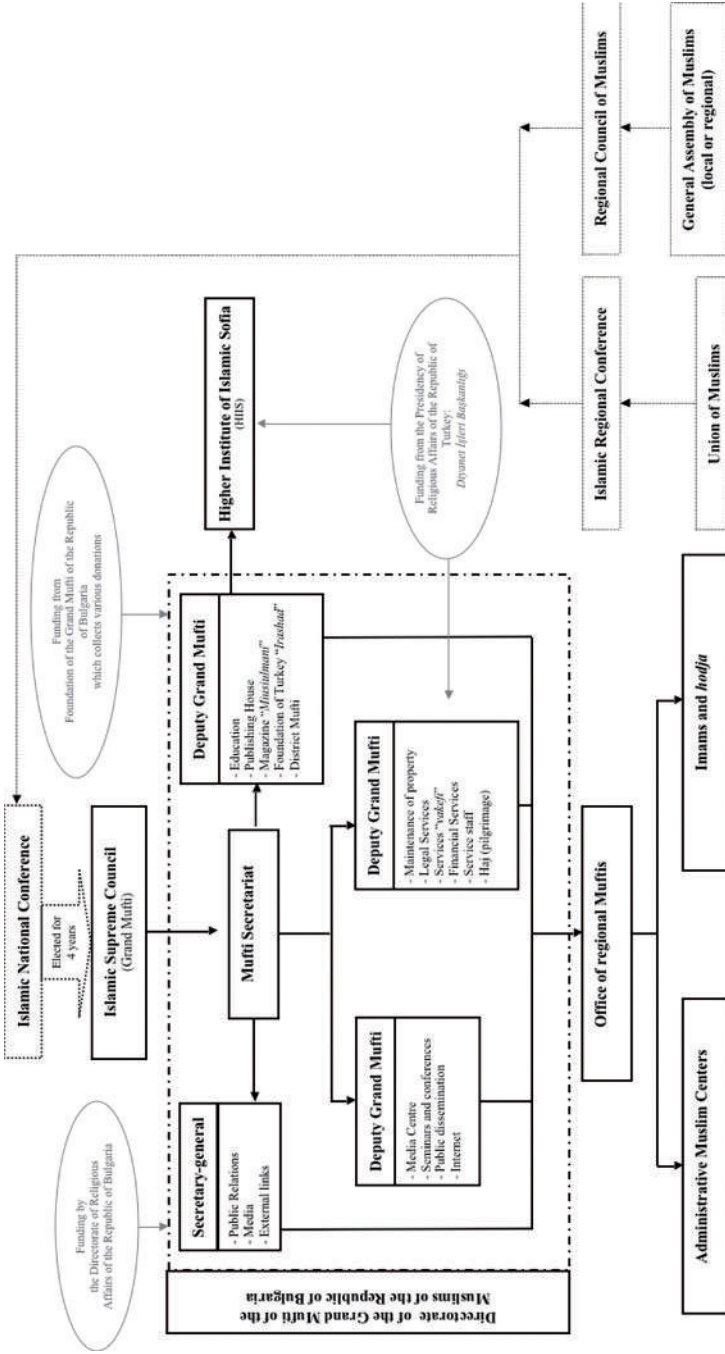


Fig. 1. Islamic institutions in Bulgaria.

Source: Author's diagram based on the Directorate of the Grand Mufti of the Muslims of the Republic of Bulgaria (DGMMRB) Internet Site: www.genmuftibg.net/bg/aboutus/structure.html (accessed 10 October 2011).

II. The *Hâtima*

1. Procedure

It usually involves young adolescents, boys and girls, ten to fifteen years old at the time when they finished the complete reading of the Koran – from beginning to end. At Satovcha, just as in Marseilles, an *hâtima* can be organized when a sufficient number of students have completed the reading of the Holy Book. The ritual usually involves all children in that age bracket. This festive ritual, which calls for the participation of the whole community, requires many preparations. Religious leaders like the Mufti⁹ or the Great *Fundi*¹⁰ attend – even if they must sometimes come from far away – to validate the exam and attest to the applicant's success. At Satovcha, the *hatim* is organized for the children of several villages. In Marseilles, it may often involve children of several *shioni*. In Bulgaria, an animal is sacrificed for the occasion, called a *kurban*, and all inhabitants – Muslim and Orthodox – of the concerned villages are invited to the celebration to share the meal.

How can this festive event, which is an important stage in the education of young Muslims, mark their introduction into the community as a believer now fully responsible for their actions?

Hitima – France, Marseilles

Today, the estimate for the Comorian population in Marseilles is fifty thousand people, which is 25% of the estimated Muslim population in Marseilles. They come mainly from the Grande Comore Island and the Moroni capital. People in the Comorian community joke about it and say that Marseilles will soon be the new capital of Comoros, since there are now more Comorians in Marseilles than in Moroni, the capital. Their specificity consists in the creation of a dense and functional network of organizations registered as non-profit associations, in accordance with the French law of 1901. Karima Dirèche-Slimani says, in that regard, that the Comorian associations for Islamic education are seen by many Muslims in Marseilles as providing: “a very dynamic place for education and knowledge, especially meaningful for families” (Dirèche-Slimani 1998). These non-profit associations are largely based upon the system present in the Comoros. They operate, with some

⁹ In religious administrative terms, a Mufti is a Sunni Islamic scholar who is an interpreter or expounder of Islam.

¹⁰ *Fundi*: Comorian word for religious teacher, the Great *Fundi*' is the equivalent of a mufti.

variants, in the same manner as the Comorian Islamic schools called *shioni*, with a Koranic teacher: the *fundi*'.

I will now give a description of a celebration of the rite of *hitima* in a *shioni* in Marseilles.

It is 11 June 2006, the mosque is perfumed with incense. Twenty children are there, with an equal number of girls and boys. The girls wear dresses that they or their mother made especially for that occasion. One girl has kohl around her eyes and henna painting on her hands, some are wearing gold bracelets. Many of the boys wear a traditional Comorian headdress, the *Kofia*, with embroidered Koranic verses, which differentiates it from the *Kofia* worn in everyday life. It represents a high status in Comoros society. The other boys wear the simple white cap that is usually worn in the mosque.

The rite begins with the invocation of Allah (*du'ā*) accompanied by three tambourines. The girls, in turn, recite the Koran in *tajwid* – following specific intonation rules. Men are beginning to enter the prayer room and salute upon arrival, with the right hand on the heart. Everyone is dressed for the occasion.

The recitation continues. The father of one of the girls stands up and pins a note of 50 Euros on her veil. The other girls receive in the same manner 5, 10 or 20 Euro notes.

The girls, now joined by the younger boys, begin to sing *Anasheeds*, which are well-known Muslim songs sung in Arabic – for example: *Salla Allahu 'Ala Muhammad, Ya Rabbana* – and songs in French whose subject is the Prophet – we can hear: “He is the Prophet, the Imam of the prophets, the last one of the prophets, Allah sent the messenger.” Some of the texts have been written by the girls and the songs can be taken from French Muslim bands they like.¹¹

The celebration continues with the recitation of the *du'ā*, beginning with the *Surah Ya Seen*. The main theme of the *du'ā* is the children themselves celebrating the *hitima*.

Then the *fundi*' gives the microphone to a boy who stands at the centre of the room, his head and shoulders covered with a red *keffiyeh*, a traditional Arab scarf, fashioned from a square usually made of cotton. He reads the last

¹¹ Like *Le silence des mosquées* (The silence of mosques). This band from Dijon (France) is very popular with young Muslims that I met, especially with this title “Oh, my sister” that is introduced with an extract of a speech by Tariq Ramadan.

Koranic chapter; the room is silent and attentive. Then the boy next to him, who also wears a *keffiyeh*, begins to read. These two boys read alternately. Both are 15 years old and celebrate the *hitima* along with eight girls.

A young boy recites a text in Comorian that praises the *fundi'* of the *shioni*.

The chants begin again. An hour has passed since the celebration started, men and women flock into the room. The *fundi'* takes the floor and addresses the gathering, speaking in Comorian, and presents the religious representatives attending the event, who have taken their places in the room on the men's side, separated from the women by curtains.



Pic. 1. Girls during the *hitima* (with euro banknotes), Marseilles.
Photo: Marie-Laure Boursin Lekov, 2006.



Pic. 2. Boys during the *fahamwe* ritual, Marseilles.
Photo: Marie-Laure Boursin Lekov, 2006.

He then proceeds to give a sermon (*khutba*) in which he praises the people who learn the Koran and the ones who teach it.

He places himself in front of the two boys and recites Koranic verses. The two boys receive money. Generally, different kinds of presents are given to the children after the ceremony, by the *fundi'* and the parents: money, prayer rugs, watches, a Koran, etc. After that, the *fundi'* gives them a glass of milk with honey, into which a piece of paper with a *Surah* written on it has been plunged. Each boy drinks his glass, one after the other: this is the *fahamwe* ritual. It is also the highlight of the ceremony and some men come nearer in order to film this event. It must be noted that the girls, who are also doing the *hitima*, will not be doing the *fahamwe* during the current ceremony, though this is not a ritual reserved to boys, and they may accomplish it in another *shioni*.

Finally, the women come from the kitchen with food; traditional Comorian dishes pass from hand to hand: there are spicy chicken and rice, semolina cakes, etc. Everyone begins to eat. Each child will take home a bag with a few treats in remembrance of that day.

After the ceremony, the family gathers at home in the evening, with some members sometimes coming from far away. An *imam* can also be present to accomplish a *du'ā*, a ritual against the evil eye, because a child who passed the *hitima* can attract jealousy from inside the community. This ritual serves here as a protection.

The way the teenagers are dressed, wear make-up and jewellery, when they accomplish their *hitima*, shows the particular significance of that day for them. In fact, the jewellery, or the *Kofia*, can usually only be worn by *Wandru Wadzima*, which means Accomplished Men. They mark a first step towards adulthood and in that sense, this festival can be understood as a rite of passage.

To have done the *hitima* is to know that Allah guides his people. This ceremony highlights a good action: to have read the totality of the Koran. The *hitima* marks the end of learning; the children will not need to attend the *shioni* anymore. The most dedicated receive the status of “small *fundi'*”. They help the *fundi'* with teaching the youngsters. Through the ritual of the *fahamwe*, one receives the Koran into his own body (incorporation), both figuratively and literally (Ware and Launay 2008; Ware 2004). The ceremony was preceded by many years of learning, through which recitations and psalmodies, the practice of swaying, which is supposed to help in memorizing, sometimes even corporal punishment administered by the *fundi'*, have marked the body of the child. Thus, memorizing the Koran and learning to read in Arabic constitute, in a sense, a real incorporation of the sacred text.

Using the Comorian language is important for the ceremony, since parents often do not understand Arabic and have difficulties understanding French. The *hitima* also gives a status to the parents: it is a testimony to the good up-bringing that was given to the child. The *hitima* certificate can also be used to settle conflicts within the community, serving as permission to testify in some cases of dispute.

The whole community is invited to the *shioni*, to the mosque or a rented house, depending on the case. This celebration is also, for the *fundi'*,

publicity for the school in order to attract more pupils. This is particularly the case with more and more children of North African origin, who do not normally practice *hâtima* in France.

Hatim – Bulgaria, Vaklinovo

This celebration took place in November 1994 at Vaklinovo. The village of Vaklinovo, from its old name *Marulevo*, is situated in the Bulgarian Rhodopi Mountains, ten kilometres from Satovcha. The population is mainly Pomak (Bulgarian Muslims).

The film was stored on a VHS videotape, playing time: 117 minutes. It begins with a panoramic view of the village. At the 18th second, a title written on a piece of paper appears, it says in Bulgarian: “Хатим Дуаси с. Марулево – 12.11.1994 г.” (A *hatim with du'ā*, Marulevo¹² village, 12 November 1994). In the next shot, children – boys and girls – are seen, one day before the festival, at the Koranic school, reading the *Surahs* together. After that, the film of the celebration day begins at 10 o'clock in the morning: the assembly leaves the mosque in procession, first the boys and the *hodja*, then the girls, the men and the women.

The group stops in a field near the cemetery and proceeds to make invocations, the *du'ā* or *duyit* in Bulgarian, before going to the village square. The children are placed in front, the young girls wear traditional Muslim harem pants, or *shalvar*, with an embroidered apron: traditional Pomak clothing. Those who make the *hatim* are covered with a long white headscarf (*zabradka*), while some who appear older wear one with a floral print. The boys wear a white Muslim cap and a white shirt under their sweater. Behind them are the adults, with many seniors. The men wear Muslim white caps, berets or classic blue caps; the women wear dresses with various colors and many of them wear a headscarf tied under the chin.

After that, the film shows women preparing meals for the whole community and men cooking sheep, which were sacrificed during the *Kurban*.

The group arrives at the village square, where a stage has been set up. The children who accomplish the *hatim* are seated on top, the boys on one side and the girls on the other. The Koran is read by each child, first by the

¹² Marulevo is the old name of the village of Vaklinovo (until 1960) which – probably – people there still use from time to time.

boys, then by the girls. A microphone is used. Behind and next to the stage is a table where the religious leaders are seated: we can recognize the *hodja* and the Mufti's secretary. The village community sits before the stage. Songs are sung in Arabic by the group of children, notably: "*Ahmad Ya Habibi Salam 'alayk*", with the following lyrics: "Oh Prophet (*nabi*) peace be upon you; Oh the Messenger (*rasul*) peace be upon you; Oh my love, peace be upon you; Praises of Allah on you". The ceremony proceeds with Koranic readings, chants, psalmodies and speeches from the various religious representatives. Then each pupil is called by name by the Mufti's secretary to receive a certificate and some presents – a Koran and various religious books. After the distribution, one of the mothers makes a speech to thank the *hodja* for his teachings and gives him a present in the name of all parents.



*Pic. 3. Village square, Vaklinovo.
Photo: Marie-Laure Boursin Lekov, 1994.*



*Distribution of prizes, Vaklinovo.
Photo: Marie-Laure Boursin Lekov, 1994.*

The Bulgarian *hatim*, just as the *hitima* in Marseilles, contains invocations or *du'ā*, *Surah* readings and the *khutba* (the *hodja*'s preach). The speeches mainly address the education of the children. The mufti's secretary particularly insists on the importance of the Koran as a sacred text, on the constant transmission of the Koranic message from the time of the Prophet and on the role of the *hodja* in this teaching. One man – probably a person of some note – also explains that this day is a very important day for Bulgarian Muslims, recalling the communist era as a time of hardships for Muslims. He closes his speech with the words that the children who have passed the *hatim* have received a moral education, that it helped them to understand the importance of the search for knowledge, and that they may even become engineers. The young people who do the *hatim* see it as something very important for their future life. We can perceive in them a sense of pride by

the various smiles and the gestures they make when they receive their prizes. As Evgenia Krasteva-Blagoeva said about the young Bulgarian Muslims: “They are very diligent studying the foundations of their religion” (Krasteva-Blagoeva 2008).

2. A comparison of the same ritual in two contexts

During both celebrations, the ritual consists mainly of individual and public readings of the last *Surahs* of the Koran in Arabic. Those readings, which pertain to the *tajwid*, require a good Arabic pronunciation and a fine aesthetic sense – which was the case at the *shioni* and at Satovcha. The boys, who speak in turn, are also somewhat competing with one another; the assembly’s comments on the performances are frequent. In Bulgaria, as in France, we can observe a great emphasis made on the incorporation of the Koran. On the subject, Evgenia Krasteva-Blagoeva wrote the following: “They are trained to read the Koran in extracurricular studies and pass the annual exam on the Koran – the ‘*hatim*’, which turns into a holiday for the entire community” (Krasteva-Blagoeva 2008). She explains that they mechanically learn and have to memorize the Koran in Arabic, without understanding the meaning of it. In fact, they do not understand Arabic, just like the Comorian children of Marseilles, since in both cases there is the issue of the migration of a religious and cultural ritual.

Arabic plays the role of a sacred tongue during the ritual, and performing it, notably in the *tajwid*, is more important than understanding it.

Today, in Bulgaria, the *hatim* is often a contest where prizes are given, for example travel tickets to Turkey or a Koran in both Arabic and Bulgarian, etc. As in Marseilles, children receive money and other gifts from the guests. At the *shioni*, half of the money given goes to the *fundi*’ – this is not always the case in Bulgaria.

The *hâtima* validates the result of the adolescent’s education. The success of the pupil attests to the competence of his Koranic teacher – *hodja* or *fundi*’ – and to the moral values transmitted by the family. This celebration highlights three statuses inside the community: that of the child, of the teacher and of the family.

It is also an occasion when the child socially validates his skills for speaking and acting in accordance to his beliefs. At the end of the *hâtima*, he has become someone responsible religiously. The proceedings of the celebration alternate readings, chants and speeches. The last two are rooted

in a local context. Chants are adapted to the language and to the country where the children are living. The speeches address the necessity of being a good Muslim, which also means being a good Bulgarian or French citizen.

Conclusion: between local and global

To conclude, the comparisons between both celebrations and between the two different social and historical contexts reveal two major elements.

In France and in Bulgaria, Muslims are minorities who are firmly established and, for the most part, are Sunni. Indeed, the Muslim population of France has, in the course of its immigration history, created a “lineage of believer” (Hervieu-Léger 2000), likewise, Bulgarian Muslims have become a long-lasting minority since the Ottoman Empire. Because of French secularism and the communist regime in Bulgaria, the institutionalization of religious teaching in both lands is still in progress.

Arjun Appadurai explores the ways in which locality is produced in a globalizing world characterized by high degrees of connectivity and circulation. He explains that it is fundamental to consider both the circulation of forms and the forms of circulation; and analysis needs to relate the two (Appadurai 1996). Indeed, the Islamic institutions, which offer teaching to prepare for the *hâtima*, have to adapt to a context of state regulations but also try to respond to local issues raised within formal and informal contexts.

In France, the existence of cultural associations partly gives a structure to such institutions. Their administrative and non-profit-making management, according to the 1901 law, needs to be transparent and can be checked on by the state’s administration. Paradoxically, this situation makes the religious teaching very informal. These associations are often only checked on administratively and fiscally. In Bulgaria, the institutions are nationally organized – see the document *Islamic institutions in Bulgaria* – and are officially checked by the state.

However, power struggles may also arise due to the informal character of the organizations. In the French context, there is no centralized structure for Islamic teaching, contrary to the Catholic Church. This lack of a ‘clergy’ – like structure, which would form and nominate religious representatives, leads to an informal legitimacy, which was not granted by a higher authority. In Bulgaria, the higher instance called ‘General Direction of the High Mufti of the Bulgarian Republic’ is supposed to play a directional role, but it does not have the human and financial means to respond to a territorial demand

and faces foreign competition, for example, illegal funding coming from Egypt or Saudi Arabia.

Furthermore, due in part to the context of minorities, national states are often confronted with local or even international (therefore global) issues. In France, this can be explained by the influence of the countries from which the Muslims originate, and in Bulgaria by the influential role played by Turkey.

If the process of globalization is defined as the intensification of relations and information flows, then “it became clear that the relationship between local authorities and global transformations is essential because each global process refers to a number of local contexts. What is unprecedented is the rhythm and speed with which these local and global practices are now in permanent contact and exchange” (Dimitrova 2005).

Indeed, these religious bodies had to borrow external models to get organized. The *shioni* are greatly inspired by traditional Comorian Islamic schools, and even the Bulgarian compulsory optional courses borrow their methods from Turkish religious education. For example, materials such as books are in both cases partly financed by Comoros and Turkey, although the content is in the vernacular language (French and Bulgarian) from the country where Muslims live.

The global concept is understood here as the external influence. Here, the import of a ritual is the result of a population migration or Ottoman rule. This ritual has however not been fixed, it adapted itself to the local context.

In Bulgaria, Pomaks appropriated the *hatim* and also use it in the social construction of their Bulgarian Muslim identity, as evidenced in the speech of the Vaklinovo ceremony (reference to the communist regime, use of Bulgarian language). In France, the use of songs by famous French bands represents the same phenomenon. In addition, the progressive integration of Muslims of North African origin in *hitima* practiced by Comorian people also shows how a ritual, which is basically a cultural specificity, can become an Islamic reference in the broad sense (global).

However, as stated above, external influence still exists. In these specific contexts, which relate to religious minorities seeking to legitimize Islamic teaching of their young people, the reference to global and universal Islam is a way to ‘make community’ at the local level, that is to say, national (as religious minorities in both countries are formed of various cultural subgroups).

This study of the *hâtima* as a yearly celebration inside the Muslim community intended to show the importance of the questions of ritual ‘importation’ and of migration of cultural traits and their transformations. According to Anna Dimitrova, the dialectic between the local and the global is to be considered “as a perpetual play between two interconnected and interdependent components” (Dimitrova 2005).

REFERENCES

- Agoston-Nikolova, Elka. 2001. “Hybrid Identities: the Pomak Community of Breznitza (Southwest Bulgaria) in Search of Genealogy.” *Fabula* 42 (1-2): 110–116.
- Alexiev, Bozhidar, Galina Lozanova, Georgeta Nazarska et al. 2007. “Regions, Minorities and European Integration: A Case Study on Muslim Minorities (Turks and Muslim Bulgarians) in the SCR of Bulgaria.” *Romanian Journal of Political Sciences* 1: 24–57.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Blanchy, Sophie. 1998. “Les Comoriens, une immigration méconnue.” *Hommes & Migrations* 1215: 5–19.
- Dimitrova, Anna. 2005. “Le ‘jeu’ entre le local et le global: dualité et dialectique de la globalisation.” *Socio-anthropologie* 16. socio-anthropologie.revues.org/index440.html.
- Dirèche-Slimani, Karima. 1998. “Les enjeux de l’école: des attentes encore non formulées.” *Hommes & Migrations* 1215: 40–49.
- Eminov, Ali. 1997. *Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria*. Londres: Hurst.
- Geisser, Vincent. 2009. “Immigration et mobilisations musulmanes à Marseille. L’éveil d’un ‘islam paroissial’ (1945-2008).” *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 78 (2): 13–31.
- Gözler, Kemal. 2001. *Les villages Pomaks de Lofça: aux XVe et XVIe siècles d’après les Tahrir Defters Ottomans*. Ankara: Société Turque d’Histoire.
- Hervieu-Léger, Danièle. 2000. *Religion as a Chain of Memory*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press.
- Krasteva-Blagoeva, Evgenia. 2008. “Symbols of Muslim Identity in Bulgaria: Traditions and Innovations.” *Communication at the International Conference: „Islam und Muslime in (Südost) Europa”, Berlin: Humboldt-*

Universität zu Berlin. www.nbu.bg/public/images/file/departments/anthropology/research.

- Nielsen, Jørgen Schøler. 1987. "Muslims in Europe." *Culture, Theory and Critique* 31 (1473-5776): 58–73.
- . 2004. *Muslims in Western Europe*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Norris, Harry T. 1993. *Islam in the Balkans: Religion and Society Between Europe and the Arab World*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Popovic, Alexandre. 1997. "Les medrese dans les Balkans: des premières innovations du milieu du 19e siècle à nos jours." In *Madrassa: la transmission du savoir dans le monde musulman*, edited by Nicole Grandin and Marc Gaborieau, 275–284. Paris: Arguments.
- Tsibiridou, Fotini. 2000. *Les Pomak dans la Thrace grecque: discours ethnique et pratiques socioculturelles*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Vavasis, Alexandros. 2007. *L'altérité musulmane en Grèce: problèmes d'intégration et exclusion sociale des minoritaires de Thrace*. Genève: Institut européen de l'Université de Genève.
- Vivier, Géraldine. 1996. *Les migrations comoriennes en France: histoire des migrations coutumières*. Paris: Centre français sur la population et le développement.
- Ware, Rudolph, and Robert Launay. 2008. "Comment (ne pas) lire le Coran: Logiques de l'enseignement religieux au Sénégal et en Côte d'Ivoire." In *L'islam en Afrique: vers un espace public religieux?*, edited by Gilles Holder, 127–144. Paris: Éditions aux lieux d'être.
- Ware, Rudolph. 2004. *Knowledge, Faith, and Power: A History of Qur'anic Schooling in 20th Century Senegal*. Dissertation: University of Pennsylvania.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Marie-Laure Boursin, anthropologist, is teaching at the Institute of Political Studies (SciencesPo) of Aix-en-Provence (France). She is also associate researcher at the Institute of Mediterranean, European and Comparative Ethnology (Idemec), in Aix-en-Provence. Her PhD dissertation was on the various processes of religious learning that have been established by religious institutions and the family environment. She is currently interested in the topic of learning religious festivals in the three monotheisms. She is publishing a book about the concept of community. She is involved in various research programs.

LEARNING JEWISHNESS THROUGH RITUALS AND FESTIVITIES IN FORMER EAST GERMANY TODAY

Karine Michel

Abstract

The 1990's collapse of barriers between the Eastern bloc and the West has given rise, in former East Germany, to a massive migration by Jews of the former Soviet Union. After more than sixty years of communism, those Jews were ignorant of Judaism and Jewishness. With their migration, these Russian-speaking Jews turn themselves toward their religious roots, rediscovering many aspects of Jewish life.

Hence, today, along with feasts of the Jewish ritual year, these Jews learn about biblical or legendary history, about cultural and ritual practices, about traditions and contemporary Jewish life of communities in the world. So it has been in Leipzig and Dresden (Saxony) for Hanukkah, the Jewish feast of lights. In Berlin, the organisation of some holiday activities for children is also a time of learning about Jewishness for Russian-speaking Jewish children. And Shabbat, each week in both communities, is an important time of learning for all groups of ages.

Describing and analysing those activities is a way to understand the creation of a Jewish link, a sort of claim to cohesion and solidarity among Jewish people. Moreover, this approach reveals the construction of a specific Jewishness, referring to Israel as the main identity variable.

Key words

Hanukkah, Shabbat, Jewishness, learning, Russian Jews, holidays, ritual, identity, former East Germany.

Around 60 years after the Shoah, the Jewish presence is growing once more in what has been called “the land of the murderers”, Germany (Bruneau 2006; Nogara 2006). After so many years and so many prohibitions pronounced to Jews about the fact of living in this country (Richarz 1986), such a renewal constitutes a very interesting and quite unique sociological and anthropological reality. And it is an even more interesting reality to observe and analyse in the former East Germany, as Jewishness in 1989 had

quite disappeared from its landscape. Indeed, since the last decade of the twentieth century, Jewishness in former East Germany can be described as a reality ‘in the act of making itself’, undergoing a revival since the massive inflow of Russian-speaking Jewish immigrants. In such a migratory context, rituals and holiday practices are revealing of an historical context with strong consequences for the current Jewish identity in this country.

The way Jews celebrate events of the Jewish ritual year today in former East Germany is to link to the history of the Jews in Eastern Europe during the twentieth century.

I. About Jews in Germany nowadays

Two main events, Shoah and communism, have destroyed the prosperous Judaism of the beginning of the twentieth century in former East Germany. The majority of Jews in Eastern Europe were killed in the Shoah; of the 5 700 000 Jews who died, 3 000 000 were from Poland (Grynberg 1995). In Germany, around 60% of the members of the Jewish communities were killed, which represents about 126 000 persons (Bensimon 2003, 22). At the liberation of the concentration camps, the flow of Displaced Persons¹ passed through Germany, but only a few Jews stayed there. In 1945, 50,000 Jews were still living in Germany but most of them emigrated a few years later. In 1949, the country was divided in West Germany (or German Federal Republic) and East Germany (or German Democratic Republic). In the following few years, many Jews escaped from East-Germany under the communist regime, often just moving from East Germany to West Germany (Traverso 1992, 175). From 3100 in 1945, there were only 2600 Jews in 1952 (Schoeps 1991, 48). In the following forty years, the communist regime was to prohibit all the practices of the religious minority, inviting more and more Jews to assimilate to the Soviet people. Communism thus represents an important fact in the history of Jews in Germany. In West Germany, under the capitalist regime, Jewish communities grew progressively from 1945 on,² even if the population remained less important than in some other communities in Europe. In the same period, the Jewish population in East Germany under the communist regime decreased, due to emigration and an

¹ This term design the 14 millions of exiled persons who were wandering through Europe at the end of the WWII.

² From 23 000 persons at the end of the 1950s, Jews in the German Federal Republic numbered around 34 200 in 1965 and only 45 000 at the end of the 1980s. See Thalmann 1993/94.

anti-particularism policy. As a result, at the end of the twentieth century, Jews who lived under the communist regime know nothing anymore about Judaism and Jewishness; “Those Jews don’t know much about Jewish learning and Jewish life” (Trepp 1996, 294). They were Jews for years under the communist regime through a place given to them by the society, their nationality. But in their everyday life, they had no practices that distinguished them from the others. Such a characteristic can be observed in all the countries that were under the communist regime till 1989. In Poland or Hungary, Jewish communities have experienced the same developments, from the Shoah till 1989, with a revival since the collapse (Karady 1998; Zawadzki 1998). As in all these countries, the socio-cultural reality of the Jewish population today in former East Germany squares with this double rupture in Jewish transmission. Over the same time and despite this important similar historical context, other countries of the Eastern bloc have not been considered as Germany was: a country not for Jews, ‘the land of the murderers’. And that is what makes the particularity of the present-day history of Jews in this country.

An important particularity of the Jewish landscape in former East Germany today results from the extremely small size of the communities at the time of the 1990s collapse and the massive migration of Jews from the former Soviet Union. Before the fall of the Eastern bloc, there were fewer than 31 000 Jews in all of Germany, of which there were only 370 in East Germany (Bensimon 2003, 24) as compared to 30 000 in West Germany. In a few years, they are estimated around 100 000 (Attias & Benbassa 1997, 84). The Russian flow represents some 200,000 Jews, arriving at an annual rate of 15 000 to 20 000 persons (Glöeckner 2004). The Jewish community of former East Berlin was, in 1989, the biggest community in this part of Germany, with 200 members (as compared with 6000 in the former West Berlin Jewish community). Today, the reunified Jewish community of Berlin numbers slightly more than 12 000 members. In Leipzig, which was the second biggest Jewish community of former East Germany, members have gone up from 35 persons in 1989 to around 700 today.

Such a massive flow has totally thrown the Jewish communities into confusion. Communities have had to adapt themselves to these migrants, ignorant of their self-Judaism and Jewishness. Each moment of the community’s life has become a time of learning. All the events of the Jewish ritual calendar have thus found a specific place in this learning program,

making the ritual year a way to teach and learn about Jewish history, religion and culture.

II. The Jewish ritual year

As many others religions, Judaism is organized around some annual holidays celebrated once a year, and around the same dates each year according to the religious calendar. All of those holidays do have not the same importance and place in the Jewry world-wide, according to the degree of religiosity of the Jewish groups. Each of those holidays also has a history, often linked to agricultural rhythms or to historical events.

A. Three types of holidays in the Jewish ritual year

In the Jewish ritual year, illustrated here (Fig. 1), there are seven feasts which are mainly celebrated by Jews all around the world. Those holidays are distinguished in three types: the austere or stark holidays, the pilgrim holidays and the little or minor holidays. This differentiation is linked to the meaning and history of those holidays. Many Jews today also celebrate some important events of their own religious group. The ritual year is punctuated by many little holidays, celebrated by a minority of Jews, as for example *Lag Ba-Omer* mainly celebrated by Ultra-Orthodox Jews (Bilu 2003).

The austere or stark holidays are constituted by Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and the ten days between those two holidays. They are so designated because their aim is a renewal, a time of “complete and sincere return to God” (Coirault 1994, 42). Each person at this time is supposed to be confronted with his or her condition and to be focused on penitence. *Rosh Hashanah*, which literally means ‘head of the year’, celebrates the birthday of the world’s creation and of the first men. It is the judgement day for everyone; each person has to present her or himself in front of God, to the sound of the Shofar. During the ten following days, the individual can pray to be forgiven on *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, which is fasted.

The pilgrim holidays, *Sukkot*, *Pesach* (Passover) and *Shavuot*, are agricultural holidays, where Jews had to go on pilgrimage to the Temple. Today, each of these three holidays is full of historical and religious signification; “They are mainly the living reminder of the steps in the birth of the Hebrew people and of its appearance on the historical scene” (Milewski 2011, 16). *Sukkot*, literally ‘tents’ or ‘huts’, is a celebration of the forty years crossing the desert of the children of Israel after they left Egypt. *Pesach*, the

Hebrew term for Easter, commemorates precisely this day of the exodus from Egypt. This event is the most important for Jewish tradition because it symbolizes the road from slavery to liberty for Jewish people. *Shavuot*, literally ‘weeks’, marks the end of *Pesach*, as the Christian Pentecost.

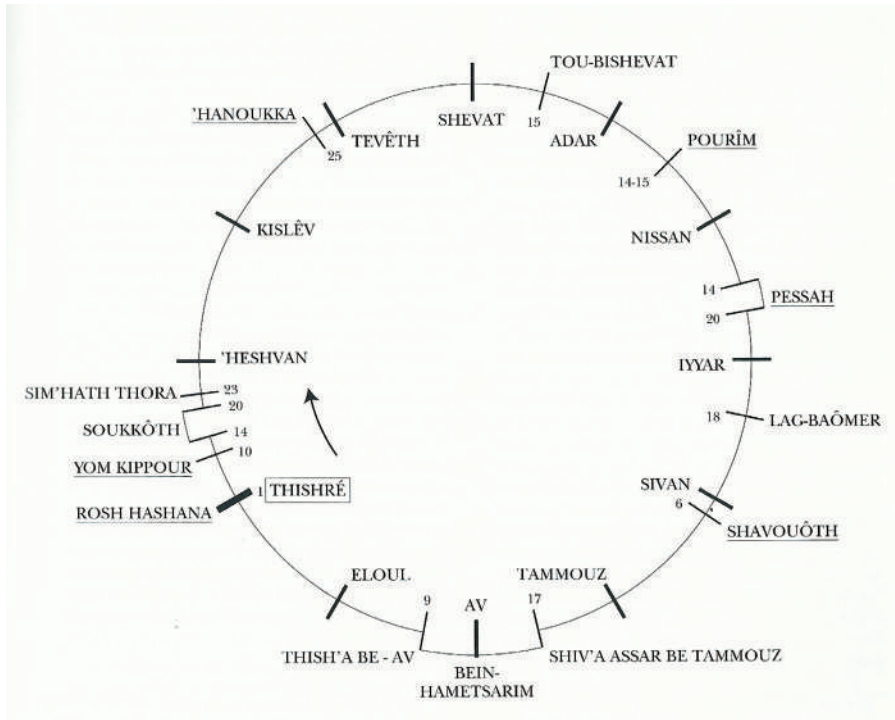


Fig. 1. Jewish ritual year (Coirault 1994, 41).

The little or minor holidays is a term used to designate some holidays that are not listed in the Torah but that have been inserted into the Jewish calendar to recall some interventions of God in history. They are considered as religious feasts but are not public holidays. They mainly give rise to popular and family manifestations (La Maisonneuve 1998, 123). Many minor holidays exist, that are more or less celebrated, unless perhaps *Purim* and *Hanukkah*. *Purim*, the ‘Feast of Lots,’ commemorates an historical event: some Jews living in Persia around the fifth century BC were saved from an anti-Semite named *Hamane* by a queen named Esther. On the *Purim* day, the Esther scroll, which relates this story, is read at synagogues. It is a day of

joy, and became a holiday especially for children, where they can make noise (shout, shake rattles, stamp one's foot, and so on) each time the name of *Hamane* is pronounced. *Hanukkah*, literally 'inauguration' or 'dedication,' is the feast of lights. It commemorates the victory of Jews over the Greeks in 164 BC.

B. Hanukkah

The story of Hanukkah begins in 333 BC. Judaea was under Greek domination, under the governance of Alexander the Great. At his death, his empire was divided between Egypt and Syria, and Judaea became a Syrian property. In 175 BC, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a tyrant who despised the Jewish religion, came to the throne. In order to unify his kingdom around Hellenism, he forbade the Jewish practices. Some Jews, most of them religious (Hassidim), refused to submit and resisted by continuing to observe their religious rules and by studying the Torah. Confronted with this resistance, the Seleucids invaded Judaea and desecrated the Temple by offering sacrifices for their gods there. The Jews revolted against this act, under the high priest Mathathias as leader, and one of his sons, Judas Maccabeus. After three years of war, the Jews won and in 164 BC, Jerusalem was freed and the Temple restored. Hanukkah celebrates this victory, its name – inauguration – symbolizes this new Temple, cleansed of all the polluted idols of the Seleucids.

However, Hanukkah is best known as a festival of lights. This came from a sort of miracle, described in the Talmud: to purify the restored Temple, the Jews decided to light tallow candles. These tallow candles, in a candelabra with seven branches,³ are supposed to shine perpetually in the Temple and, if rather an oil lamp, to be provided only by virgin olive oil. After the Temple was restored, they found only one flask of olive oil, the supply for only one day of light. But preparing pure oil necessitated eight days because it was done only with the first drops from each olive (Gugenheim 1978, 126). They chose to light it with only one. With this single lamp, the menorah remained lit eight days and this is what is considered as a miracle.

This holiday thus lasts eight days, according to the miracle, and to celebrate it, Jews use a *hanukkiah* (Pic. 1) which is lighted day after day. This light has not just seven branches as the menorah, but eight as the number of

³ The menorah is today a symbol of the Israeli state. A big one can be found in front of the *Knesset*, the Jewish Parliament in Jerusalem.

days of the miracle, and another one, in front of the others. It is called the *shamesh* (the servant) and is used to light the eight others. On the first day of Hanukkah, only one candle is lit, the first one on the right; the second day, two candles are lit, the one at the left of the first candle and the first candle on the right; and so on till the eighth day. According to the religious idea, the light symbolizes the spirit of the Torah and faith (Ouaknin 2001, 142). In so far as they are chosen people, Jews have to bring light to the whole world.



*Pic. 1.
Hanukkah in Leipzig.
Photo: Karine Michel, Leipzig,
2001.*

The celebration of a ritual is an important time of socio-cultural practices. In all its composing elements, a holiday, next to the ritual codification, constitutes an interesting approach to religious and socio-cultural reality, whatever the religion, the human group or its cultural history.

III. Hanukkah celebrations today in former East Germany

During the week of Hanukkah in 2001 in Saxony, different activities were organized by the Jewish communities, more or less linked to the celebration of this holiday. Due to the Russian Jews' ignorance of Judaism, few people have some religious or traditional practices at home. At the time of activities, community centres become places of practices usually done at home, and so, times of learning.

A. A holiday for children

Hanukkah is often designated today as the children festival: it is a time of games and of presents. An old European custom was to give them money ('Hanukkah gelt'); in this period close to the Christian Christmas, Jews change this money into presents (Estin 1987, 143). A main point of this holiday is so to give joy to children.

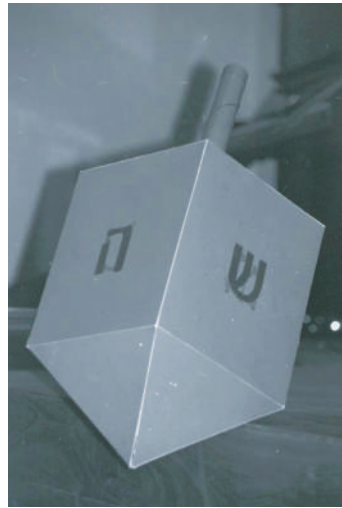
According to the calendar, in 2001, the first day of Hanukkah was a Sunday. The community's members organized animations for children

in the afternoon. At first, children were invited to a drawing and painting workshop. As it was on the theme of Hanukkah, children drew and painted some Hanukkah candles to wear them afterwards as necklaces (Pic. 2). During that time, parents were learning traditional dances.

Then, everybody was invited to sit down to look at a spectacle prepared by children. A little girl, in the middle of the stage, took a top with four letters inscribed on each of its face: this is the Hanukkah *sevivon*. This top, called a *trendel* or *dreidel* in German, is a very symbolic element in the feast of Hanukkah. The four letters are the initials in Hebrew of *ness gadol haiah po* which means ‘a big miracle took place here.’ In the diaspora, the last initial is not the *pé* for *po* (which means ‘here’), but a *shin*, for *cham* (which means ‘there’). As the miracle took place in Jerusalem, Jews of Israel use the *sevivon* with *Po*, while Jews of the diaspora use the *sevivon* with *Cham*, for ‘a big miracle took place there’ (Pic. 3).



