

Polish ritual year – a reflection on Polish cultural policy

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Abstract: The Polish ritual year celebrates culturally important events which belong both to Polish religious and lay tradition as well as to global mass culture. The set of events has been changing in recent years depending on the cultural policy and the culture-specific values it has promoted. Thus in contemporary Polish culture many rituals and festivities have been lost, replaced by others, modified or celebrated as niche holidays (national holidays, e.g. Independence Day on July 22 vs. November 11, 1st of May, October Revolution, the Day of the First Communion, Corpus Christi, St. John's Day known as *Wianki*). In the last decades of the 20th century some new holidays alien to Polish culture were adapted as a result of globalisation or rather Americanisation of the national culture (e.g. Halloween, St. Patrick's Day).

Thus the Polish ritual year is rich and varied: on the one hand, it is very Polish, even re-enacting the old Slavonic pagan traditions, but on the other hand, it is also multicultural and international because of global cultural exchange. It is deeply marked with apparently contradictory trends: Poles become global citizens and at the same time their sense of glocality as well as of belonging locally acquire importance, which results in a visible tendency to search and reaffirm their glocal/local and regional identities (e.g. through St. Martin's Day celebrated in Poznan).

The present article aims at describing the Polish ritual year, discussing the celebrations against the backdrop of changes in Polish cultural policy as well as the cultural trends of globalisation and glocalisation.

Keywords: culture, cultural policy, traditions and rituals, globalisation, glocalisation

Introduction

Any definition of culture, but especially the enumerative one, points out rituals, customs and traditions as its inherent elements. Although their origin and functions differ – they may be religious or secular, constitutive of rites of passage, providing entertainment and spectacle, commemorating important national

events, teaching patriotism, reviving collective memory or defining the cultural identity of their performers, etc. – they show a strong link with national values and national culture. The relation is visible even in the rituals which have been deeply modified by global mass culture as many of them belong to the so-called ‘invented tradition’. This term was coined by Eric Hobsbawm (cf. Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983) to illustrate the changes that operate in contemporary rituals and to perceive their evolution against a new cultural, social and economic background which shapes the needs, tastes and expectations of modern culture users. According to Hobsbawm (*ibid.*), it is due to the invented tradition that many old rituals are still performed and despite their deep modifications they keep revealing a strong relation to national cultural heritage:

‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past [...] However, insofar as there is such reference to a historic past, the peculiarity of ‘invented’ traditions is that the continuity with it is largely fictitious. In short, they are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983).

Thus, rituals reflect national values and promote them but at the same time they depict undergoing changes in the field of culture, various types of influences of both global and glocal nature, fashions and trends, as well as point at the continuously increasing role of the media and mediated reality, market, economics, and consumption identity. Despite many of them being marginalised or even forgotten, most of the rituals keep performing a key role in constructing ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1991: 34), which have become extremely important in the age of the crisis of the state and statehood. Together with ‘invented tradition’, ‘imagined communities’ is another important term which defines the role of rituals in post-modernity and accounts for their new socio-cultural role. For Benedict Anderson, the author of the term, ‘imagined communities’ have acquired a very special meaning only today due to an increased social mobility and the existence of a great number of diasporas. Consequently, post-modern communities are:

[...] imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson 1991: 34).

All of the above mentioned factors make us claim that similarly to culture, various rituals continue performing important social values although not in the same way as in the past. Their role in communicating the cultural identity of their participants has become even bigger – they act as instruments of inclusion and exclusion, accounting for a socio-cultural membership or a socio-cultural otherness/strangeness. Kyriakidis (2007) rightly highlights this function, making a clear distinction between *etic* and *emic* value of rituals, which stresses both their universal and culture-specific character. It also explains their role in identity formation as well as communication processes inside a culture- and language community as well as outside its borders. It additionally sensitises us to another important issue, namely the political dimension of culture which, despite its independent status as a constitutive element of human life, shows various degrees of dependence on cultural policy. Kevin Mulcahy (2006: 320) rightly observes that its scope and aims have been changed because unlike in the past when cultural policy tended to be identified with arts policy, today it:

[...] encompasses a much broader array of activities than were addressed under arts policy. Whereas arts policy was effectively limited to addressing aesthetic concerns, the significance of the transformation to cultural policy can be observed in its demonstrable emphases on cultural identity, valorisation of indigeneity and analyses of historical dynamics (such as hegemony and colonialism) (Mulcahy 2006: 320).