*Pic. 2. A Hanukkah candle, drawn by a child, written both in Russian and in German.
Photo: Karine Michel, Leipzig, 2001.*



*Pic. 3. A Hanukkah sevivon.
Photo: Karine Michel, Leipzig, 2001.*

This little girl in the middle of the stage began to play with the top and then another child arrived, with a drawn candle around his neck. She asks him: “Who are you?”, and the child must answer: “I’m the first candle of Hanukkah.” Then the little girl asks him: “And what can you explain me?” and the child must answer, telling a story about Hanukkah. This is one of the customs of Hanukkah, to tell some episodes of the Jewish past (Estin 1987, 143). This little scene repeated seven times, to represent the eight candles of the Hanukkiah. Then, children sing some Hanukkah songs in Russian,

Hebrew and German. To sing is also one of the custom of the Jewish feasts; “A whole repertoire of old and contemporary songs associated with *Hanoukka* exist also, since the *Ma’oz Tsour*, song composed in the thirteenth century, which expresses the Messianic hope of Temple reconstruction and the gratitude for the salvation found in hard times in the past, and goes on to cheerful little songs, intend especially for children”⁴ (Estin 1987, 143). After the spectacle, children play and the afternoon comes to an end with a children’s party.

The feast of Hanukkah is described as a day of joy, of games, songs and dances. In such an afternoon, all the symbolic elements are reproduced: games for children, dances for parents, songs and, of course, candles. But in the spectacle prepared by the children, another dimension takes place: a lesson about what Hanukkah is, its history, its legends and traditions.

B. The Rabbi’s lesson

The second day of Hanukkah, a lesson was given by the Rabbi of Saxony in Leipzig. Inscribed in this temporality, he decided to deal with the history of Hanukkah. He began by some theological data: calendar of this holiday, context of its creation, terminological and social signification, and so on. He also spoke about the legends linked to Hanukkah, in particular those around the issue of the war between the Maccabees and the Seleucids, and then about the different traditions generated by those legends. For example, the fact of eating some cheese cakes for Hanukkah would remain what Antiochus ate when he was beheaded by Yehudit (Judith), who liberated the Maccabees from the Seleucids.

Then the Rabbi explained about the ritual rules. There are some specific rules both concerning how to place the Hanukkiah at home, and to light the candles. The ideal place for the *hanukkiak* is the street, in front of the house door, at the left side of the front door. It should not be on the ground, nor at less than 30 centimetres from it, nor at more than 10 meters high (Coirault 1994, 50). It can also be inside at the window, a practice which is more followed in the diaspora. The important point is that the *hanukkiak* lights should be visible from outside to attest to the miracle (Gugenheim 1978, 127). The second point concerns the way to light the candles. It has to be done from the left to the right: one the first day, two the second day and

⁴ My translation.

so on, and each candle should be lit with the *shamesh*. It is thus the first one to be lit. It has also to be done “on and after sunset, around twenty minutes before the appearance of the stars” (Ouaknin 2001, 150).

The Rabbi finished his lesson by asking the students some questions to examine what they had or had not understood. Some also asked him some to make some points clearer, as for example: “Should we light candles once more at home when it has been done at synagogue?”⁵ The aim of the lesson is not only to explain and learn about a tradition or a religious history, but also (and perhaps much more) to give and inculcate the ‘good’ gesture to be able to reproduce it at home. Indeed, such practices and their history are, in others cultural contexts, transmitted by families, with the repetition of movement shown by parents and grandparents. The gap or the rupture in knowledge appears here in the content of the lesson, in the rules learned and in the questions of the students themselves.

At the end of the lesson, a little brunch was organized in the community centre for the students. The fact of eating together is not something prescribed by the Torah for this holiday. It is more something that comes under the heading of tradition; the usual practice is to make some pastries and some fried potatoes mix, for the miracle’s sake (Estin 1987, 143). Recipes change with the countries involved, and also depend upon the food available⁶ and the memory of the Jews themselves. On the table, there was some tea, some fritters and other fat rolls. According to legends, such dishes are what was eaten with his wine by Antiochus before his death. Joëlle Bahloul explains about a symbolic link between fat and oil for Hanukkah:

What characterizes at the best this cooking, in Jewish food, is the mediation of the material utilized, the oil highly charged with a strong symbolism in the rite, the oil by which the liturgical lighting is done, the oil that gave light. That is probably what explains the presence of fried dishes during the Hanukkah week, feast of lights, and that commemorates the miracle whereby the Temple desecrated by the pagan idols is restored to the sacred order preserved by the lighting of magic and unfailing oil (Bahloul 1983, 177–178).

⁵ Hanukkah is a family fest. Candles should be light on when all the family is united. The answer is so yes.

⁶ In former East Germany today, casher food is not something easy to find and Jews don’t know really how to eat or cook casher in such a situation. See Michel, 2010.

On a culinary level, Hanukkah is often symbolized by fritters, salted or sugared according to cultural tradition. Sepharadic Jews used to eat some *sufganiyot*, fritters filled today with chocolate or marmelade and Ashkenazi Jews used to cook some latkes, potato fritters.

The sharing of some dishes after a lesson or a religious celebration is not systematic. To choose the week of Hanukkah to organize it shows the importance of the fat dishes for this holiday. The aim is, of course, to question the members about their own culinary practices for Hanukkah and invite them to do it at home.

C. The holiday in Leipzig and Dresden

The main point of celebration in the week is the official time of the feast, the one written on the calendar. In Leipzig, it has been celebrated the eighth day of the week and one day before in Dresden. In Leipzig, on this official day, at the end of the week, more than three hundred members came. It began by the lighting of the *hanukkiah*. All the members stand in front of the *hanukkiah* and the Rabbi officiates. He lit the *shamesh*, singing prayers. It seems that those first prayers are two blessings that have to be recited before the lighting of the candles. “The first day, like for all the first evenings of holidays, we add the ‘Cheheheyanou’ blessing’, which thanks God for the continuing life of the Jews telling it (Ouaknin 2001, 151). Then the rabbi began to light one after another the eight candles, singing the prayer of Hanukkah at the same time. When they were all lit, he recited the last prayer of Hanukkah. The members sang the last two stanzas with him and everybody said Amen. As Colette Estin explains: “Each day of Hanoukka, the *hallel*⁷ and the prayer ‘*Al Hanissim*, “For the miracles” are recited, the meaning of which is that heroism can be found more easily among a handful of resolute people than in a great number of undecided people”⁸ (1987, 139). According to Marc-Alain Ouaknin, after the lighting of the candles, Sepharadic Jews sing Psalm 30 and Ashkenazi Jews the *Maoz Tsour*, a traditional song⁹ (2001, 153). Then, everybody sat to eat. During the evening, the children made once

⁷ Series of Psalms 113-118, which are all blessings actions.

⁸ My translation.

⁹ The *Maoz Tsour* is composed of six stanza: 1) a praise to God for the inauguration of the altar, 2) the exodus from Egypt, 3) the reconstruction of the Temple after the Babylonian exile, 4) the Purim miracle, 5) the Hanukkah holiday and the victory of Hasmonians, 6) the Messiah's arrival and the redemption of Israel's people.

again the same spectacle with the candles, explaining to everyone about the signification of Hanukkah. Some adults also sang some traditional songs, with some klezmer accents.

In Dresden, as the room was bigger, some other events took place. The seventh day was a Saturday and began just before the end of Shabbat. Before lighting on the candles, the Rabbi celebrated the *havdalah*, the prayer of the end of Shabbat (Pic. 4). Several times, he had to explain to members that they could not take pictures at that time, as photographing is forbidden during Shabbat. When Shabbat was over, he went to the *hanukkiah* to celebrate, as he was going to do the next day in Leipzig, the prayer and lighting of the seven candles of Hanukkah. Then, the children presented their spectacle, the same as in Leipzig, once more with the scene of the candles of Hanukkah and a game with the *sevivon*. Before beginning the dinner, the Rabbi celebrated the *motsi* (Pic. 5). For that, he asked to stop the music and invited everybody to stand up. The *motsi* is the prayer of thanks to God, for the dishes given. It begins with the *netilath yadayim* ('to wash one's hands') and is followed by the prayer of the bread: a prayer is said over the covered bread, it is salted, eaten by the officiant, and then cut in small parts and given to the others. Then, the dinner can begin.



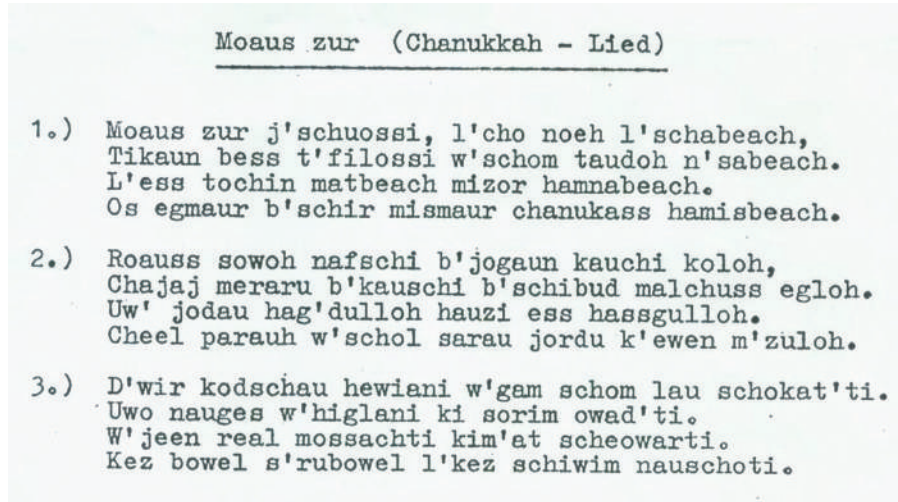
Pic. 4. Wine and Candle
to celebrate the Havdalah.
Photo: Karine Michel,
Leipzig, 2001.



Pic. 5. Water and salt to celebrate the
Motsi.
Photo: Karine Michel,
Leipzig, 2001.

During all the dinner, young people sang, mostly traditional songs, but also some Hebrew songs. Many of Jews today no longer know about Jewish songs. The *Maoz Tsour* was sung at this time. The lyrics had been distributed in the room, so that everybody could sing (Pic. 6). Throughout the evening, young people invited members to dance, showing them traditional rounds.

In different ways and different types of celebration, Hanukkah has become an important time of learning in the Jewish communities of former East Germany. It is of course a religious learning, with the liturgy and the ritual practices. It is also a cultural learning, though the culinary items proposed, the dances, the histories.



*Pic. 6. Lyrics of the Maoz Tsour song.
Photo: Karine Michel, Leipzig, 2001.*

This learning is produced through explanations, possible during little meetings like the holiday for children or the Rabbi's lesson. It is also conveyed through demonstrations at the time of big meetings, by the fact of demonstrating to everybody, as the Rabbi did for the *havdalah* or the *motsi*, and as also the young people did with dances.

IV. Revealing festivities

The description of Hanukkah celebrations in former East Germany today bring to light the place and importance of young people in the everyday life of Jewish communities. Children and young people constitute today a powerful unit for the religious activities and Jewish sociability in the communities. Most of the activities proposed concern young people and children, and are even organized by them.

A. Mahane Chagim

In August 2004 in Berlin, a week of holiday was organized for children and young people of the community, from 5 to 14 years old. This week, whose name means ‘festivities camp,’ was organized by the Talmud-Tora school of the Berlin Jewish community. On the programme, there were some excursions and visits in Berlin, some lessons and games. The first day took place in the community centre and had as its aim bringing together all the children of the week. It was thus organized around songs, games, drawings or sports games in the building of the community. In one group, an activity was to learn in a fun way a Hebrew song. Some children had been divided up by age, into four different groups. Each group, and the room of its activities, was named for a Hebrew word: Torah, Israel, Magen David and Shalom. Each group was organised in the same way, directed by a *madrich* (‘a guide’), a system which is really usual in Israeli society. These *madrichim* are also young people, older than the children they have to take care of. The group of the youngest children, between 5 and 7 years old, was animated by a young girl fifteen years old.

An interesting point of such activities is that it is mainly oriented to an Israeli way of life. It is organized around *madrichim*, Hebrew words and songs, and even an Israeli reference. The activity rooms are all illustrated with posters of the Israeli landscape, or of the Hebrew alphabet.



*Pic. 7. Invitation for Mahane Chagim.
Photo: Karine Michel, Berlin, 2004.*

Such a holiday event has nothing to do with a ritual event in a religious year. However, it is really followed by the children and shows the involvement of young people in Jewish life today in former East Germany. And this phenomenon is much more perceptible in the Shabbat activities, events that come back not once a year but each week.

B. Shabbat celebrations

Even if it is a weekly celebration, Shabbat is considered in some ways as a holiday. This consideration can be linked to the full moon holiday (Wénin 2005, 11). In its Biblical conception, Shabbat is a day of rest, the seventh day when God has finished creating the world. In fact, there were two different conceptions of Shabbat for the Babylonian exile. “The first one, from Canaan, was a religious celebration of the full moon called *Sabbat*. The second one, of liturgical origin it seems, evolved in the eighth century to become a weekly rest day (...) The melding of these two practices in the priestly circles of the Babylonian deportation (586-538) gave rise to the Shabbat institution as Judaism still knows it today. The fast day had been set at the seventh day and called *Sabbat* to signify its festivity and liturgical aspect”¹⁰ (Wénin 2005, 19). In this way, Shabbat, “feast of the feast” (La Maisonnette 1998, 109), is one of the holidays of the Jewish ritual year, even if it is a weekly one. As a day of a total rest, everyone has to stop every activity on Shabbat and has to make this day holy. It is hence forbidden to do any activity that could create something (to cook, drive, write, listen to radio, switch on the light, and so on). The study of the Torah is not considered as a work but as a joy, and it is the main activity of the most religious Jews on this day.

In former East Germany today, Shabbat is not celebrated each week everywhere, because, on the one hand due to the lack of rabbis, and, on the other, to the lack of knowledge on the part of most of the Russian Jews making up the communities. In Saxony in 2001, Shabbat was celebrated in Leipzig, Chemnitz and Dresden once a month, as the Rabbi was alone to serve the three towns. But at the same time, young people met each week in Leipzig (and began to do it the same year in Chemnitz) to celebrate Shabbat together.

¹⁰ My translation.

1. Shabbat among young people

Around ten to twenty young people aged between 12 to 25 years old, according to the town concerned, were observing a service and eating together after it in the community centre. Older young people, who were *madrichim*, organized times (learning, prayer, ritual, eating) and adviser younger people. Each of those celebrations was an occasion of learning. Before the time of prayer, games were organized around some subjects of Jewish life: history, ancient and modern, religion, social and cultural life, and so on. During the prayer, *madrichim* put right some incorrect gesture, such as not to turn around at the right time, remove his *kippa* for a boy, reciting too loud or not, and so on. During the ritual of the *Kiddush*, at the beginning of the Shabbat dinner, *madrichim* observed and corrected once more: to talk or not to talk, to do the *Netilath Yadayim* the right way, to say Amen, and so on. After the dinner, they watched to see that each child sang the *Birkat ha Mazon*, a prayer of the end of the dinner that thanks God for the meal consumed.

The place of learning in such a holiday celebration is really important. It can involve several things at any one time: ritual, prayer, games or anything else. It is even more important, as the children and young people who participate in these religious activities are all Russian-speaking Jews. To take part in this group is, of course, first motivated by the fact of being with other Russian-speaking and Jewish children. But it is also a way to know what constitutes the Jewishness to which they have been dedicated.

2. Shabbat for adults

Adults and older Jews who celebrate Shabbat once a week with the Rabbi are for the most part Russian-speaking Jews. The Shabbat is, as for the children and young people, a time of learning about Jewish religion, although this celebration is only composed of a service.

The Rabbi celebrates the service in German and, as many still do not understand, a man translates every explanation of the Rabbi in Russian. “That’s not so simple. In fact, the community of Leipzig includes more or less 100% of immigrants, when the majority still does not understand the German language. The indications are the followings: “in the Russian edition, you’ll find the psalm at page 76, in the German one at page 98 and in the little blue book at page 5”. If nevertheless someone does not find the text, a

neighbor helps him” (Jähingen 2001, 9). The explanations not only concern the text recited, but also the ritual and liturgical gesture. For the prayer of the morning of Shabbat, men have to wear a *tallit*. This is a rectangular shawl, of which each angle has some fringe, named *tsitsit*. On the top of the *tallit*, there is a band where a psalm is written. At the time of the service, the Rabbi has to explain how to wear the *tallit*. The band with the psalm should be on the nape of the neck, and not at the small of the back, as many members put it on. The Rabbi explains and also shows how to hold the *tsitsit*: two by two in each hand, united and next the ones from the others by the two hands in front of oneself. But only a few of the members do it.

As in the group of children and young people, learning is involved in each step of the service. The lack of knowledge appears to be so considerable that it is not possible to celebrate a service without those explanations.

Celebrations of Jewish rituals and holidays today in former East Germany constitute a very good observation window on the socio-cultural reality of this kind of Jewishness. Those occasions are privileged ones for the expression of one’s Jewishness, and also consequently of the lack of knowledge of this Jewishness. It concerns a reality ‘in the act of making itself,’ in which each moment of Jewish life is a time of learning. There, holidays allow two main important points of this Jewishness in former East Germany to appear.

First, learning is not limited to one subject. It concerns any subject of Jewish life: history, culture, liturgy, rituality, gesture, clothing, and so on. For years for Russian-speaking Jews, their Jewishness was only the designation that the Russians gave them. It was an exo-designation, and today nothing less can constitute an auto-designation as a Jew. This has to be learnt. So through holidays, as Hanukkah here, this necessity of learning and large field of apprenticeship reveals itself. Festivities are times where Jews learn about events in Biblical history, about codification and the way to use religious objects, but also about traditional songs, dances or cooking. More often, through Shabbat for example, they learn about the text, the liturgy and the gesture of prayer, the rituality of the *Kiddush*, and so on. In this way, such efforts could enable us to think about a possible future for this Jewishness. In reality, things should be put in perspective.

As a matter of fact, most of the activities for Shabbat or the holidays are organized by the young people. For Hanukkah, they prepare the spectacle, the dances, the songs and invite adults to do these things with them. For

Shabbat, they are much more organized than the adults, celebrating services and dinner on their own, even when adults do not do anything. Through their involvement in religious activities, in Hebrew learning, in camps and so on, young people constitute the power of the Jewish communities of former East Germany. They are the impulse for a Jewish life, contributing in large part to the sociability of the Jewish community. But at the same time, they go on themselves with an orientation to Israel, the Israeli way of life and Hebrew. Most of them wish to emigrate once more, to the United States or Israel, when it is not already the case. Some *madrachim* in Leipzig, engaged in the *yeshivah*¹¹ of Berlin, could be taken as an example: one of them, whom I met in 2001, has emigrated to the United States; another one, a *madricha* of Berlin Imet in 2004, was waiting for her visa and made her *alyah*¹² the same year.

The revival force those young people represent is not staying in Germany. And what is more, the Russian flow of immigration ended in 2006. In such conditions, it is difficult to know about the future of Jewishness in this part of the country, as if going on with a Jewish identity in Germany was still complicated.

REFERENCES

- Attias, Jean-Christophe, and Esther Benbassa. 1997. *Dictionnaire de civilisation juive*. Paris: Larousse.
- Bahloul, Joëlle. 1983. *Le culte de la table dressée*. Paris: Métailié.
- Bensimon, Doris. 2003. *Les juifs en Allemagne aujourd'hui*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Bilu, Yoram. 2003. "From *Milah* (circumcision) to *Milah* (word): Male Identity and Rituals of Childhood in the Jewish Ultraorthodox Community." *Ethos* 31(2): 172–203.
- Bruneau, Caroline. 2006. "Etre Juif en Allemagne." *Tribune Juive* 18: 24–26.
- Coirault, Michel. 1994. *Pour connaître les fêtes juives, chrétiennes, musulmanes*. Paris: Cerf.
- Estin, Colette. 1987. *Contes et fêtes juives*. Paris: Beauchesne.
- Gloëckner Olaf. 2004. "Russian Jewish Immigration to Germany – Its Impacts on

¹¹ Talmudic school.

¹² Literally 'way up to Israel,' this term expresses the fact of emigrating there for a Jew.

- the Jewish Communities and Its Perspectives in the German Society”, Paper presented at the conference of Bar-Ilan 14-16/06/04, Jérusalem.
- Grynberg, Annie. 1995. *La Shoah – L'impossible oubli*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Gugenheim, Ernest. 1978. *Le judaïsme dans la vie quotidienne*. Paris: Albin Michel.
- Jähnigen, Brigitte. 2001. “Zwischen Leipzig, Chemnitz und Dresden.” *Allgemeine Jüdische Wochenzeitung* 11: 9.
- Karady, Victor. 1998. “Les Juifs de Hongrie - au-delà de l’assimilation.” *Les cahiers du judaïsme* 1: 19–31.
- La Maisonneuve, Dominique. 1998. *Le judaïsme*. Paris: éditions de l’Atelier.
- Michel, Karine. 2010. “Les pratiques alimentaires des juifs russophones en ex-Allemagne de l’Est: réinvention d’une identité juive.” *Hommes et Migrations* 1283: 118–127.
- Milewski, Jacky. 2011. *Les fêtes de pèlerinage dans la tradition juive*. Paris: PUF.
- Nogara, Aurélien. 2006. “Tel-Aviv à l’heure de Berlin.” *Tribune Juive* 18: 27–28.
- Ouaknin, Marc-Alain. *De génération en génération... être juif*. Marseille: Arche du livre.
- Richarz, Monica. 1986. “Juden in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik seit 1945.” In *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland seit 1945*, edited by Micha Brumlik, 13–30. Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum Verlag.
- Schoeps, Julius. 1991. “Les juifs dans l’Allemagne d’après-guerre.” *Matériaux pour l’histoire de notre temps* avril-juin: 41–51.
- Thalmann, Rita. 1993/94. “Les Juifs en Allemagne et en Autriche.” *Yod, revue des études hébraïques et contemporaines* 36-37: 49–59.
- Traverso, Enzo. 1992. “Histoire et mémoire: la ‘question juive’ en Allemagne après Auschwitz.” In *Les juifs et l’Allemagne – De la “symbiose judéo-allemande” à la mémoire d’Auschwitz*, 172–204. Paris: La Découverte.
- Trepp, Leo. 1996. *Geschichte der deutschen Juden*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag.
- Wénin, André. 2005. *Le Sabbat dans la Bible*. Bruxelles: Lumen Vitae.
- Zawadzki, Paul. 1998, “Juifs de Pologne – Malaise dans la filiation.” *Les cahiers du judaïsme* 1: 32–42.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Karine Michel is an Associate Researcher at IDEMEC (Institute of Mediterranean European and Comparative Ethnology) in Aix-en-Provence (France),

her Ph.D. treated with the working out of Jewishness in former East Germany today. Her research topics are identity, alimentation, immigration, religion, memory. Her research projects are actually exploring the subject of memory and its place in the working out of identity. Through the analysis and comparison between Jews, Gypsies and Armenians, the aim is to understand the way history and memory take place and express themselves in the identity construction. Alimentation, one of this way of expression, constitutes another of my aim of study, especially through the coordination of an interdisciplinary research program called ALIMED.

MIGRATION OF RITUALS AND MYTHS

SAINT NEKTARIOS, THE ‘MIGRANT’ SAINT: FROM THE GREEK AEGINA TO THE ‘ROMANIAN AEGINA’

Irina Stahl

Abstract

Over the past decade, there has been a sustained migration of relics from Greece to Romania. The process is due to a propitious combination of factors relating to the religious revival in Romania since the fall of communism, the tightening of relations between the two churches and the recent economic crisis. Many tiny fragments of the body of a twentieth-century Greek saint, Nektarios, are today cherished by Romanian devotees who have adopted him as one of their own saints. From this perspective his case represents what could be called a success story of integration. He is the example *par excellence* of migrant human remains, since the spread of his remains is the result of his own posthumous wish; migration was his choice. As in the case of people, the principal choice for the migration of relics is to large cities, ‘centres of religious transformation’ that capture ‘the new spirit of the century and the new spirit of the Church’ (Le Bras). The cult of Saint Nektarios started in Bucharest; it later also developed in Iași and it is from these two cities that it has further radiated through the country. Being in many respects a modern cult, it is a good illustration of the study of religion within the current Romanian urban environment. This article deals with the circumstances of the migration of these relics, the cult as a propagation mechanism, the channels of diffusion and the players involved in the process. It also considers the reasons behind the migration, the network, the integration process and the new solidarities created. Special attention is given to the way devotees relate to the relics and the ritual behaviour involved. In the conclusions, the main characteristics of this cult will be underlined and it will be put into a broader, regional context.

Key words

Cult of Saint Nektarios, urban lived religion, lived Orthodoxy, Bucharest, Romania.

Introduction

This paper offers an unusual view of the topic of migrations. Instead of dealing with the migration of humans during their lifetimes, it focuses on posthumous human migration. More precisely, it deals with the case of

exceptional human remains: the relics of saints.

In the past decade, there has been a sustained migration of relics from Greece to Romania. The process is due to a propitious combination of factors relating to the religious revival in Romania since the fall of communism, the tightening of relations between the Greek and Romanian Orthodox churches and the recent economic crisis. Many tiny fragments of the body of a twentieth-century Greek saint, Nektarios, are today cherished by Romanian devotees who have adopted him as one of their own saints. From this perspective, his case could be considered a success story of integration. He is the example par excellence of migrant human remains, as the spread of his relics is the result of his own posthumous wish; migration was his choice.

As in the case of living people, the principal destination for the migration of relics is to large cities, 'centres of religious transformation' that capture 'the new spirit of the century and the new spirit of the Church' (Le Bras 1956, 479). Being in many respects a modern cult, that of Nektarios is a good case study of religion within the current Romanian urban environment. This paper deals with the circumstances of the migration of these relics, the propagation mechanism of the cult, the channels of diffusion and the players involved in the process. It also questions the reasons behind the migration, the network, the integration process and the new solidarities created. Following a short biographical introduction comes a factual description of the rise and spread of the cult in Romania. A separate chapter examines the way in which devotees relate to the relics and the ritual behaviour involved. The conclusions underline the main characteristics of this cult, putting it into a broader context.

The monk who later became a saint¹

Anastasios Kephalas came into the world on 1 October 1846, in a Greek Orthodox family from Selybria (Turk. *Silivri*), a town in present-day Turkey. Having to support himself as well as his family from an early age, Anastasios first worked as a teacher. At the age of 27, he decided to enter the monastic community of Nea Moni on the Greek island of Chios. Three years later, he took vows and became a monk, receiving the name Lazarus. He was not to bear this name for long, however; a couple

¹ All information on the life of Saint Nektarios was taken from Teoclit (2008) and Ambroise (2009).

of months later, upon becoming hierodeacon, he was given the name by which he would later be known as a saint, Nektarios. The young monk continued his education, graduating from secondary school and later studying theology in Athens, thanks to the financial support of Sophronios, Patriarch of Alexandria (Egypt). In 1885, after completing his studies, he became Patriarch Sophronios's secretary and one of his closest aides. After spending a few years in Alexandria, he was named Patriarchal Curator for Cairo. Here, his work as a preacher and administrator led to his election in 1889 as Metropolitan of Pentapolis (an ancient diocese in Cyrenaica, in what is now Libya). However, after only one year, he was suspended from his duties and eventually banished from Egypt by the patriarch after a series of accusations was brought against him by his fellows. Returning to Greece, Nektarios had a difficult time reintegrating with the religious community. Instead, he turned towards the community of believers, whom he won over once more through his inspiring preaching. In 1894, he was called to lead the Rizareios Theological Seminary in Athens, a position which also gave him the opportunity to improve the religious educational system in Greece. At the beginning of the twentieth-century, along with a group of followers, he established a convent dedicated to the Holy Trinity on the island of Aegina, near Athens. It is here that he chose to spend his last years after resigning from his duties at the seminary in 1908. He died on 9 November 1920, after a long fight against cancer.

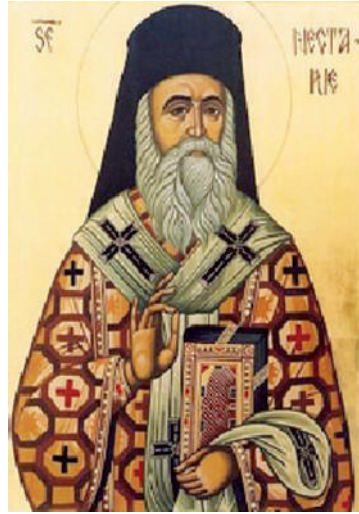
Six months after his death, his body was found untouched and spreading a wonderful fragrance – undoubted proof of sanctity. It remained so until, twenty years after his death, it started decomposing, to the despair of his followers. According to what later became a legend, a woman, in mourning over what had happened, had a dream. In it, the saint told her that he had especially requested that God allow his body to decompose in order to facilitate the distribution of his bones all over Greece, and worldwide, so they could bring comfort to believers in need. In 1961, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, taking account of the pious and faultless life of Nektarios Kephalas, the miracles accomplished in his name and the popular fervour manifested towards him, signed the document placing him amongst the saints. Thereafter, he was to be known as Saint Nektarios and celebrated on 9 November.

Today, it can be said that Saint Nektarios's wish has truly been granted. His relics are to be found in numerous churches in Greece and

also abroad, in the Greek diaspora (in the U.S.A., Canada and England) and in Romania, Bulgaria (Kalofer) and Serbia (Belgrade).



Pic. 1. Father Nektarios in his later years.



Pic. 2. The icon of Saint Nektarios. Holding the Gospel in his left hand, the saint blesses the viewer with his raised right hand (the fingers shape the Christogram ICXC).

The rise and spread of the cult of Saint Nektarios in Romania

Saint Nektarios's relics arrived in Romania in 2002, accompanying a Greek metropolitan on an unofficial visit to Bucharest. During his stay, the latter learned of the devotion to Nektarios of one Varsanufie Gogescu, prior of the newly reopened Radu Vodă Monastery. The hierarch subsequently bequeathed the relics to the prior as a private gift. Nevertheless, the tiny piece of bone was exhibited to the public the following year, starting one of the most spectacular cults in Romania.

Incidentally, the sixteenth-century monastery that hosted the relics could not have been better chosen. Located in the city centre, near the Dâmbovița river, just a few hundred metres from the patriarchal palace, it has longstanding ties with the Greek world:² In 1613, Prince Radu (whose

² All historical information on Radu Vodă Monastery was taken from Policarp (2009).

name lived on in local memories following his rebuilding of the establishment initially founded by his grandfather) donated the property to the Iviron Monastery on Mount Athos as a sign of appreciation towards the Greek monks who had contributed to his early education. The monastery, one of the richest in Wallachia, was administered by Greek monks for a further two and a half centuries, two of its priors even becoming local metropolitans. Nevertheless, the monastery was shut down with the secularisation reform of 1863. In an attempt to maintain the religious use of the complex, the monastery was re-established in 1946 but was once again shut down, in 1960, as a result of the restrictive communist legislation. A few years later, however, Patriarch Justinian Marina (1948-1977), personally attached to the place, initiated the restoration of the complex. In accordance with his own wishes, he was buried inside the church in March 1977. For Father Policarp Chițulescu, current director of the Holy Synod Library and member of the Radu Vodă community, this was a premonitory decision, anticipating the massive destruction of churches initiated only a few months later by Ceaușescu (Archimandrite Policarp Chițulescu, pers. comm., 11 October 2012). By his gesture, the old patriarch wanted to add weight to the place,



Pic. 3. Patriarch Justinian worshipping at the relics of Saint Nektarios, 6 May 1971, Holy Trinity Convent, Aegina. Source: the photographic archives of the Patriarchate.

thus preventing its potential demolition. Today, his tomb stands in a niche on the north side of the church, next to Saint Nektarios's relics. The spatial proximity of their remains, however, stands for a more profound bond between the two holy men, as revealed in a recently discovered photograph. In the picture, Patriarch Justinian is shown bent over a reliquary containing Saint Nektarios's relics in a pious gesture of worship. The picture was taken on 6 May 1971 at the Holy Trinity Convent on Aegina. This is surprising not only because it was taken in the early years of the cult of the saint, but also because Patriarch Justinian rarely travelled abroad.

Radu Vodă Monastery reopened one decade after the fall of communism. In 1998, a thirty-year-old monk from

Bucharest, a teacher and former student of the Radu Vodă Theological Seminary, Father Varsanufie,³ was called to re-establish the community. The following year, he became the first post-communist prior when the monastery officially reopened. In 2006, he was succeeded as the head of the community by one of his young disciples, Nectarie Șofelea, whose name he had personally chosen when the latter took his vows in 2002. Father Nectarie was the third novice to have taken the habit at Radu Vodă since its reopening. Today, the community consists of nineteen people, both monks and novices, many in their thirties; it is a young community.

Soon after Prior Varsanufie decided to display the relics to the general public, the saint became the monastery's second patron (it had initially been dedicated to the Holy Trinity, as with the saint's convent on Aegina). In 2004, Saint Nektarios's name was included in the Orthodox calendar printed by the Archdiocese of Bucharest,⁴ and marked as a minor celebration.⁵ Once again, the initiative belonged to Varsanufie Gogescu (Archimandrite Policarp Chițulescu, pers. comm., 11 October 2012), who had in the meantime been named assistant bishop of the archdiocese⁶ (September 2001). Since then, the Greek service and prayers dedicated to Saint Nektarios have been translated into Romanian and adapted by the local monks (printed as well as recorded versions are available on sale). Several icons of Saint Nektarios have been added to those inside the church; the oldest one in the iconostasis (painted in 2003) is situated next to the icon of the Holy Trinity.

In the spring of 2011, a second relic of Saint Nektarios arrived at Radu Vodă. Slightly bigger than the first, it was brought by an official deputation led by Theodosia, Mother Superior of the Holy Trinity Convent on Aegina. This was a response to a formal request made by the monastery, motivated by the temporary loss of the document of authenticity for the first relics. The

³ Under the lay name of Valentin Gogescu, Father Varsanufie passed through the Theological Seminary (1985-1990), followed by the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest (1990-1994). He took his vows in 1994, at Slănic Monastery in Argeș County. Among other roles, he has worked as a teacher of religious education and has also contributed to the creation of specific methodology for religious teaching.

⁴ In the Romanian Orthodox Church, each Archdiocese has the right to print its own calendar. The calendar printed by the Archdiocese of Bucharest, however, is considered the official version for the Church.

⁵ In the Orthodox calendar, minor celebrations are marked in black while major ones are marked in red.

⁶ In this function he took the name Varsanufie Prahoveanul (i.e. from Prahova County).

cult of the saint was growing and the monastery was not willing to risk any scandal or rumours relating to the authenticity of its relics. Consequently, the event was hardly publicised. The new relics were kept in a chapel until the following year when, for the celebration on 9 November, they were exhibited in a new silver reliquary, considerably larger than the one hosting the first relics. However, for the thousands of pilgrims gathered for the occasion, the replacement was barely noticed. The saint was still with them. The first relics have been relocated, pending donation to another establishment. They are currently kept in the patriarchal cathedral.

A high point in the development of the cult of Saint Nektarios in Romania was reached in 2012, the year solemnly proclaimed ‘Homage Year of the Anointing and Care for the Sick’ by the Romanian Patriarchate. In accordance with the chosen theme, the relics of Saint Nektarios the Thaumaturge (his right hand) were brought over during the celebration of Saint Dimitrie the New (27 October), protector of Bucharest. The Greek official deputation which accompanied them was led by Ephraim, Metropolitan of Hydra, Spetses and Aegina, the guest of honour at the event. Saint Nektarios’s relics thus joined the local relics of Saint Dimitrie the New and those of Saints Constantin and Elena. For a whole week (24-30 October), the three reliquaries, one next to the other, remained on exhibition to the thousands of pilgrims who flocked in from all over the country.



Pic. 4. Metropolitan Ephraim and Patriarch Daniel next to Saint Nektarios's relics in Bucharest, 24 October 2012. Photo: Irina Stahl.

During the celebration, Patriarch Daniel and Metropolitan Ephraim took part in several events, including the inauguration and blessing of the Saint Nectarie Palliative Care Centre (Saint Pantelimon Parish Church) and the Saint Hierarch Nectarie of Aegina Sociocultural Centre (Radu Vodă Monastery). While the first centre is intended for the care of the terminally ill (mostly suffering from cancer), the second one is open to pilgrims coming to see Saint Nektarios's relics. The two hierarchs also took the time to bless the new silver reliquary intended to house the newly received relics. The richly adorned chest is covered with scenes from the saint's life; on the interior side of the opened lid, in two distinctive medallions, are pictured the two monastic churches housing his relics in Bucharest and on Aegina. Later that year, the patriarch attended the celebration of the saint at Radu Vodă Monastery.

This, however, was not the first time Saint Nektarios's relics had come to Romania. In October 2006 they were also present in Iași, during celebrations for the local Saint Parascheva. This time as well, they were brought by the same Greek metropolitan, Ephraim. Since 2005, when he was still Metropolitan of Moldavia, Patriarch Daniel has established the custom of bringing over relics of different saints from abroad during celebrations for local saints: first that of Saint Parascheva, to Iași (14 October), and then also Saint Dimitrie the New, to Bucharest. To date, several relics, so far all from Greece, have accompanied the local relics on these occasions in a joint procession called 'The Way of the Saints' (*Calea sfinților*).

According to printed and online sources, by the beginning of 2013, thirty-nine churches in Romania and one additional church belonging to the Romanian community in Spain (Coslada, Madrid), held relics of Saint Nektarios. The accuracy of this, however, remains uncertain, as the religious authorities do not keep any official records on existing relics. As with most relics, those of Saint Nektarios are usually acquired in the form of gifts or by direct acquisition. They originate either directly from the Holy Trinity Convent on Aegina or indirectly, after passing through the hands of one or more owners. The Church of The Nativity of the Mother of God in Iași (Alexandru cel Bun quarter), for instance, received the relics in 2006 directly from Metropolitan Ephraim. The Romanian community's Church of Saint Nectarie in Coslanda received them in 2011 from Polycarp, the Greek Metropolitan of Spain and Portugal, from his private reliquary. In these cases, as probably in many others, the relics originated from Greek sources.

Regarding the issue of authenticity, it is customary for every hierarchy offering relics to provide an accompanying written document mentioning their origin. By this he acts as their guarantor. Although these documents are usually required, in the eyes of the Church as well as in those of believers, testimonies to the presumed efficacy of the relics alone are considered proof enough. However, clerks seem to be more accurate with these papers nowadays, as the Radu Vodă case shows, presumably mainly in order to avoid any potential media scandals.

Being important sources of attraction for pilgrims, relics (to the same extent as miraculous icons) are valuable assets for parish churches and monastic communities, in terms of status as well as revenue. This makes them particularly desirable in Romania at present, where competition among religious establishments is intensifying due to their continuously increasing numbers over the past two decades. For those establishments not housing relics, one option is to invite certain relics over, usually for special celebrations. Since the arrival of Saint Nektarios's relics, Radu Vodă Monastery has received such requests every year. The voyage of relics is doubly beneficial, since it not only brings additional financial support to the inviting establishment but also contributes to the fame of the invited establishment and the spread of the cult in general. For this reason in particular, Saint Nektarios's relics were taken to the United States in May-June 2011. Accompanied by Father Varsanufie, they visited ten community parishes, introducing the saint to the Romanian diaspora. The event was also announced on the websites of the Greek and Serbian churches.

Saint Nektarios is today the patron saint of numerous chapels and churches in Romania, but also in Romanian communities abroad. Three of the first palliative care centres in Romania (two in Bucharest, one in Cluj), which recently opened on the initiative of the Church, have also been put under the saint's protection. In the past decade many monks and nuns have received the names Nectarie or Nectaria as they have taken their vows. The same is happening in the lay world, where the same names are increasingly given as baptismal names for newborn children. This is especially the case for 'miracle babies', whose coming into the world is considered the result of the saint's miraculous intervention.

Various items related to Saint Nektarios (e.g., protective bracelets, holy oil, icons) are today to be found in every religious shop in Romania and on the counters of every fair during celebrations. Usually, they are either

presented as local products, the work of local devotees, or 'genuine' products, imported from Greece.

By the beginning of 2013, twenty-nine books and booklets relating to Saint Nektarios had been published in Romania. Eight are translations of his writings, while nineteen others (including one audio book and two books for children) refer to his life, works and miracles. In this last category, five volumes relate exclusively to Romanian testimonies. An additional three (one gathering testimonies from Iași, another on Romanian testimonies in general and the last on testimonies from the Romanian diaspora) have been announced and are expected to appear soon. At this point, there are three Romanian websites⁷ dedicated to the saint, but several others also refer to him; there is even a Facebook account in his name.⁸ The media, either religious (through the official Basilica Media Centre of the Romanian Patriarchate) or secular (both private and public) also feature events related to Saint Nektarios. This is usually the case during his celebration or under exceptional circumstances, such as those of October 2012. A DVD on the saint's life and miracles, released by the Orthodox church's official TV chain, has also come out recently (Trinitas TV 2012).

Once brought to Romania, and thus in a new cultural context, the newly acquired relics of Saint Nektarios underwent a process of 'reconstruction of value' (Geary 1986, 186–187). In this regard, online and specially printed testimonies on the accomplished miracles played an important role since, over time, they seem to have led to more miracles. Saint Nektarios's relics in Romania also prove that there is no direct relation between the dimensions of the relic and the proportions of the cult. Full-body relics are rare in Romania, especially if compared to other Western European countries or even cities (the example of Venice springs to mind); Saint Dimitrie's remains are the only full-body relic in Bucharest.

The collections circulate from hand to hand and are often offered as gifts. The initiator of the testimony collection series, Danion Vasile, confesses a strong attachment to the saint whom he got to know before the first book on him was published in Romania. His personal evolution is representative of the new generation of Orthodox believers in Romania. Born in Bucharest

⁷ www.sfantulnectarie.ro, www.sfantul-nectarie.ro, www.eviasieghina.ro (accessed 01.03.2013).

⁸ www.facebook.com/sf.nectarie (accessed 30.03.2013) was created in June 2011. By the end of March 2013, this page had received a total of 1517 'Likes'. In the 'Page insights' section, 25–34 years old were indicated as the most popular age group and Bucharest as the most popular city.

in 1974, Vasile started his spiritual quest at an early age when he became an M.I.S.A.⁹ member. He passed through different religious phases, which evolved from tantric yoga to Orthodoxy. After graduating in theology in Bucharest (1997) and getting a master's degree in sectology (1998), he started a PhD thesis on theology in Greece (Thessaloniki). He is the author of several publications on various theological topics including the Orthodox attitude toward yoga. According to his own statement (2012d, 231–233), in 2002, his confessor, Father Varsanufie, gave him his blessing to gather testimonies on the wonders and miracles of Saint Nektarios.¹⁰ The same year, his daughter was born. She received the name Nectaria and was baptised during the first celebration of the saint, at Radu Vodă Monastery. Also in 2002, Vasile became manager of the publishing house which had published the first Romanian volume on Saint Nektarios. It was here as well that he published the first collection of testimonies in 2003. A few years later, he started his own publishing house, where he published the next four collections with the help of Ciprian Voicilă. Both editors contributed their own testimonies to the volumes. Vasile, in particular, gives accounts of a vision he had experienced (2012a, 155–157) and also relates how he miraculously managed to find a place to live in the proximity of Radu Vodă Monastery (2012a, 171–176). He also describes how he became involved in bringing the relics to Bucharest (2012d, 234–236): in 2001, knowing that he was to go on a pilgrimage to Greece, Father Varsanufie had entrusted him with an official letter addressed to the authorities of the Holy Trinity Convent on Aegina. In the letter, the prior asked for a piece of Saint Nektarios's relics on behalf of his monastic community. Unfortunately the plan failed due to a last-minute itinerary change. However, the prayers of all those who had fostered the initiative, laymen as well as monks, had not been in vain, Vasile concluded, since the relics of Saint Nektarios finally arrived in Bucharest a few months later.

⁹ The Movement for Spiritual Integration into the Absolute (*Mișcarea de integrare spirituală în absolut*), is a yoga organisation which had a great impact on the youth of Romania in the early '90s. Following numerous complaints and repeated campaigns in the media, in 2005, its leader, Gregorian Bivolaru (b. 1952) was accused of multiple charges (including improper conduct with a minor, tax evasion and illegal crossing of the border). At that time, however, he had already left the country. Claiming persecution due to his religious beliefs, he sought and was granted political asylum in Sweden.

¹⁰ In his publications and on his personal web-page (www.danionvasile.ro) he encourages people to write to him about miracles and wonders they have experienced.

Romanian devotees and Saint Nektarios

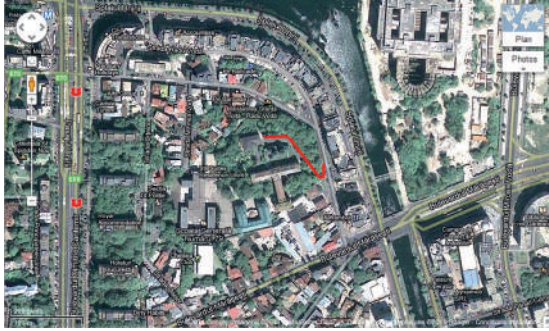
Situated on high ground, Radu Vodă Monastery is today hidden from view by a row of concrete buildings which were deliberately designed to conceal it by the communist regime. Its general appearance, with the church at the top surrounded by trees and vegetation, is that of a green island in a sea of grey, a fact which led to the place becoming known as ‘the Romanian Aegina.’¹¹



*Pic. 5. The queue of pilgrims at Radu Vodă Monastery on 9 November 2012.
Photo: Irina Stahl.*

Every year, hundreds of pilgrims from all over the country, but mainly from Bucharest, gather here during the celebration of the saint. The queue of people waiting to reach the relics encircles the hill, its length increasing year on year.

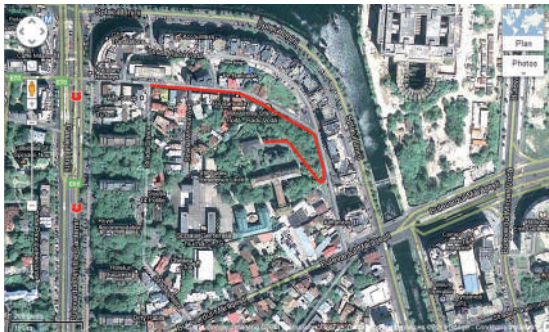
¹¹ First coined by Vasile in reference to Radu Vodă Monastery (Vasile and Agapit 2003, 35–39), this expression was later extended to all churches and religious communities in Romania holding the saint’s relics, which have him as a protector or simply manifest great devotion towards him (Vasile 2012a, 8), and even to all places in which he has shown his work (Vasile 2012b, 5).



Pic. 6. The queue of pilgrims at Radu Vodă Monastery on 9 November 2010; estimated number of participants in the celebration: 2500.



Pic. 7. The queue of pilgrims at Radu Vodă Monastery on 9 November 2011; estimated number of participants in the celebration: 3000.



Pic. 8. The queue of pilgrims at Radu Vodă Monastery on 9 November 2012; estimated number of participants in the celebration: 3500.

The number of Romanian pilgrims visiting Aegina is also increasing. In 2012, over thirty pilgrimages organised by the two patriarchal pilgrimage agencies included a stop at the Holy Trinity Convent on Aegina in their itinerary. Additional pilgrimages are organised by priests for their parishioners. According to Ephraim, Metropolitan of Hydra, Spetses and Aegina, in 2012, 55%-57% of the total number of pilgrims visiting the Holy Trinity Convent were Romanians (Trinitas TV 2012, min. 13:27).

Not long after the first relics belonging to Saint Nektarios were exhibited in Romania, testimonies to wonders and miraculous healings started to flow. Besides the 287 published testimonies, many others are preserved in the monastic archives¹² and still more are posted on the internet. Although they do not always contain explicit information regarding the identity of the authors, the texts provide a general profile of the devotees, who are mainly young, educated and living in urban settings; a few are migrants established abroad. What often determines the gesture of making a personal testimony public is a promise made to the saint in exchange for his help. This is also the case where the saint's name is given to 'miracle babies'. By this action, witnesses deliberately assume an active role in the dissemination process. From their perspective, however, helping others in coping with their problems by encouraging them to follow their example and pray to the saint is the main motivation.

The growing popularity of Saint Nektarios is partially to be explained by the fact that the saint, who suffered from and eventually died of cancer, is particularly known as the healer of this life-threatening disease. Romania, on the other hand, has the highest rate of mortality due to cancer in Europe. Furthermore, the country's medical system is about to collapse. Each year, thousands of doctors leave the country for better-paid work abroad. Consequently, ritual practices addressing Saint Nektarios are often considered important options when seeking to obtain healing. This 'new' twentieth-century saint can thus be designated a 'modern' saint, responding to the new needs of his time. But the saint not only helps people in serious, life-threatening situations; his intervention is also instantaneous:

¹² Testimonies collected at the Holy Trinity Convent on Aegina continue to be published. The last volumes also include Romanian testimonies (see the testimony of Antoaneta Velcovici, psycho-sociologist and editor at the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Society, Bucharest, in Vasile 2012a, 176–180).

... people gather around the person who has healed them, or who has quickly solved a serious problem for them. The cult of Saint Nektarios developed because he is quick to help; this is how he is known, as quick to help (grabnic ajutător). Many problems have been solved; I have personally known people with one foot in the grave who finally escaped death. This is what has made him known: the fact that he intervenes very quickly and in very serious matters. (Archimandrite Policarp Chițulescu, pers. comm., 11 October 2012)

The content of the printed testimonies offers indications on how the devotees experience life. Furthermore, it shows how their religious beliefs have transformed their perception of life, as they seem to develop particular 'sensory models' (Classen 1997, 402). In other words, they have espoused specific 'sensory meanings and values' which help them to 'make sense' of the world, or translate sensory perceptions and concepts into a particular 'worldview'. This is what, from a theological perspective, Rafail Noica calls 'the spiritualisation of the senses' (*înduhovnicirea simțurilor*, 2002, 18), meaning people's ability to recognise the Spirit of God through their senses. Spiritualising the senses is a gradual process, accomplished only by cultivating the word of God, or what Noica calls 'the culture of the Spirit' (*cultura Duhului*).

In terms of ritual behaviour, the saint is currently invoked through prayer, that most commonly used by devotees being the acatist of the saint. Reproduced in numerous brochures and at the end of most volumes dedicated to him, this particular prayer is regularly held (on a nearly daily basis) in the Radu Vodă Monastery church. Collective prayer is usually considered to be more effective and therefore preferred. Many people praying at the same time is believed to reinforce the communication channel (Venbrux 2012, 95). Several testimonies describe how, in critical or decisive moments, regardless of the distance between them, family and friends of the person in need agreed to pray together. The same belief motivates people to seek the relics of Saint Nektarios, particularly during his celebration, despite the fact that they are displayed continuously throughout the year; 8 November (during vespers) and 9 November are generally considered to be the most propitious moments for communication with the saint, and through him, with God Himself. As one witness puts it, this is the time when "the sky opens, allowing the saint to ask [God] for everything!" (Vasile 2011, 69).

People endeavour to go to the relics in person, even if that entails a challenge for physical endurance and the expenditure of time, money or energy. These are merely small sacrifices meant to demonstrate faith in God and thus gain his mercy. Considering the social aspect of religion, the closeness of people during celebrations also increases solidarity and reinforces faith. The queue of pilgrims is a place where problems as well as wonders are shared.

Another special time for praying is during the *maslu* service, held twice a week at the Radu Vodă Monastery church, in which oil is sanctified in a special ritual performed by a number of priests (usually three or seven). In contrast to the final anointing in western Christian traditions, the *maslu* of Romanian Orthodox tradition addresses all those sick in body or in soul, whom the sanctified oil is intended to heal (see Bria 1981, 250–252; Ioanichie 1993). The healing, however, is not considered miraculous in this case (a subject which will be explored later, regarding the burning of lamp-oil at Saint Nektarios’s relics), but rather an act of divine compassion. At the end of the ritual, the clergy proceed to anoint the congregation with the consecrated oil. The remaining oil is taken home by people who use it for



*Pic. 9. The maslu service at Radu Vodă Monastery, 5 October 2012.
Photo: Irina Stahl.*

therapeutic purposes: rubbing it into their skin, onto their forehead or affected body parts, or adding it to food. Sometimes it is also used in oil lamps. Being consecrated, it may under no circumstances be spoiled or thrown away.

Besides praying, devotees also seek to establish physical contact with the saint’s relics or icons. As presented in a previous study (Stahl 2013), relics are proof of God’s continuous work through his saints according to Orthodox tradition; through their remains, the saints continue to help those in need long after their deaths. Furthermore, their good works are believed to multiply as their relics spread. This was the very argument

brought by Saint Nektarios in the vision meant to explain the decomposition of his body, which became part of the legend. As a consequence of the tactile nature of people, physical contact is needed in order to maintain and sustain faith. It allows devotees to ‘hold on’ to something. Touching the relics or icons gives people the feeling that the saints – and, through them, God Himself – are with them. The concrete, physical connection sustains the higher spiritual one.



Pic. 10. Young child touching Saint Nektarios's relics, 9 November 2010.
Photo: Irina Stahl.

By visiting the relics of Saint Nektarios, people express their intention of ‘visiting the saint’; in travelling to Aegina, Romanian pilgrims are ‘visiting the saint at home’. Devotees go to the relics as to a person they can share their problems with, a person that they know will also offer them much-needed help and support. This is usually the case when a person is confronted with insurmountable difficulties, such as dealing with life-threatening diseases. In these cases, ‘the wish for closeness is the wish to be helped quickly’ (Archimandrite Policarp Chițulescu, pers. comm., 11 October 2012).

The way people relate to relics in general is governed by the relics’ exceptional character: “objects that are both persons and things” (Geary 1986, 169). This statement applies equally to icons. While sceptics see and treat them merely as objects, believers regard them as they would the saint himself, as a living person. Every relic is, in this respect, a *pars pro toto*, a part that stands for the whole, meaning the very person of the saint. As a consequence, the ritual behaviour towards the relics replicates social behaviour. Touching the relics, people talk to the saint, sharing their misfortunes and praying in

low voices. The direct contact seems to reassure them that they are heard, that they have caught the saint's attention. The devotees touch the glass-covered relics with their bare hands, their cheeks and foreheads; they kiss and embrace them. This is how they show their affection towards the saint and, at the same time, ask for his help. With regard to visual representations (icons), devotees never touch the face, but only the hands, feet, frame or even the table it stands on. 'This is a way of humbly positioning ourselves with regard to the holiness of the saint', commented Archimandrite Policarp Chițulescu. "We do not cultivate a familiarity that could diverge into audacity, but we don't feel kept apart either" (pers. comm., 11 October 2012). In the printed testimonies, the warm feelings devotees have towards Saint Nektarios manifest themselves through the use of expressions such as 'my dear saint', 'my dear friend and protector', 'my little grandfather' (this is a new form of address in Romanian, probably translated from Greek).

The requests people come with are also written down as notes (*acatist*). These are also brought into contact with the relics so as to ensure their reception. The folded notes are finally slipped into a special box, next to the reliquary. Contrary to similar practices elsewhere (Venbrux 2012, 94), they are later read aloud in church. Written requests are also slipped under the thick glass floor covering the old gravestones inside the Radu Vodă Monastery church. Hundreds are left in this manner every month, in order to be closer to the canopy under which the relics of the saint are displayed, and for a longer time. In this sense they evoke the notes slipped inside the metal coating of icons. The double form of address, both oral and written, is supposed to increase the chances of getting a message through and thus having the request granted.

Believers bring various other objects (such as shawls, handkerchiefs, clothing, baby cushions, icons) with which to touch the relics. Half, if not more, of the people waiting in the queue



Pic. 11. Written requests slipped under the thick glass floor covering the old gravestones inside the Radu Vodă Monastery church.

during the saint's celebration carry bags filled with such items. Mainly meant for sick people, these are also considered to have more general, protective powers. Through them, the direct contact with the relics is extended in space (within the entourage of the attendee) and time (following the actual contact). Other items which have been in direct contact with the relics (such as tiny pieces of cotton impregnated with holy oil, called *mir*, as well as flowers and basil) are sometimes burned, since inhaling the smoke is considered to be good for the health. Similar practices are mentioned by medical folklore collectors (Candrea 1999; Ciobotaru 2005), proving that devotees also rely on widespread folk practices and beliefs.

Of particular interest is the use of new technologies which are sometimes used as substitutes for the physical body in making contact with the sacred. Photos of absent persons are held against the relics, allowing people who are not physically present to come into contact with the sacred. Furthermore, photographing the relics, a recent practice, has started to become a means for knowing the saint's opinion. While a clear image is interpreted as approval, a blurred one is considered to indicate disapproval.

As with the oil generated from relics or miraculous icons, the oil from lamps burning next to relics is credited with exceptional healing powers. Every day, people go to Radu Vodă Monastery in order to get the precious liquid from the lamp burning next to the relics of Saint Nektarios. The oil is intended to be rubbed into the bare skin, especially onto affected or aching parts of the body; in the case of pregnant women, over the womb. Occasionally, making a simple cross on the forehead of the sick person is considered sufficient. The miraculous healings supposedly resulting are described in many testimonies.

Witnesses constantly relate their sensorial experiences to the supernatural. Thus, all extraordinary perceptions are regarded as positive answers to prayers. With regard to the saint's relics, many sick people mention feeling a sudden warmth in the afflicted part of their body while in direct, physical contact with them. Others mention a sudden decrease in pain. For them, these are signs that the healing process has started. On the other hand, feeling nothing out of the ordinary at the moment of contact does not necessarily mean a negative answer either, as people may attribute positive significance to future developments in the experience. Other witnesses testify to apparitions and visions of the saint, reassuring them and announcing the forthcoming healing. These usually occur after intensive

prayer. A few also relate having smelt unusual fragrances of holy oil, nectar, nectarines or peaches, emanating from the saint's relics or even from books relating to him.

Another reality comes to light from existing testimonies: besides religious and domestic settings, ritual practices addressing Saint Nektarios are also performed in public hospitals. It is here that, as patients or merely companions, people bring different religious items (icons, prayer books, holy oil or water) for help and support, but also as complementary therapy. In one case in particular, a member of the medical staff actually recommended prayers to the saint and the use of holy oil (see the testimony of Dr. Cătălina Constantin, in Vasile 2012c, 5–13). The fact that five hospital chapels (two in Bucharest, one in Sibiu, one in Suceava and one in Botoşani) have relics of the saint is also worth mentioning.

Since ritual practices relating to Saint Nektarios often transgress the usual limits of 'prescriptive' Orthodoxy, finding appropriate terms to describe them is challenging. Using the term 'lived religion' or, better, that of 'lived Orthodoxy' (see Werth 2011) seems to be the best of choices. This avoids rather vague expressions such as ('canonical' vs. 'non-canonical'¹³), or those which might be offensive to Christian believers (such as 'magic'). To take the case of the various objects which people bring into contact with the relics, for instance, this practice is neither preached nor encouraged by the Church but rather tolerated. In this matter, as in others, Eastern Christianity shows its flexibility in carrying out what is known as the *oeconomy* (see Larchet 2002). Amongst theologians, there are some who consider it to be straying, as a transgression from the 'right path', or even magic (Archimandrite Policarp Chiţulescu, pers. comm., 11 October 2012).

From my own point of view, however, it is less important to establish whether these practices should or should not be performed than to question why they exist to begin with. From this perspective, the practice can, as already mentioned, be considered an extension of initial physical contact with the relics, which is now made available to absent persons. The objects can also be considered as reminders, material things meant to sustain people in their faith in the might of God. It remains to be established whether these

¹³ Timotin (2010, 25) argues this choice when discussing Romanian eighteenth-century manuscript incantations, pointing out, however, that the canon is changing over time. At present, there is still no clear consensus among theologians over what is 'canonical', and opinions sometimes diverge.

objects are considered to have achieved their own healing powers through mere contact with the relics. An indicator in this direction is the fact that, according to some of the people I talked to, the items of clothing used to touch the relics have to be worn on the bare skin; their effectiveness would end when washed. If this belief were more widely confirmed, then the term 'sacred contagion' (Durkheim 2001, 229ss.) could apply, although this is at odds with Christian dogma (Stahl 2013).

Another example which would require further investigation is that of the oil from the lamp burning next to the relics. The thoughts of theologians in this matter are far from unanimous. According to some (Vintilescu 1972, 355), this particular kind of oil acquires extraordinary properties through mere proximity to the relics, a fact that could sustain an argument for the practice. However, according to others (Archimandrite Policarp Chițulescu, pers. comm., 11 October, 2012), the saint himself indicated the use of this oil as a remedy during his apparitions and therefore the healing powers of the lamp oil are the result of divine intervention and not a consequence of proximity to the relics.

Conclusions

The cult of Saint Nektarios has spread rapidly in Romania. In many ways, it is a modern cult, substantially promoted and developed by a new, young and active generation of Orthodox believers using modern channels of communication (the media, publications and the internet). The information is no longer exclusively transmitted through traditional word-of-mouth channels but also through online forums, virtual chat rooms, blogs and websites. New religious solidarities are created around the saint in real as well as virtual space. Frequent pilgrimages, by bus, are organised to places where his relics are exhibited, locally or abroad.

The cult started and has so far mainly developed in an urban environment. In this respect, Le Bras's observations on 'large cities as centres of religious transformation' are more pertinent than ever. It is in large cities that 'the Church renews its practices' and 'new frameworks' are established. It is also from large cities that attempts at renewal will 'radiate' further (Le Bras 1956, 479). The cult of Saint Nektarios started in Bucharest; it later developed in Iași and from these two cities radiated throughout the country. Since the fall of communism, but especially since the enthronement of

Patriarch Daniel (2007), the renewal of the Romanian Orthodox church has become increasingly apparent. One visible sign of this is the gradual religious appropriation of urban space. Periodic pilgrimages and processions occupy the pavements and halt traffic; church services are transmitted outdoors through loudspeakers and religious merchandise is increasingly available on the streets. The cult of Saint Nektarios is no exception to this trend.

The intervention of a few key persons appears to have been crucial in the spread of the cult. Its initiator and constant promoter is the former prior of Radu Vodă Monastery, Varsanufie Gogescu. In this respect, a large-scale fresco, painted not long ago on the walls of the bell tower at the northern end of the church, is telling: down on his knees, the prior (realistically represented) prays in front of Christ; next to him stands Saint Nektarios, holding Radu Vodă Monastery, which he dedicates to Christ.



Pic. 12. Fresco on the eastern interior wall of the bell-tower, Radu Vodă Monastery. Photo: Irina Stahl.

Patriarch Daniel can equally be considered a promoter, given his constant support for the cult through concrete initiatives as well as his presence on well-chosen occasions. Finally, Danion Vasile, the editor of the testimony collections, has also made a significant contribution.

Viewed more broadly, the development of the cult of Saint Nektarios in Romania and Greece raises a number of questions. Why did this cult

extend to Romania and not to Bulgaria,¹⁴ geographically closer to Greece, and a country to which the relics were also brought (much earlier, in 1990), but one in which no further developments have yet been recorded? A partial answer would highlight the propitious context in Romania resulting from the general sense of insecurity developed after the fall of communism and the religious revival that it gave rise to (Stahl and Venbrux 2011, 147–150). But is the extension of the cult into Romania also related to a possible religious decline in Greece, or to put it in Geary's terms (1986), to an eventual decrease in 'the value of relics' of Saint Nektarios in Greece? Could it be that Saint Nektarios migrated to the 'Romanian Aegina' for economic reasons? I leave the answer for future studies. What could, however, be mentioned at this point is the 'patronage network' (Geary 1986, 183) being created by Greek hierarchs offering relics of Saint Nektarios. This converges with the desire of the current Romanian patriarch to create a rapprochement with the Greek Orthodox church and a return to the Byzantine origins of Orthodoxy.

As its development is still on-going, the study of the new cult of Saint Nektarios in Romania leaves many unanswered questions. Among the most pressing of these are: when will the cult of Saint Nektarios plateau in Romania and what influence will Romanian pilgrims visiting Greece have upon the forthcoming evolution of the local cult? Pending future developments and answers to these questions, it may be concluded for now that the rise of this cult is a unique phenomenon in current Romanian Orthodoxy and a good case study for lived religion in an urban context.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to address special thanks to Father Policarp Chițulescu, who kindly agreed to give me an in-depth interview on the relics of Saint Nektarios at Radu Vodă Monastery, which revealed a great deal of information previously unknown to me. He also gave me the photo of Patriarch Justinian, allowing me to use it as an illustration to this article.

¹⁴ In Bulgaria, the relics of Saint Nektarios are kept in the Holy Presentation of the Mother of God Convent in Kalofer. The Mother Superior, Valentina Drumeva, whom I met in 2012, related how, shortly after the fall of communism, a group of nuns went to Aegina in order to ask for the relics. The icon of the saint next to them had been bought in Athens, in 2010.

I would also like to thank Lina Gergova, secretary of the international organisation committee for the Eighth Annual Conference of the SIEF Working Group on 'The Ritual Year' – Migrations, (26-29 June 2012, Plovdiv), who made the trip to Kalofer possible.

REFERENCES

- Ambroise Fontrier, Priest. 2009. *Sfântul Nectarie din Eghina. Schiță biografică*. Bucharest: Agapis.
- Bria, Ion. 1981. *Dicționar de teologie ortodoxă*. Bucharesturești: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române.
- Candrea, I.-Aurel. 1999. *Folclorul medical român comparat. Privire generală. Medicina magică*. Iași: Polirom.
- Ciubotaru, Silvia. 2005. *Folclorul medical din Moldova. Tipologie și corpus de texte*. Iași: Editura Universității 'Alexandru Ioan Cuza'.
- Classen, Constance. 1997. "Foundations for an Anthropology of the Senses." *International Social Science Journal* 49 (153): 401–412.
- Durkheim, Emile. 2001. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. First published 1912.
- Geary, Patrick. 1986. "Sacred commodities: the circulation of medieval relics." In *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, 169–191. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ioanichie Bălan, Archimandrite. 1993. *Puterea Sfântului Maslu*. Iași: Editura Mitropoliei Moldovei și Bucovinei.
- Larchet, Jean-Claude. 2002. *Le chrétien devant la maladie, la souffrance et la mort*. Paris: Les Editions du Cerf.
- Le Bras, Gabriel. 1956. Études de sociologie religieuse. Vol. 2: De la morphologie à la typologie*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Noica, Rafail, Hieromonk. 2002. *Cultura duhului*. Alba Iulia: Reîntregirea.
- Policarp Chițulescu, Archimandrite. 2009. *Mănăstirea Radu Vodă*. Bucharest: Editura "Basilica" a Patriarhiei Române.
- Stahl, Irina and Eric Venbrux. 2011. "Ritual Multiplication: on Lived Religion in Bucharest." *Jaarboek voor Liturgieonderzoek / Yearbook for Liturgical and Ritual Studies*, Vol. 27, 139–167. Groningen: Instituut voor Christelijk Cultureel Erfgoed; Tilburg: Instituut voor Liturgische en Rituele Studies.
- Stahl, Irina. 2013. "Getting in Touch with the Saints in Contemporary Romania."

- In *Balkanskaya kartin mira sub specie pyati chelovecheskih chuvstv. Balkanskie chteniya 12. Tezisyi i materialyi. 26-27 marta 2013 goda* [Balkan Picture of the World *sub specie* Five Senses. Balkan Conference 12. Abstracts and Articles. 26-27 March 2013], 99–109. [Moscow]: Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Slavic Studies, Centre for linguocultural studies 'Balcanica', University 'Dimitry Pozharsky'.
- Teoclit Dionisiatul, Monk. 2008. *Sfântul Nectarie din Egina, făcătorul de minuni. Viața și opera, 1846-1920* [Saint Nectarios of Aegina, the miracle worker. His life and work, 1846-1920]. Bucharest: Sofia. Translated from the 1979 Greek edition.
- Timotin, Emanuela. 2010. *Descântecele manuscrise românești (secolele al XVII-lea – al XIX-lea)*. Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române.
- Trinitas TV. 2012. *Viața și minunile Sfântului Nectarie*. DVD, Bucharest, 95 min.
- Vasile, Danion, and Iosif D. Agapit, eds. 2003. *Noi minuni ale sfântului Nectarie* [New Miracles of Saint Nektarios]. Galați: Egumenița.
- Vasile, Danion, ed. 2011. *Minuni contemporane*. Bucharest: Areopag, Meditații.
- , ed. 2012a. *Sfântul Nectarie. Minuni în România*. Revised by Ciprian Voicilă. Third edition. Bucharest: Areopag, Meditații. First published 2010.
- , ed. 2012b. *Minunile Sfântului Nectarie din Eghina românească*. Revised by Ciprian Voicilă. Bucharest: Areopag.
- , ed. 2012c. *Sfântul Nectarie. Noi minuni la mănăstirea Radu Vodă*. Revised by Ciprian Voicilă. Bucharest: Areopag.
- , ed. 2012d. *Sfântul Nectarie. Vindecări minunate*. Revised by Ciprian Voicilă. Bucharest: Areopag, Meditații.
- Venbrux, Eric. 2012. "The Miraculous Medal: Linking People together like the Beads of the Rosary." In *Gender, Nation and Religion at European Pilgrimage Sites*, edited by Willy Jansen and Catrien Notermans, 89–104. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Vintilescu, Priest Petre. 1972. *Liturghierul explicat*. Bucharest: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă.
- Werth, Paul W. 2011. "Lived Orthodoxy and Confessional Diversity: The Last Decade on Religion in Modern Russia." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12 (4): 849–865.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Irina Stahl is a researcher with the Institute of Sociology, Romanian Academy of Sciences in Bucharest. Her fields of interest are social change in nineteenth-

century Bucharest, lived religion in contemporary Romania and the history of sociology in southeastern Europe. Recent papers: *Getting in Touch with the Saints in Contemporary Romania* (2013, *Балканская картина мира sub specie пяти человеческих чувств, Moscow*), *Le café au carrefour des deux mondes. Exemple d'une acculturation volontaire dans la ville de Bucarest au XIXe siècle* (2011, *Ethnologia Balkanica*, Vol. 15/1), *Ritual Multiplication: On Lived Religion in Bucharest* (2011, *Yearbook for Liturgical and Ritual Studies, Groningen*, Vol. 27), *Balthasar Bogišić et Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu, deux scientifiques à la recherche des coutumes juridiques dans le sud-est de l'Europe* (2011, *Spomenica Valtazara Bogišića o stogodišnjici njegove smrti 24.apr.2008.godine, Belgrade*, Vol. 1). She has also recently finished an article on sudden death memorials in Bucharest.

NESTINARSKI RITUAL COMPLEX IN STOMANEVO VILLAGE – A NEW PLACE FOR AN OLD TRADITION

Ana Stefanova

Abstract

The *nestinarski* ritual complex has its roots in ancient times. According to the Bulgarian scientist Michail Arnaudov it came to Bulgarian lands from Minor Asia. Some scientists define its origin from the culture of the ancient Thracians. Its traditional existence in Bulgarian lands is because of Greek migrants in some Bulgarian villages on Strandja mountain: Brodilivo, Kosti, Gramatikovo, Kondolovo and Slivarovo. According to the theoretical basis of the Jungian analytical psychology, the steps of initiation are well recognizable in the stages of the ritual complex. Along with its unchangeable 'core,' the ritual complex undergoes different changes in time. Christianity imprint upon it was important, the years of communism determined other changes, recent times put their own sign on the tradition. One of these contemporary inventions is the migration of the ritual from its traditional places to one more place – in the Rhodope mountain village, named Stomanevo (also called Stomanovo), nearly thirteen years ago. Along with the new place, there appeared some new traits by comparison with the folklore tradition in Strandja, but its universal 'core' remains the same.

Key words

Analytical psychology, fire dancing, initiation, *nestinarsvo*, Rodopa mountain.

When a certain tradition is living, it undergoes changes. Every living ritual is a form of "invented tradition" (after Eric Hobsbawm) – there is always something old and something new. The migration of a ritual is a trait of a living tradition.

According to the analytical psychology of C. G. Jung, in the psyche there is an individual and universal part. The universal part, the collective unconscious, is inheritable, has compulsive expression and brings numinous experience. The archetypes, called by Jung "organs of the soul" are part of its structure and dynamics. Being "images without faces", they find expression in

the activities only through individual forms, which depend on the particular kind of culture and personality.

The individual traits of an activity change in time, but the universal ‘core’ remains. Following the energetic point of view of Jung, this universal unchangeable ‘skeleton’ of the ritual could be traced in several stages that could be found in every form of a ritual, irregardless of time and place. Jung calls it initiation (Samuels et al. 1995, 76–77).

The initiation is realized, when a person dares to act against the natural instincts and allows himself moving to awareness. In general, they are: 1. Regression of the conscious; 2. Free will sacrifice; 3. Integration of dichotomies; 4. Transformation; 5. Progression of the conscious; 6. Establishing a new, higher level of existence. This initiation is about the archetypes of the transformation, which Jung defines as non-personalized constructs about situations, modes, means for transformation, ensuring development and change; they are “expressed in many of the situations, places, objects and events, reflected in our dreams and leading corresponding motifs in the folklore” (Corsini 1998, 81). These stages are only conventionally traced, with the purpose of clearness and easiness in studying and observing community phenomena, such as rituals. Very often their differentiation is difficult, they shade one into another; the psychical dynamics is a whole process and the multidimensionality of the symbol is only about its conscious registration.

These stages are well visible in the *nestinarski* ritual complex in Stomanevo village. That is why it is a ‘complex’ – because it is composed of a number of stages, performed by different activities. *Nestinarstvo* is a folklore and archaic solar-chthonic cult about fertility, which is practiced through the *nestinarski* ritual complex. The performers are called *nestinari*.

The *nestinarski* ritual complex is very often equated with one of the components in it – the dance in the fire. “The strange dance in the fire, performed most often on 21 May, the day of Sts Constantine and Helena and rarer in June and July” (Arnaudov 1996, 380). The famous Bulgarian scholar Michail Arnaudov describes it as a dance, typical for Strandja mountain, for nearly twenty Bulgarian and Greek villages in the regions of Bunarhisar, Midia, Ahtopol on the Black Sea coast and unknown elsewhere in Europe. Petko Slaveikov¹ describes, that it is performed in the villages

¹The first Bulgarian, who documented the *nestinarstvo* in writing in 1866.

Kosti, Brodilovo, Blaca, Madjura, Pergoplovo, Rezovo, Murzevo and Agio-Stephano. “On the day of Constantine and Helena (21 May) in these villages they did big gatherings (*panairi*) and made outside of the village or in the village itself fires of 40-50 wooden stakes, around which they put tables. When with the sounds of the bagpipes the eating and drinking came to an end and the fire kindled, turning into glowing embers without flames, the peasants rise up, light candles, making the sign of the cross. At the same time, when someone of them ‘catches St. Constantine,’ jumped up, starting tearing off his clothes, going into the fire, holding in his hand his little domestic icon of Sts Constantine and Helena, with a handle below. In the fire he went about barefoot. Crossing several times the fire, he goes running into the forest or returns back into the village” (Arnaudov 1996, 381). “Sometimes this happened seven nights one after another and after this time the gathering broke up” (Arnaudov 1996, 384). The term ‘catches’ means to go into a trance. The fire-dancers are called *nestinari*. They are the Manna personalities, who conduct the ritual and fulfill its aims – well-being for all the people, fertility, end of the wars in the world. The *nestinari* are of different genders, they have hierarchy and it is believed, that the more of them dance in the event, the better the result of it will be.

Nestinarstvo is a ritual complex, which has different parts. The procession starts from the *konak* (a building, where the icons and the holy drum stay all the year; a holy building). Another stage of the ritual complex is the visitation of a holy water spring (*aiasmo*) and washing the icons of the saints. There is a musical accompaniment (a drum and bagpipes) during most of the stages. Another important trait is the procession walking across the village, from one stage of the ritual to another. There are also ritual fights, fire-dancing, sacrifice of a ram, bull or other kind of a cattle; a common table for the community and another one for the main participants, the procession with the icons visits all the homes in the village from door to door. Another stage of the ritual complex involves ‘meeting’ the two icons of the different villages, knocking them ‘across’ each other – the icon of the ‘Old’ and the ‘Young’ St. Kostadin (or Konstantin²).

According to the Bulgarian ethnologist Ivanichka Georgieva, there were migrations of the *nestinarstvo* in the years after the World War I to some villages in the region of its traditional existence, to the Pazarjik region,

² In the language of the common people.

to the Sofia region, brought by migration waves. In some of these places the ritual did not continue to exist for a long time. “The ritual was preserved comparatively longer in Primorsko, Carevo, Stara Zagora, until the 1940s” (Georgieva 2005, 6–7).

In the years of communism, the process of secularization and desacralization reached all the aspects of life, including the traditions. The *nestinarstvo* was reduced to only one component – dancing in the fire, presented in restaurants and hotels on the Black Sea coast as a show, as a ‘trick.’ These kinds of performances still exist. The individual type of culture brought changes in general. Many people perform it – in barracks, in different gatherings, for fun, in most cases without experiencing the sacredness or feeling it in a different context than in the traditional ritual. Gusgunis, a Greek researcher of *nestinarstvo*, describes the contemporary sacredness as “an invisible religion of our individuality”. Juxtaposing the concept of our contemporary times to experiencing the holiness of the gathered group, as in Durkheim’s concept, the author writes: “today the religion and its sacred ‘*raison d’être*’ (reasons for existing) are more accurately described by individualism and personal aspirations” (Gusgunis 2005, 93). This conclusion finds confirmation in the newest form of the *nestinarski* ritual, the one in Stomanevo.

Over the last 12-13 years, the ritual has migrated to one more place, where it had never been performed before. This place is in Rodopa Mountain, Stomanevo village. Field research undertaken in 2011³ gives information about interesting traits, some of them completely new, taken from the contemporary event.

The population of the village Stomanevo is about 150 persons, Bulgarian-Mohammedans: a Turkish ethnical community and small number of Pomaci, of Islamic confession. They call the ceremony ‘*nestinarski* feast’ or ‘a pagan ritual.’ The organizer and main performer, the only one Manna person in the event, is Ivailo Aianski. He claims that the ritual he performs is ‘authentic,’ with an origin in ancient Thrace 6000 years ago. Ivailo is a farmer and stock-breeder, he has flocks and (according to informer Z.V. born 1956, journalist, a poet, organizer of the visiting group from Varna and close friend of Ivailo) his annual harvest of potatoes is nearly 60 tonnes. He also produces cheese, milk, honey and other organic food. He studied ethnology

³ Carried out by Ana Stefanova.

in Plovdiv, but did not complete his education. Now he intends to write a book. The informer remarks that “What you see in Strandja is commercial, only a show”, here (in Stomanevo) is the real ritual.

Ivailo’s grandmother, Rufie, with the Bulgarian name Rosana, was the person responsible for his gifts and interests; she raised him and first introduced him to granny Zlata, the famous *nestinar* from Stranja. According to the informer, her ancestry is Albanian, connected to Mother Teresa; she was also a close friend to the prophetess Vanga and had control over the weather elements, with the ability to produce a storm, when she was angry about the bad deeds of someone in the village. Ivailo does not dance with an icon, but with his grandmother’s portrait or without holding anything. He worships his grandmother. As it is usual for the other *nestinars*, for him too, the ‘catching’ starts sometimes before the day of the feast: Ivailo feels “his soul departs the body”. The informer states that he is a witness of Ivailo’s ability to influence the weather; that in the earthquake in Bulgaria on 22nd of May there were no victims, because of Ivailo’s intervention. As the other *nestinars*, it is believed, that Ivailo has the ability to tell the future and his healing skills are connected to that gift. He cannot heal directly, but gives appropriate advice for methods or persons, that may help. This is his way of solving people’s problems, not only connected with health.

The stages of the ritual in Stomanevo are the same as Stranja’s. There is no *konak*, but the feast and the procession start from Ivailo’s own house, inherited from his grandmother. Musicians play in front of it – three drummers and the same number of bagpipers.

A chain dance (*horo*) is a dance that is played all day long, accompanying some of the stages of the ritual. All the people participate in it, including Ivailo and his relatives, who help him in different activities all the time. It is played first in front of Ivailo’s house, around a bonfire, in the beginning of the feast. According to our informant, it is called ‘the horo of life’ and it “cleans all the *chakras* and arranges the oncoming year to be good for the dancers”. At this stage, Ivailo ‘catches’ for first time for the day, playing in the fire.

Dressed in traditional clothes, he preaches to the visitors, talking about the spiritual virtues and the beliefs of ancient Thracians. After that, he goes into his home to offer fortune-telling for the visitors.

The next stage of the ritual complex is visiting the spring. The bagpipes start playing again and the procession from Ivailo’s house goes to the spring.

It is a stone fountain with three pipes and a stone notice on it, where it is written that it was done in 1985 as a present to the Stomanevo village from the municipality and is in honour of Bulgarian-Soviet friendship. This is another example of the 'adjustment' of the details in the universal archetypal form. The water-part includes activities with bread and water – he pours water on himself and drenches a piece of a round-bread. Putting a bouquet of yellow forest flowers into a copper vessel, he sprinkles the people around. After this, he puts the wet bread into a hollow of a big yoke-elm tree. Ivailo puts a morsel of bread into the mouth of everyone, starting with his helpers. In return, everyone kisses his hand.

When the last one from the line took part in this stage of the ritual, the procession continued to the glade, where the next and the final stage would take place.

The final point in the space and time structure of the ritual is a glade outside of the boundaries of the village. Bagpipes and drums start playing and people jump into the *horo* (chain-dance). At the one side of the glade are the cauldrons with the boiling *kuban*. Near them, at a pine-tree, up the sacrificial ram is tied: a beautiful dark-brown animal. This is a good illustration of how in syncretic mythological thinking the opposites of life-death coexist in one and the same time and space, ensuring the everlasting cycle life-death-life. At the glade, different items of the local food-production are available for sale: yoghurt, cheese, yellow cheese. The visitors, most of them from cities, are very interested and soon the production on offer is sold out.