The last remark needs some more attention, especially in the post-colonial or post dependent countries¹, where, historically speaking, the status of cultural policy was closely related to the national domestic and international politics. Politics used to exercise quite a strong influence on the form and content of national culture, at least on the mainstream culture, which was treated as a *porte-parole* of the government. As the government was the main and, in most cases, unique sponsor and patron of culture, its decisions of what kind of cultural activities and products to finance and how to formulate the mission of cultural organisations were loaded with political reasons. Determined by political ideology, they were to promote and communicate it to the wider public as well as to disseminate the values it embodied.

It should also be added that cultural policy as a vision and an idea of what the culture should be like uses cultural management as its tool to implement

¹ The term has been recently used as better suited to define the experience of post-communist countries which have never been colonies in the sense of, for example, African or Asian nations, but which were enslaved under the communist regime (see also Lubecka 2013, this volume).

this vision and understanding of culture on the level of public practices both in collective and individual experience. Cultural policy assigns diverse functions to cultural management; more specifically, it defines the value system which forms the foundation of culture and culture-specific social identities by means of various institutions (starting with the ministry and ending with local institutions representing local governments or NGOs and QUANGOs). The fact that different nations name the ministry and nation-wide cultural institutions by different names² is also indicative in this respect as it clearly points out the official understanding of culture and of its role in organising public life.

The relationship between culture and policy/politics derives directly from the fact that culture is an expression and a carrier of certain values, which has often resulted in the duality between culture and politics. It also points out a gap between the nation and the state (the people on the one hand, and the officials and state representatives on the other). A strong politicisation of culture was observed not only in the past as typical of totalitarian systems. It is experienced also today when culture has become an arena for the war of ideas and a new form of enslavement (cf. the concept of cultural imperialism) or quite to the contrary, for empowerment and display of human rights (cf. the role played by such books as, for example, Salman Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses" (1988) or Oriana Fallaci's "The Rage and the Pride" (2002), and also the twelve editorial cartoons, mostly caricatures of the Islamic prophet Muhammad published in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* on 30 September 2005).

A visible relationship between politics and culture which even today has led to a manipulation and interpretation of the latter as to suit the government policies was usual in communist Poland. Its inhabitants often felt an inner conflict between the traditional national culture and its values reflected in national identities and the values promoted by the communist ideology. The latter, in most cases imposed on people, especially when they acted as public persons and represented the official stance of the government and the state, resulted in a change of ritual scripts and an alternative ritual year. Thus some rituals were banned if they could not be changed so as to suit the communist ideology; some others were just replaced with new ones which were to communicate new values and create new (politically correct) identities. A change of the political system in Poland in 1989 resulted in restarting the same process of adjusting the ritual year to a new system of values, this time defining a newly reborn

² E.g. in Poland the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, in the USA the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts, while in France and in Great Britain culture and sport have been combined together in the French Ministry of Culture and Sport and the British Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Arts Council England.

democracy and a civic society. The process has become even more complex and rich as Polish national culture and heritage are being challenged by global culture, which was quickly adopted after the 1989. It offered a new global identity attractive to Poles, who had suddenly become global citizens. Moreover, the global culture is not a homogenous construct; it includes many mutually exclusive trends such as, for example, Americanisation, creolisation, indigenisation/globalisation. This implies choices and often results in axiological dilemmas.

Another problem, still unresolved, is a tension between the elitist and populist nature of culture and the underlying cultural policy where these two terms are not seen as complementary and mutually inclusive in the process of democratisation of culture and cultural education/participation.

The aim of the present article is to discuss the changes in the Polish ritual year which reflect the transformations in Polish culture as subsequent to local cultural policy after the *caesura* in 1989. In that year, a new political system coincided with the introduction of such new global trends as mass culture and a market oriented character of most cultural institutions, new models of cultural identity and, to some extent, a slow death of the concept of the state together with the birth (or rather rebirth) of citizenry and civic society in Poland. These trends defined a new understanding of culture and cultural identity. Consequently, what can be observed today is a new, more global, consumption-like and more carnivalesque character of Polish rituals performed during the calendar year, as well as a strong tendency to interpret traditional Polish religious character and its roots within non-religious frames defined by mass culture which moves the rituals from the realm of the sacred to that of the profane.