Ivailo sits under an old wild-pear tree. The tree is an element, not included in Stranja's tradition, the sacrificial activities, too. Ivailo meditates, pressing his palms together in prayer, with wandering gaze. One of the helpers digs a pit with a spade in front of him, under the tree. The drums beat fast. The slaughterers bring the ram and position it laying on the fringe of the pit. At this stage, with all the traits of a chthonic cult, the sacrifice of the ram takes place.

During the skinning of the animal at the other side of the tree, Ivailo stays in his place preaching and divining.

Many people arrive at this stage of the ritual. The visitors are one of the factors that determine the profile of the contemporary invented tradition. It was attended by the winners of the last two seasons of the TV show *Clairvoyants*: Ivelina Hristova and Mariana Stefanova, TV 'stars', who represent the contemporary 'mystical' beliefs. There appeared to be a

hierarchy: Ivailo gives advice to Ivelina. She is here with a crew to shoot a movie about her, including the participation in the 'feast.'

Nearly 2 m³ of wooden stakes, brought here by a lorry, are arranged for a bonfire in the centre of the glade. They are lit without other fuel.

The helpers arrange a ring around the fire using meter-long stakes, marking a round place, with a diameter of nearly 15 meters. This is the border for the audience. Access to the inside of the ring is only for Ivailo, his helpers and the musicians.

The helpers lay out on the ground a white cloth, nearly 12 meters long, between the playground (*gumno*) and the 'Holy tree,' the wild pear. This is the Table. They decorate it with many garden flowers. The women set out on the table round bread, potato pastry (*patatnik* – specific meal for Rhodope Mountain, a region famous for its potatoes), onion pastry, biscuits, fried pastry, yoghurt etc. Finally they serve meat. The consumption of alcohol is not to be seen, either at this time or all day long.

The live coals in the fire are burning. The visitors throw in pieces of paper, where they have written their wishes.⁴ Ivailo invites the people at the table to take his gift, after a speech about peace and prosperity, sending thanks to his grandmother, who, as he says, instructed him in everything.

Ivailo starts his dance in the fire. After this, the feast ends and the crowd disperses. Some people take 'new' coals from the fire, putting back in it the 'old' ones, taken from it in the last year. This is the way they renew 'the fire,' initiating a new cycle – for the individual, the family, the community and the cosmos.

Another aspect, besides the specific details in the universal stages of the ritual complex, which helps describe the connection between the tradition and the new traits, is the attitude of the visitors, the crowd attending the event. It helps in distinguishing the universal and the individual traits, too. Most of the participants visit the event every year. Their attitude to the feast is belief, respect and feeling of sacredness. The conversations and activities of different groups of people are connected with modern eclectic beliefs and practices, such as '*chakra* activation,' 'Chinese massages and acupuncture,' 'the power of stone amulets,' 'the healing foods,' *karma*, etc. The observations of the attendees (clothing, cars, accessories, conversations

⁴ One of the many symbolic aspects of Fire based in the mythological ideas is to be a mediator between the Worlds, ensuring quick connection.

about jobs and occupation) enable us to suppose average and high social status of the majority.

The attitude of the locals to the feast has changed over time. At first, they were suspicious and negative. As time passed, Ivailo gained their respect and the feast became a part of their annual life circle. They show curiosity about the visitors, some of them only watching, others helping in the organization.

In general, some short conclusions could be made. The ritual has a universal archetypal 'core,' expressing particular psychic dynamics, a way to flatten the libido (according to the Jungian 'energetic' point of view). Also easily recognizable are the mythological type of thinking, and the contemporary details, 'entangled' with the tradition.

This invented tradition contains a cult about the forebearers. The *konak* is replaced by the house of the grandmother; the icon of the saints – by her portrait. The women's characters (granny Rosana, granny Zlata, Vanga, Mother Teresa) are Ivailo's aspects of the archetype of the Anima. In the Stranja ritual, she is present in St. Elena's character. As it is known from the concept of analytical psychology, the Anima is the archetype, who makes the connection between the I and the unconsciousness of men, she is a psychopomp. In this example, she leads into the trance. The relationship with these famous legendary women also increases the importance and the sacredness of Ivailo himself. Other specific elements in the Stmanevo ritual complex are:

- The *nestinar* Ivailo is important not only during the ritual; he is an organizer, whom people call 'our patron.' About the traditional Strandja ritual, Arnaudov writes that in secular life the *nestinars* are ordinary people;
- The tree next to the playground (*gumno*), symbolizing the Axis Mundi, the World Tree and the playground itself, present the vertical and horizontal structure of the world, where the ritual happens, *in illo tempore*, in the space and time, in the cycle of Life-Death-Life, following the stages of the initiation. The pit in the ground, the multitude and the Tree could be considered as the 3 dimensions in the Cosmos: Under-, Middle and Higher Worlds, connecting in between. The ritual itself establishes another multileveled connection and integration: of the micro- (the person), meso- (the community) and macrocosm, initiating a new, better stage of existence;

- Only Ivailo plays in the fire. This is 'his feast.' Not even his daughter participates in the firedancing. In Strandja, there are many *nestinars* and even the visitors are welcome to dance, if they want to.
- Renewing the coals (for 'health in the house');
- Writing wishes on pieces of paper;
- Creating hierarchy – the highest is the Manna person, after him – the helpers, believers and close friends, forming a cult of a person. The hierarchy in Strandja is different.

The main stages of the initiation are easily visible, based in the mythological ideas, in an archetype of transformation, recognizable in the traditional Strandja ritual, too:

- Visitation of the ayazmo (the holy spring of water);
- Freewill sacrifice of an Animal (the Primordial Source of Life, according to myths in different, mainly agrarian cultures⁵), with homological symbolic meaning with the sacrifice of Man (or/and God) and the Tree (the World Tree, the Axis Mundi), who burn in one and the same Fire, after ritual cleansing in one and the same Water. They form a unity (by the principle 'pars pro toto') which presents the burning of all the aspects of the micro- and macrocosm and the initiation of a New Cosmos and space-time cycle.
- The *horo* of life as another initiational element;
- The Way between the different stages of the ritual;
- Specific music and dances – drums and bagpipes;
- The common table. It is an expression of the wholeness, a gathering in space and time. Sharing a meal, as an experience expressing the dynamics of psychological introjection, is a way of integrating the micro- and the macro-level and a stage of the transformation, too;
- Divination and healing;
- Trance, ecstasy, firedancing.

⁵ Franz Cumont, for example, states that the sacrifice in Mithracism is an obligation of the priest and the blood of the victim is collected in a pit in the ground (Cumont 1999, 136). The sacrifices of living creatures, according to the author, are about the daemons. The *Tavrobolia* is connected with the ideas of cleansing and immortality, renovation in all the aspects of life. The basic idea is that the blood contains 'living energy' that may be transferred. Examples could be found in many different cultures. In this particular case, in *nestinarstvo*, they point to a solar-chthonic cult and the aim of integration of the opposites, transformation and renovation – stages of the initiation (renewing the world by the death and resurrection of the Primordial creature, symbolized by the *kurban* – one of its different aspects in the ritual), from which the entire world is created).

The unconscious acts compulsively; many of these specific details are parts of practices in the same and in different cultures, too. It is not necessary for people to have rational knowledge and information about them. They appear spontaneously, on the basis of the archetype.

The migration of a ritual takes place both in space and time. Space and time imprint their own specific traits, but the universal pattern of the initiation stays the same. It is an archetype of transformation, which, according to Jung, is inheritable, a part of the psyche, brings numinous experience and is revealed compulsively in behavior. It is a shape that is filled with the contents of the experience. The activities are objectivation of the psyche. The actions undergo introjection and influence the psyche; the psyche shapes the activities. The 'inner' and the 'outer' reality form an integrative whole that has specific dynamics of interaction. According to C. Kerényi, when the solidly constructed cultural monads break down, we found ourselves closer to various kinds of mysticism than to mythology, something midway between the archetype and the monadic fragment, the fixed monadic version – a living mythology (Jung and Kerényi 2002, 26–28). This process is observable in the invented tradition in Stomanevo.

REFERENCES

- Arnaudov, Mihail. 1996a. *Ocherci po balgarski folklor [Studies on the Bulgarian Folklore]*. Vol 1. Sofia: Akademichno izdatelstvo "Marin Drinov".
- . 1996b. *Ocherci po balgarski folklor [Studies on the Bulgarian Folklore]*. Vol 2. Sofia: Akademichno izdatelstvo "Marin Drinov".
- Jung, Carl Gustav, and Carl Kerényi. 2002. *The Science of Mythology*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge Classics.
- Corsini, Raymond. 1998. *Enciklopediya psihologiya [Encyclopedia of Psychology]*. Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo.
- Cumont, Franz. 1999. *Misteriite na Mitra [The Mysteries of Mithra]*. Sofia: Shambala.
- Eliade, Mircea. 2000. *Tarseneto. Istoriya i smisal v religiyata [The Quest. History and Meaning in Religion]*. Sofia: Lik.
- Georgieva, Ivanichka. 2005. "Nestinarstvoto mezhdu dvete svetovni vojni" [Fire Dancing Interwar]. *Balgarski folklor* 4: 5–25.
- Gusgunis, Nikos. 2005. "Transgresiya na sakralnoto v obrednata anastenariya" [Transgresy of the Sacral within Ritual Anastenaria]. *Balgarski folklor* 4,

92–11.

Samuels, Andrew, Bani Shorter, and Fred Plaut. 1995. *Kriticheski rechnik na analitichnata psihologiya [A Critical Dictionary of Jungian Analysis]*. Pleven: EA.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Ana Stefanova is a PhD student in IEFSEM – BAS, in the section of Historical Ethnology. She works in the field of rituals, fairytales. She uses the methods of analytical psychology.

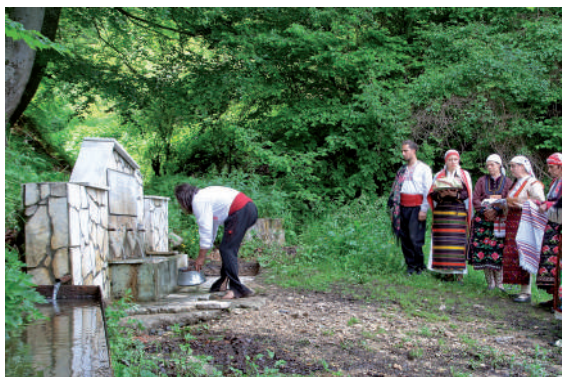
PICTURES



Pic. 1. The fire dance on the village square.



Pic. 2. The procession between some of the important stages of the ritual.



Pic. 3. Water worshiping.



Pic. 4. Sacrifice.



Pic. 5. Fortune telling.



Pic. 6. Dances by the fire.



Pic. 7. Fire dancing.

*The pictures show some of the main stages of the ritual complex.
Photography by Svetlan Stefanov © 2011.*

THE MIGRATION OF THE SEVEN SLEEPERS' MYTH FROM EPHEBUS TO BRITTANY: A CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM PILGRIMAGE CASE

Manoël Pénicaud

Abstract

Attesting to the resurrection of the body, the Seven Sleepers Myth has an eschatological meaning in Christianity, as well as in Islam in which they are known as 'Those of the Cave' according to the Koran. Initially originating in the 3rd century in the antic city of Ephesus (Turkey), the myth spread over the entire Christian and Muslim worlds. This is how it arrived to Brittany, France. Then, in the 1950s, a French orientalist, Louis Massignon, 'grafted' a Christian-Muslim gathering on a little Breton *pardon* (pilgrimage) dedicated to the Seven Sleepers. By utilizing this myth, he wanted to prepare the spiritual reconciliation between Christians and Muslims. Nowadays, this unexpected pilgrimage is still considered to be one of the oldest attempts at Christian-Muslim dialogue in France.

Based on historical and ethnographical research, this article focuses on the migration of the myth as far as Brittany, then on its contemporary and inter-religious instrumentalization.

Key words

Religious anthropology, pilgrimage, Seven Sleepers Myth, Christian-Muslim dialogue, Louis Massignon.

* * *

This article concerns the practice of the religious ritual year and it focuses on the migration of the myth of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, which led to the creation of an unexpected annual ritual in Brittany (France), originally for Muslim immigrants in the 1950s: a Christian-Muslim pilgrimage which is still active nowadays. However, we will see that the contemporary situation is clearly different from the beginnings of the pilgrimage.

Every year in July, Christian and Muslim pilgrims meet at the Sept-Saints hamlet near the village of Vieux-Marché (Cotes d'Armor). In 1954, Louis Massignon, orientalist and teacher at the prestigious *College de France*

in Paris, invited Muslims to a local, Catholic and Breton pilgrimage called a *pardon*, dedicated to these Seven Sleepers saints. Because they are also revered in Islam, Massignon wished to prepare a spiritual ‘reconciliation’ between Christians and Muslims.

How did the Seven Sleepers myth arrive from Ephesus (Turkey) to Brittany and how was this pilgrimage created? What are the specificities of this inter-religious cult? To answer, this article is divided into three parts: first, the presentation of the pilgrimage; second, its founding; third, the contemporary annual ritual.¹

1. The Seven Sleepers Myth and the Breton Pilgrimage

According to the legend, at the time of Christian persecution in the third century, the Seven Sleepers are seven Christian youths who fled to a cave near the ancient city of Ephesus, and there were buried alive, then fell into a miraculous sleep for almost two centuries². They then awoke in the fifth century (probably 448 CE) without knowing that the Roman Empire had become Christian. After some adventures, they were discovered and, afterwards, went to sleep forever, until the Last Judgement. This miracle attested to the resurrection of the body and had an eschatological meaning. It was very successful and spread over the entire Christian world.³

Then, this story passed into Islam in the seventh century. The miraculous sleep appears in the eighteenth surah of the Koran, called ‘The Cave’ after that of the Seven Sleepers, but they are called *Ahl al-Kahf* (‘Those of the Cave’, in Arabic) or *Ashab al-Kahf* (‘Companions of the Cave,’ in Arabic). It is more or less the same story but shorter and the style is more elliptical than in the Christian version. For example, the Islamic version gives an imprecise number of Sleepers (3, 5 or 7), with their sacred dog, called ‘Katmir,’⁴ who protects them during their sleep (often associated

¹ This article is based on a Ph.D. in anthropology defended in December 2010 at Aix-Marseille University, France. Historical data and anthropological reflections come from this extensive monograph which will be published: Manoël Pénicaud. *Le rüveil des Sept Dormants. Un pèlerinage islamo-chrétien en Bretagne*. Paris: Cerf.

² How long this sleep lasted in the miracle varies depending on legend versions.

³ Among the Christian sources of the myth: the homilies of Jacobus of Sarug (5th-6th century), *De gloria martyrii* by Gregory of Tours (6th century), or *The Golden Legend* by Jacobus of Voragine (13th century).

⁴ This name is not mentioned in the Koran but by Islamic scholars and commentators.

with al-Khidr, ‘the Green One,’ a great mystical figure revered in Islam) (Hasluck 2000). Their sleep lasted 309 years and the Ephesus location is not mentioned. This last point explains why many Muslim Seven Sleepers sites have emerged and have been considered as the original and miraculous cave all around the Mediterranean.

The eighteenth *surah* is very well-known for Muslims and, moreover, one *hadīth* (reports of statements or actions of Prophet Muhammad) recommends believers to read it every week in order to receive the *Sakina* (‘divine light,’ in Arabic).⁵ Whatever the case, the legend spread to the entire Muslim world, from Mecca to Andalusia and China, generating local forms of devotion to the *Ahl al-Kahf*.

Therefore, the Seven Sleepers myth did not stay in Asia Minor but emigrated with pilgrims, travellers, merchants and soldiers in all the Mediterranean, on both coasts, Christian and Muslim, and beyond. Taking only the Mediterranean into account, we can list many devotion sites in Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Spain, Italy, Greece, and right on to Brittany in northwestern France (Massignon 1954-1963).

This Breton case is very specific because of its unexpected pilgrimage (Pénicaud 2011). It occurs in three main spaces of the Sept-Saints’ hamlet. The first is the chapel built in the beginning of the eighteenth century. The second is its crypt, because the church was built over a Neolithic dolmen and this old megalith was once considered as the Seven Sleepers Cave. Third is the sacred fountain of the hamlet whose particularity is to have seven holes (probably because of the Seven Sleepers). This is the place where an imam psalmodies the eighteenth *surah* and it is the epicentre of the Christian-Muslim gathering.

The ritual ‘sequencing’ of the Pilgrimage takes place on two days, on the fourth weekend of July, and is composed of several sequences. It begins on the Saturday afternoon with an inter-religious dialogue debate in Vieux-Marché village hall, 4 km from Sept-Saints hamlet. Most of the audience (around 200 people) are Catholic and retired, and the most important and significant point is that there are very few Muslims (fewer than ten). After

⁵ Another *hadīth* about the 18th *surah* says: “Whoever recites Surat al-Kahf on Friday, a light out from under his feet to the heavenly horizon, who will shine in the Judgment, and his sins committed between two Fridays will be forgiven.”

the discussion, cultural activities are proposed to the ‘Christian-Muslim pilgrims,’⁶ such as a lecture on Islamic calligraphy or a concert by a Christian-Muslim couple. At the end of the day, all the pilgrims go to the Sept-Saints hamlet where the local festivities have already started. The Catholic mass is classical, but the main priest always has a personal link with the Arabic Muslim world. In his sermon, he always speaks about dialogue with Islam and refers to the Seven Sleepers myth. At the end of the mass, the traditional procession – with banners, crosses and a statue of the Virgin Mary – leaves the chapel and makes a round of a field before reaching the hamlet’s square. There, the priest lights a bonfire (*tantad*, in the Breton language). When the celebration is over, the *fest noz* (‘night festival’) begins with Breton music, traditional dances and a great deal of alcohol. Moreover, the refreshment stand becomes the profane epicentre of the night.

On Sunday morning, the Great Mass is at 11 a.m., with more people than on the Saturday. Most of them are Bretons and Catholics, and the rare Muslims remain outside the chapel, except those who are guests of honour. After the mass, the priest invites the congregation to follow another procession, to the spring. Many people do not, but about two hundred people go to the fountain, three hundred metres away, where an imam psalmodes the eighteenth surah. Afterwards, these pilgrims join the others in a meadow in front of the church to eat a *mechoui* (a North African dish). However, the investigation has revealed that the mutton is not *halal* (‘licit,’ according to the Koran, in Arabic), and this is one of the big ambiguities of the Christian-Muslim pilgrimage. Then, some pilgrims meet in the chapel for more dialogue organized by the local Christian clergy. This moment is intended for Catholics and only the imam is present to answer their questions. At the end of afternoon, most of the pilgrims have left the hamlet until next year.

2. The invention of the annual ritual Pilgrimage

The Seven Sleepers’ Myth spread over the Mediterranean. However, in France, its migration was not due to immigrants, but to one man who created a Christian-Muslim pilgrimage dedicated to the Seven Sleepers in

⁶ The expression of ‘Christian-Muslim pilgrims’ is used to distinguish them from the Breton and Catholic pilgrims of the local *pardon*.

the 1950s: Louis Massignon (1883-1962).⁷ He was one of the most famous French orientalist of the twentieth century, and an Islamic studies specialist (Massignon 2009). As such, he held the chair of ‘Muslim Sociography’ at the College de France in Paris for thirty years, and he dedicated his whole life to understanding Islam. But he was also a Catholic believer. When he died in 1962, Ibrahim Madkour said in Cairo that he was “the greatest Christian among Muslims and the greatest Muslim among Christians.”⁸ In fact, the two sides of his personality were inseparable: the rigour of the scientist and the faith of the mystical believer. And few people know that he was secretly ordained as a priest in 1950, in the Catholic Melkite Rite, by a special dispensation from Pope Pius XII.⁹

In 1952, Louis Massignon discovered in Brittany a local, Catholic, Breton pilgrimage called a *pardon*, dedicated to the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus that he studied in Islam and Christianity (Massignon 1950). The first Christian-Muslim pilgrimage was organized in July 1954, for “serene peace in Algeria,” as he said, even before the beginning of war in this French colony. The year after that, Massignon decided to invite Muslim workers from Paris, as there were no Muslims in Brittany. Furthermore, it was a way to integrate these immigrants in French Society (Pénicaud 2011).

As a ‘religious entrepreneur,’ Louis Massignon invented specific rituals in this new kind of pilgrimage. Muslims read the *Fatiha* (the first surah of the Koran) in front of the dolmen, then they joined the traditional Catholic procession to the bonfire, with a singular banner on which the beginning of the *Ave Maria* was written in Arabic (this banner had been blessed in a Christian-Muslim pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1958; it is a specific innovation of the Christian-Muslim ‘graft’ that produced ambiguity during the pilgrimage). Massignon ‘grafted’ something else new onto the *pardon*: he introduced a Melkite mass before the Latin one on the Sunday morning, but this celebration in Arabic was very strange for the local and Breton people. Nevertheless, the orientalist continued to innovate with a new ritual of the eighteenth surah: in 1961, he asked his friend Amadou Hampate Ba to psalmody the *al-Kahf* surah at the holy Fountain just after the Sunday mass.

⁷ The 1950s data about the pilgrimage’s founding come from the private and unpublished archives of Pr. Massignon, kept in his family until 2012, before being transferred to the prestigious National Library of France (Bibliothèque Nationale de France) in Paris.

⁸ Tribute to Louis Massignon by Ibrahim Madkour delivered in Cairo, 20 December 1962.

⁹ His ordination took place in St. Mary’s Church of Peace in Cairo, 28 January 1950.

First and foremost, Massignon wanted to prepare the reconciliation between Christians and Muslims before the Last Judgement in an eschatological way. Therefore, his overall project concerned not only Brittany but all humanity. He wanted to anticipate the final gathering of humanity in Jerusalem.

Secondly, his wish was to gather together all Abraham's children, including the Jews, but later.¹⁰ This is what I call Massignon's 'Abrahamic ecumenism.' While the pilgrimage was intramundane, his project was primarily eschatological and extramundane.

Louis Massignon died in 1962, just after the end of the War in Algeria. But some of his followers maintained the Christian-Muslim initiative in Brittany. Despite this continuity, the Christian-Muslim pilgrimage (not the Breton and Catholic part) declined in the 1980s with the last followers, but it was reborn in the 1990s.

3. The contemporary Christian-Muslim Pilgrimage

Nowadays, the situation is very different from that in Massignon's time. At the beginning of the 1990s, a new local association (*Seven Sleepers' Springs*) revived the Christian-Muslim pilgrimage, organizing inter-religious dialogue and debate where Christian and Muslim speakers are invited to discuss social and religious themes. The main values proclaimed are peace, coexistence and social cohesion. This initiative was first launched by non-believers: though linked to an inter-religious pilgrimage, the aim is also humanistic and not strictly religious. However, the project has not been successful because of local reactions: in fact, local people are not interested in the debates. They think them too intellectual and do not feel concerned by the Christian-Muslim themes. One of the reasons for this is certainly that there are not many Muslims in this rural area, but other factors can explain this lack of interest.

During the Christian-Muslim pilgrimage, Muslim attendance is very low. Each year, there are only between five and ten. Though there are Muslims living in the nearest little town, they boycott the pilgrimage. Why? Because they are not really invited by the organizers, who say that Muslim people go to their countries of origin in North Africa during the summer,

¹⁰ Actually, his position towards Judaism was ambiguous, because of the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. He had taken a stand for the internationalization of the Holy Land and for the cause of Palestinian refugees.

although this is not enough to explain their absence. For the Muslims, it is a Catholic gathering organized to meet Muslims, but not for Muslims. The case of the *mechoui* is capital: the organizers propose this North African meal in order to include Muslim pilgrims but, as mentioned above, the meat is not *halal* (licit, in Arabic). Therefore, Muslims are not totally respected; some of them considered this an outrage and will not come the following year.

Furthermore, the 'inter-religious pilgrimage' is organized by Catholics alone, who select the themes for dialogue. It is a Catholic event, to which just a few liberal Muslims are invited. Indeed, Islam is an invited religion in an invented pilgrimage (the Christian-Muslim graft).

Another important point is that the Pilgrimage is changing: from an inter-religious annual ritual to an intercultural one ('intercultural,' as organizers say). Many cultural activities are programmed, and other religions are invited to debate, even non-believers and agnostic people, as well. The event is becoming more a locus of dialogue than a ritual Pilgrimage as a place of devotion.

Pilgrimage as ritual year

To conclude, here are some reflections about pilgrimage phenomena in a religious ritual year, already studied by famous anthropologists. In the 1970s, Victor and Edith Turner defined the concept of *communitas* which is an alternative spatio-temporal system opposed to the 'structure' society (Turner and Turner 1969, 1978). Based on the rites of passage theory (Arnold Van Gennep 1909), pilgrims would enter in the *communitas* governed by other values. But in the 1990s, John Eade and Michael Sallnow used the metaphor of *arena* to define the pilgrimage process (Eade and Sallnow 1991): this is not a peaceful and harmonized area, placed under the sign of *communitas*, but a space of competition where social differences are still profoundly at work, as in the rest of the society.

In the Breton case, behind the promotion of peace and *vivre-ensemble* (living together), there is a lot of tension between organizers, local people, Catholic clergy, the municipality, agnostic people, and so on. Nowadays, many kinds of pilgrims come to the same area with different intentions, practices, and representations. They can be Christians, Muslims, but also tourists, humanists, agnostics, and a lot of New Agers visit the sacred site (Neo-Celts, Neo-Druids, Neo-Shamans, dowsers or magnetic healers). Their presence confirms the pilgrimage's heterogeneity and mosaic attendance (Pénicaud 2011).

Furthermore, according to John Eade and Michael Sallnow's concept, this pilgrimage appears to be an "empty vessel" that pilgrims fill with the meaning of their choice, even when contradictory (Eade and Sallnow 1991). This is a place of juxtaposition of intentions and expectations. In fact, it is an inclusive pilgrimage which can be considered as 'unlocked' by Louis Massignon in the 1950s.

The Seven Sleepers pilgrimage in Brittany is a very interesting case study. From the mobility of the Seven Sleepers' Myth, we observe its inter-religious instrumentalization to promote dialogue during an annual pilgrimage. This unexpected pilgrimage was made to integrate Muslims immigrants and their descendants who became French citizens. It reveals cultural interactions caused by the migration process in France, in the context after World War II and the War in Algeria. However, the aspect of integration intended in the pilgrimage has failed. There are very few Muslims and the ritual is more for Catholics than for Muslims. Thus, the situation reveals a kind of 'artificiality' and shows 'an invited religion in an invented pilgrimage.'

The interesting point is the ritual transformations, year by year. It is becoming an 'intercultural' event more than an inter-religious pilgrimage. In this way, this ritual year event will continue, but also continue changing.

REFERENCES

- Coleman, Steeve. 2002. "Do you believe in pilgrimage? *Communitas*, contestation and beyond." *Anthropological Theory* vol. II (3): 355–368.
- Eade, John, and Michael J. Sallnow, eds. 1991. *Contesting the Sacred. The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Jourdan, François. 2001. *La tradition des Sept Dormants. Une rencontre entre chrétiens et musulmans*. Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose.
- Hasluck, Frederick. 2000. *Christianity and Islam under the sultan*. Istanbul: The Isis Press.
- Massignon, Louis. 1950. "Les Sept Dormants, Apocalypse de l'Islam." *Mélanges Paul Peeters* II: 245–260.
- . 1954-1963. "Les Sept Dormants d'Éphèse (ahl Al-Kahf) en Islam et en Chrétienté. Recueil documentaire et iconographique." *Revue des Études Islamiques*. Paris: Geuthner.

- . 1992. *La crypte-dolmen des VII Saints Dormants d'Éphèse au Stiffel (en Plouaret, puis Vieux-Marché)*. Extrait des Mémoires de la Société d'Émulation des Côtes-du-Nord: Saint-Brieuc.
- . 2009. *Écrits Mémorables*. Paris: Robert Laffont.
- Morinis, Allan, ed. 1992. *Sacred Journeys. The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- Pénicaud, Manoël. 2011. "L'hétérotopie des Sept Dormants en Bretagne." *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 155: 131–148.
- Preston, James J. 1992. "Spiritual Magnetism: an Organizing Principle for the Study of Pilgrimage." In *Sacred Journeys. The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, edited by Allan Morinis, 32–46. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- Sallnow, Michael J. 1981. "Communitas Reconsidered: The Sociology of Andean Pilgrimage." *Man* 16/2: 163–182.
- Turner, Victor W. 1969. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Turner, Victor W., and Edith Turner. 1978. *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological perspectives*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Van Gennep, Arnold. 1981. *Les rites de passage*. Paris: Editions Picard.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Anthropologist at the *Institute of Mediterranean European and Comparative Ethnology* in Aix-en-Provence (France), Manoël Pénicaud is specialized in the pilgrimage studies. His Ph.D. was on the Christian-Muslim pilgrimage of the Seven Sleepers in Brittany and it will be published in France (Le Cerf, Paris). He holds a post-doctoral position at the *Museum of the civilizations from Europe and the Mediterranean* in Marseilles (MuCEM) and he works on shared shrines in the Mediterranean.

RITUAL HEALING ON TWO CONTINENTS: NATURE, TRADITION, AND BELIEF (PART I)

Marlene Hugoson

Abstract

This paper examines how two types of healing trees were used in the Swedish folk tradition, and looks at the ritual actions and ritual speech connected with them, as well as the deeper belief systems surrounding them. The analysis traces how the beliefs changed as society changed, and how attitudes towards the healing trees finally went through a transformation from being used in general folk cures to being elevated to the status of valued cultural heritage. In the second part of this combined paper Nancy McEntire takes a closer look at the current use of a specific healing tree in the United States.¹

Key Words

Healing trees, traditional healing, folk cures, folk belief.

It is obvious that trees are symbolically charged and that they to a large extent speak to our feelings and are part of both individual lives and collective memory. Trees have the ability to transcend time and phases like few other things or events. How they are handled and how one speaks of them tells a lot about the time in which they are planted, cared for or cut down (Hagström and Sjöholm 2007).²

Trees in Swedish folk tradition

Human interaction with nature, the power of belief, and the uses of ritual actions and ritual speech provide valuable data for the analysis

¹ Nancy McEntire, "Ritual Healing on Two Continents: Nature, Tradition, and Belief (Part II)," in this book.

² All translations from Swedish into English in this article are the author's own.

of traditional folk cures. In Swedish folk tradition, trees have played an important part in ritual healing. Aches and ailments of different kinds could be ‘put away’ and transferred to (specific) trees. In Sweden, healing trees have been used to cure the English disease (rickets), toothache, a bad back, a hernia, mumps, tuberculosis, cramps, feeble-mindedness, falling sickness (epilepsy), boils, and even the unwelcome presence of a changeling.³ This paper takes a closer look at the tradition, the different types of healing trees, the rituals that are used to achieve the transfer of illness, and the belief systems that surround them.

In Swedish folk tradition there are three main categories of trees connected with ritual healing: *Bortsättningsträd* (Put Away Trees) to which you could transfer illness, *Smöjträd* (Drawing Trees) with openings through which a person could be drawn or pulled and thus healed, and *Vårdträd* (Care Trees) which were planted to mark occasions such as birth or weddings, drawing on the symbolism between families and roots. I have decided to limit the scope of this paper to the first two types, as they were used solely for healing, while the *Vårdträd* had several purposes, of which only some were connected with healing.

Transferring the illness

The research examples in this paper primarily come from the archives of the Department of Dialectology and Folklore Research in Uppsala, Sweden. In the archive catalogue of *Realia* there are some 425 accessions on *Bortsättning*,⁴ referring to the transfer of illness, mainly onto trees. There are many names for these ‘Put Away Trees,’ including ‘Troll Trees’ and ‘Mære Trees’ (names referring to the unusual growth pattern of the tree, and linking the trees to folkloristic beings), and ‘Ache Trees,’ ‘Toothache Trees,’ and ‘Boil Trees’ (names referring to the specific use of the tree although these trees were also chosen because of their unusual look), and finally ‘Sacrifice Trees’ (a name referring to the sacrifice needed to be rid of the sickness, often consisting of a coin transferring the illness from the person to the tree).

In 1830 there were only four practicing dentists in Sweden, and needless to say they only treated wealthy patients. The men who pulled teeth

³ See excerpts under headings ‘*Bortsättning*’ and ‘*Smöjning*’ in the Catalogue of *Realia* at the DFU Archives in Uppsala.

⁴ Excerpts ‘*Bortsättning*’.

from ordinary people used tools such as pliers, which were not made for dentistry, and thus ‘Toothache Trees’ were the preferable option for many. A nail or wooden splinter was used to pick at the aching tooth or the gums until blood was drawn, and then the nail or splinter was hammered into the tree, often accompanied by an incantation (Hagberg 1931).

Looking at the number of doctors we find that there were two hundred doctors in Sweden at the beginning of the 19th century, and with a population of 2.3 million, they were few and far between even if you had the means to pay one.⁵ Needless to say, wise men and women had an important role to play in this society.

Gustaf Ersson, who was born in 1845 and living at Hagstugan in the district of Dalarna in 1937, tells of the healing rituals that were performed there:

It's put in trees, boils and aches. I have seen that old man at Hagstugan put in toothache, boils and mischief. He took puss from the boil with a stick and drilled a hole in the tree – that apple tree standing out there – and then he put the stick in the tree. If you look, it is filled with little holes and bumps on the apple tree; they're showing. That crazy shoemaker farmhand, he sawed off two branches and grafted shoots to the tree; he got cancer. They call it putting away the ache.⁶

In this account we learn a little about how the healing was done, that a stick is put to the wound and then into a drilled hole in the tree, but also that the tree is dangerous and that it can make you sick if you, like the farmhand in the story, take a saw to it and harm it.

While interpreting the archival material I found Sir James George Frazer's theoretical work in *The Golden Bough* (Frazer 1922) which was published in 1922 especially helpful, particularly in finding the deeper belief behind the ritual actions. In it he talks about the two laws of *sympathetic magic*: *homoeopathic* or *imitative magic* and *contagious magic*. Using Frazer's terminology the ‘Put Away Trees’ represent a form of *contagious magic* used within folk medicine: by transferring blood, puss, hair or nail clippings to the tree, the sick person established a bond between himself and the healing tree.

⁵ “Vår stolta historia,” Svenska Läkaresällskapet (SLS): <http://www.sls.se/Om-SLS/Historia/> (accessed 20 June 2012).

⁶ Dialekt- och folkminnesarkivet i Uppsala, ULMA 10923, 225.



Pic. 1. The 'Put Away Tree' at Hagstugan in the district of Dalarna. Notice the scarred bark. Photo by Ingeborg Nordin-Grip, 1937. ULMA 10923 p. 226. © Institute of Language and Folklore.

This theory is partially supported by the archival material. Many accounts talk of the danger of cutting down these trees and in my research I have found two belief systems explaining the dangerous qualities of the trees: In the more common form the ache put in the tree was believed to transfer onto whoever harmed the tree. In the more uncommon form the aches could be released and transferred back to the person who originally put the ache in the tree, if the tree was harmed.⁷ The two belief systems can be illustrated with a couple of quotations: “Woe to him that cut such a tree, that person no doctor can cure,”⁸ revealing the contagious quality, and “The man gets to keep his teeth as long as the tree stands, but loses them when the tree is cut down,”⁹ pointing to the existence of a bond between man and tree.

Drawing through a cleft, loop twisted or entwined tree

In the Uppsala archive there are some 200 accessions on *Smjoträd*, a magic folk cure in which the sick person is pulled through a natural or manmade hole in a tree or under an exposed tree root. This practice is known in Europe, as well as in more distant parts of the world (Hagberg 1931; Hansen 1950). Here too, several names are used for the tree, descriptive of the tree or of the main action used in the healing (*Smjoträd* and *Vålbundet träd*).¹⁰

⁷ Excerpts ‘*Bortsättning*’ and ‘*Smjörning*’.

⁸ ULMA 4165, 34.

⁹ ULMA 11559, 10.

¹⁰ Looking at excerpts under headings ‘*Bortsättning*’ and ‘*Smjörning*’ in the Catalogue of Realia at the DFU Archives in Uppsala the following names can be found: *Smjoträd*, *häfträd*, *krappaträd*, *vårdbundet/vålbundet/valbundet träd*. Engström and Marklund 1994 – search word ‘*Smjoträd*’

To make the cure potent, the hole should be of an unusual kind (von Sydow 1932, 246–247). There are several sources describing how trees were cut into and of already existing wedges being opened to create a larger hole in the trunk through which a person could pass; later, the hole was closed up again and the tree bound to let it heal. Trees with natural holes in them were also used, and even cut out sections of trees with a natural hole could be used to draw a child through, and although the latter were functional as they could be kept at home, a living tree had more potency.¹¹

When it came to children suffering from rickets, a nutritional deficiency causing bone deformity, drawing through a tree was the predominant cure (Engström and Marklund 1994, 415). Returning to Frazer and the division he makes between different types of magic, the drawing through a tree represents a form of *homoeopathic* or **imitative magic** (Frazer 1922), transferring the crookedness and odd growth of a child's bones to a likewise wrongly growing and crooked tree.

Just as with the 'Put Away Trees,' a bond is imagined to have been created between the sick person and the tree: A tree trunk was wedged open, through which the patient was passed three times whereupon the tree was closed up again and tied together. When the tree mended so did the patient (von Sydow 1932, 247). However, if you did not take care of the tree afterwards the repercussions could be fateful; Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (1878-1952), who wrote an article about healing trees in 1932, writes:

*I heard an old tenant farmer in Småland tell the story of how his brother, as a child, had been drawn through a rowan tree, cleft for the purpose. The cure was successful, but the father was then so careful of the tree, because if it withered, the boy must die.*¹²

There are several interpretations of the symbolism behind someone being drawn through a cleft tree, loop twisted or entwined tree: one

¹¹ Excerpts 'Bortsättning' and 'Smöjning.' Hagberg, "Läkedomskonst," 299.

¹² Von Sydow 1932, 248. Swedish folklorist Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (1878-1952) has looked at healing trees using Frazer's work on *sympathetic magic*. Although he never mentions Frazer's work in his article from 1932, he does develop on his thoughts: using the terms *emotional or fantasy association*, discussing how a specific tree is originally chosen as a healing tree, and of how the sacrifice works, using the Latin "post hoc ergo propter hoc", a logical fallacy meaning recovery came after the sacrifice and that the recovery thus is due to the sacrifice (von Sydow 1932, 229–230). Also, compare the belief shown in the quote to the theme in Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* from 1891.

interpretation is that the crookedness of the bones is transferred to a likewise crooked tree, what Frazer calls *Imitative magic* (Frazer 1922). Continuing his interpretation along with Frazer's theory, von Sydow states that trees are seen as being imbued with healing powers, and by establishing a bond, the tree and person become connected: the person receiving the benefit of the wholesome powers of the tree, and the tree containing the power of the illness without being affected (von Sydow 1932, 256).

Another interpretation is that the illness was brushed or scraped off since it could not pass through the narrow hole in the tree (von Sydow 1932, 249; Hansen 1950, 34). Finally, the drawing through tree can symbolise rebirth; that the person is reborn and thus free from the illness that was contracted later in life (Hansen 1950, 34). This last theory also fits with Arnold van Gennep's contemporarily presented theory of *rites de passage* from 1909 (van Gennep 1909).

Magic and cosmology

The variation in combinations in the archival material is endless and varies from one part of the country to another. It seems that the choice of tree, the sacred actions and sacred words were up to each healers fancy, finding the most suitable combination for each case treated. This is also the case when the patient treats him- or herself. In finding odd looking trees and designating them as possessing a healing quality, a specific **place** is established, but a few other things are also of significance (underlined in the quotation below).

A researcher who has looked at folk cures and healing trees was Louise Hagberg (1868-1944), former curator at Nordiska museet in Stockholm. In an article, she refers to a record from Salem County in Sweden, which in many ways is exemplary:

At Rönninge farm (Sörmland), by lake Flaten, there once was a 'cleft goat willow tree', by which rotted clothes lay in the 1880's, and by the year 1895 a large pile of clothes was still to be seen there. Through a large hole in the trunk, children were taken through the tree, on the first Thursday of the month, at which time they were drawn, head first, to the East, around the tree three times, and then through again, whereupon the child's vest or a shirt were thrown by the tree (Hagberg 1921, 176).

If we begin by looking at the first underlined word, several accounts speak of water close to or surrounding the tree, and north running waters were preferred.¹³ Water of course has purifying qualities, besides giving the tree basic sustenance.

In this account, as in several of the accounts in the Uppsala archive, Thursdays are also mentioned,¹⁴ and the importance of Thursdays comes from the Christian tradition, as Jesus shared his last supper with the apostles and instructed the Holy Communion on a Thursday,¹⁵ pointing to the religious influence.