For the purpose of the present discussion, ritual will be understood as a set of actions performed by a given cultural community mainly for its symbolic function of identification, marking their belonging to the imagined community. The concept of imagined community refers also to the Polish diaspora, both the “old” and the “new” Polish immigrants scattered all over the world, even in the most distant and exotic parts of the globe.

The present model of Polish culture

To understand the complexity and richness of Polish ritual year, where particular rituals often tend to be exclusive of each other when their underlying values have been identified, it is necessary to reflect upon the waves of changes operating in the Polish national culture at least in the last seventy years. Two important dates (1945 and 1989) serve as historical as well as socio-political

and economic borderline events in this timeline. As already mentioned, rituals which also include the rites of passage (van Gennep 1961) belong to the concept of culture and as such their symbolical value, social functions, interpretations and social semantics change together with the evolution of the former as well as with the principle of cultural policy and politics adopted by a given country.

The present model of Polish culture, when discussed in terms of the values which constitute its foundations, is a complex construct containing three quite distinct culture-specific layers. Mutual relationships among them are not easy to explain as they are both exclusive and inclusive, which has resulted in Polish culture representing a unique melting pot experience although not in the same sense as the original term. Each of the subsequent layers of culture has very clearly marked political dimensions, is historically determined and exists as a product of cultural policy, even if the name has not been always used or its meaning has not been the same as today. Similarly to the other aspects of contemporary Polish life, also the Polish history, unstable and particularly dramatic, marked with long years of subjugation, loss of independence (the period of partition for over 100 years) and political negation (1945–1989 when Poland became a satellite state of the Soviet Union), functions as a powerful determinant of culture-specific values officially present in the public sphere. At present the global culture of consumption with its mass- and market-orientation adds one more feature and accounts for the Polish ritual year becoming marked with non-Polish, global and internationally celebrated holidays. Although these holidays are alien to the Polish cultural ethos, they have become important for the young generation because of they are fashionable and function as markers of a global imagined community.

Polish national (traditional) culture and its rituals under communism

The core values of Polish national culture, which may seem contradictory in itself, were clearly defined in the 19th century and strengthened under the Soviet regime, which started in Poland after 1945 (on the 22 July 1944, the so-called July Manifesto proclaimed Poland as a communist country). The former period also marks the time when a double system of values started operating in the Polish society and was enacted in various cultural practices such as rituals. In these two periods, Polish national culture was in an opposition to the culture(s) imposed by the oppressors. As already said, the 19th century is the period when

Polish national values became the most prominent and when they created the basis for Polish national identity. “God, Honour and Motherland” (*Bóg, Honor i Ojczyzna*) name the values which belong to the traditional Polish cultural ethos framing Polish national identity, which in turn embodies the essence of Polishness. A strong religious aspect combined with patriotism, freedom as well as love towards one’s motherland, personal pride and honour, etc., were sentiments that were always expressed in all kinds of cultural rituals. It must also be added that Polish national culture is rather elitist than popular, aristocratic than lowly, intellectual than populist, spiritual and sacred than materialistic and profane. These characteristics account for how the rituals were celebrated in the past and how their lofty manner tends to be re-enacted today.

The second layer was added under communism, resulting in the so-called Polish schizophrenia as Tadeusz Konwicki calls it in his book “The Polish complex” (1977). The traditional values were denied, especially if they were of religious nature (which was true in most cases), or were changed and given a new meaning. Usually new holidays and the new interpretations of old rituals were borrowed from the Soviet culture and a lot of pain was taken to eradicate their traditional form and content, e.g. Saint Nicholas was replaced with Father Frost (*Dziadek Mróz*). In this way a new tradition was created and its modified celebration script was implemented in the society. An attempt to introduce these new rituals to or impose them on Poles failed under communism. Polish children, especially within their families, still believed in Saint Nicholas who looked like an archbishop and resembled the historical figure of the saint, and who was always accompanied by an Angel and a Devil. Following the tradition, they sent him letters asking for the presents they dreamt of. In kindergartens and at schools, they were visited by Father Frost and Snowflake (*Śnieżynka*), who replaced the Angel, helping the old man to distribute presents. A *crèche*³ was also banned from the public sphere, although children, usually with their grandparents, made it at home. Another old Polish tradition to visit churches in order to admire the variety of *crèches* did not die, either.