In this account we should also note the correspondence between the lunar phase and the patient's age: that the child is treated when the moon too is young and emerging.¹⁶ More commonly though, the moon was thought to be at its most potent when full.¹⁷

In this account we are given examples of the relevance of both the sun's movement and the lunar phase, and their influence over patients, again pointing to the belief in the connection between nature and man, but also to the importance of choosing days which have religious meaning. The specific point in time thus played an important part in the ritual healing.

Also contained in the account is a reference to a point of the compass, and the movement from West to East.¹⁸ The inspiration for this is likely to have come from the layout of Swedish churches, where the entrance is usually found in the West and the choir and altar in the East.

In the account we also find the use of a magic number, and this too is reflected in the archival material, where we find that the healing powers can be enforced by the use of magic numbers such as 3, 7, and 9; 3 for the Holy Trinity, 3x3 to triple the effect, and 7 for the seven days of Creation. The most common treatment for curing a toothache was to put three splinters to the bad tooth, which were then put into the tree, sometimes with a specific

¹³ ULMA 6579, 33. ULMA 12580, 14.

¹⁴ Excerpts '*Bortsättning*' and '*Smöjning*.'

¹⁵ This in turn goes back to Jewish tradition and the Seder Meal at Passover.

¹⁶ A previous parallel to this belief is found in Benedictus Olai's work *Een nyttigh läkere book* (A Useful Book on Medicine) from 1578, in which he states that bloodletting of young people should be done when a new moon was emerging, while bloodletting on old people should be done when the moon was full and receding (Benedictus, CXLI).

¹⁷ Excerpts '*Bortsättning*' and '*Smöjning*.'

¹⁸ Ibid.

incantation spoken. For curing rickets the common treatment was to draw the child counter-clockwise three or nine times through a tree on a Thursday with an approaching moon.¹⁹

According to von Sydow, the pieces of clothing left by the tree were items representing the illness, but because of the clothing's material nature, they could also be regarded as a form of sacrifice. In sacrificing, the more you sacrifice the more health you are believed to receive from the sacrifice, and again the sacred numbers can be applied; If three sacrifices are required, and one did not have much, three pins were considered the minimal sacrifice (von Sydow 1932, 240; 254–255). Like silver, steel was thought to ward off evil (i.e. *apotropaic magic*), and the sacrifice of a coin, metal pin or nail thus represents more than a sacrifice; it is also a protective action.

In 1930, Mrs Johansson in Skärträsk, a teacher who was born in 1881, tells of the healing rituals performed there:

*There were two twins here in Skärträsk who were very sickly and whiny. They were both girls. It was thought they had rickets and needed to be cured. Two firstborn unmarried boys were chosen to draw the girls through a loop twisted tree. They drew the girls three times from West to East. I was there and watched when I was fifteen. Had it been a boy who was sick it would have been two firstborn girls who would draw the child.*²⁰

Here we are given an example of how gender and *opposites* were used, and the use of gender and *direction* is reported by Louise Hagberg who found that boys were drawn from the right and girls from the left (Hagberg 1950, 299), which again corresponds with the Christian tradition, where the left is the female side, and the right is the male side.

Incantations and prayers

Combining magic actions was believed to make the cures more potent and the final ingredient was incantation or prayer. Going through the archival material in Uppsala, there were no examples of incantations or prayers used in the drawing through a tree,²¹ perhaps because this was a magical knowledge that was to be protected so as not to lose its potency. Looking at

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ ULMA 3038:1, 36.

²¹ Excerpts 'Bortsättning' and 'Smöjning'.

an account from Enviken in von Sydow's article, in which a child touched by rickets was drawn under a root, we only learn that 'something secret' was read (von Sydow 1932, 252). It is generally known however that wise persons could 'read away' illness. Sometimes the words were incomprehensible, at other times they were prayers in the name of God, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. In old forms the incantations can even contain the names of the Nordic heathen Gods: Oden, Tor and Frej (Schlecker 2002, 46–47).

With 'putting away toothache' however, there are several examples of incantations to be found: On the first strike, hitting a rusty nail to the North side of a tree you call: "Here I strike!", on the second strike: "...in my toothache!", and on the third strike: "Rest there and don't come back!"²² In another account, three horseshoe-nails were put into a tree while the Lord's Prayer was recited backwards.²³ Family was also a source of strength as speaking one's own and especially one's father's name held power.²⁴ A firstborn woman could also transfer the toothache to a tree with the words: "I cut, and I cut, the toothache into you."²⁵ Worms were thought to be the cause of toothaches and from that the following incantation comes: "Stay here worm, in wood, under bark."²⁶ Other incantations were: "Here you can ache as much as you like,"²⁷ "Take this and play with (it),"²⁸ and "Now you can ache there."²⁹

Rhymes were also used: "It should ache alone, not in bone."³⁰ In the material there is only one record of a 'reading' for something other than toothache and that is for a boil: "Boils blue, there you flew."³¹ There are also examples of a lack of words, where total silence is required to make the cure

²² ULMA 3359:1a, 1. There are also examples of a nail or splinter from a coffin being used to cure toothache (ULMA 4601, 13, 7265, 13) or splinters from trees hit by lightning (for example ULMA 16983, 7).

²³ ULMA 1415:4, 60.

²⁴ ULMA 4781, 22. ULMA 7782, 19.

²⁵ ULMA 20446, 110.

²⁶ ULMA 27943, 3–4.

²⁷ ULMA 8039, 3.

²⁸ ULMA 8162, 63–64.

²⁹ ULMA 2051, 5.

³⁰ ULMA 5874, 3. The adjustment of the Swedish word 'en' (juniper) to 'alone' makes the rhyme work in translation.

³¹ ULMA 23031, 111. The adjustment of the Swedish word 'stå' (stand) to 'flew,' makes the rhyme works in translation.

work, both during the healing ritual and on the way home afterwards.³²

From potent magic to cultural heritage protection

Over time the healing trees, so it was believed, came to hold a lot of aches and illnesses, and harming these trees could be very dangerous, as it was thought that the sickness would then be released.³³ But in magic there is thankfully the converse action as well: If you needed to cut a healing tree down, the danger could be averted if the first three splinters from the first chops of the axe were placed on the chopping block.³⁴ In one account the man intending on cutting the tree down commanded the tree and then cut it down in the Lord's name, and all was well.³⁵ In 1922 Karl Persson from Risinge County gave this account: "He who unwittingly cut down such a sickness tree, without knowing it was such, could try to shield himself from the consequences by gaping over the blade of the axe and taking it in his mouth."³⁶ Sharp objects were thought to cut through pain, and axes were of course made of iron or steel, and this combined countermeasure might thus ward off the released evil.

A change in the old beliefs was however underway: In 1932 Oscar Olsson, an agricultural labourer born in 1855, made this account:

When little children did not want to walk (i.e. they were suffering from rickets), they used to draw them through an oak here in Eknäs. They said, that it was a cleft tree, that. I was about twelve or thirteen years old, when they drew a girl from the Smitty's cottage there. They were supposed to draw so that her vest got stuck in the hole and decomposed. No-one was allowed to touch the tree afterwards. The hole in the oak goes from West to East, but nowadays it has grown shut. There was a farmhand from Malm there who took an axe to the tree, because he wanted to see if he would get sick, but he didn't get any boils.³⁷

³² ULMA 24526, 2.

³³ Excerpts 'Bortsättning' and 'Smöjning.'

³⁴ ULMA 4781, 18. 5529, 73-74.

³⁵ ULMA 5229, 73-74.

³⁶ ULMA 1756:1, 105.

³⁷ ULMA 4872, 13-14.



*Pic. 2. The oak tree at Eknäs (a cleft healing tree). Illustration by Waldemar Palmblad 1932. ULMA 4872, p. 14.
© Institute of Language and Folklore.*

In von Sydow's article from 1932 you can see the shift in the belief system as well. Previously it was believed that the coins transferred the illness they were sacrificed for, and that taking the coins would transfer the illness to the person taking them. But when von Sydow does his fieldwork, he finds that the money is often gone, taken by someone who needs it, and who no longer believes in this magic (von Sydow 1932, 227–228; 241–242; 253–256).

Changes in society led to the shift in the belief systems: due to the great medical developments of the 19th century many diseases and aches became a thing of the past, and consequently the healing trees lost their importance as a general folk cure (Fåhræus 1970, 328–337; Honko 1978, 1–2). With this said, the healing trees were still in use in the 1920s, and some can still remember what was said about them. The trees have therefore not been forgotten, although the imagined danger of touching them has been discarded with time. Instead the healing trees have become part of the cultural heritage and are put on display by museums and local antiquities societies³⁸ and, like buildings, trees like these can get listed and protected by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, County Administrative Boards, and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences³⁹ – taking the healing trees from general folk curing traditions to being regarded as valuable cultural heritage.

³⁸ “Våra trolltallar,” Enhörna hembygdsförening, www.web.telia.com/~u94303517/enhorna/trolltall.htm.

³⁹ “Åtgärdsprogram för särskilt skyddsvärda träd i kulturlandskapet,” in Rapport 5411. Oktober 2004, Naturvårdsverket: www.naturvardsverket.se/Documents/publikationer/620-5411-2.pdf (accessed 20 June 2012). “Naturminnen i Stockholms län,” in Rapport 2005:01, Länsstyrelsen i Stockholms län: www.lansstyrelsen.se/stockholm/SiteCollectionDocuments/Sv/publikationer/2005/rapport-2005-1.pdf (accessed 20 June 2012), Trädportalen, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), www.tradportalen.se/.

ARCHIVE RECORDS

Dialekt- och folkminnesarkivet i Uppsala (DFU)

Archive records (ULMA). 1415:4. 1756:1. 2051. 3038:1. 3359:1a. 4165. 4601. 4781. 4872. 5229. 5874. 6579. 7265. 7782. 8039. 8162. 10923. 11559. 12580. 16983. 20446. 23031. 24526. 27943.

Catalogue of Realia. Excerpts under headings 'Bortsättning' and 'Smöjning'.

REFERENCES

- Benedictus Olai. 1957. *Een nyttigh läkere book*. Stockholm: Tryckt j Stocholm aff Anders Torstenson. Anno Domini 1578, 1578. Malmö: Malmö ljustrycksanst, (Faksimil).
- Dahlin, Bengt, and Jan Kuuse. 2010. *Från provinsialläkare till primärvård – en historisk exposé*. Lerum: Bengt Dahlin. bengtdahlin.se/HoSstoryn1/indexa.html or bengtdahlin.se/HoSstoryn1/filer_del_1C/socialsverige.html.
- Engström, Christer, and Kari Marklund, eds. 1994. *Nationalencyklopedin: ett uppslagsverk på vetenskaplig grund utarbetat på initiativ av Statens kulturråd*. Höganäs: Bra böcker.
- Fåhræus, Robin. 1970. *Läkekostens historia. Från magi till vetenskap*. Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand.
- Frazer, James George. 1922. *The Golden Bough*. New York: Macmillan. bartleby.com/196/.
- Hagberg, Louise. 1921. "Några anteckningar om 'smöjning'." In *Etnologiska studier tillägnade Nils Edvard Hammarstedt 19 3/3 21*, edited by Sune Ambrosiani, 171–182. Stockholm: Svenska teknologföreningens förlag. ukforsk.se/lokalhistforsk/smojning.pdf.
- Hagberg, Louise. 1931. "Läkedomskonst." In *Svenska kulturbilder*, book 4, part VII & VIII, edited by Sigurd Erixon and Sigurd Wallin, 291–312. Stockholm: Skoglund.
- Hagström, Charlotte, and Carina Sjöholm. 2007. "Utan träd är staden steril och karg." In *Gröna fakta, Trädens arkitektur och natur*, no. 8, edited by Charlotte Hagström and Carina Sjöholm, 1–4. Alnarp: Movium, SLU.
- Hansen, Hans Peter. 1950. *Primitiv folkmedicin, II, Transplantation*. København: Munksgaard.
- Honko, Lauri. 1978. "Folkmedicinens roll i går och i dag." In offprint of *Tradisjon. Tidsskrift for folkeminnevitenskap* 8, 1–26. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Schlecker, Susanne. 2002. *Midsommarkvast, malört och dödningben. Folklig*

läkekonst i 1800-talets Kronoberg. Ljungby: Sagomuseet.

Van Gennep, Arnold. 1909. *Les rites de passage: étude systématique des rites*. Paris: Émile Nourry.

Von Sydow, Carl Wilhelm. 1932. "Något om träden i folkets tro och sed." In *Svenska kulturbilder*, book 6, part XI & XII, edited by Sigurd Erixon & Sigurd Wallin, 227–258. Stockholm: Skoglund.

Wilde, Oscar. 1891. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. London: Ward, Lock and Company.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Marlene Hugoson holds an MA in Ethnology and is Research Archivist in the Department of Dialectology and Folklore Research at the Institute for Language and Folklore, Uppsala, Sweden. Her research interest is contemporary society, but she has a growing interest in traditional folklore. She has previously published articles on emerging traditions, co-edited a book on Christmas, *Nu gör vi jul igen* (2006), and edited an interdisciplinary book, *Bodil lajv* (2007). Her collaboration with Nancy McEntire continues with a second pair of articles named *The Politics of Tradition: Folk Healing on Two Continents*, Part 1-2, to be published in the Ritual Year Working Group proceedings from Hungary 2013.

RITUAL HEALING ON TWO CONTINENTS: NATURE, TRADITION, AND BELIEF (PART II)

Nancy Cassell McEntire

Abstract

Rituals connected to folk medicine are known worldwide and are associated with folk cures for many human ailments. In the first part of this collaborative essay, Marlene Hugoson examines rituals and cures associated with healing trees in Sweden. Part two of the topic focuses on the ongoing use of a specific healing tree in the Midwest of the United States. Information about the tree and its curing power comes from interviews with Pat Rhoads, a middle-aged farming woman and restaurant-owner who learned the healing ritual from her grandfather, Ernest Marvin; from Pat's niece, Angie; and from Angie's son, David, who was cured by visiting the healing tree as a child.

This and other examples of folk medicine that Mrs. Rhoads practices are current survivals of older, European-based beliefs. The topic of ritual healing on two continents explores the existence of specific tree-related rituals and traditions that have migrated to the New World, how they are manifested in the twenty-first century, and how they are documented and interpreted.

Key words

Folk medicine, healing trees, United States, asthma, ritual cures.

In the first part of this joint essay, Marlene Hugoson examined rituals and cures associated with healing trees in Sweden. Part two focuses on the current use of a specific healing tree in the Midwest of the United States, located near Marshall, Illinois. Information about the tree and its curing power comes from interviews with three members of one family, representing three generations.

Magical transference of disease from a person to a plant, especially a tree,¹ has a long history as a folk medical practice. The diseases that are

¹ Thompson 1966: D950 Magic tree; D1500.1.3 Magic tree heals; D2161.4.5 Cure by passing patient through cleft of tree (other loop); F811 Extraordinary tree; F950.3 Measuring sick as means of cure.

ommonly treated are non-infectious, such as asthma, arthritis, rheumatism, appendicitis, toothache, and warts. The processes of nailing, notching, and plugging are typical procedures. In most cases, the patient is a child. A lock of hair is nailed to a tree just above his height; or a notch is cut on the tree that indicates the height of the child; or a hole is drilled into the bark of the tree, which is filled with a lock of hair and then plugged.² The child then leaves the tree. In an application of one of the laws of sympathetic magic, the law of contiguity, as defined by James Frazer in his classic work *The Golden Bough*, the tree and the child, which have been in contact, continue to act on each other despite physical separation.³ Once the child has grown to a height beyond that of the nail or notch or plug in the tree, he or she will be cured. Of the types of trees selected for this ritual, hardwoods are dominant, especially oak, beech, birch, maple, and ash.⁴ As early as 1883, the British folklorist William G. Black was documenting cases of nailing, notching, and plugging of trees with hair, blood, and nail-clippings for ailments ranging from warts to violent pain to toothaches (Black 1883, 37-39). “In Cheshire,” he writes, “the absolute transference of warts is worth noting. Steal a piece of bacon and rub the warts with it, then cut a slit in the bark of an ash tree, and slip in the bacon under a piece of the bark. Speedily the warts will disappear from the hand” (Black 1883, 38).

It is clear that knowledge of rituals involving transference of disease through the use of trees migrated between Europe and North America, most likely with immigrant families from England, Scotland, Ireland, and other European countries. For example, an article in the 1927 volume of the *Journal of American Folklore* cited the following cure for asthma from Louisiana:

To cure a child of asthma, stand him up against a tree and bore a hole just above his head. Into this hole put some of the child's hair and then stop it up. When the child grows above the hair he will no longer have the asthma (Roberts 1927, 165).

Similar cures were noted for croup and for whooping cough in the same volume (Roberts 1927, 165–66).

² Anderson 1968. See also Hand 1980, 81–106.

³ Frazer 1966, 13–15. For further analysis of sympathetic magic, see Mauss 2001, 15–16.

⁴ See Hand 1966, 64, for a discussion of trees used in America for rituals involving transference of disease.

Other published accounts in the late 1800s and early 1900s demonstrate both stability of the ritual action as well as regional or individual variation in accounts of transference of disease involving trees. For example, in a 1935 collection of customs from rural Illinois, accounts of the transference of disease through the use of wood are consistent, but the methods of achieving the transference are various. Asthma in a child is cured through boring a hole into the side of an oak or linden tree at a spot that matches the measured height of the child and putting the child's hair into the hole.⁵ In some cases, the child is cured when he grows above the hole in the tree, yet in other cases the child is cured when the bark of the tree grows over the hole (Hyatt 1965, 253–255). In another account, a wooden door is used instead of a tree. According to the narrator, her mother is worried that a tree might die, and through the sympathetic law of similarity, her daughter would die as well:

When I was twelve years old I had asthma bad. My mother took and stood me up against a door. Just at the top of my head she bore a hole in the door, put some of my hair in that hole, then plug it up, praying the house would not burn down before I grew above that hole, for if the house should burn down before I grew above that hole, I would die. My mother said she would never bore a hole in a tree like so many do, for if the tree should die, the person would die, too. She thought the house safer (Hyatt 1965, 253).

In 1944 a Romanian folklorist, Ion Aurel Candrea, published accounts of epilepsy, fever, and other illnesses being transmitted to a plant by placing hair or nails of the suffering person into a hole in a healing tree and then sealing it off with a wooden cork.⁶ That same year a similar account was published in the *Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin*. The collector, Ruth O'Dell, referred to the healing practice as a superstition:

Mrs. Lula Wood gave me the following superstition about asthma. Stand by a tree and cut into the bark the exact height you measure on the tree, and when you outgrow the mark, asthma will leave... Another belief was that if you bore a hole in a tree and take a lock of hair out of the crown of your head and place it in the hole, securely plugging the hole afterwards, the disease would be cured (1944, 3).

⁵ See Hand 1980, 93–94, for details regarding magical measurement for disease.

⁶ See Candrea 1944, 389. Reference provided by Irina Stahl.

According to U.S. folklorist Wayland Hand, this type of plugging ritual is “a more intimate kind” of transference of disease, which he refers to as implantation. Whereas touching, rubbing, or tying articles to a tree may have been practiced as magical transference, “... under ‘plugging’ and its related forms, the disease is implanted or buried in the tree, whether deep or superficially, depending on how the transference is made” (Hand 1966, 63). Hand also notes that in the United States, the ritual of plugging seemed to have had more of a connection with asthma than with other diseases (Hand 1966, 66).⁷ These and subsequent accounts in the later part of the twentieth century were framed as recollections of earlier practices rather than descriptions of ongoing traditions. It seemed as though the ritual of transference of disease was a fading memory for older generations of Europeans and North Americans.

Then, in one of those remarkable moments in which a casual conversation leads to an unexpected discovery, my husband David Stanley heard about a local healing tree in the fall of 2010 during a medical appointment with a dermatologist, Angie Hamilton. When Angie asked Dave to tell her more about himself, he mentioned his interest in folklore. “Oh,” she said, “You should meet my Aunt Pat. She has a healing tree.” Angie’s aunt, Pat Rhoads, lived in rural Illinois, close to the border between Illinois and Indiana. Dave and I were curious about her and about the tree, but we were too busy at the time to investigate it further. It wasn’t until nearly a year later that we made our way to Clarksville, Illinois, where Pat and her husband own and operate a small restaurant, Millcreek. The restaurant lies outside of Clarksville and is surrounded by midwestern farmland.

We arrived towards the end of the lunch hour, and three or four tables were still occupied by local farmers and their families. Their conversations stopped as soon as we walked in. We were strangers. When we asked for Pat, the waitress hurried off to get her. Pat emerged from the kitchen, wiping her hands, and listened thoughtfully to our inquiry about the healing tree. “I’ll get a cup of coffee,” she said, “and we’ll talk.” Our initial conversation

⁷ Wayland Hand also noted that instances of this type of healing occurred more frequently in the southern states (Hand 1980: 82). See also Randolph 1947, 134–135; O’Dell 1944; Redfield 1938; and Roberts 1927. The Indiana State University Folklore Archives contain three examples, all recollections of earlier cures of asthma or bronchitis by means of a healing tree, dated 1983, 1992, and 1993.

led to a series of interviews that I conducted with Pat Rhoads, who learned a healing tree ritual and prayer from her grandfather, Ernest Marvin; Pat's niece Angie Hamilton (Dave's dermatologist), who had taken her son David and her daughter Kacey to the tree; and Angie's son, David Hamilton, who recalled his childhood experience at the tree.



Pic. 1. The entrance to Millcreek restaurant, near Clarksville, Illinois, USA.



Pic. 2. Pat Rhoads at the cash register.

Pat Rhoads is hardly the odd or marginal character typically associated with archaic rituals involving magical transference of disease. She is a lively, outgoing woman – a respected leader in her community. She goes out of her way to help anyone in need, from troubled teenagers to elderly neighbours. On a cultural level, she schedules regular music performances at the restaurant. She is an artist as well as a cook. Her artwork is displayed on the walls of the restaurant, and her customers look forward to her home-baked cookies and pastries during the holidays. It just happens that she has a gift from her grandfather – a ritual involving magical transference of disease from a child to a tree. The tree, a huge oak, was on the land that Pat's grandfather owned. After his death in 1975 at the age of 92, his land was sold. The family that bought the land promised that the tree would not be destroyed and that Pat could use it for healing purposes for as long as she wished. The tree is well known locally and is referred to as “the asthma tree.”

The ritual that Pat learned from her grandfather is as follows: a child who is suffering from asthma is brought to the tree. The child stands up against the tree and is measured. The person conducting the ritual drills



Pic. 3. Left to right: Angie Hamilton (Pat's niece); David Hamilton (Angie's son); and Pat Rhoads (Angie's aunt).

a small hole, about 2-3 cm. in diameter, which corresponds to the child's height. Pat says a prayer, and a lock of the child's hair is put into the hole of the tree, which is then "corked" or plugged with a small, round piece of wood. When the child's height exceeds the height of the hole where the hair is kept, the asthma will be cured.



Pic. 4. The healing tree, an oak, located in southeastern Illinois, USA. Local residents refer to it as "the asthma tree."



Pic. 5. Pat Rhoads points to a plug in the healing tree where a lock of a child's hair had been inserted years before.

The man responsible for the local fame of the asthma tree, Ernest Marvin, was born in rural Illinois in 1883. His parents were of English and Irish descent. He married a local woman, Lilly Belle Davison, and worked as a farmer in Mill Creek, south of Marshall. They had nine children, one of whom died at birth. Pat's mother, Joye Marvin, was next to the youngest. Pat thinks that her grandfather's family brought the custom of ritual healing from Europe, but she is unclear of the details. It was a family tradition. "It wasn't that unusual for our family," she said in an interview. "It was just something that grandpa always did."⁸ Several years before his death, after having taken dozens of children to the tree, Ernest passed the prayer associated with the ritual to Pat. According to her, the prayer has to be passed from male to female to male. Pat thinks that she will likely pass it on to her son, who lives next door to her, and whom she describes as "a very Christian man." She will not reveal the prayer to any other person.

The act of maintaining a secret incantation or prayer and of passing this knowledge from a man to a woman, etc., is not uncommon in folk healing rituals.⁹ If a special power is believed to be associated with this part of the ritual, it is strengthened through privacy and through strict rules regarding its dissemination. Pat accepts this aspect of the tradition without reservation, even though to modern audiences it might seem arcane or irrational. Furthermore, the fact that saying a prayer is compatible with Pat's own religious background makes conducting the ritual more comfortable for her and for those she heals.



*Pic. 6. Ernest Marvin, folk healer (1883-1975).
Photograph provided by Pat Rhoads.*

⁸ Pat Rhoads, interview by Nancy McEntire, Clarksville, Illinois, April 7, 2012.

⁹ For more information regarding folk prayers and incantations associated with folk healing, see Black 1883, 75-94. See also Brandon 1976, 222-226; and Mauss 2001, 67-75. See Hyatt 1965, 254-255, for an account of an incantation accompanying a ritual asthma cure: "You must say In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost when driving the nail in the hole." No. 5667.

Pat is resolute when she speaks about a spiritual context for folk healing; she places healing practices associated with the asthma tree squarely within the context of Christianity. In our interview, she offered this explanation of her work:

As far as I can understand, it is a gift that I have, but it is not performed by me. The healing is actually from God. I'm only God's instrument. So I don't do the healing. My grandfather taught me how to do it and what to say. But the actual feeling comes from the good Lord. I don't tell people that I do this [healing], because then I'm showing pride, and I'm boasting that I do it – and we don't do that. I only do the healing when people ask me to do it. If they come and say, "Would you take my child up to the tree for their asthma?" then I will do it.¹⁰

Pat's statement confirms several important characteristics of healers. First, she makes sense of the experience of healing by expressing her faith and putting the power of God above any power that might be attributed to her. Second, she makes sure that she can only practice healing if people ask for her help, and that she would never perform a healing ritual without having been asked to do so first. In her article, "Faith Healing and Miracles: Narratives about Folk Medicine," Torunn Selberg urges folklorists to pay close attention to stories about folk and faith healing. Often, she notes, the healer describes himself or herself as "an instrument of God, as proof of God's power and existence." Descriptions of the healing process or of people's seemingly miraculous relief from suffering are significant; they allow both the healer and those who listen to the healer's stories to reflect on faith and interpretations of the miraculous. It is also important that the healer and the patient do not need to belong to the same religious community, even though the ritual of healing is framed in a Christian context (Selberg 1995, 36–37). In Pat's case, the healer and the patient are joined, not in a church but in open farmland; they stand not at an altar but at the base of an enormous tree. Even though references to Christianity may give the healer and the patient a Christian worldview as a referent, there is no mention of personal religious preferences or allegiance to a specific Church.

Faith is an important aspect of unconventional healing practices, especially in modern times. Prospective patients and their families can

¹⁰ Pat Rhoads, interview by Nancy McEntire, April 7, 2012.

find every kind of reason to doubt a curing ritual, especially if it involves something as unusual as placing a lock of a child's hair into a tree. Pat Rhoads' niece, Angie Hamilton, found herself in a quandary of faith when two of her three children were suffering from asthma. David, her oldest child, had sports-induced asthma; whenever he exerted himself, he would start to cough. David's younger sister, Kacey, had more severe symptoms. According to Angie, her daughter's asthma problems began when she was six months old:

She had stopped breathing twice before the age of three. She had to be put in the hospital two or three times. We called her "the walking wheezer." We knew about the tree, but I didn't think much about it. Of course, I'm in the medical field, so the first thing we did was to take my kids to a medical doctor. And we ended up with a specialist in Indianapolis – for both kids. And things just weren't getting any better. So I went to Aunt Pat. I said, "OK, I'd like to try the tree. Let's go!"

We met her out at the tree. The kids were little. I can't remember exactly, but I think that David was six years old at the time, and Kacey was four. I explained to them what we were going to do, and they were OK with it. So we went to the tree. And Aunt Pat had this special stick, and she cut pieces off it, and she drilled two holes in the tree. And she took a piece of each child's hair, and said something, and put the hair in the holes, and corked the holes. As soon as they grew above those holes, they stopped having asthma problems... I tell you, it worked really well for them, and I know she's done this for other people and it's worked. It was a miracle for us. I mean, when Kacey stopped breathing, it was really scary. And in her grade-school years and her high-school years, she played basketball and everything else. She ran track and was a hurdler. They both ran track. David went to state [state-level competition] in track. They both ended up having a good career in sports after the healing.¹¹

Angie Hamilton's narrative focuses on her own conflicts between the modern, official realm of the medical profession, in which she works, and

¹¹ Angie Hamilton, interview by Nancy McEntire, Terre Haute, Indiana, May 21, 2012.

the alternative, unofficial realm of folk medicine. Anxiety over the health of her children, especially her daughter, led her to request Pat's services at the healing tree. In her description of the process, she pays attention to qualities of the ritual that are out of the ordinary. For example, the broomstick that Pat cuts and uses to cork the hole in the tree is a 'special' stick, according to Angie. Even though there is nothing extraordinary about a broomstick within the context of daily life [Are broomsticks used in daily life in this part of the US?], it assumes a remarkable aspect within the context of the ritual. Angie also acknowledges the intimate act of prayer in her narrative, noting that Pat 'said something' before she put the hair in the holes. Finally, as she recalls how athletic her children became after they were free of the symptoms of asthma, she says, "It was a miracle." Like many practitioners of folk medicine, Angie first tried the scientific, established method of treating her children's symptoms. When that seemed ineffective, she turned to a folk cure.¹²

The third interview was with Angie's son, David, who was taken to the tree at the age of six. David is now a senior at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, where he studies political science, psychology, and business. His plans for the future include law school and a possible future in corporate law. As a student leader – president of his fraternity and a student trustee – he finds the disparity between his rural background and his sophisticated aspirations both disconcerting and amusing. He occasionally tells the story of the healing tree to his university friends in order to underscore this disparity and to catch their attention. As he says, "People don't think that anyone does this kind of thing today. I tell them that yes, we do!" Here is his recollection of his childhood visit to the tree:¹³

Oh, sure, we went to Pat's tree. I guess we figured it wouldn't hurt anything. And they were getting ready to cut my hair, anyway! It was strange, though. I didn't understand why they wanted a chunk of my hair and why they were drilling a hole in the tree. Even after they explained it, I was confused. How did my reasonable mother, that I trusted and thought that she knew all, at that point in my life, think that this would work? She was a

¹² See O'Connor 2001, 13–35, for an excellent overview of folk medicine, including current concepts and practices.

¹³ Angie and David Hamilton estimate that his visit to the healing tree occurred in the summer of 1997.

nurse! But surely she knew what she was doing. And if she said it was going to work, it was going to work!

... I am a very rational person. I still can't say that I think it works. But I do think it has value, in that it is something that makes my family unique. It was fun to walk out in the woods as a kid, and it was a bonding experience. I could even see letting Aunt Pat do it to my own kids. Even if I know it's not going to have any scientific effect, it's a cultural experience. It's our family's experience. It's part of our worldview. It's not a treatment. It's something we do.¹⁴

Recalling his memories of the healing tree, David remains sceptical about the effectiveness of the ritual. He does, however, focus on the importance of the ritual in reinforcing the closeness of his family, even to the point of saying that he would take his own children to the tree when he had a family. In his estimation, the visit to the healing tree is a ritual that sets him and his family apart from the modern world. According to folklorist Sandra Dolby, attitudes about folk healing are not formulated abstractly but are expressed as stories about personal experiences.¹⁵ David's stories about the healing tree emphasize the 'otherness' of his family, simultaneously stressing the oddity of the experience and its effectiveness in bringing the family together.

In conclusion, I offer the following observations:

1. Pat Rhoads, Angie Hamilton, and David Hamilton are related as family members, but they also have shared the experience of ritual healing. Even though they represent different generations and assumed different roles within the ritual (healer, parent of healed person, and healed person), they all anticipated and eventually believed in the power of transference of disease. They entered into the ritual at Pat's grandfather's oak tree with the expectation of change, and they all agree that after following the procedure of measuring the child,¹⁶ boring a hole in the tree, taking a lock of hair

¹⁴ David Hamilton, interview by Nancy McEntire, May 23, 2012.

¹⁵ For a valuable overview of the role of personal narratives and cultural assessment, see Stahl 1977.

¹⁶ The act of measuring the child is an important assurance that the disease that afflicts the child will not grow beyond the measurement that is marked on the tree. According to folklorist Wayland Hand, "The unit of measure, the length marked, or the area circumscribed somehow prevents the ravage of the disease beyond the confines measured" (Hand 1980, 93–94).



Pics 7, 8. On the left: David Hamilton and his sister Kacey, shortly before their visit to the healing tree (ca. 1997). Note Kacey's inhaler for asthma. On the right: David and Kacey in 2012. (1997 photograph provided by Angie Hamilton).

from the child, and after a prayer, placing the lock in the hole and plugging the hole, the anticipated change did take place when the child had grown beyond the height of his initial measurement. Further, the ritual enacted at the asthma tree placed an object (a lock of hair) in a certain state (within a living tree) with the expectation that a change would eventually occur. Through an application of sympathetic contiguity, the lock of hair, a part of the person suffering from asthma, represented the whole person; any change that affected that part of the person therefore affected the person himself, despite the fact that the person and the lock of hair were physically separated. Furthermore, the enacted ritual of transference of disease resulted in bringing the afflicted person out of a dangerous state, from sickness into health.¹⁷

2. The continued use of a tree for ritual healing in the Midwest of the United States is evidence of the survival of older, European-based beliefs. While we cannot trace specifically the journey that these practices took as they migrated from Europe to North America, we do know that they are extant, even in the twenty-first century, having moved through both time and space. Published accounts of magical transference from the late 1800s through the mid-1900s confirm this migration.

3. As transcriptions from personal interviews throughout this article

¹⁷ For a discussion of the importance of change in magical practices, see Mauss 2001, 75–83.

have indicated, oral narratives from healers, witnesses of healing rituals, and recollections from those who were healed provide important insights about the personal experience of folk cures. These narratives focus on personal experiences rather than generalized opinions and thus reveal valuable insights about the function of ritual in contemporary life. To examine the transference of disease through personal, oral accounts of healing rituals brings the researcher closer to the worldview of those who practice those rituals and who can describe their effects. Within the context of close examinations of recent oral accounts, tradition, ritual, and belief are not survivals from a primitive past; they are ongoing manifestations of the art of everyday life.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Pat Rhoads and her family in Clarksville, Illinois, for their continuing support and enthusiasm for my investigation of their beliefs and traditions. None of the field research that informs this article would have been possible without their cooperation. Thanks also to Ritual Year colleagues Irina Stahl (Romania) and Léon van Gulik (The Netherlands) for their valuable insights and scholarly references.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, John Q. 1968. "Magical Transference of Disease in Texas Folk Medicine." *Western Folklore* 27 (3): 198–199.
- Black, William G. 1883. *Folk Medicine: A Chapter in the History of Culture*. London: The Folk-Lore Society.
- Brandon, Elizabeth. 1976. "Folk Medicine in French Louisiana." In *American Folk Medicine. A Symposium*, edited by Wayland D. Hand, 215–234. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Candrea, Ion Aurel. 1944. *Folclorul medical român comparat. Privire generală. Medinina Magică*. București: Casa Școalelor.
- Frazer, James. 1996. *The Golden Bough*, Abridged edition. New York: Penguin Books.
- Hamilton, Angie. 2012. Interview by Nancy McEntire, Terre Haute, Indiana. May 21.

- Hamilton, David. 2012. Phone interview by Nancy McEntire, May 23.
- Hand, Wayland D., Ed. 1961-1964. *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, Vols. VI-VII. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.
- . 1980. *Magical Medicine: The Folkloric Component of Medicine in the Folk Belief, Custom, and Ritual of the Peoples of Europe and America. Selected Essays of Wayland D. Hand*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hyatt, Harry Middleton. 1965. *Folk-Lore from Adams County Illinois*. New York: Alma Egan Hyatt Foundation.
- Mauss, Marcel. 2001. *A General Theory of Magic*. London and New York: Routledge Classics.
- O'Connor, Bonnie B., and David Hufford. 2001. "Understanding Folk Medicine." In *Healing Logics. Culture and Medicine in Modern Health Belief Systems*, edited by Erika Brady, 13–35. Logan: Utah State University Press.
- O'Dell, Ruth W. 1944. "Sign and Superstitions." *Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin* 10 (4): 1–6.
- Randolph, Vance. 1947. *Ozark Superstitions*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Redfield, W. Adelbert. 1938. "Superstitions and Folk Beliefs." *Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin* 3: 11–40.
- Rhoads, Pat. 2012. Interview by Nancy McEntire, Clarksville, Illinois. April 7.
- Roberts, Hilda. 1927. "Louisiana Superstitions." *Journal of American Folklore* 40: 144–208.
- Selberg, Torunn. 1995. "Faith Healing and Miracles: Narratives about Folk Medicine." *Journal of Folklore Research* 32 (1): 35–47.
- Stahl [now Dolby], Sandra. 1977. "The Personal Narrative as Folklore." *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 14: 9-30.
- Thompson, Stith. 1966. *The Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, 6 vols. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Nancy Cassell McEntire is an associate professor emerita and director of the Folklore Archives at Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana, USA. She has done extensive fieldwork in the Midwest of the United States, recording oral narratives and folk music, especially in Indiana.

CROSSING BORDERS WITH THE FESTIVAL OF BRIGID

Bożena Gierek

Abstract

The Brigid that I refer to here is an Irish saint who is said to have lived in the 5th-6th centuries. She is one of the most important Irish saints, together with Patrick and Columcille. Historical documents concerning her are so scant that some scholars even doubt that she ever existed. The fact that the Christian saint shares many features with the pagan Celtic goddess Brigit might support these doubts. However, these doubts have never stopped Irish people from celebrating the saint's feast – *Féile Bride*, which falls on 1 February. The same day marks one of the four biggest Celtic festivals called *Imbolg (Oímelc)*, which used to open the spring time.

The purpose of this article is to present how and why the festival of Brigid is celebrated nowadays (also to point to the common features with the pagan feast), mainly in Ireland. However, in the conclusions I refer to the celebrations outside that country, giving an unusual example from Poland. While doing this I show the process of migration of symbols within one country and through centuries. I use the materials that I received from the Irish Institute for Feminism and Religion in Dublin, as well from the main cult centre of St. Brigid in Kildare. I also draw from my direct observations and conversations with participants in the festivals of Brigid in Athenry (Ireland) in 1999 and in Kraków (Poland) in 2010, as well from an interview with sister Mary Minehan from Kildare.

Key words

Brigit, celebration, Celtic, feast, festival, goddess, *Imbolc*, pagan, rituals, saint, spring.

The Festival of *Imbolc*

Imbolc, *Imbolg*, *Oímelc* or *Oímelg* is one of the four chief Celtic festivals, which seems to be celebrated on the family level, not like three other festivals (*Samain* – 1 November; *Beltaine* – 1 May; *Lunasad* – 1 August), celebrated on the community level. There is not much evidence about *Imbolc*

to be found in the old sources. One of them is *Cormac's¹ Glossary* written in the 9th century, in which we read that Imbolc is “the time the sheep’s milk comes. milking i.e. milk that is milked” (in Ó Catháin 1995, 7). This is the time of lactation and parturition, when young lambs are born. Hence the name of the festival might come from: *oí* – ‘sheep’/‘ewe;’ *oísc* – ‘barren ewe;’ *oímelc* – ‘milking ewe’ or ‘fed ewe,’ as it is suggested. The name of the festival is also linked with breast feeding. According to Mary Condren (1989, 58) it is possible that “the pilgrimages that took place on the feast *Imbolc* were remnants of a Druidic ritual celebrating the fluids of the womb, amniotic fluids, waters sacred to the old religion.” In the first place, however, *Imbolc* marked the beginning of spring. This is the time when nature is re-awakening to new life and man is occupied with the spring work in the fields and also with pastoral work (animal-breeding).

The main ritual that was conducted during the spring festival was general purification. Everything was purified – the whole homestead with the people and the animals. The people washed the dirt of the winter off their hands, feet and heads. As this is the beginning of the new season, it was important to protect the seeds of new life, as well to conduct rituals which ensured prosperity. One of them was an imitation of a sexual act by making butter in a churn. Another one required the blood of poultry with which the four corners of the house were sprinkled (Guyonvarc’h and Le Roux 1997, 91). In some places around Galway Bay, a live shellfish (a limpet or a periwinkle) was placed at each of the four corners of the house (Danaher 1972, 14). It is obvious that the fisher community used in the ritual the things that corresponded to their activities.

The protecting rituals involved water and fire that could also have been used for purification. Fire, which served to keep away evil spirits, is also one of the most important features of other two Celtic festivals (*Samain* and *Beltaine*). On the one hand the evil spirits (earlier known as chthonic gods) were driven away by rituals, on the other hand they were propitiated by offerings made for them.

As I mentioned earlier, the old records on *Imbolc* are very scant. Even the old legends do not help here. There are only two Irish legends in which the name *Imbolc* occurs (*Táin Bó Cuailnge*, *Tochmarc Emire*). Thus we have

¹ Cormac mac Cuilennáin was a bishop of Cashel (at present in Co. Tipperary) and in 902-908 he was a king over the Irish province of Munster.

to rely on the folk tradition, which preserved and transmitted rituals and customs related to that festival. We can trace them in the rituals performed during the Feast of St. Brigid. They are dominated by fire and water.

Goddess Brigit and Saint Brigid

I would like to start my presentation on Brigid with the words of the song *Brigid's Kiss* from the album *Senex Puer* (Lughnasa Music 1998) of the Irish group Lá Lugh. It speaks of everything that Brigid means to Irish people, and not only to them. The first part of the song is in Irish and the second one in English:

*Gabhaim molta Bríde
Ionmhain í le héirinn,
Ionmhain le gach tír í,
Molaimis go léir í.*

I praise Brigid
Beloved of Ireland
Beloved of all lands
We all praise her

*Lóchrann geal na Laighneach
'Soilsíú feadh na tíre
Ceann ar óghaibh Éireann
Ceann na mban ar míne.*

Bright torch of Leinster
Shining throughout the land
Irish women cherish her
As do all fine women.

*Tig an gheimhreadh dian dubh
Gearradh lena ghéire;
Ach ar Lá le Bríde
Gar dúinn Earrach Éireann.*

The harsh dark Winter comes
Coming with its sharpness
But on Brigid's Day
Ireland's Spring is near.

Brigid of the sunrise
Rising in the morning
Rising with the Springtime
Greening all the land.

See you in the soft cloud,
See you in the raindrop,
See you in the winds of change
Blowing through the land.

You the red eared white cow,
Nourishing the people,
Nourish now the hunger
Souls longing in our land.

Bird that is unfolding,
Now the time's apon us,
Only have we eyes to see
Your Epiphany.

As expressed in the first two verses of the song, Bríde (Brigid, Brigit) is honoured in all Ireland. 'Torch of Leinster' indicates the province in which Kildare (*Cill Dara* – 'Church of the Oak,' Co. Kildare), where St. Brigid founded her monastery, is situated. Before she did this she lived there in a cell under a big oak guarding the eternal flame. The same is told about the goddess Brigit, who used to tend the fire in a pagan sanctuary there. According to Celtic mythology, the goddess Brigit had two sisters of the same name. Each of them was a patron of one craft: *filidecht* (the craft of the *filid* – poets and seers), smithcraft and healing (leechcraft). Similarly, St. Brigid is regarded as a patroness of poets, smiths and healers (people knowledgeable about medicine). The name Brigit (Brigid) means 'Exalted One' or 'Fiery Arrow.' The second name can refer to her intelligence or to a connection with the sun. In the *Life of St. Brigid* are many motifs, including solar ones, which could point to her pagan past. The earliest *Life of St. Brigid* was written in Latin by Cogitosus around 650, more than a century after Brigid's death (around 524).² The first Irish *vita* – *Bethu Brigitte* – was written probably in the 9th century. St. Brigid is pictured in the Lives as a person of justice, generosity and hospitality, who had compassion for those who suffered and were in need. She protected the poor and humble. She is presented as a cheerful person, a lover of music and poetry. She is said to have had a kind of philosophical wisdom. Of course, there are many stories about miracles that she performed through God's intercession. These miracles are related mostly to the multiplication of food she is also said to change water into ale, as well salt into stones and the other way round. The saint is portrayed as possessing healing power, as well a control over nature that enabled her to keep away rain from certain places and to make wild animals submissive to her.

There is a theory according to which St. Brigid was an avatar of the Celtic goddess Brigit. It is suggested that there might have been a school of priestesses in Kildare and that one of Brigit's followers, who was presiding

² 452 or 456 are given as dates of St. Brigid's birth. Most sources point to Faughart, Co. Louth, as the place of her birth, although Daphne Pochin Mould (1964, 42) suggests that it was near Kildare.

over the community, became Christian and transformed the pagan sanctuary into a Christian one (Macalister 1919, 340–341). William John Watson, who is one of the adherents of this theory, thinks that: “It is not impossible, in view of the well-established Celtic doctrine of re-birth, that Brigit the saint was regarded by the people as a reincarnation of Brigit the goddess” (1915, 264–265). He suggests that it is not unlikely that saint Brigit “owed much of her renown to her name, which served her as heir to the veneration paid to the pagan goddess” (Ibid., 264). Pádraig Ó Riain (1978, 138–139) suspects that “Brigit of Kildare may be the most transparent mutation of pagan goddess to christian saint.” Séamus Ó Catháin (1995, 17) publishes in his book an interesting testimony from an old man from Donegal concerning two Brigids: “There were two saints [called] Bríd. There was a Bríd up in Kildare, but this is the Bríd from this place.” He interprets this as “the compromise between the old goddess and the Holy Woman.” But this does not have to mean, irrespectively of the features shared by Brigit – the goddess and the saint, that they were identical, especially since we do not know about any festival connected with Brigit the goddess. However, it is interesting that the feast of St. Brigid falls exactly on the day (1 February) of one of the four Celtic pagan festivals – *Imbolc* (*Oímelc*), to which I return in the next section. According to Irish folk tradition the date of the feast of St. Brigid was fixed by the Virgin Mary, who wanted to express her gratitude to Brigit for lighting the way with a candle when Mary with her child was proceeding to the temple. The other story has it that Brigit helped Mary to enter a church unobtrusively. Brigit achieved this by drawing the attention of all the people gathered in the church by placing on her head a harrow with its points upwards. When she entered the church “every point of the harrow turned into a lighted candle (...) The Blessed Virgin was so delighted with St. Brigid that she gave her her day before her own.” Another reason suggested for granting St. Brigid the day before the Purification and Candlemas might be that she is called “the aid-woman of Mary” (Ó Catháin 1995, 8–9), indicating that she helped Mary during her labour.

Let us look at the other stanzas of the song *Brighid's Kiss*. Brighid's Day (*Lá Fhéile Bríde*) announces spring and the saint is believed to bring it. There are many signs given by the nature at this time that can be understood as a kind of revelation of Brigit: the sun shines earlier and more strongly, the wind drives away clouds and brings the rain that is necessary for vegetation. People, like the natural world that awaits the coming of spring after the

dark and cold of winter, are longing for the warmer time and the food that comes with it. We also find here reference to the spiritual food, which is of no less importance to the people than ordinary food. By addressing Brigid as the “red eared white cow” the author refers to her childhood. In *The Life of Brigid* that comes from the *Book of Lismore*³ we read that she was “reared on food different from that of children of her own age,” because she rejected “unclean food,” thus she used to consume milk that came from a red-eared cow (Stokes 1995, 185). Red-eared animals are known in Celtic legends as messengers from the Other World. This is one of many pagan elements, which appear in *The Life of Brigid*. Calling Brigid a cow refers also to her maternal protection – seeing Brigid as the mother who is giving food to her children.

St. Brigid’s Feast

Although St. Brigid’s Day is on 1 February, most rituals are conducted on the vigil of that day which is called ‘The Eve of Brigid’s Feast’ (*Oíche Fhéile Bríde*). This is in accordance with the way Celts used to celebrate their festivals and to count time generally – starting with the night. Caesar is one of the ancient writers that provides us with this information. In Irish folk tradition Brigid is associated with cattle, milk and dairy products, and thus, as an introduction to the chief rituals, fresh butter was churned for storage. The cleaning of the house and the whole homestead was perceived as a kind of ‘preparation ritual’ (Guyonvarc’h and Le Roux 1997, 90). It is likely that a main fire, perhaps in a village, was kindled, as was the case at *Samain* and *Beltaine*. The remnants of this practice can be traced in the custom of lighting candles and placing them in the windows on the vigil of the feast. It is believed that the saint passed the homesteads blessing them, and so the candles lit the way she went. While she was going around she was also believed to touch the so called *Brat Bríde* (‘Brigid’s mantle’) or *Bratóg Bríde* (‘Brigid’s little mantle’), which was left outdoors overnight in order to become endowed with healing powers. One can think that the *Brat Bríde* was a real mantle, as the name suggests, but it could be a piece of clothing, a cloth or any linen, or, relatively recently – a ribbon. Today it is mostly a ribbon. The *Brat* was recognized as a remedy for any ailment, especially for various

³ Compiled in the latter half of the 15th century.

'head pains:' toothache, headache, earache and a sore throat. It was enough to put it against the sore part of body to heal it. It was also used to cure sick farm animals – the sign of the cross was made over such an animal with the *Brat*. The *Brat* was not only endowed with healing powers, but was used to ward off evil spirits, for example, the fairies from the children, who could be abducted by them. Sewed into the clothes of girls, the *Brat* protected their virginity. On the other hand, it was also applied as an antidote to barrenness or sterility. The *Brat* would secure a safe delivery at the end of pregnancy, both for people and animals.

Another way to protect people and their homesteads from any harm was to weave St. Brigid's crosses on the vigil of her day and then to hang them over the doors in houses, byres and stables. The crosses were made of rushes or straw. It was important not to cut the rushes with any sharp implement, but to pull them out. Kevin Danaher (1972, 16) says that "the most usual type of cross was the diamond or lozenge,"⁴ but at present the most common form is a four-legged cross. A three-legged cross is also common now, and so is the simplest one, made of two slips of straw or rushes folded in two and interlaced. Quite rare is a kind of four-legged cross, which can be obtained by interlacing some strands of straw or rushes, where the ends of each of the four sets of material are tied together.⁵ The belief that the St. Brigid's cross protected the household from fire, especially lightning, might have its roots in its link with the swastika – a symbol of the sun. Weaving crosses was a ceremony that used to gather the whole family (Ibid. 19–23). A portion of the material used for making crosses was also used to make spannels and cattle tyings, which had the same function as the St. Brigid's crosses.

If the St. Brigid's cross was to provide the protection for the homestead, receiving the *Brídeóg* ('Little Brigid') in the house would certainly double that security. The *Brídeóg* is an effigy of the saint made very often of straw or hay and dressed suitably. In the old days the head of the *Brídeóg* was made of a carved turnip. The effigy was carried from house to house by a group of disguised⁶ boys and/or girls bringing Brigid's blessing in the form of rhymes,

⁴ The simplest version is formed of two pieces of twig or wood fastened in the shape of a cross, around which straw is woven. A more elaborate form would have the same small crosses at the extremities of the legs of the basic cross. See the first image on: www.mysite.verizon.net/cbladey/brigid/bcs.html.

⁵ See the sixth image on: www.mysite.verizon.net/cbladey/brigid/bcs.html.

⁶ Boys in girls' clothes and vice versa.



*Pic.1. Four-legged cross.
Photo: Bożena Gierek.*



*Pic. 2. Three-legged cross.
Photo: Bożena Gierek.*



*Pic. 3. Lozenge cross.
Photo: Bożena Gierek.*



*Pic. 4. The simplest form of the cross.
Photo: Bożena Gierek.*

prayers or songs, and receiving some food (bread and butter; in recent times money) in return. The *Brídeóg* was also called the *biddy* ('old hag'). This name might recall one of the manifestations of the Irish goddess-mother,

namely Caillech Bérrí.⁷ We have to keep in mind that a hag means a wise woman, a woman whose advice was sought and highly valued.

While going around in procession some parties of young people carried also a so-called *Crios Bríde* ('St. Brigid's Girdle'). The *Crios Bríde* was a long plaited straw rope, the ends of which were joined together to form a loop. Three or four crosses, also plaited from straw, were usually attached to it. The presentation of the *Crios* was accompanied by prayers (see *ibid.* 34–35 and Ó Catháin 1995, 11), in which a wish for good health and protection from illness, especially 'pains in the bones,' during the coming year was expressed (Danaher 1972, 34). To complete the ceremony every person from the visited household had to go three times through the *Crios* kissing it. People also used to invoke the saint and make the sign of the cross before passing through it. Kevin Danaher (*Ibid.* 35) gives the 'proper' way of going through the *Crios*, which was different for men and women: the men put "first the right leg, then right arm and shoulder, next the head, then left shoulder and arm, then left leg: Women put it down over head, shoulders and body and then stepped out of it."

There were also other rituals that were to ensure the saint's blessing and protection. One of them involved water brought from Brigid's well⁸ with which the house, people, animals, byre and fields were sprinkled. Some people left food (grain and potatoes) on the doorstep, according to Danaher (*Ibid.*) "to gain the saint's blessing," but it also could well be a survival of pagan sacrifice to gods. The placing of butter in the centre of the feasting might be another pagan survival. The butter, as the product of churning – an imitation of sexual intercourse, would express hope for new life, creation and fertility in the coming year. It is interesting that this act is echoed in the *Brídeóg*, which might be formed round a churn-dash. It is then no wonder that that was the time when marriage divination and weather forecasting were practised.

Féile Bríde in Kildare

As the centre of St. Brigid's cult, Kildare is the place where St. Brigid's Day must be celebrated. On the site where Brigid is said to have

⁷ I use the Old-Irish form of this name.

⁸ There are many holy wells named after Brigid throughout Ireland. They are renowned for curing eye diseases.

established the first female monastery in Ireland (around 470) is now St. Brigid's Cathedral built in the 13th century. Next to the Cathedral is a round tower dated to the 9th century or the middle of the 11th century. Outside the Cathedral are the remains of an old stone high cross. At the north-western wall of the Cathedral can be seen the restored foundation of the 'house of fire' – an ancient fire temple. On the Feast of St. Brigid a small fire is lit there. The fire kept by the community of sisters was extinguished in the time of the Reformation (16th century) and was brought back by the Brigidine Sisters in 1993. Since then the fire has been kept in one of the rooms ('Brigid's room') of the Solas Bhríde House, where the Sisters live. When I visited Kildare in March 1999 I spoke with Sister Mary Minehan, who told me that they wanted to bring the fire into the centre of the town of Kildare. In 2006 this wish was finally granted when President Mary McAleese unveiled the St. Brigid's Flame monument in the Market Square on St. Brigid's Day.



Pic. 5. The flame kept in 'Brigid's room,' Kildare.

Photo: Bożena Gierek.

The most important site of the St. Brigid's cult in Kildare is her holy well located close to the ruins of the Black Abbey (13th century). Next to the well grows a tree on which may be seen rags (called 'clooties'). It was a common belief, not only in Ireland, that illness was left on the tree or bush at the holy well with a piece of the clothing of an ill person hung on it. Of course, there were also other rituals that had to be conducted, like fasting, going around the well (always clockwise), drinking water from the well, very often washing off the inflicted parts of body with the water and leaving some

offerings (see Brenneman & Brenneman 1995, Logan 1992, Jones 1992). When I was at the well in 1999, I did not notice clooties on the tree, which means that there might have been just a few at that time. More clooties left at present are a proof of the revival of tradition. A component of a pilgrimage to the well (all the year, not only on St. Brigid's Day) is contemplation at five 'prayer stones' which are arranged in a line. At each of them one aspect of the saint can be reflected upon: the earth woman, the peacemaker, the hearth-woman and the heart woman, the healer, and the friend of the poor. At the entrance to the ground with the well stands a bronze sculpture of the saint holding the flame⁹. It is quite a recent monument. When I was there in 1999, there was a figure of the saint dressed like a contemporary nun and placed in a stone niche behind glass. I was told at that time that the figure would be replaced, because it did not represent the way of dressing at the time of Brigid. There is also another representation which should be mentioned – that of "Bríd and the children," made of limestone and placed at a little church in Suncroft, a few miles south of Kildare. In the centre of the cross on Brigid's chest is a fossil in the shape of a crescent moon that, as I was told, began to appear quite unexpectedly as the artist (Annette McCormac) was carving the statue. To Mary Minehan this is "a symbol of feminine energy." The crescent moon is also interpreted "as if the two worlds were joining" – the old and the new, "Pagan Celtic and Christian Celtic Ireland" (Sacred Site Tour 2012).



*Pic. 6. The St. Brigid's well and 'prayer stones,' Kildare.
Photo: Bożena Gierek.*

⁹ See the picture of the statue on: www.kandle.ie/feile-bhride-2012-kildare-town/.



*Pic. 7. Old figure of St. Brigid, Kildare.
Photo: Bożena Gierek.*

Near St. Brigid's well is the plain of St. Brigid's Pastures, commonly known as the *Curragh* of Kildare, that covers almost 5,000 acres. According to legend, it was granted to Brigid by the King of Leinster, who promised to give her as much land as her cloak would cover. The cloak expanded miraculously and the stingy king had to keep his word. According to folk tradition, it was from here that Merlin transported the stones to Salisbury Plain in England that were used for building Stonehenge. At present horse races take place here, and on the Feast of St. Brigid some ceremonies are held. It is worth mentioning that horse and chariot races were one of the favourite sports among Irish Celts. According to folk tradition St. Brigid herself often took part in them.

Since 1993, initiated by the Brigidine Sisters, the feast of Brigid (*Féile Bríde*) has been organized in Kildare every year, and it has developed over time. For instance in 1999 it lasted three days and in 2012 it lasted a week. On 30 January 1999, people made a pilgrimage from the oak peace pole¹⁰ on the *Curragh* to the Market Square, where St. Brigid's flame was lit. On 31 January a morning Eucharist celebration was held at Brigid's well and later on the same day people met there for the evening ritual. As Mary Minehan said, it is important "to get in touch with the well inside ourselves." The *pattern* (celebration of the saint's day), including lighting the flame on a

¹⁰ Carved by *Caride Bhríde* (Friends of Brigid) from Kildare.

wooden pole covered with *ogham*¹¹ inscriptions, was held on the *Curragh* on 1 February. Another ceremony – of the living Earth, with singing and reciting poems, took place in the nearby Japanese Gardens. The celebration of *Féile Bríde* was accompanied by a conference “Tending the Flame of Justice and Peace,” organized by the Action from Ireland (AFI).¹² The following issues were discussed during the conference: furthering the peace process in Northern Ireland, Ireland’s deepening involvement with NATO, Indonesia’s militarisation in the West Papua, Third World debt, Inner Peace – World Peace and the Spirituality of Justice.¹³ The peace emphasis of this conference recalled St. Brigid portrayed as a mediator between rival parties. In 2012 the leading theme of the conference was “Fire and Food.” The first conference (in 1993) was entitled “Brigid: Prophetess, Earthwoman, Peacemaker.” The conferences deal with issues such a militarism, poverty, the environment, third-world debt, and any problems of the contemporary world that can be linked with St. Brigid and her contribution to solving these problems. All events that take place during *Féile Bríde*, including weaving St. Brigid’s crosses, dancing and singing, are set in the context of ancient “Celtic spirituality,” like the annual Celtic lecture on “Ancient Wisdom for new times” and the workshop on “Wisdom springs from Ancient Wells,” which were a part of the programme of *Féile Bríde* in 2012.



Pic. 8. A crescent moon in the cross in the statue of St. Brigid in Suncroft.
Photo: Bożena Gierek.

¹¹ The earliest form of Irish writing (from the 4th or 5th century AD down to the 8th century) which is represented by groups of notches and grooves.

¹² A justice, peace and human rights group.

¹³ From the programme in the leaflet printed by Donovan Printing Ltd., Newbrigde, co. Kildare.

The Festival of Brigit celebrated by the Institute for Feminism and Religion

Although the Institute for Feminism and Religion¹⁴ has its seat in Dublin, it has organized the Festival of Brigit in different places in Ireland since 1992.¹⁵ For instance in 1992 it was in Dundalk (Co. Louth), and then there were two in Termonfeckin (Co. Louth), and three in Athenry (Co. Galway). In 2000 it took place in Belfast (Co. Antrim), and in 2005 in Dublin. I first learnt about this festival in 1999 when I saw an invitation to “Celebrating the Festival of Brigit” in Athenry. The aim of the event was “to invoke the healing spirit and courage of Brigit” (*Celebrating the Festival of Brigit* 1999, 7). In the leaflet printed by the Institute there were more details regarding the aim:

To embrace the Cailleach

To melt the winter ice

To grow, to change, to dance

To heal ourselves, each other, and the earth

“In spring waters of the earth.” We have here a reference to the spiritual virtues of Brigid, to spring and to the old goddess, the Caillech. It is interesting that in all materials from the Institute, the name appears as Brigit, not Brigid as in the newspapers and when referring to the saint. This is not without reason as we shall see. That year the festival had “Wounder and Healer” as its theme and that is why in one leaflet all women were welcomed “to experience the power of women’s healing through Brigit.” I asked Mary Condren, the organizer, how should I understand Brigit as the wounder. She wrote me that we should perceive Brigit not just as “a ‘nice’ comforting figure, but someone who actively challenged the status quo and values, beliefs, and ethical stances of her followers.” The healing was to be achieved through the exploration and liberation of the myths, traditions and symbols of Brigit, through drumming, bonfire circles, telling stories, singing, dancing and workshops in art, Celtic tradition and language, and also in yoga.

The festival started on 29 January in the Esker Retreat House. A group of women singing and playing instruments entered a main room,

¹⁴ Further I will refer to the Institute for Feminism and Religion as the Institute.

¹⁵ In 2001 and 2002 the festival was not organized.

where the celebration took place. The room was decorated with the symbols of Brigit (cloak, oak, snake, narcissus, snowdrop, cow, fire), mostly known from the saint's *vita*. An interesting element of decoration was a large replica of a tapestry depicting *Sean-Mháthair* (Grandmother), which hangs in the Augustinian Church in Drogheda (Co. Louth).¹⁶ The old woman is surrounded by flowers that come up to her knees. She has her hands in front of her in a gesture demonstrating openness. Just below her hands are depicted two other hands – one belonging to a child or a young girl and the other one to a mature woman. The whole picture was interpreted as a representation of the symbolic role of the woman (as Maiden, Mother and Crone) in the cycle of birth, life and death. In other words, it can be perceived as “the feminine wisdom in a time of change” (Saint Augustines Drogheda 2012). The Crone, as Caillech, the wise woman, was recalled very often during the festival. In the middle of the room were placed objects that symbolized the four elements, but also were linked with Brigit: burning candles, symbolizing fire; a bough and a stone symbolizing earth; water from Brigid's well in Liscannor (Co. Clare) representing the element water; and smoke coming from the lighting candle symbolizing air. There were also: melting ice symbolizing the end of winter, ivy and narcissuses symbolizing the beginning of spring, and rushes for weaving crosses and the *Crios Bríde*. The festival was opened with the song *Brighid's Kiss*, given above. The song was to invite Brigit to come to her festival, and a kind of steps that can be heard at the beginning of the song were to express her arrival. One of the rituals performed that evening was purification done by passing incense around each participant. Some women were making the sign of the cross with it. Another ritual was led by the gatherer who called the spirits of women and spirits of goddesses from the four cardinal points of Ireland. After that the lights were turned off and the gatherer took all the participants on a spiritual journey to meet the Caillech, the old, wise woman. There were workshops during which the participants shared their thoughts on Brigid's symbols. Each of the groups which the participants were divided into, lit its small candle from Brigid's big one. All these events were intertwined with singing.

¹⁶ See the picture on: www.ainedunnweaver.com/sean-mhathair.



Pic. 9. Objects symbolizing four elements, linked with Brigit, Athenry.
Photo: Bożena Gierek.



Pic. 10. Carrying the Brat Bríde, Athenry. Photo: Bożena Gierek.

Lectures on, and stories about, Brigit, as well as singing, were continued next day (30 January). There were also workshops during which Brigit's crosses were woven, chanting¹⁷ was practised, and the participants who preferred to get in touch with nature went to the wood to gather some loose objects. One of the most important rituals that day was the arrival of Brigit, played by one of the participants, after she had been invited to come, and her dance in a red¹⁸ cloak. In the evening Brigit was accompanied to the meadow outside, where her cloak (*Brat Bríde*) was left for the night. The participants said farewell to the winter (darkness) and welcomed the spring (light). Then they went to the fire, which was to warm them and the earth. The fire was circled by the women, who joined their hands. They called spirits of dead relatives and women that they knew. Before the 'fire ritual' ended they asked for a fire blessing for people who were not present at the fire.

On 31 January the ritual of showing Brigit with her cloak into the main room (where she danced briefly) was performed. After that the cloak was cut into strips and each participant took a few of the strips, for herself and for the people she cared for. The strips were to protect and heal the body and spirit of those who had them, and "to keep the flame of the Spirit of Brigit alive" for them during the year, as was written in one of the leaflets. On the next vigil of St. Brigit's Day the old *Brat Bríde* should be burnt and a new one received. Before the festival came to an end, two important rituals were

¹⁷ The participants are always encouraged to share their own chants and poems.

¹⁸ The red colour is considered a symbol of healing.

performed. The participants ate the food linked with Brigit: bread (called ‘a product which comes from the Mother-Earth’) dipped in milk (a nourishing product coming from a cow) and honey (a product of bees). The closing ritual was a blessing ceremony, during which each participant went three times through *Crios Bríde* (in the way that Danaher described as ‘a male way’), each time receiving one blessing:

*May Brigit's flame give you inspiration,
May Brigit's girdle give you healing,
May Brigit's creativity give you a way.*



Pic. 11. Food linked with Brigit, Athenry. Photo: Bożena Gierek.



Pic. 12. Going through the Crios Bríde, Athenry. Photo: Bożena Gierek.

The festival finished with the singing of one of the famous Irish blessings: “May the road rise (...).” The women formed a circle and held hands with their neighbours. The reason why the festival was not celebrated on 1 February was that it was a Monday and most people work on that day, and so the festival ended on the Sunday. The festival drew approximately 50 women on this occasion. A year earlier there were 90 women celebrating Brigit’s Day and in 2000 in Belfast, 130. The women who participate in the Brigit festival represent various ideologies. In 1999 there were Catholics, pagans (they introduced themselves like this), and lesbians.

It does not matter what the theme of the festival is, the pivot of it is always Brigit, with an emphasis on the motifs from the saint’s life placed in the context of mythology, living nature and issues of feminism. As Mary Condren (pers. comm., January 1999) expressed it in her letter: “There is always a magic about this event that comes from the combined energies of all the women participating, as well as from the richness of the Brigit

traditions we explore.” The issues of feminism can be seen more clearly in the programme of the festival for 2003. The leading theme was “Brigit’s Cloak. Unfolding and Reclaiming Women’s Ground.” The aim for that year’s festival was “to provide a safe tent for every woman to weave a shawl of protection, a veil of mystery, a mantle of hope, a cloak of courage.” The organizers thought that the theme was appropriate for the festival “as women struggle to find a room of their own, in metaphor, symbol or reality, to live lives of integrity, justice, honour, and love.” They challenged the participants to answer three questions: 1) What is the ground I need to claim? 2) What is holding me back? 3) What resources do I need? (Early-Medieval-Ireland discussion group, E-mail, 16 Jan 2003).



*Pic. 13. Objects placed in the middle of the room along with crosses made by students, Kraków.
Photo: M. Stonawska.*



*Pic. 14. “Brigid’s food,” Kraków.
Photo: J. Chrzanowska.*

Conclusions

Using the example of the celebration of the festival of St. Brigid or Brigit, or *Imbolc*, I have shown how the same symbols can migrate through time in one country (here Ireland). It is also possible to show how they migrate with the festival across national borders. The festival itself, although celebrated in the same way, might be perceived differently. The celebration of *Imbolc*¹⁹ by a group of students at the university in Kraków on 31 January 2010 is one example of such migration. The students, as expressed in the poster for the feast, wanted to “weave Brigid’s crosses; try Brigid’s food: bread, milk and honey; listen to stories about Brigid, as well as to Celtic

¹⁹ As announced by the students in the poster.

music; join in the celebration of the festival of Brigid in Ireland; and much, much more.” The room, in which the feast was celebrated, was decorated by students. One of them brought a big branch, almost like a tree. On the floor in the middle of the room, the students placed a plant, stones and burning candles on red blotting paper. I did an introduction to the *Imbolc* festival and St. Brigid’s life and cult and then we listened to the song *Brigid’s Kiss* and tried to sing it together. I taught the students how to make Brigid’s crosses and after that they made a nice collection of them. One student left a four-legged cross in the room and it is still there. It was interesting that when students found some difficulties in making crosses, especially lozenge ones, since the material they brought was quite hard to use, some of them made them of wool, as can be seen in the picture. We did not have *Crios Bríde*, but we did eat ‘Brigid’s food.’



Pic. 15. Taking “Brigid’s food,”
Kraków. Photo: M. Stonawska.



Pic. 16. Celebrating the Festival of Imbolc
with students in Kraków.
Photo: J. Chrzanowska.

Although it was a small group of students (10), who had earlier attended my course in *Celtic culture*, they did not come to celebrate the feast because they had to; they came because they wanted to. It was they who approached me to organize the meeting. It was not in any way obligatory; “we listened to because we wanted, we celebrated because we cared about it,” said Katarzyna Kleczkowska (pers. comm. e-mail, 22 June 2012). Moreover, it was Sunday – their free time, and it was in the middle of the winter exam session, when they were busy with preparations for their exams. This was a group of students that showed great interest, even passion, as Katarzyna

Kleczkowska wrote (pers. comm.), for the tradition which is still cultivated in Ireland. For her it was the possibility of immersing herself in the atmosphere (which for her was unusual, unrepeatable) of the feast from a culture that fascinates her, but it was also nice to meet up with the people who wanted to share this passion. The students enjoyed not only the celebration of the feast, especially weaving crosses, but also the preparation for the feast itself. They were very concerned about it, as Katarzyna Kleczkowska wrote: “I and my colleague Jan were looking for rushes and we brought a bough, Monika and two boys were gathering rushes, Magda with two girls and one boy prepared decoration – everybody brought something: candles or stones; Julka was dressed in red. Everybody did her/his best” (pers. comm.). These things brought by the students were called by another student, Dorota Suder, “our ‘magic’ things.” She came to celebrate the feast because she is interested in Celtic culture and she felt “nostalgia for celebrating agricultural feasts.” According to her “in our culture these kind of customs are almost extinct and those which are still celebrated do not have anything to do with the celebration of changes in nature” (pers. comm. e-mail, 22 June 2012). She enjoyed the event “in a small circle of people who were able to tune into celebration of the feast, which is completely different from the feasts in our culture.” Dorota Suder is right saying that we do not have the same customs, but we do have others which maybe are stripped off ‘magic’ and pagan meaning, but do have to do with changes in nature, like *dożynki* (harvest festival), a celebration held after the crops are taken in from the fields. It is usually held at the end of August or the beginning of September. I am talking here about the widespread events accepted by the Polish Catholic Church. Of course, there are pagan groups in Poland that celebrate various festivals throughout the year.

Although the above celebration happened only once and so differs from the other two described in this article, I think it is worth mentioning it, to show the reason why people want to celebrate this festival and what they emphasise in it. It is a special case – a small group of students, who did not have a chance to interact with Celtic culture but grew up in a different culture, which, in my opinion, is much more influenced in the tradition (present customs) and belief by Catholicism than the Irish one (see: Gierek 2011). The surviving and cultivated or revived heritage from pre-Christian times in Ireland does not find an equivalent in Poland, although there are many Slavic neo-pagan events there. This is why I think that the celebration

of *Imbolc* in Kraków is an interesting case, even if it also plays the role of socializing for the students. But Brigid is known and honoured in many different ways all over the world. An interesting commemoration of Brigid can be found in a Brigidine Kildare College Chapel in South Australia, where Brigid is depicted in a window as “Dancing the Dance of the New Life of Creation, Carrying the Spirit of Jesus into the Future.”²⁰ The Brigidine community in Australia also celebrates the festival of Brigid, as is evidenced on their website. To see, where and how *Féile Bríde* is celebrated around the world, it is enough to look up the Internet and see all those website on which invitations to celebrations of Brigid’s/Brigit’s feast, as well as reflections on those celebrations, are placed. It is hard to say whether there are more celebrations in pagan or Christian circles, with more stress on the goddess or saint aspects. The same symbols are used, the same rituals are performed. Pagan circles draw from the saint’s *vita* and, on the other hand, the Irish Catholic Church is aware of the pagan heritage in the saint’s tradition, which is very well portrayed in the poem placed on the website of ‘Catholic Ireland:’

*Lady, from winters dark,
Star of Imbolc, rise!
Dance around our threshold,
Scattering warm laughter,
Seeds of hospitality,
Tolerance, forgiveness!
Return again to the folk;
You the spring we yearn for!* (Catholic Ireland 2012)

After all this is not the issue here, whether the goddess or the saint is more often invoked, the most important thing is that in common celebration Bríd unites people of different spirituality (religions), nationality, gender and sexual orientation, which means crossing another borders.

The festival can be large (as in Kildare) or small (as in Kraków). Participants in the feast can be attracted to it because of personal need, to “experience the quickening energy of Imbolc and nourish Brigit’s energy (*neart*) in ourselves while we gather the seeds of our Spring dreams” (Institute for Feminism & Religion 2010), but there may also be a wish to work out work

²⁰ See the picture in the section “Woman of peace” on: www.brigidine.org.au/about-us/index.cfm?loadref=13.

out the energy for the community's good, as in the "hope for transforming the energy of the North [Northern Ireland]" (Margaret McCullogh, pers. comm.; e-mail from M. Condren, 1 February 2000). And here we have a community need, which Luka Bloom expressed in the following words, hoping that "someday out of the darkness of war, hunger, greed, poverty, will come the light of community, sharing, justice, music, dance, peace and love" (CiNews 2012). This can also be perceived as concern for the whole world, as seen in the themes of the conferences in Kildare (e.g. 'Fire and Food') and in accompanying workshops in which the issue of food is emphasized – "the need to plant our own food, ensure access to food for all, support those saving seeds and oppose attempt to genetically modifying and patenting seeds;" and in symbolic actions, like collecting torches from indigenous elders in Bolivia by Mayra Gomez, lighting them from the Hiroshima Flame in Japan, then carrying them around the world "at key peace events," and finally presenting them to the UN High Representative for Disarmament in New York (St. Brigid's tradition live 2012). The political issue comes up very often at such events, especially when they are organized on a territory which does not have a stable political situation or when the participants come from a troubled territory. There is no wonder, that St. Brigid is called upon in such cases, as she is considered to be a peacemaker. But she is not the only one; another saint who is regarded as a very good mediator and politician is Columcille, one of the three major saints of Ireland.

As it has been shown, celebrating the festival of Brigid migrates through the centuries and across various borders – those understood literally as country borders, but also those of other dimensions. The phenomenon of the widespread celebration of this festival can be attributed to the Irish emigrants who transplanted it outside Ireland, but also to the person of Brigid/Brigit herself – to the characteristics and values, including the spiritual ones, ascribed to her, as well as to her strong connection with nature. The last factor seems to be more and more present in today's life, and not only in pagan or New Age circles. Ecology is no more treated as a kind of 'new religion;' it is becoming a fact that has to be considered in the globalized world, if people want to survive. This, along with the search for the development of inner life, makes Brigid/Brigit and her festival popular beyond Ireland.

REFERENCES

- Brenneman, Walter L., Jr. and Mary G. Brenneman. 1995. *Crossing the Circle at the Holy Wells of Ireland*. London: University Press of Virginia.
- Catholic Ireland. 2012. "A Woman for our times: St Brigid of Ireland." [this article first appeared in "The Messenger" (February 2002), a publication of the Irish Jesuits] www.catholicireland.net/church-a-bible/church/february-saints/835-1-a-woman-for-our-times-st-brigid-of-ireland (accessed 23 August 2012).
- "Celebrating the Festival of Brigid." 1999. *Galway Advertiser*, January 21, 7.
- CiNews. 2012. "Féile Bríde celebrates light and Spring." February 1. <http://www.cinews.ie/article.php?artid=9651>.
- Condren, Mary. 1989. *The Serpent and The Goddess*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Danaher, Kevin. 1972. *The Year in Ireland*. Dublin: Mercier Press.
- Gierek, Bożena. 2011. "'Celtic Spirituality' in Contemporary Ireland." In *Ireland's New Religious Movements*, edited by Olivia Cosgrove, Laurence Cox, Carmen Kuhling and Peter Mulholland, 300–316. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Goetz, Philip W., ed. 1990. *The New Encyclopædia Britannica*. Vol. 1. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.
- Guyonvarc'h, Christian-J., and Françoise Le Roux. 1997. *Die Hohen Feste der Kelten*. Engerda: Arun-Verlag.
- Institute for Feminism & Religion. 2010. "Upcoming Spring Weekend Workshop." (www.instituteforfeminismandreligion.org/ (in Janury 2012 the Institute changed its address to www.groups.yahoo.com/group/WomanSpiritIreland/)).
- Jones, Francis. 1992. *The Holy Wells of Wales*. Cardiff: Univeristy of Wales Press.
- Logan, Patrick. 1992. *The Holy Wells of Ireland*. Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe.
- Macalister, Robert Alexander Stewart. 1919. "Temair Breg: a Study of the Remains and Traditions of Tara." *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 34: 231–404.
- Mould, Daphne Pochin. 1964. *The Irish Saints*. Dublin: Clonmore & Reynolds.
- Ó Catháin, Séamus. 1995. *The Festival of Brigit*. Dublin: DBA Publications.
- Ó Riain, Pádraig. 1978. "Traces of Lug in early Irish hagiographical tradition." *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 36: 138–156.
- Saint Augustines Drogheda IRELAND. 2012. "Our Grandmother the Sean Mhathair." www.augustiniansdrogheda.com/16801/17327.html (accessed 23 August 2012).
- Sacred Site Tours. 2012. www.sacredsitetour.com/Sacred-Sites-of-Ireland/kildare-and-st.brigids-cathedral.html (accessed 20 August 2012).

- “St Brigid’s traditions live on in Kildare Feile.” 2012. *Leinster Leader*, February 2. www.leinsterleader.ie/community/st-brigid-s-traditions-live-on-in-kildare-feile-1-3481593.
- Stokes, Whitley, transl. and ed. 1995. *Lives of Saints from the Book of Lismore*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Reprint, Felinfach: Llanerch Publishers.
- Watson, William John. 1915. “The Celtic Church in its Relations with Paganism.” *The Celtic Review* 10: 263–279.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Bożena Gierek, PhD in Philosophy (Comparative Religion Studies), Associate Professor in the Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilizations at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland. Her research focuses on Celtic culture, comparative cultures (approached through anthropology) and non-verbal communication. She is the author of numerous publications, both articles as well books, and is also the co-author of lexica and encyclopaedias in the field of religion. Her most important publications are: *Celtowie* [Celts], 1998; *Tradycja celtycka w życiu religijnym współczesnego społeczeństwa irlandzkiego* [Celtic Tradition in Religious Life of Contemporary Irish Society], 2002; *Religie Celtów* [Religion of the Celts], 2013.

FAIRIES IN THE RITUAL YEAR IN SCOTLAND AND GREECE

Nikolemma Polyxeni Dimitriou

Abstract

My topic consists of a comparative analysis of the presence of fairies in the Scottish and Greek ritual year. More specifically, I wish to draw attention to Beltane and Hallowe'en in Scotland and to dates during the Greek ritual year, such as Christmas and New Year, on which fairies make their appearance. I will also refer to other relevant dates during the ritual year. Examples of folktales and folk beliefs from both countries will be used as a main argument. Although these two countries are considered culturally very different, I aim to show that the manner in which fairies appear, behave and act during these days is similar. I hope that by discussing these parameters I will be able to demonstrate that the Mediterranean folk belief concerning the ritual year and the depiction of fairies, or at least fragments of it, is nearer to Northern European folk belief than has been believed until recently.

Key words

Greece, Scotland, quarter days, ritual year, fairies, Hallowe'en, Christmas, May Day, folk belief, Kallikatzaroi, legends, comparative analysis.

Introduction

In this essay I will be researching the ritual years of Scotland and Greece. I will refer to all the main festivals that are part of these ritual years and examine whether they take place on identical dates. At the same time, I will examine whether the beliefs and traditions that are held or practiced on these dates are of a similar nature. I hope to prove that even though Scotland and Greece lie far apart within the European map, and have come under very different influences, they share, nonetheless, similar ritual years and celebrations.

I will then proceed to examine the similarities between folk beliefs concerning the supernatural at Christmas in Greece and Hallowe'en in Scotland and on May Day in both countries. May Day offers easier grounds to work on as it takes place on the same day in both countries, but I also

believe that a parallel exists between Christmas in Greece and Hallowe'en in Scotland, one that has been overlooked in past researches conducted in the field of European folk belief. The reasons why such a parallel may exist will be given further on. The main part of this short essay will consist of examining the differences and similarities concerning folk belief and legends around fairies on the dates mentioned above. I will examine their depiction as far as appearance, behaviour and interaction with humans is concerned, in the hope of suggesting a possible parallel in both countries.

Through this essay, I hope to suggest that Scotland and Greece share a number of similarities in their folklore belief systems, customs and legends. Hopefully in the future comparative research will be applied on a larger scale to other countries within the European region, such as comparing the Balkans to Scandinavia. The aim of such research would be to identify each country's identity within a whole, namely Europe, and to acknowledge a country's cultural identity in relation to that of others.

The Ritual Years

The ritual years in both Greece and Scotland are governed by four main festivals that divide the year into four nearly equal parts. In Greece, as in many cases around Europe and the world, festivals combine Christian beliefs with other, older 'beliefs which are not properly Christian: beliefs deeply rooted in common people, beliefs inherited from the remotest antiquity and often closely akin in the ways of thought of primitive man' (Megas 1958, 13). Thus, in the Greek calendar year pre-Christian, pagan beliefs are included and play an important role in festivals with Christian names.

The four main festivals that govern the ritual year in Greece are St. Demetrius Day (26 October), Candlemas (2 February), May Day (1 May) and 1 August. They are built on agricultural and rural characteristics, as are the Scottish festivals which follow.

In Scotland the main festivals celebrated as quarters are Samhain (1 November), Lammas (1 August), Beltane (1 June), and Imbolc (1 February). They too, as in the case of Greece, maintained an agriculture character consistent with the society in which they flourished.

The first Greek festival, named St. Demetrius Day, is celebrated on 26 October and is of great importance for the farmers "as the day is an important landmark in rural life and occupation. It marked the opening of

the winter season; summer contracts and working agreements came to an end and new ones had to be signed for the winter” (Megas 1958, 19).

However, even though this festival marked the beginning of the winter and the farmers knew that they had to “begin storing and preparing for the cold months” (Megas 1958, 20), winter at this time has not actually set in. The weather is still quite mild and it is only through superstitions and agricultural customs that people are reminded of the winter and cold weather that is to come.

The second festival celebrated is Candlemas, which marks the coming of spring. Even though it is mostly known for its Christian characteristics, there are a number of folk beliefs, such as weather omens, which do not stem from Christian doctrines, but which are nevertheless observed on this day. A common name for this festival is Μυλιάργουσα, which actually means the “Miller’s Holiday’ (*Μύλος*: mill, *αργία*: holiday) (...) on this day the windmills remain idle (...) and it is also a good day for weather forecasting. Whatever the weather is at Candlemas, it will remain the same for forty consecutive days or at least till the end of February” (Megas 1958, 56).

The festival that celebrated the coming of spring in Scotland was Imbolc, which took place on nearly the same day as the Greek Candlemas. This festival too, was governed by agricultural weather omens as well as other superstitions, such as the prohibition against marrying at this time of year (Banks 1939, 142).

The third festival to be found in both countries on the same date is August 1st, Lughnasa in Scotland. Both festivals celebrated harvest and the beginning of autumn as well as the coming of winter. In Greece the farmers begin “to receive the profits from their crops” (Megas 1958, 145), while in Scotland too it is a time of reaping and harvesting. Apart from that, similarities also arise from the folk beliefs of the day in both Greece and Scotland. In Greece, the first days of August are called ‘Drimes’ and are “believed to be unfavourable to certain types of activity: it is advisable not to cut wood or wash one’s hair on these days; many people also avoid bathing in the sea, and children are not allowed to stay out at noon” (Megas 1958, 145). Similarly, in Scotland on this day magic was supposed to be strong and farmers did whatever they could in order to protect their products from being harmed by witches (Banks 1941, 47). On this day, it was firmly believed that witches attempted to injure and tamper with corn, sometimes after it was threshed.

The similarities that can be seen on this day between Scotland and Greece are many and include both major aspects of symbolism and the common character of the day. The Drimes and witches are both, in most cases, of female gender and are treated as a danger in both countries for fear they should ruin the farmers' crops.

However, as it was stated above, the main festivals of interest in this paper are Hallowe'en and Christmas in Scotland and Greece respectively and May Day in both countries. The reason that these dates in the ritual year were chosen is because of the strong supernatural activity that is believed to take place on all of them and also because of their important role within the ritual year. On the days of the festivals, supernatural entities such as fairies, nymphs, elves (in Greece entitled Kallikatzaroi during Christmas time) all leave their underground abodes and cause mischief. One cannot help but wonder why such belief in the supernatural, expressed through folk beliefs and folktales, displays such common characteristics on such important dates even though the two countries lie far apart from each other. At this point, I wish to make clear that although there is no exact equivalent of Hallowe'en in Greece, I believe that, because of the similar beliefs, customs and legends found on these two days, a strong parallel between Hallowe'en in Scotland and Christmas in Greece does exist.

More specifically, both Christmas and Hallowe'en include customs of an agricultural type. In Greece, during Christmas, "the ploughshare and Christmas table are both placed close to the hearth" (Megas 1958, 31) while in Scotland Hallowe'en was, likewise, a commemoration of both Christian and pre-Christian influences. "Its rites were destined to ensure the consecration of gathered fruits and crops, the purification from evil influence by fire, and communion with and commemoration of the dead" (Banks 1941, 109). The commemoration of the dead is a factor that can also be found during Christmas in Greece as "offerings were made towards them and visits to the cemetery were more often found during this time" (Megas 1958, 31). Hallowe'en too, was believed to be a day when the dead should be respected and feared as "spirits were believed to roam abroad on Hallowe'en" (Banks 1941, 109).

The climate is the main reason which forces me to believe that these two festivals serve the same purpose in the ritual year. In Greece the winter starts much later in the year than in Scotland and consequently, the long, dark and cold nights begin later too. As a result, the dark, 'winter' folk beliefs and legends are associated with the end of the year.

It is, therefore, only natural that the festival commemorating and remembering the dead in Greece would not take place at the end of October, when the weather is still fairly mild, thus affecting people's psychology in a positive manner, but towards the end of December. In the same way, it is natural that the equivalent festival in Scotland would be found earlier on, more specifically, on Hallowe'en.

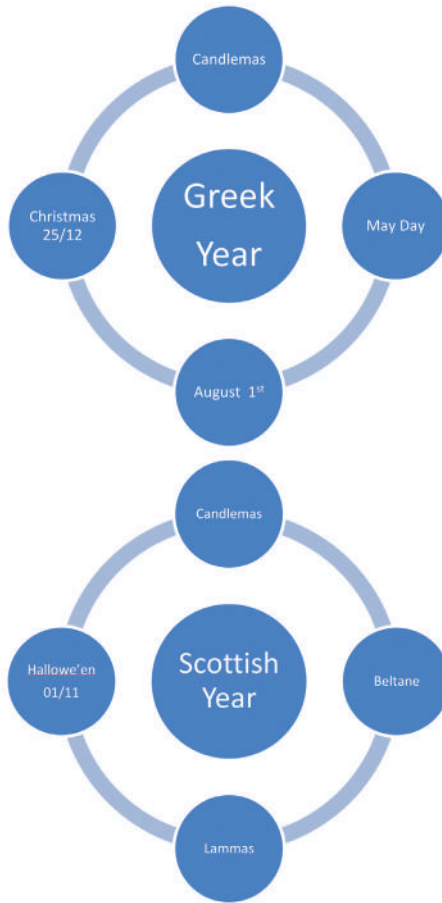
These dates, as well as sharing a common belief system concerning agriculture and the dead show many similarities in the beliefs about supernatural entities. Fairies in both countries during this time are let loose to create nuisance. In Greece, during the twelve days between Christmas and Epiphany, when the waters are believed to be unholy, the Kallikatzaroi make their appearance (Megas 1958, 33). They are

...a species of goblin, or spirits, who appear only once a year, at Christmas time (...) They are like human beings, only very dark and ugly, very tall and they wear iron clogs ... [they are also believed to be] very swarthy, with red eyes, cleft hooves, monkey arms, and bodies covered with hair (...) They slip into people's houses through the chimney; they make water on the fire, ride astride people's backs, force them to dance and pester them in every imaginable way (Megas 1958, 34).

Likewise, on Hallowe'en, or so it was believed, there was a complete upheaval and all the denizens of the Otherworld were released for the night. Such a belief can also be found in Ireland which, being culturally very close to Scotland, can be viewed in a similar cultural context. The festival in Ireland was regarded as

...one of the leading festivals of the year [. The people looked] on the night as the end of the year's growth and the fairies were let loose (...) It was called puca night and oiche na sprideanna because of the old people's belief that both the fairies and the ghosts were active then (Danaher 1972, 200).

It becomes clear that in both Greece and Scotland the spirits were believed to possess a dual nature. They belonged to the Otherworld of the dead but were also considered to be supernatural demonic creatures who resided in a parallel realm to the human one. Only in a few cases could they be said to belong entirely in only one of these two worlds.



Legends:

- 1) Christmas in Greece compared to Hallowe'en in Scotland as representative of the winter festival*
- 2) May Day in both Scotland and Greece*

The elements that I found to be similar between Kallikatzarous and fairies on Christmas and Hallowe'en were many and occurred in a number of legends. However, because of lack of space, I have decided to limit myself to commenting on only a small number of legends as representative of the similarities to which I wish to draw attention. One Greek tale which deals

with Kallikatzarous during Christmas is “The Kallikatzaroi and the Children.” According to this legend

...a woman, after she had finished preparing her cakes, vasilopites, courabiedes and melomakarona [traditional Greek Christmas dishes], looked out of her window and thought that it had just dawned. However, she had been tricked by the moon, because, as people say: “January’s moon is nearly day.” So she ran and woke her children so as to send them with her Christmas treats to the bakery to have them baked. They all woke up and, willingly, each and every one of them took a tray and began to walk towards the bakery. However, dawn had not yet come and suddenly, from inside the narrow streets, wild cries and laughter were heard. In just a few minutes, the street was full of little Kallikatzarous. They grabbed the children, threw down whatever they were holding and started a crazy dance, banging the trays and shouting: “Oh! Crooked trays, with fake bread and with ugly children. Jump, you little rogues!”

The moment the first rooster crowed, the exhausted kallikatzaroi left the trays on the roof of a house and ran away screeching and laughing, sticking out their tongues, which were red like fire, and swishing their tails to and fro. When day dawned, and people set out for work, they found on the street the three children half faint, not even able to stand on their feet. They shook them and blessed them with holy water. Then, when they had come to their senses, the children told them what the Kallikatzaroi had done to them. This is why everyone was afraid to leave their houses before dawn during the twelve days of Christmas.

In the same manner, the following Scottish legend shares a number of similarities with the Greek one:

Two neighbours went, after nightfall, for their Hallowe’en whisky to an inn, which was not far off. After they had got the whisky, they returned with it in jars on their backs, and some of it, no doubt, under their belts. On the way they saw a brilliant light before them, and shortly after that they heard sweet music and a shout of great rejoicing coming from the place where they saw the light. They knew that a Fairy Knoll was there and when they

reached it, the door was open, and the fairies plying the dance.

One of the men thrust his dirk into the side post of the door, and he and his companion stood on the outward side of the dirk. But if they did, one of them did not remain there long. The music so excited him that he sprang into the Knoll, shouting: "Up with it," and he began, with the jar on his back, to dance with the fairies. After he was a while on the floor, his companion outside called him to come, otherwise they would not be home on time. "Tuts! We have plenty of time," said he; "I have not yet danced one reel." Then some of the fairies came to the door and tried to persuade the man outside to enter with his companion; but he remained where he was. After a good while, he again called his companion who was within to come out, and go home with him, but if he called, it was in vain.

He now saw that he had better not stay longer. So he drew his dirk out of the door-post, the Fairy Knoll closed and he went away home.

When he arrived at the house, every one asked him where he had left his companion. He told them everything that had happened, and how he had left his companion dancing in the Fairy Knoll. But there was not one of them that credited the story. Instead of that they maintained that he had killed his neighbour, and that he had invented the story he told to turn away suspicion from himself. They put him in custody and pronounced sentence of death upon him. He then earnestly besought them to give him a year and a day's respite to clear himself of the suspicion under which he lay. That he obtained.

When the next Hallowe'en came around, he went the way of the Fairy Knoll in which he had left his companion. The Fairy Knoll was open, and his companion plying the dance with the fairies, as he had left him. He thrust the dirk into the door post, and called to his companion, who was dancing with the jar still on his back, that it was now high time for him to come out. "What do you say? I have not yet finished the first reel!" "Do you know how long you are on the floor?" "Not more than two or three minutes." "You are

here a day and a year! Your friends are thinking that you are dead, and intend to put me to death to-morrow unless I bring you home alive and well to-night.” “Stay until I finish this reel, and I will go with you then.” He now attempted to return within, but his companion laid hold of him by the arm and pulled him out. His companion then drew the dirk out of the door-post, and forthwith the door closed against them both. They returned home; and when they had arrived, and the first man had taken the jar off his back, the clothes under it were worn through to the skin and he was only left with skin and bones (Philip 1995, 435).

In both cases, the Kallikatzaroi and the fairies appear at night time and in remote areas near the human community. Both the time and the place at which they appear are liminal, meaning at the borders of the safe and the unsafe, of the known and the unknown, of day and night. In the Greek tale they appear at the crack of dawn, that is, between night and day. In the same manner, in the Scottish tale they appear just when night falls, once again, between day and night. The places in which they appear are also liminal, outside the safe area of the home, or in the streets, as in the Greek legend, and by the roadside in a hill, as in the Scottish legend, at the border between the known, safe human community and the unknown, dangerous area that lies in the streets, in a hill, or in other similar types of areas where humans do not spend their night.

The reason for this is because ‘[t]he space inside the home is regulated, controlled space’ (Martin 2007, 291). It is the safe area into which it is harder for the spirits to enter. The areas that appear in the legends, on the other hand, are areas which are outside the controlled, safe area of the home and are therefore subject to being invaded by spirits.

Not only is the background of the legends, in the form of time and place, similar, but also the behaviour of the supernatural entities. They are depicted in both legends laughing, dancing and merrymaking. Their attitude towards humans, in both cases, is dangerous, as they succeed in grabbing the children and the man and force them to dance till they are ‘half faint’ and only ‘skin and bones.’ The latter are eventually saved by human intervention when suitable precautions are taken to protect and save them.

Another Greek legend concerning Kallikatzarous describes how

...three hundred years ago, a girl became a kallikatzaros because

she was born on Christmas day but had not been baptised. Every Christmas day she would become a kallikatzaros and the next day she would become human again. When it was time for her to get married, the kallikatzaroi came and took her. One night, an old man was attacked by her. He made her count to three and then she became a woman again. She asked who she belonged to and he? took her home (Molinos 1996, 53–54).

A similar Scottish legend narrates that:

The wife of a farmer in Lothian had been carried off by the fairies, and, during the year of probation, repeatedly appeared on Sunday in the midst of her children, combing their hair. On one occasion, she was accosted by her husband. When she related to him the unfortunate event, which had separated them, she instructed him by what means he might win her, and exhorted him to exert all his courage, since her temporal and eternal happiness depended on the success of his attempt. The farmer, who ardently loved his wife, set out on Hallowe'en, and, in the midst of a plot of furze, waited impatiently for the procession of the fairies. At the ringing of the fairy bridles, and the wild unearthly sound which accompanied the cavalcade, his heart failed him, and he suffered the ghostly train to pass by without interruption. When the last rode by, the whole troop vanished, with loud shouts of laughter and exultation; among which he plainly discovered the voice of his wife, lamenting that he had lost her forever (Banks 1941, 167).

In both cases, the victim was a woman, and more specifically, a wife. The two women were taken by the fairies or the Kallikatzarous and an attempt to save them was made during night time. In the Greek tale, the man succeeded in saving her by counting to three, while in the Scottish legend, the woman's husband lost courage and was never able to save his wife. The gender of the victim, the role of the saviour, and the time that the attempt was made to save them are all too important factors to be overlooked or to be viewed as a simple coincidence.

Apart from Hallowe'en and Christmas, a day on which there is high supernatural activity in both countries is May Day, or else Beltane, as it is called in Scotland. In both countries this day is celebrated as the main festival of spring and summer while it is also believed to be subject to all types of

magical activity. Therefore, it is considered proper to take many precautions in order to stay safe. In Greece in particular, the word May (*Μάη-Μάιος*) is very similar to the word *mayia* (*μάγια*), which means magic, and it was generally believed that magic spells were particularly effective on this day. In the same manner in Scotland fairies were believed to make social calls the night before Beltane and were often seen dancing on this night while also raiding in human communities (Banks 1939, 219). In order to be safe, many precautions were taken in both Greece and Scotland. In both countries it was considered dangerous to marry and travel during this period.

Water and its many forms was also a common feature on this day. The reason it plays such an important role in both countries most probably lies in the archetypal idea that water is connected to regeneration and the giving of life, which is exactly what the spring and summer seasons represent. More specifically, water from rain in Greece was considered magic on this day and obtaining it was therefore considered as good luck. It was believed that it could keep women looking young. For example, in Kotoria in Greece, women would stand with loose hair in the rain so as to make it grow strong and thick (Megas 1958, 237). In Scotland too, water in the form of dew was looked upon as lucky. Women used to go out during the early hours of the morning on Beltane day in order wash their faces in May dew. It was not only considered lucky but also a way to stay young and beautiful.

I have consequently come to the conclusion that the notion that water was lucky on this day is also connected to the folk belief in fairies. My reason for so believing is that the fairies in most legends set around May Day were to be found near water, whether in the form of a river, lake, or sea.

An important difference between the appearance of fairies on May Day and their appearance on Hallowe'en and Christmas is the time of day when they appear. In most cases they appear during the early hours of the morning, once again because morning represents new beginnings, as well as rebirth, life and growth, just as spring does.

In the two following legends, the many similarities that occur in the depiction of fairies on May Day in Greece and Scotland become obvious.

The Greek legend goes as follows:

One Menidioti man went up to the mountain and saw the fairies bathing in the river. The Menidioti man grabbed the garments belonging to one fairy and with that action he forced her to marry

him. *They had a large family and the fairy lover stayed by her mortal husband's side for the rest of their lives* (Giohalas 1997, 134).

The Scottish legend states that:

There was a fisherman, who lived alone on an island. While walking along the shore one May Day he saw a group of seals making for the beach in the bay. They took their skins off and changed into beautiful women. The young man fell in love with one of the seal maidens and decided that he was going to make her his wife. He cunningly seized her skin and thrust it under his arm. The woman wept and pleaded for her skin but nothing she would say would persuade the man in giving it back. Finally, she consented in going back to the house with the fisherman. The fisherman made sure to hide the skin carefully in the barn where he was certain that she would never find it. Eventually he and the seal maiden got married and lived happily. They had many children and all seemed to be going well. One day however, during spring time again, the children happened to come across the seal skin and told their mother about it, without of course knowing themselves that it was actually their mother's seal skin. When the mother found out where her husband had hid the skin she swiftly went and retrieved it.

The woman was never seen again- and there was no sign of the skin. People reckoned that she had got hold of the skin and that she had got back to the sea just as had been before (Celtic Congress 1998, 58–59).

In both cases, the human men meet their fairy lovers in the morning. The fairies are both found near water, in the Greek tale in the form of a river and in the Scottish one in the form of the sea. As in the case of Christmas and Hallowe'en they make their appearance during the liminal hour of day break and in the liminal space of the shore or at the side of a lake. Both the time of day and the time of year at which they appear represent transition - from dark to light and from winter to spring, while the space in which they appear lies in-between two areas. The sea shore and the side of the lake symbolize the boundary between the safe and controlled area of the known, human community and the dangerous, unknown under- world of the sea or lake. It

must not be forgotten that water, even though it can provide, can also take one's life; it is a space in which mortals cannot live.

Once again, both time and space in the legends emphasize discretely the two-dimensional and contrasting natures of the fairies in both countries. In both legends the mortal men fall deeply in love with the fairy maidens and try to find a way to capture them. The manner in which they succeed in doing so is identical in both cases. In the Greek legend the man seized the fairy's garment and would not let her have it until she consented to marrying him. Similarly, in Scotland, the mortal man took the seal-maiden's skin and did not let her go. As in the Greek legend, the seal-maiden is forced to marry the mortal man.

Conclusion

From my examination of all the above beliefs and legends, I believe it is safe to suggest that Hallowe'en in Scotland and Christmas in Greece express the supernatural element in a similar manner. As can be seen from the folk beliefs and legends described above, on these two dates the spirits are much more mischievous and create a great amount of havoc and nuisance for humans. They appear by and large as groups and capture mostly children and women, consequently putting their lives at risk. In order to stay safe, humans are expected to take many precautions, most of which are connected in one form or another to Christian beliefs, such as making the sign of the cross or counting to three, as three is a sacred number in the Christian belief system. As was already demonstrated, the prohibitions used as a form of protection are analogous in both cases. The liminal time and space in which the supernatural beings appear also correspond, emphasizing the spirits' 'in-between' state, that is between life and death, light and darkness.

The folk beliefs and legends concerning fairies on May Day in both countries are also comparable. The fairies are dangerous but not to the same extent as during Hallowe'en and Christmas. In particular, many legends connected with this day have as their main subject a love affair between a mortal man and a spirit of the Otherworld, mostly connected to water. One cannot help but notice that the reason for this is because May Day, as was stated before, is the primary festival of summer, a celebration of regeneration, life and the beginning of all that is new. Hence, it is not surprising that many legends set on this date deal primarily with a love affair between a human and a spirit.

In addition, in both Greek and Scottish legends, the fairies appear almost always near water, such as rivers, wells and the sea. At this point the folk belief concerning May dew and May rain should be emphasized, since this too may be connected to fairies.

As in the case of Hallowe'en and Christmas, precautions, mostly in the form of prohibitions and Christian elements, must be taken by mortals in order to keep themselves safe on this day.

In both countries, the spirits that appear on May Day for the most part adopt a human form more specifically that of women who are captured by mortal men.

However, even though the similarities between Scottish and Greek fairy legends on Hallowe'en, Christmas and 1 May are many, one cannot help but notice a number of differences too. The main difference is the fact that they are influenced by their natural surroundings. As was stated before, the warm and mild weather of Greece, arising from the country's geographical position, naturally lasts longer than that of Scotland. It seems logical that the psychology of the peoples who live in these two places would also be influenced by this and find expression through their folk beliefs and legends.

Consequently, Greek legends always seem to be less dark and grim than the equivalent Scottish ones. As can be seen, for example, from those that were examined above, most legends in Greece have a satisfactory ending, either by saving the human victim or by witnessing a happy marriage between a fairy and a mortal. In Scottish legends, on the other hand, the human victim is often not saved and the seal maiden eventually leaves her human husband.

All in all, I hope that through this short essay I have been able to demonstrate that the folk beliefs of the Scottish and Greek ritual year share more similarities than one might have expected. I believe that these two countries, even though their surroundings and external influences are extremely different, share a great number of similarities which may have been left unnoticed till today. By focusing on them I believe that what can be achieved is a greater comprehension of Greece's and Scotland's cultural identity both individually and in relation to one another.

The aim of this paper was to focus only on a limited area of the folk beliefs and legends to be found in Greece and Scotland. Because of lack of space, it was not possible to examine other relevant folk beliefs, legends, traditions and customs. Even so, I trust that the examination of this limited

number of legends and folk beliefs is sufficient to prove that Scotland and Greece have in common a greater number of cultural similarities than was previously believed and that the depiction of supernatural creatures in legends of the calendar year, shows that they share common connotations, symbols, and characteristics.

REFERENCES

- Banks, M. MacLeod. 1939. *British Calendar Customs: Scotland Vol. II: The Seasons, The Quarters Hogmanay, January to May*. London: William Glaisher LTD.
- . 1941. *British Calendar Customs: Scotland Vol. III: June to December, Christmas, The Yules*. London: William Glaisher LTD.
- Danaher, Kevin. 1972. *The Year in Ireland*. Dublin: Mercier Press.
- Dualchas Mara (Sea Heritage)*. 1998. Highland: Celtic Congress.
- Giohalas, Titos P. 1997. *Αρβανίτικα Παραμύθια και Δοξασίες: νεράιδες, δαίμονες, ξόρκια, ψυχιάσματα*. Athens: [-].
- MacDougall, James. 1978. *Highland Fairy Legends*, edited by George Calder. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer Ltd.
- Martin, Neill. 2007. *The Form and Function of Ritual Dialogue in the Marriage Traditions of Celtic-Language Cultures*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Megas, George A. 1958. *Greek Calendar Customs*. Athens: Press and Information Department.
- Μολινός, Στρατής Αλ. 1996. *Οι Καλλικιάτζαροι*. Αθήνα: Στρατής Γ. Φιλιππότης.
- Philip, Neill, ed. 1995. *The Penguin Book of Scottish Folktales*. London: Penguin Group.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Nikolemma Polyxeni Dimitriou has studied at the department of Celtic and Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh (UK) for a Masters by Research. Her master's thesis involved the comparison of the legend of the fairy maiden who is abducted by a human man in Scotland and Greece. She completed her bachelor's degree in 2011 in English Language and Literature at the department of English Studies at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She was part of the editorial team for the university's poetry magazine A-formes. Her research interests

include the comparative analysis of supernatural entities in European legends and folktales, explorations of folk belief in the ritual year and folk belief involving fairy women (nymphs, nereids, leanan sídhe), particularly in the Balkans and Scandinavia but also in other regions of Europe.

IN THE HANDS OF THE WOMEN, THE BABO DAY: FROM A MID-WINTER FESTIVAL IN GREEK MACEDONIA TO THE ANCIENT WORLD

Evy Johanne Håland

Abstract

The women's festival dedicated to the midwife, Babo, or Saint Domenika, is celebrated in the village of Monokklēsia in Greek Macedonia on 8 January. Despite the fact that few women in Monokklēsia know of her, Saint Domenika is the midwife who, according to tradition, helped the Virgin Mary at the birth of Christ and until his baptism. On the day of this festival, the village's women demand their menfolk to take over their usual domestic work, while the celebrating women reel around in the streets and occupy the taberna. Their heavy alcohol consumption is accompanied with obscenities.

These modern rituals also have parallels to the ancient *Mystēria*, which are female festivals celebrated during important periods of the agricultural year, such as before sowing, around mid-winter, and around harvest.

Based on a presentation of the modern Greek festival on which the author has conducted fieldwork, this article examines the festival within the contexts of other modern customs and their ancient equivalents celebrated during the ritual year of the grain.

Key words

Agricultural cycle, agriculture, death, fertility, festivals, healing, midwife, Midwinter, modern and Ancient Greece, obscenities, religion, saints, St. Domenika, women.

Introduction

A women's festival, dedicated to the midwife, Babo, *Agia* (Saint) or *Osia* (venerable, blessed, saint)¹ Domnikēs or Domenika, is celebrated in

¹ The transliteration of Greek follows the rules of the Nordic Library, Athens. Strictly speaking, Domnikēs is not an *Agia*, i.e. saint but *Osia*, i.e. venerable, blessed, saint. According to one of my informants, a young female scholar from Thessaloniki, there are two kinds of saints or rather two levels, i.e. *Agia* (f.)/*Agios* (m.) and *Osia* (f.)/*Osios* (m.), for ceremonial reasons. She further explains that *Osia*/*Osios* is the designation of a person who has participated in something of religious importance, but this person never provokes miracles. The difference is also seen in the liturgy since the liturgy performed for an *Osia*/*Osios* is much shorter than the liturgy performed

several villages in Greek Macedonia on 8 January, ‘the Babo day.’ I visited the festival in the village of Monokklēsia in 1992.² Monokklēsia is a small village which is situated approximately twenty kilometers west of Serres, the biggest township in the area, and approximately two and a half kilometers from Provatas. From this latter village the ninety-five kilometer bus trip westwards to Thessaloniki takes approximately one hour.

Monokklēsia is famous for the custom that is celebrated in early January: On this feast, the village’s women demand their menfolk to take over their usual domestic work, while the celebrating drunken women reel around in the streets, and occupying the taberna.

The festival takes place in a region in the northern and most fertile part of Greece, populated by refugees from the former village of Petra in Eastern Roumelia or eastern Thrace, an area that since the war in 1922 has belonged to Bulgaria and Turkey.³ The customs that the refugees brought with them to Greece probably derive from the Dionysian rituals in ancient Thrace, but they also have ties with ancient Greek women’s festivals dedicated to Demeter, particularly the Haloa festival celebrated in ancient Eleusis at the same time during the ritual year of the grain.

By giving a thick description of the modern festival, the article presents a tool to do research on female festivals within Greek history drawing on a methodology that uses modern in conjunction with ancient sources. This method helps to reevaluate the sources we have from the ancient context, since they predominately are produced by men, who in general were excluded from the female rituals. The male authored sources must therefore be deconstructed and considered from a gyno-inclusive perspective by examining them in conjunction with information from the female sphere, which a female researcher may have particular access to in the village of Monokklēsia.⁴

for an *Agia/Agios*. An *Osia* 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. However, most of my Greek informants, including priests, never use the word *Osia*, but *Agia*, as I also do in this study.

² Håland 2007: Ch. 4 (also for a discussion of the bibliography about the festival), see also 2006, 2011a. For the festival in Monokklēsia, see Tsotakou-Karbelē 1991, 23 f.; Dede 1976, 195–208; Michaēl-Dede 1979, 493–503; 1987, 33–35; 1991; Megas 1952, 3–27, 170 f.; 1992, 90–92; Loukatos 1985, 83–87; Dracoulidēs 1962, 89–91, 105–119; Romaios 1949, 159 f.

³ Loukatos 1985, 83–87; Megas 1952, 3–27.

⁴ Due to length constraints in this article, the examination of the ancient festivals will be given a

The midwife's day

'The Babo day'" has only minor connections to the festival celebrated by the Orthodox Church on 8 January: This is the day when the Orthodox Church celebrates the holy, Osia or Agia Domnikēs, Domnēs or Domenika. Even though it has several very interesting customs attached to it, the Babo festival is a minor event if we compare it with the great religious feasts in Greece, such as the Orthodox Easter season celebrations or the extensive rituals that take place during the carnival season. Furthermore, this particular female saint is nearly unknown, even to the women in Monokklēsia. Agia Domnikēs is the midwife who according to the tradition helped the *Panagia* (Virgin Mary) from the time of the birth of Christ until his baptism, an event which is celebrated on 6 January.⁵

Two days later, 8 January, is the 'Midwife's day' or the 'Old Woman's day,' since Agia Domenika is best known as the Midwife's Day. It is essentially a woman's feast, but only women who are still of age to bear children are permitted to participate at the feast, 'so they may get pregnant,' as people say. The honoured person of this day is not the Saint herself, but one of the most important members of the village community: the midwife, Babo.

On Agia Domenika's Day all of the eligible village-women dress up in their best clothes and go to visit the one who is selected to be 'the midwife' of the year. They bring her gifts that will be useful to her profession, such as soap, towels, etc., but they also bring food and wine.

In this way all the women gather and start the religious ritual: Each woman pours out some water for the midwife to wash her hands, thus anticipating the day when the midwife will assist her in childbirth. Then she must sit down and kiss the *schema* that is offered to her by the old women who attend the midwife; this *schema* is a phallic-shaped object made from a large leek, or a sausage. These phallic shaped objects symbolize fertility. The women kiss the phallus passionately and weep over it. Meanwhile the midwife, adorned with gilded flowers, onion and garlic tresses, necklaces of dried figs, currants and carob-beans, and one large onion instead of a watch, sits proudly upon a makeshift throne, watching the scene with satisfaction. The village-women surround her with great

shorter outline. For a comprehensive study, see Håland 2007, Ch. 4–6, cf. also 2006.

⁵ Dede 1976, 206 f.; Michaël-Dede 1979, 494 f.; cf. Loukatos 1985, 86; see also Meraklēs 1986, 22 f. for the importance of the midwife.

veneration, as if she was a reincarnation of *Genetyllis*, the ancient Greek goddess of childbirth.

This is a women's feast, and now they celebrate with great gusto and a banquet with plenty of food and lots of wine, which they enjoy through continuous and potent libations. It is not considered improper for women to get drunk on this occasion. After much eating and drinking, the midwife, still heavily bedecked, is placed in a hut made of straws. During earlier celebrations the women used to place the hut on a carriage, and the entire structure was carried through the streets of the village. The midwife was displayed as if she was a bride; she was taken to the public fountain, where she was sprinkled with water. The womenfolk escorted her all the way. During my fieldwork this ritual took place in front of and inside the hut, and the women who surrounded her were singing and dancing. Some of them were in fancy dress, most wore national customs, and many were quite wild. Their heavy alcohol consumption was accompanied with obscenities. Their songs and jokes were often extremely coarse.

Needless to say, most men stay indoors on *Agia Domenika's Day*. They hardly dare to venture out for fear of falling into the hands of these drunken women. According to the women who participate in this festival, they will 'have a good time and get many children.'

The ritual that is described here changes slightly from year to year in *Monokklēsia*. In the other villages in which the festival is celebrated, the rules are followed strictly. However, the main elements are the same. The festival also is celebrated in several villages in Greek Macedonia. The most important difference is that in *Kitros*, a young woman personifies the midwife during the celebration, while in *Monokklēsia*, she must be old, and thereby have completed the fertile period of her life.⁶

The Babo day in Monokklēsia in 1992

On the eve of the Babo day, the village-women are busy with the preparations of the feast. At 6 p.m. a visitor is informed of what will take place

⁶ Dede 1976 gives a direct description from *Kitros*, *Pierias*. Cf. Michaēl-Dede 1979. She claims that the version of Babo which is celebrated in *Monokklēsia* is not the midwife, but the old woman, and that old women in general were not midwives! It is the grandmother that is celebrated, when she has finished all her work during the 12 days Christmas celebration, 493 f.; see also *infra*. It is in *Kitros* that they celebrate the midwife, because she is young, cf. Loukatos 1985, 86. But there are different opinions on this topic.

here: When entering the main street of the village, the festival is announced by a placard which hangs across the street: *gynaikokratia* (women's rule). To the right of the church, the women have their own building, and the words, *Ἐ Λυσιστρατῆ, Μονοκκλήσια, Σερρών, ἔτος ἰδρύσ 1963* ('the Lysistrata association of Monokklēsia, Serres, founded in 1963'), are written on a placard, which hangs over the door. The sign also announces that this is the association for married women (*sylogos engamōn gynaikōn*).

Inside this building is the women's house, where I find a scene of enthusiastic activity. In the main room a long table is situated in the form of a horse shoe. In addition here is a stage, on which musical instruments are placed. Several women seated next to the stove are having an eager conversation. Others are busy in the kitchen, and this is where I see a big pot filled with eggs. Under the kitchen cabinet is a container with cabbage. The women are enthusiastic to pose for the 'photographer,' and fetch some plucked chickens, which are used as props for obscene gestures. They simulate sexual intercourse with fingers, hands, and chickens to the amusement of all (Pic. 1).⁷



Pic. 1. On the eve of the Babo feast in the village of Monokklēsia, the women perform obscene gestures with plucked chickens: they simulate sexual intercourse with fingers, hands, and chickens.

(All the pictures are by the author.)

Several pictures hang on the wall in the main room. They depict earlier feasts in which famous visiting persons have been present, such as Margaret Papandreou. The men are kept outside since the feast or ceremonial area is 'indicated' or cut off by a fence. They also informed that the festival will start at 9 a.m. the following day and that it will last the whole day and evening. There will also be celebrations in other neighboring villages.

On the other side of the road people tidy up outside of the most popular taberna of the village, a place where the village-men were feasting from early in the morning. They were eating and drinking and no women

⁷ Cf. Pic. 1 and Dracoulidēs 1962, Pic. 10.

were permitted to participate. This festival is called the ‘purification,’ and is more recent. Some claim that the men take their feast on this day, and the next day, when they have a hangover, they let the women feast. Others say that the festival continues on 18 January, but then they celebrate the ‘married couple’s feast.’ Thus, what originally was only a woman’s feast is now supplied with a man’s feast before and a couple’s feast afterwards.

On the feast day, 8 January, activities start at 8 a.m. At the entrance to the village three women stand next to a bar on which they have written ‘STOP.’ Here they dip a branch into a glass with water, bless me, and wish ‘Many Years’ (*chronia polla*), as is the usual custom at religious festivals in Greece. A car filled up with menfolk, however, is required to pay a fee in cash before the women move the bar and allow them to pass. Then they start to wash the car, and finally the men are ordered to drive to another direction. In front of the church a square area between the church and the women’s house has been roped off. In the same building however, is the council house of the village. At the place where the women’s space is roped off, a woman dressed in a police uniform stands on a white and blue painted stand. She directs the cars to the right or the left, depending on the sex of the people in the cars. At the square in front of the women’s house is a hut made of straw. This is the hut where they will place Babo when the other women have been in her house to fetch her.



Pic. 2. The police woman takes a big sip from a wine-bottle at the Babo feast.

The women dance around in the village throughout the morning. They visit all the houses to collect and call upon all the village’s women to

participate in the feast. Afterwards, they visit Babo, the oldest woman in the village, and conduct her to the hut. Most of the women are dressed in traditional national costumes. Some play musical instruments. They dance and drink straight from the spouts of the bottles they carry with them. A woman dressed in a black coat dances around carrying a leek, which she and the others kiss ecstatically. When they arrive at the location of the uniformed police woman, they give her one of the wine-bottles and she takes a big sip (Pic. 2).

The women enter the space in front of the women's house at noon. As part of their annual ritual, they select a new leader and committee.

The festival in 1992 was quite unusual because there was a funeral in the village on 7 January. That is why the men started their feast late, and it took more time than usual to collect all the women during the feast today.

In 1992 some of the women said that they were not so interested in tracking the custom back to the ancient period, as others had been. For these women, the most important thing was to remember and maintain the bonds with their place of origin in Thrace before 1922, i.e. the area from which they, i.e. their forebears, migrated seventy years ago. They are eager to stress that they are – and have always been – Greeks: they think as Greeks, but, still, they need to maintain this memory about their place of origin. It is very important for them to emphasize that although they came here to this place seventy years ago, they “have always felt themselves as Greeks, both earlier and now. It is in their blood, their hearts, their feelings. A Greek can come to Greece from anywhere in the world, and will understand the people here.” It is very interesting to reflect on the fact that these women are eager to emphasize their Greekness simultaneously as they memorize their place of origin, i.e. the place from which their ancestors emigrated seventy years ago in 1992, i.e. in a period when it was forbidden to speak anything else than Greek officially in the northern part of Greece. Other celebrating women see this festival as a pretext to ‘place Monokklēsia on the map/agenda,’ since they want to emphasize that Greece is more than Athens.⁸

⁸ In other words people put different meanings in the feast, and this is important to remember for someone coming as a visitor, and seeks the one and only meaning. See Dubisch 1995, for another variant (her first original fieldwork on Tinos) and cf. my experiences from Kephallonia 1992, when I came to do fieldwork on the festival dedicated to the Panagia in the village of Markopoulo, but was strongly encouraged by the locals to attend the festival dedicated to their patron saint, Agios Gerasimos, which I also did with great benefit.

The food that is served at the feast is symbolic. I had been introduced to some of the ingredients the day before. Now everything is collected: eggs, chickens, and vegetables, particularly onions and cabbage. The women have baked sweet cakes, which taste like *mpaklabas* ('baklabas') but are formed in the shape of an erected phallus. All the food has some ritual meaning.

On the square in front of the women's house, a TV team makes an interview with the leader of the women's association. Like many of the other women, she wears a necklace made of *pimientos* ('peppers'), which symbolize phalluses. Then the musicians, who are men dressed in women's clothes, arrive – and the dance starts. One of the women dances around carrying a leek which she and the others kiss (Pic. 3).



Pic. 3. The dancing women at the Babo festival. One of them (the one in the middle) holds a leek.

Another woman dances around, holding a bottle of wine. Some young girls dance around holding ballpoint pens, with which they make symbolic gestures. Next, the TV team interviews the other participants.

A man stands outside a house and shakes clothes, indicating that he is carrying out the housework, as he is expected to do. Some of the villagers sit at the *Kapheneio* (coffeehouse), while others have the courage to approach the closed off square. However, as soon as they are outside the roped off area, they are chased away. A woman who has been waiting for their approach will splash water on them (Pic. 4).

She carries a water vessel and a twig, which she uses to sprinkle water on the men, much to the amusement of the other women.



Pic. 4. Armed with a water jug, a woman laughs, while another woman chases intruding men.

After a while the common lunch is ready. All the women enter the house of their association and eat chicken soup, which is accompanied with a lot of wine. During the meal they entertain each other with coarse jokes and sing lewd songs. Here is a rich collection of both wedding songs and religious parodies and hymns. They sing about necrophilia, incest, laxity and drunkenness, about 'draining oneself' and other impertinences: "Oh, I long for a really long prick, I long for some explosives, some happiness to fill (up my pussy) me up. Either will I give birth to an orphan, or I will give birth to a trickster." In another song a woman tells that "for a long time you caress my pussy, you undress. – Undress, and when your prick rises, you shall pat, you will work yourself in me." A third song describes the priest who arrives and takes the woman from behind while she is busy frying fish for her husband's dinner. In addition, they drink to their health while shouting wishes for "putting a prick in my pussy in an everlasting coitus"; or "in his cousin and his aunt, he went deeper and deeper." The songs often are in the form of questions and answers, such as the song which is a sort of conversation between a mother and her daughter: "Mum my pussy wants food, mum it excites me." She is advised to give her pussy bread, but replies that it only wants hairy testicles and a shameless prick.⁹

At this point the men start a singsong outside of the *Kapheneio*, to counterbalance the women's singing in their house. This might be a parallel to the male feast which seemed to stand in polar opposition to the women's Haloa festival in ancient Greece. After the lunch has ended, some of the men

⁹ Many examples of the songs they sing are published in Michaël-Dede 1991.

pick a quarrel: directed by the mayor of the village, they start a part song outside of the church.

The music starts again. The women have finally decided who is going to be Babo of the year. In one body, and preceded by the musicians, the women go to the home of the oldest woman of the village. After performing the religious ritual, which is connected with the midwife, (Pic. 5) the women lead her as a bride to the space in front of the women's house. Here she is ceremonially assigned to the main place in the straw hut. She receives a leek in one hand and a wooden scepter in the other (Pic. 6).



Pic. 5. The women lead Babo in procession from her home to the women's house.



Pic. 6. From the ceremony in the straw hut: Babo receives the honorary symbols, the leek and the scepter.

In the next phase of the ceremony, the women wash their hands (Pic. 7). Afterwards, some women arrive from the kitchen carrying a chicken, and they share it ceremonially, in a sort of communal meal. This phase also is accompanied by a lot of wine (Pic. 8).

They sing obscene songs, and kiss the leek passionately. Then, the dance starts again. Babo has the title the second successive year, and, of course, she tells a lie on her age, emphasizing that she is the oldest woman.

After a while the chairman of Serres arrives. The women put an apron around his waist. This female clothing is required for letting him enter into their female space, and then he must lead the dance. The major also has to lead the dance, but as soon as he has done so, the leader of the women's association takes charge (Pic. 9).¹⁰

¹⁰ One may perhaps wonder why these particular men are permitted to participate when others are forbidden. It may be since they as men of power having to cross-dress (to enter the female space) makes it more humiliating for them and also thereby manifesting the power of the women to decide if they will let these authorities in or not.



Pic. 7. Next, the women wash Babo's hands.



Pic. 8. The women eat, drink, and sing obscene songs.

Babo comes dancing and carrying a liter's bottle of retzina, from which she drinks. She passes the bottle around to the others, so everybody can take a sip; both the major and the chairman also have to take a sip of the bottle. Then she throws it to the ground, where it breaks. She gives the same treatment to a bottle of red wine. A bottle of oil is also broken.

At the other part of the house, beneath the offices of the authorities, the distinguished male visitors are served. Several women move around, constituting a kind of 'shuttle traffic,' to serve them. But, although the men are served by the women, they must eat the leftovers after the women have finished their meal. This is a glaring contrast to the usual custom and rule in Greece. In this festival, men enter everywhere, but not in the women's house. They try repeatedly, but as soon as they enter, or rather try to enter into the roped-off square, one of the women is there to sprinkle water on them.



Pic. 9. The major, dressed in an apron, follows the leader of the women's association in the dance.

The old black-clad women of the village sit lined up outside of the women's house on their own wooden chairs. From here they enthusiastically

comment and debate on all aspects of the festivities. Babo fetches the microphone and sings lewd songs, accompanied by the cross-dressed musicians.

According to some of the young villagers, Herodotus writes about women's rule and women's feasts in the ancient period.¹¹ Another says that "in the ancient world, they celebrated a women's feast on 12 January", because she has "read that in Aristophanes' play, *Lysistrata*, so the minor difference regarding the date of the feast day does not play any particular role. It is the same feast." The Orthodox Church is not so strict anymore in this village. There is no ecclesiastical celebration of Agia Domnikēs, and the church is hardly visited during the day. Here the official church says this: "You may celebrate whatever you want as long as we get money."¹²

At sunset, the feast continues inside the women's house. The musicians enter the stage. While waiting for the food, which is prepared by some women, most of the women dance. Since there are many women present this year, the festal committee decides that they will charge an entrance fee of 1000 drachmas. The reason is that many of the participants have not contributed to the 'collective kitchen.' During the dance, which takes place while the participants are waiting for food, the leader of the association grabs the microphone and begins performing the wild songs (Pic. 10).



Pic. 10. The leader of the committee sings the wild songs, and a male cross-dressed musician joins in the singing.¹³

¹¹ See *infra* for sources mentioning women's rule and festivals, cf. also Håland 2007, Ch. 5 f. for a comprehensive discussion of the available sources. Although Hdt. mentions what he considers to be the Egyptian version of the Greek Thesmophoria (2.171,1), and other fertility rituals, he is not among these authors of sources.

¹² This position is a glaring contrast to the struggle that has been fought other places in Greek Macedonia, particularly in Agia Elenē concerning the Kalogeros and Anastenaria festivals, see Håland 2007, Ch. 4 and 6.

¹³ Cf. *supra* for the requirement for male participants.

In the course of the evening the feast becomes more and more excited; it is a real orgy, with much singing and dancing, a lot of food, and the wine is flowing in streams. After a while, women also start to dance topless on the tables, holding leeks and ballpoints, while singing their songs.¹⁴ However, the feast ends at midnight, according to custom.

The following day, 9 January, is literally ‘the morning after’ for the women. At the entrance to Monokklēsia the placard announcing the women’s rule has been moved. Some women sweep the enclosure outside of the ‘Lysistrata house.’ Inside the house the women’s committee is seated. They have a coffee break from the tidying up and cleaning. They are tired, but discuss the feast enthusiastically. At the *Kapheneio*, the men’s sanctuary, the men are seated, discussing the feast. In and outside of the houses of the village, the women have resumed working. One of them is in the field, picking leeks, and when I take a photo she starts to laugh. One of the women in the feast-committee invites me for a cup of coffee. She is originally from Cyprus, and is very proud of her vegetable garden, and she grins when I praise the elegant, stately leeks. She tells that she fled from Cyprus to Monokklēsia during the Turkish invasion.¹⁵ Today all the women have a hangover and the men are feasting. When I ask if the men have a feast both before and after the women’s day, I learn that “they celebrate the day before the women’s day, and today they feast because it is so cold.” She is keen to stress that next weekend there will be a celebration for both sexes: both men and women are feasting together. They keep on feasting outside of the women’s house the whole day.¹⁶ In other words, one may propose that we encounter an example of ‘ying and yang,’ or gendered complementarity, with these three festivals in Monokklēsia: One festival is female; one is male; and there is one in which both sexes participate, paralleling ancient circumstances.¹⁷

¹⁴ Cf. also Michaël-Dede 1991, e.g. 21, 38.

¹⁵ In the kitchen, the holy corner, i.e. the altar, is situated at the top of a cupboard, but when I direct the attention to the altar, she quickly switches off the ‘ever-burning lamp.’

¹⁶ A young man from Provatas tells me that the ‘women’s rule,’ i.e. the feast, is not as it used to be. “After 1981/2 it has relapsed, at least the last five years. It degenerates: in one village they celebrate on 4 January; in another they fest every day”, he says.

¹⁷ Cf. Håland 2007, 385n.527.

A note on the scholars' historiographical assessment of the Babo-festival

Many scholars have related the Babo festival to the ancient women's festivals, and just as many scholars have denied any such link while arguing that this is a new phenomenon that bears no relation whatsoever to – and therefore is absolutely not a new version of – Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* or *Ecclesiazusae* ('Women in Parliament'). On the other hand, this festival that takes place in Monokklēsia is a celebration of the grandmother, after women have finished their hard work during the Christmas celebrations. The argument of the festival as a having no relation to ancient women's festivals is furthermore explained by stating that old women were not midwives. Accordingly, the modern so-called 'Women's rule' in Monokklēsia is a new phenomenon, and all comparisons with the ancient *Lysistrata* are due to ideas that Maria Michaēl-Dede and Dēmētrios Loukatos link to tourists and uninformed journalists.¹⁸ Concerning Loukatos' negative conclusion about an 'Aristophanian *Lysistrata*,' however, we know very little and, in fact, nothing about the context surrounding the play. The festival should not be interpreted from the perspective of the modern western women's liberation, as Loring M. Danforth does when he relates the festival to contemporary feminist movements, an aspect that is absent in the presentations given by Greek scholars.¹⁹ Some of the young festival participants that I interviewed when visiting the village, and who pointed to that Herodotus talks about women's rule and women's festivals in antiquity, do not belong to the village. They are visiting students of sociology from Athens who carry out fieldwork among northern peasant women, and accordingly they represent a view that is different from that of Greek peasant women. Several of the younger peasant women, however, also mention the same ancient sources.

The first 'modern' observation of the Babo feast was carried out among Greeks in the former district of Adrianopolis in Thrace and was published

¹⁸ Loukatos 1985, 86 f., in the following of Dede 1976, 204, 206, cf. Michaēl-Dede 1979, 493 ff. and personal communication in 1992. For midwives, see also Håland 2007, Ch. 6. For grandmothers: Ch. 4. The 'survivalist,' Dracoulidēs 1962, 106, however, discusses parallels between the Babo feast and Ar. Eccl. i.e. the women's 24 hours rule when Praxagora was elected leader. Among other factors he supports his analysis on the term *gynaikokratia*. See also Megas 1952.

¹⁹ See Håland 2007, Ch. 6, e.g. n.692 for a discussion of the problems that arises when attempting to force western gender ideals on Greek peasant women, categorizing them as lacking freedom, dependent, secluded and not living a full life.

in 1886. This handwritten report, which was given by Sum. Manasseïdous, was taken up by G. Megas (1952) and Loukatos (1985) in their presentations of older accounts of the feast. Both Megas, N. N. Dracoulidès (1962), and Michaël-Dede have visited the festival. Despite a certain ambiguity in Michaël-Dede, following from the problems concerning the *survivalism*²⁰ and Orthodoxy, which she shares with most Greek folklorists,²¹ all of the aforementioned scholars relate the festival to the ancient women's festivals, the Thesmophoria and Haloa. We meet the same associations with antiquity in the descriptions by C. A. Romaios (1949) and Aikaterinē Tsotakou-Karbēlē (1991).²² Megas' (1952) lively description and interpretation of ancient parallels refers to accounts given by twelve Thracian refugees that he interviewed in 1937. In the comparison he also discusses similar customs in modern Denmark and Germany, noting also how the Bulgarians, who now celebrate the same festivals, must have imitated the Greeks, since there had been Greek colonies (Apollonia, Mesembria, Anchiale) with a flourishing Greek population until 1923. He concludes that the festival for the wise woman is not only a single folkloristic phenomenon that helps us understand the Thesmophoria and Haloa, but is a genuine survival of the ancient festivals, particularly the ritual of the Thesmophoria, which was connected with *Kalligeneia* (the goddess of the beautiful birth who was invoked on the third day of the festival) and the obscene rituals during the Haloa, in which only women participated. The connection with the Slavic customs has provoked much discussion about the problem pertaining to the term Babo itself: is it a Slavic or a Greek term, and if the latter is correct, can it be traced back to the ancient Baubō and the Eleusinian Mysteries? The discussion has lasted for more than a century. It was the Austrian historian Jakob Philip Fallmerayer who in 1830 declared that the modern Greeks were certainly not descendants of the ancient Greeks, but Slavs, and his focus on the topics of 'language, nationalism, and race.' Despite the many emigrations

²⁰ In its purest form, 'survivalism' presupposes that on key issues there has been cultural continuity from antiquity to the present in Greece, see Håland 2007, Ch. 2.

²¹ I.e. the problems following from their claim to being Orthodox Christians and simultaneously claiming that modern Greece is the direct heir of the ancient pagan Greek culture, see Håland 2007, Ch. 2–3 for discussion.

²² Romaios 1949, 159 f. refers to the documentation of the festival among refugees in several Greek Macedonian villages, cf. Håland 2007, Ch. 6 n.558. Phaltaitis was published in 1929. Cf. Loukatos 1985, 83–87; Megas 1952, 1–27, see also 1992, 90–92. Nor is Dede 1976 quite consequent, but rather ambiguous.

and immigrations that have taken place and still occur in this multi-ethnic geographical area, legal or illegal, it seems that the debate has not concluded. In fact, the discussion concerning language and religion in the service of nationalism is particularly timely.²³ The ‘survivalists’ have related the Babo festival to the ancient Dionysian ceremonies and their eventual continuity is related to the difficulties in entering the geographical area where the festival was celebrated before the ‘exodus.’ This phenomenon can be observed in several of the festivals that came to modern Greece with refugees from the Thracian area.²⁴

From the modern festival to its ancient parallels

It is important to note that many of the pictures Dracoulidès published in 1962 are similar to those I took thirty years later, some of which are also reproduced here. In particular, it is interesting to note that ‘the 1992 version of the Babo’ also was present at the festival he has documented. On the other hand, although the Babo feast most likely is not a genuine survival of the ancient festivals, as Megas has claimed, the modern festival probably represents many parallel patterns with the ancient women’s celebrations, and under all circumstances the modern ritual constitutes an important and valuable comparative resource both regarding the particular time within the agricultural year when it is celebrated and also the gender relations in the area.

There might be many reasons for comparing the Babo feast with the festivals dedicated to the ancient grain goddess, Demeter, such as the particular stage in the grain’s growth, i.e. the time within the agricultural

²³ See Håland 2007, Ch. 2, 4, 6 and my own discussion (from 1994) with Schwartz 1994, 39. See also Merlier 1949, vi; and Romaios 1949, 195 where he despite an important point concerning continuity of cult regardless of superficial political domination, does not take up the assimilation between the people that no doubt must have taken place. Vryonis 1978, 237–256, gives a good account of the polemics within Byzantine research. The presentation is also relevant for classical research from which the Byzantine is derived. He gives interesting examples of continuity 251n.2 and good examples of deliberate mistranslation of sources in the service of discontinuity and the Slavic point of view, 253 f.n.22. Vryonis’ account presents both sides scrupulously, including a good account of Fallmerayer. See furthermore, Ben-Zaken 2013, for an alternative approach to the problem, in connection with modern emigration and the ‘global village,’ transcending the old nation state.

²⁴ I have visited and documented three of these festivals: Håland 2005, 2007, 2013. See Chourmouziadēs 1961, 145; Romaios 1949, 197; Dracoulidès 1962, 90 f. cf. 118 vs. critique in Danforth 1984, 69.

year when it is celebrated. The way the ancient male produced sources considered the *gynaikokratia* (cf. n.18 supra) is also important to take into account when we are comparing the gender relations in both ancient and modern Greek contexts.

We therefore encounter an interesting complementarity with all three of the festivals in Monokklēsia. Yet it was the annual Babo festival that I visited, and this festival represents many symbols and rituals which are associated with both death cult, fertility cult and healing. This regards the time of the year with it is celebrated, when the farmer must reawaken the earth from the death's embrace, the various phallic symbols that are employed such as in the procession, a ritual with holy and healing water, the women's alcohol consumption, and the obscene songs and jokes that are presented. It is practical to have leeks and cabbage as phallic symbols during the festival, since it is the period of harvesting these crops in the area.²⁵ The phallic symbols signify the fertility that starts to reawaken. The festival gives an interesting presentation of the two gender's respective spheres in Greece. Moreover, it is celebrated by women who mainly are descendants of Orthodox and Greek-speaking Thracian refugees who brought the custom with them to Greece during the population exchange in 1923. The immigrant women came to Greece from an area that has been isolated from the outside world as a consequence of its inaccessibility until recently. The Babo festival can therefore be a supplementary source to the ancient women's festivals, which were celebrated in this area. The reason is that we have few sources to the ancient female festivals, and the evidence that we do have is written by and passed down by men, even though men were generally excluded from participating in the festivals.

The ancient Thesmophoria festival and the Haloa were celebrated around important periods of the agricultural year. It is therefore natural that the modern Babo feast is taken into account when we try to illuminate ancient women's festivals. Relevant aspects, which will be discussed in the following pages, are the time of the year for the celebration, the exclusion of men, and concrete symbols and obscenities. It is also important to note that the men's 'chorus' outside of the *Kapheneio* while the women sing in their

²⁵ Leeks are also symbols during the carnival in the village of Melikē (Western Greek Macedonia) in February/March.

association's house is an illustration of a common ritual when the two sexes are separated. The midwinter festival dedicated to Babo, when the official church celebrates Agia Domnikēs, may therefore be a relevant illustration of how the new Christian ideology has added Orthodox festivals to older festivals.

As we have seen, the modern Greek festival is also celebrated by other women who have settled down in Monokklēsia, such as immigrants from Cyprus. Moreover, the festival parallels similar customs that takes place in Bulgaria, such as 'Babin Den,' or 'Midwives' Day,' a fertility festival that is celebrated on 21 January (Lodge 1947), and accordingly belongs to the ritual year in South-Eastern European communities.

These modern rituals also have parallels to the ancient *Mystēria*. Apart from the *Mysteries at Eleusis*, which were attended by men and women, other rituals constitute the agricultural mysteries dedicated to the grain goddess, Demeter. The Thesmophoria, Haloa, and Skira are festivals that most often were just called *mystēria*, i.e. the secret rituals that were celebrated by women alone, since men could not participate. These female festivals were celebrated before sowing (Thesmophoria), around mid-winter (Haloa), and around harvest (Skira), i.e. around important periods during the agricultural year.

Based on the presentation of the modern Greek festival mainly based on my fieldwork, the final part of the paper will delve into some of its ancient equivalents celebrated during this particular period of the ritual year of the grain.

The obscene reawakening of the 'dead' earth

In the female festival dedicated to the midwife, Babo, we encounter obscenities and alcohol consumption. This mid-winter festival is important to secure the harvest, because January is the time when it becomes clear whether or not the year will be a good one. If the cereals have not grown to a certain height when the frost sets in, they will need a lot of rain in the spring to 'catch up' and not be burned by the hot spring sun before they are ripe. If only a small percentage of the seeds have sprouted by January, it is unlikely that the crop will be a good one. The farmer knows that the seeds that germinate after the frost in the spring rains are likely to be blasted by the sun before they are ripe and will therefore fail to produce grain. At this period, the fields are 'dead.' The growth of the shoots is at a temporary standstill.

Likewise, the sun's power has declined each day. This type of rite, in which people attempt to warm up or wake up the earth to stimulate its fertility by the magical manipulation of sexual or agricultural symbols, by merry feasting and obscene behaviour, is paralleled in other modern celebrations and rituals that take place during the twelve-day period from Christmas to Epiphany and during the carnival season before the Lenten period and later during spring. However, it also has ancient parallels (Håland 2005).

One ancient parallel is the unabashed nocturnal *Haloa*, i.e. threshing floor festival of the grain goddess Demeter celebrated by women in ancient Eleusis.²⁶ It was also a mid-winter festival celebrated in *Poseideon* (December-January), at the time of the winter solstice when the crops are seemingly frozen and arrested in their growth. At this time, the earth needs help 'to wake up from the death's embrace.' The importance of this stage in the grain's growth explains why the *Haloa* festival of light, warmth, eating and drinking, ribaldry, and fertility magic takes place at this time, and why it is dedicated to Demeter. Both today and in the ancient ritual, the fertility of the earth is stimulated by the magical manipulation of sexual or agricultural



symbols. Our ancient written sources are complemented by several vase paintings illustrating how the festival included fertility magic to stimulate and wake up the earth, such a vase painting depicting a girl or a young woman who seems to sprinkle seeds or water on phalluses that are sown into the earth (Pic. 11=ARV 1137,25).

Pic. 11. Ancient Attic red-figure classical vase (pelike) painting illustrating woman planting phalluses, or rather sprinkling of seeds or watering of already planted phalluses.²⁷

²⁶ Cf. Schol. Luc. *DMeretr.* 7.4, Rabe 1906, 279.24–281.3, discussed in Håland 2007, Ch. 5.

²⁷ Copied from Winkler 1990.

The vase painting gives an interesting parallel to the fields with leeks in Monokklēsia. The ancient illustration has particular relevance as a counterpart to a similar custom that is reported from the neighbourhood of Mostar on the way to Sarajevo (Salaman 1930, 48; Håland 2007, Ch. 6): Until recently it has been customary to mark out the design of a phallus in the growing crop, i.e. to put or 'sow' phalluses among the seed to ensure the outcome or encourage the fertility of the crops, based on the thinking behind 'sympathetic magic' (i.e. magic, that depends on a resemblance or perceived similarity between the object, substance, or action used in performing the magic and the desired effect): after sowing the crop, i.e. when the winter seed sprouts, they mark out the design of an erect phallus and testicles boldly outlined by a deep, fresh furrow in the field. This type of fertility magic has been a common practice in the Balkans. The ancient vase paintings also illustrate fertility rituals, because we are dealing with societies that seek to ensure the fertility of both the humans and the earth, that do not separate them. Accordingly, these rituals are not only performed as a reminder of natural events, but also as an attempt to influence them, both magically and by propitiation of the deities concerned. During the Haloa festival a pregnant cow was also sacrificed to the earth in the fields; the growing seed and embryonic life are seen to be related, and according to the paradoxical logic of sacrifice, one has to kill the one in order to promote the other (Burkert 1985; Brumfield 1981).

Some conclusions: Women's rituals in Greece, the Balkans and beyond

The role of the woman as performer of the agricultural rituals has always been central. Like the modern festival dedicated to the midwife, the ancient festivals of Demeter concentrate on the community's ritual attention on moments critical to the life of the crops, particularly the sowing, but also the sprouting as we have seen in connection with the Haloa, to try to magically and ritually influence the course of events. As bearers of the secrets of fertility, the women perform the central rituals on these occasions.

As I have illustrated in earlier contexts (cf. Håland 2006, 2007), in Greece we find certain factors specific to that society that place emphasis on woman's role in fertility rituals. Among the central aspects woven into the agricultural cycle are women, secrecy, and obscenity. Many of Demeter's festivals are celebrated by women alone in secret (cf. Ar. Eccl. 443), thus,

paralleling the ritual during the modern festival dedicated to Babo. Usually women are thought to be more capable of performing agricultural magic than men, since they are more in touch with the well-springs of fertility, for the obvious reason that they bear children, and symbolize fecundity. Women are still thought of as having some mysterious understanding of the forces of nature, bestowed on them simply by the fact of their own biology. Human culture generally tends to associate women with nature and the supernatural. The growth of both the human child and the seed occur out of sight; women are thus associated with the hidden sources of the fertility they produce. The relation between the fertility of the earth and woman is illustrated through popular customs since antiquity. In ancient and modern Greece and other Mediterranean societies, women are seen to be in charge of fertility, while men are in charge of creation.²⁸ As in other official male ideologies in ancient and modern Greece and the Mediterranean, the male sex is placed in the category 'spiritual' and the female in the category 'physical.'²⁹ This was the official male view in the ancient world, and despite recent attempts to develop cognitive theories of emotion, the common perception in our society is one that defines emotion as physical and 'natural' as opposed to cultural. It has been argued that the devaluation placed on women stems from the perception that woman = nature, man = culture, and from 'civilized' society's ultimate preference for culture over nature (Ortner 1974, but cf. Dubisch 1986). Nevertheless, fertility resides in the 'uncivilized' element, which has to be tamed by the male component. This is a recurring theme in ancient and modern Greek sources written by men.³⁰

On the other hand, since women give birth, protect and nurture the life of the child through care, and the rationality of care privileges birth over death (cf. Ruddick 1990; Holst-Warhaft 1992), women are most competent

²⁸ Bourdieu 1980, 357, cf. Plut. *Mor.* 364a vis-à-vis 375c60. For women and fertility, see Schol. Luc. *DMeretr.* 2.1; Rabe 1906, 275.23–276.28, cf. Plut. *Mor.* 378d–f69, see also 141b–c23; Bourdieu 1980, 359; Papamichael 1975, 78, cf. 54. See also Brumfield 1981, Ch. 12.

²⁹ Du Boulay 1974, cf. Hirschon 1993 and Bourdieu 1980, 359. Cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1.1254b3–15, 1.1260a, GA.738b26–28; Plut. *Mor.* 113a, 102e, cf. 103a, 145e, 142e, 769b–c. The earth, body, womb and menstruation are related to women: Arist. GA.727a2 ff., 728b23–32, see also 716a14–24, 727b31–34.

³⁰ See Håland 2007 for discussion of the ambiguous view ancient male produced sources present of women, a view which naturally is passed down by men, and the presentation of an approach to sort out the reasoning of ancient women, based on a comparison with the values found among modern Greek women and the few sources we have from ancient women.

to perform fertility magic. Under all circumstances, women experience the world differently from men. They have their own values in addition to, or running contrary to the male view, depending on how the male view suits their own thinking. Women compete in showing their motherhood, and women enjoy relative independence from male performance in the basic life processes. As Mother Earth who does the eight months' labour necessary to produce Demeter's grain, women carry the long burden of human generation. Women civilize Demeter's wheat, turning it first into flour, then into bread; it is they who nurture and train children. Women are also the midwives of society, and as such are often seen to be the wise woman of the society as well.

As already mentioned, it is interesting to note the similarities of my pictures from the Babo feast in 1992 and the pictures published in 1962.³¹ As far as several of the carnivals in this multiethnic geographical area are concerned, everybody, naturally enough, claims to be the original source of the customs. Yet as I already noted, the Babo festival is also celebrated in Bulgaria.³² Accordingly, it is important to remember that much of what we encounter in Greece is not special for Greece, but is found in several places not only in the Balkans, but all over the Mediterranean. In the same geographical area people perform similar fertility rituals, such as annual blood sacrifices to secure the fertility for people, the earth and the animals they live from and of. In other words, the rituals are performed to secure food. Many of the rituals are similar to the rituals that were celebrated in the ancient culture; today they are encountered in popular culture in countries with Greek Orthodox, Catholic, until recently communist, and also Islamic official ideologies. What makes the Greek rituals particularly interesting though, is that we can trace them back to the ancient sources via Byzantine sources, very often by way of Greek men's sayings not only about women and ordinary people, but also their neighbours, such as Thracians or other 'Barbarians,' i.e. people that talked an unintelligible, non-Greek language further, north, east, or south.³³

The Babo feast along with other customs, such as the Kalogeros and Anastenaria were until recently celebrated in 'no man's land,' since the area

³¹ Cf. Dracoulidès 1962, figs.8–10, 14 and Håland 2007, figs.28–31, 33, 35 f.

³² Lodge 1947, 83–85, see also Dracoulidès 1962, 107; 116 f.

³³ For a discussion of the problem, see also Håland 1993a, cf. 1993b and 1994, 2007, 2011a.

was so difficult to penetrate. As with other remote and inaccessible parts in the Balkan, world currents swept around but not through their district, and the people remained so ignorant of events of their times that the area came to be called the blind province. People therefore lived alienated from the 'larger history,' and reproduced their own traditional culture.³⁴ In this connection, myths and legends become central.³⁵

So, today there are several more or less new nation-states in the geographical area where ancient Greek culture flourished. That the modern ritual in Monokklēsia has been encountered in several villages in the Balkans might, of course, illustrate Greek influence in neighbourhood areas, but in the melting pot that constitutes modern Balkan it is very difficult to sort out who have influenced who. Although, of course, our most ancient sources are written in Greek, there have been so many emigrations and immigrations in the area that it is difficult to say who did what. It is impossible to set a boundary for one culture as the actual geographic area was and is multicultural, just as there are also many common cultural characteristics. It is these characteristics that are of interest, because they represent the basic rules of Balkan and Mediterranean culture and society. The Balkan, Mediterranean, and oriental influence, which has always been present in popular Greek culture, is an important focal point when trying to gain new understanding of ancient Greek culture and its relationship to its modern equivalent (cf. Alexiou 1986). By focusing on cultural characteristics revealed in the Greek, Mediterranean, and Balkan regions when dealing with religious rituals and evidence of migration, we learn a great deal about modern culture in the south eastern area of Europe, which is of especially relevance during the present era of globalization.

³⁴ See also Hastrup 1992, 115 f. Cf. Håland 1993c, 14. See also Danforth 1989, Ch. 5 and Iossifoglou Kyriakopoulou 1990.

³⁵ The Danish anthropologist Anne Knudsen focused on Corsica, where she exemplified the general "Dual history" we encounter in the Mediterranean area. The Corsican's history, which is lived in another historical space than the 'larger' European progressive history, is very similar to the reality we meet in Greece and also in the Balkans in general. Knudsen 1992, 82–101. Cf. however, Roth 1994 discussed in Håland 2005; See also 2011b and cf. Stewart 2012.

ANCIENT SOURCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

- Ar. = Aristophanes, tr. Benjamin Bickley Rogers 1946 (1924). Vol. 3: *The Lysistrata, The Thesmophoriazusae, The Ecclesiazusae (=Eccl.)*, The Plutus. The Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Arist. = Aristotle, *GA.=Generation of Animals*, tr. A. L. Peck 1963 (1942). The Loeb Classical Library. London: Heinemann.
- . *Pol. = Politics*, tr. H. Rackham 1950 (1932). The Loeb Classical Library. London: Heinemann.
- ARV = Beazley, J. D. 1963. *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*. Vols 1-2. 2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hdt. = Herodotus, tr. A. D. Godley 1946-1950 (1920-1938). Vols. 1-4. The Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Plut. *Mor.* = Plutarch, *Moralia*, tr. Frank Cole Babbitt 1956-1961 (1928). Vols 2, 5, 9. The Loeb Classical Library. London: Heinemann.
- Schol. Luc. *DMeretr.* = Rabe, Hugo, ed. 1906. *Scholia in Lucianum*. Leipzig: In aedibus Teubneri.

REFERENCES

- Alexiou, Margaret 1986. "Modern Greek Studies in the West: Between the Classics and the Orient." *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 4, 1: 3–15.
- Ben-Zaken, Avner. 2013. "Cultural History-Now." *Cultural History* 2.1: 1–15.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1980. *Le Sens Pratique*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.
- Brumfield, Allaire Chandor. 1981. *The Attic Festivals of Demeter and their relation to the Agricultural Year*. Salem, New Hampshire: The Ayer Company.
- Burkert, Walter. 1985. *Greek Religion. Archaic and Classical*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell and Harvard University Press.
- Chourmouziadēs, Anast. 1961. "Peri tōn Anastenariōn kai allōn tinōn paradoxōn ethimōn kai prolēpseōn." *Archeion tou Thrakikou Laographikou kai Glōssikou Thēsaurou* 26: 144–168.
- Danforth, Loring M. 1984. "The Ideological context of the Search for Continuities in Greek Culture." *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 2: 53–85.
- . 1989. *Firewalking and Religious Healing. The Anastenaria of Greece and the American Firewalking Movement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Dede, Maria. 1976. "Ē Mera tēs Mamēs Ē Mpampōs." *Archeion Thrakēs* 184: 195–208.
- Dracoulidēs, N. N. 1962. "Les cérémonies orgiaques de Dionysos dans l'antiquité et leur survivance dans la Grèce contemporaine." *Actes du Congrès national des*

sociétés savantes, section d'archéologie 87: 75–119.

- Dubisch, Jill. 1986. "Culture Enters through the Kitchen: Women, Food, and Social Boundaries in Rural Greece." In *Gender and Power in Rural Greece*, edited by Jill Dubisch: 195–214. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- . 1995. *In a Different Place. Pilgrimage, Gender, and Politics at a Greek Island Shrine*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Du Boulay, Juliet. 1974. *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hastrup, Kirsten. 1992. "Uchronia and the two histories of Iceland, 1400-1800." In *Other histories*, edited by Kirsten Hastrup, 102–120. London: Routledge.
- Hirschon, Renée. 1993. "Open Body/Closed Space: The Transformation of Female Sexuality." In *Defining Females. The Nature of Women in Society*, edited by Shirley Ardener: 51–72. Oxford/Providence: Berg.
- Holst-Warhaft, Gail. 1992. *Dangerous Voices. Women's Laments and Greek Literature*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Håland, Evy Johanne. 1993a. "Karneval og Nasjonalisme i Gresk-Makedonia". *Samtiden* 4: 55–61.
- . 1993b. "I Kvinnenes Vold: På Midtvinters-fest i Gresk-Makedonia". *Jordens Folk* 3: 100–105.
- . 1993c. "Sankta Domenica eller Babo-fest: på kvinnofest i grekiska Makedonien". *Medusa* 2: 14–20.
- . 1994. "I Antropologens Vold? Svar til Jonathan Schwartz' Kommentar: I informantens vold". *Jordens Folk* 1: 39–40.
- . 2005. "Rituals of Magical Rain-Making in Modern and Ancient Greece: A Comparative Approach." *Cosmos: The Journal of the Traditional Cosmology Society* 17: 197–251.
- . 2006. "The Ritual Year as a Woman's Life: The Festivals of the Agricultural Cycle, Life-cycle Passages of Mother Goddesses and Fertility-cult." In *First International Conference of the SIEF working group on The Ritual Year. In association with The Department of Maltese University of Malta, Junior College, Msida, Malta, 2005: Proceedings*, edited by George Mifsud-Chircop: 303–326. Malta: Publishers Enterprises Group Ltd.
- . 2007. *Greske fester, Moderne og Antikke: En sammenlignende undersøkelse av kvinnelige og mannlige verdier*. Kristiansand: Norwegian Academic Press.
- . 2011a. *Konkurrerende ideologier i gresk religion før og nå*. Bodø: Licentia Publishers.
- . 2011b. "History, Memory and Myth in Greece." *Journal of European Popular*

- Culture* 2.2: 153–170.
- . 2013. “Cultural Diversity in Greek Religion: From the Modern Anastenaria Festival to the Ancient World.” *Mediterranean Review* Vol. 6 (1): 1–41.
- Iossifoglou Kyriakopoulou, Lely. 1990. “The Pontian Greeks of Kazakhstan.” *The Athenian* April: 26–30.
- Knudsen, Anne. 1992. *Dual Histories: a Mediterranean Problem*. In *Other histories*, edited by Kirsten Hastrup, 82–101. London: Routledge.
- Lodge, Olive. 1947. “Babin Den: Midwives’ Day in Bulgaria.” *Man* 85: 83–85.
- Loukatos, Dēmētrios S. 1985. *Symplērōmatika tou Cheimōna kai tēs Anoixēs*. Laographia – Paradosē 5. Athens: Ekd. Philippotē.
- Megas, Geōrgios A. 1952. “Ethima tēs ēmeras tēs Mammēs (8 Ianouario).” *Epetērida tou Laographikou Archeiou*: 3–27, 170–171.
- . 1992. *Ellēnikes Giortes kai Ethima tēs Laikēs Latreias*. Athens: Odysseas.
- Meraklēs, M. G. 1986. *Ellēnikē Laographia: Ēthē kai Ethima*. Athens: Odysseas.
- Merlier, Octave. 1949. “Avant-Propos.” In *Cultes populaires de la Thrace. Les Anasténaria. La cérémonie de lundi pur*, edited by C. A. Romaios, v–xv. Athens: Collection de L’Institut Français d’Athènes.
- Michaēl-Dede, Maria. 1979. “Oi Diastaseis tēs Gynaikokratias se merika Ethima.” *Praktika G. Symposiou Laographias tou Boreioelladikou Chōrou*, 493–503. Thessaloniki: IMCHA.
- . 1987. *Giortes, Ethima kai ta tragoudia tous*. Laographia – Paradosē 9. Athens: Ekd. Philippotē.
- . 1991. *To Asemno – Aniero – Ybristiko sto Ellēniko Dēmotiko Tragoudi*. Kritikē-Meletēmata 37. Athens: Ekd. Philippotē.
- Ortner, Sherry B. 1974. “Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?” In *Woman, Culture, and Society*, edited by Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, 67–87. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Papamichael, Anna J. 1975. *Birth and Plant Symbolism: Symbolic and Magical Uses of Plants in Connection with Birth in Modern Greece*. Athens: 113, Asklipiou.
- Romaios, C. A. 1949. *Cultes populaires de la Thrace. Les Anasténaria. La cérémonie de lundi pur*. Athens: Collection de L’Institut Français d’Athènes.
- Roth, Klaus. 1994. “Time, Folk Culture and Post-Socialist Ethnology in Southeast Europe.” In *Tiden och historien i 1990-talets kulturforskning: Föredrag vid en nordisk forskarkurs i Uppsala*, edited by Anders Gustavsson, 159–176. Uppsala: Uppsala universitet: Skrifter från Etnologiska institutionen.
- Ruddick, Sara. 1990. “The Rationality of Care.” In *Women, Militarism & War. Essays in History, Politics, and Social Theory*, edited by Jean Bethke Elshtain and

- Sheila Tobias, 229–254. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Salaman, Redcliffe N. 1930. “A Phallic Design in the Balkan.” *Man* 30: 48.
- Schwartz, Jonathan Matthew. 1994. “Kommentar fra Jonathan Schwartz til Evy Johanne Hålands artikel, I kvindernes vold (3, 1993): I informantens vold.” *Jordens Folk* 1: 39.
- Stewart, Charles. 2012. *Dreaming and Historical Consciousness in Island Greece*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Tsotakou-Karbelē, Aikaterinē. 1991. *Laographiko Ēmerologio: Oi dōdeka mēnes kai ta ethima tous*. Athens: Patak.
- Vryonis, Speros, Jr. 1978. “Recent Scholarship on Continuity and Discontinuity of Culture: Classical Greeks, Byzantines, Modern Greeks.” *Byzantina kai Metabyzantina* (Malibu: Undena) 1, 237–256.
- Winkler, John J. 1990. *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*. New York and London: Routledge. Original: British Museum, E819

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Evy Johanne Håland, PhD, is a Senior Researcher, Marie Curie Intra-European Fellow at the Department of Archaeology and History of Art, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Her research focuses on ancient and modern cultural history and religion in the Mediterranean generally, and especially Greece. She is currently working on the project, *Greek Women and Death, Ancient and Modern: A Comparative Analysis*. The research is financed by EU’s 7th framework programme. The final book is under contract for publishing at Cambridge Scholars Publishing (Newcastle upon Tyne). Since 1983, she has had several periods of fieldwork in the Mediterranean, mainly in Greece and Italy, where she has also been conducting research on religious festivals since 1987, and has published several books and articles on modern and ancient Greek religious festivals and life-cycle rituals from a comparative approach.

THE LIST OF THE PUBLISHED BOOKS:

George Mifsud-Chircop (ed.). *The Ritual Year 1. Proceedings of the First International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year. Malta, March 20-24, 2005*. San Gwan: Publishing Enterprises Group, 2006. 568 p.

Lina Midholm and Annika Nordström (eds.). *The Ritual Year 2: The Ritual Year and Ritual Diversity. Proceedings of the Second International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year, Gothenburg, Sweden, June 7-11, 2006*. Gothenburg: Institutet för spark och folkminen, 2007. 377 p.

Irina Sedakova (ed.). *The Ritual Year 3: The Ritual Year and History. Proceedings of the Third International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year. Strážnice, Czech Republic, May 25-29, 2007*. Strážnice: Národní ústav lidové kultury, 2008. 208 p.

Jenny Butler (ed.). *The Ritual Year 4: The Ritual Year and Gender. Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference of The SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year. Cork, Ireland, June 22-26, 2008*. Edinburgh: Traditional Cosmology Society (a joint publication with Cosmos 25), 2011. 251 p.

Arūnas Vaičekauskas (ed.). *The Ritual Year 5: The Power of the Mask. Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference of The SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year. Kaunas, Lithuania, July, 2-6, 2007*. Kaunas: Vitautas Magnus University, 2013. 150 p.

Mare Kõiva (ed.). *The Ritual Year 6: The Inner and the Outer. The Yearbook of the SIEF Working Group of the Ritual Year [Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of The SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year. Tallinn, Estonia, June 4-7, 2010]*. Tartu, 2011. 400 p.

Jurij Fikfak and Laurent Sébastien Fournier (eds.). *The Ritual Year 7: The Interplay of Performances, Performers, Researchers, and Heritages. The Yearbook of the SIEF Working Group of the Ritual Year [Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of The SIEF Working Group on The*

Ritual Year. Ljubljana, Slovenia, November 11-13, 2011]. Ljubljana, ZRC Publishing, 2012. 270 p.

Gábor Barna and Povedák István (eds.). *The Ritual Year 9: Politics, Feasts, Festivals. The Yearbook of the SIEF Working Group of the Ritual Year [Proceedings of the Ninth International Conference of The SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year. Szeged, Hungary, March 14-16, 2013]*. Szeged, Department of ethnology and cultural anthropology, 2014.

THE RITUAL YEAR 8
MIGRATIONS

Edited by
Dobrinka Parusheva and Lina Gergova

General Editor:
Emily Lyle

Reviewers:
Vihra Baeva and Nikolai Vukov

Language editors:
Jenny Butler, Molly Carter, Cozette Griffin-Kremer, John Helsloot, Emily Lyle,
Neill Martin, Nancy McEntire, David Stanley, Elizabeth Warner

Design and layout:
Yana Gergova

First Edition

PARADIGMA Publishing House
www.paradigma.bg

ISSN 2228-1347