Similarly, Easter rituals were consistently performed, e.g. that of Palm Sunday, which commemorates the triumphant arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem,

³ A *crèche* or nativity scene is also known as a manger scene, or crib. It is a representation of the birth of Jesus as it is described in the gospel of Matthew and Luke. The main characters from the nativity story are the infant Jesus, his mother Mary and Joseph as well as shepherds and Magi. As Jesus was born in a barn or stable, a donkey and an ox are also typically depicted. The first nativity scene was created by Saint Francis of Assisi in 1223 after his visit to the holy Land where he visited Jesus’s birthplace. The *crèche* was to cultivate the worship of Christ.

with the tradition of making small crosses with the branches of the willow tree which was used for making palms and of putting them in fields in order to protect people from natural disasters; the habit of attending the ceremonies of the holy week, or of having an Easter basket blessed in church on Easter Saturday – the basket was to be filled with all kinds of foods, e.g. hard boiled eggs, sausage, salt, bread, horseradish root, a roasted lamb with sugar glaze, etc. The symbolism of these foods is a mixture of pagan and Christian beliefs. The small sugar crusted lamb, a central symbol of Christian Easter, is to symbolise Jesus Christ, the saviour of humanity, while painted Easter eggs stood for new life, spring and rebirth in the pagan tradition. It was also believed that colourful egg shells put on the flower beds make the plants grow better and make them more beautiful. All the religious celebrations of the Lent starting with Ash Wednesday and ending with a procession on Easter Sunday, carrying a figure of Jesus who has miraculously been resurrected after being crucified and having died on the cross, were attended by thousands of people despite an attempt to turn Poland into a profane country. The same can be said about the strong tradition of the Midnight Shepherds' Mass or else of the Christmas Eve dinner whose symbolism is strongly religious even if there are many popular folk interpretations of particular rituals resembling the mediaeval tradition of *Biblia Pauperum*: e.g. according to the Polish tradition, a prayer as well as a reading of the Bible should start the meal and then all the family and invited guests are to share a wafer, a symbol of Jesus, and to say wishes to each other as an act of forgiveness. The number of dishes which are to be served must be twelve because there were twelve Apostles. Some rituals whose origin was rural stopped being performed, e.g. a ritual demanding that farmers should leave a sheaf of corn in the orchard for deer and hares, to plead with them in this form for not to eat the harvest.

It is interesting to notice how cultural policy treated religious holidays and rituals. As the official policy did not succeed in preventing people from celebrating forbidden holidays, it either approached the rituals from a purely ethnographic perspective or treated them as superstitious, as symbols of backwardness and lack of education. Within the ethnographic approach, the rituals were interpreted as merely cultural artefacts, important to be preserved for the sake of the Polish culture but deprived of their spiritual and religious dimensions.

The Polish ritual year under communism included other events which typically belong to the liturgical year, e.g. the Corpus Christi processions. Also typical family celebrations, such as the rites of passage – the first communion, baptism, confirmation, weddings and funerals – had a deeply religious character, which accounted for their ambiguous social status as many Poles had to

perform them twice. Wedding ceremonies, for example, were performed firstly in the register office to be officially recognised by Polish administration and, secondly, in church to give the ceremony the right status and to validate it socially among family members and friends. The religious ceremony was followed by a wedding reception while the visit in the register office tended to be treated just as an imposed obligation that people did not identify with. The power of the religious ceremony was so strong that religious wedding ceremonies of many party members were clandestinely performed in village churches outside their place of residence. This behaviour constitutes an interesting comment in itself about the value of tradition and rituals.

The role of the church was also clearly seen in the celebrations of these national holidays which the communist government tried to erase from the collective memory as politically incorrect by banning them from the calendar. They were immediately replaced with new holidays which were to create a new mythology for Poles as well as to offer new symbols and values to build their new political identities (see Kõiva 2013: 67, this volume). The old national holidays were always celebrated in churches, where the so-called patriotic masses were numerously attended, especially when the martial law was proclaimed in Poland in 1981. These holidays and their subsequent rituals re-enacted the Polish history and gave it a different interpretation than the communist regime. First of all, the church still observed the traditional Polish Independence Day celebrated before the communist Poland (November 11) as well as the Constitution Day (the May 3). At the same time, the political regime had replaced the former holiday with 22nd of July and totally banned the November celebration from the calendar as it commemorates the historical moment in 1918 when Poland regained its independence after 123 years of non-existence. It was proclaimed a national holiday only as late as in 1937 and after the years of war and communist regime it was officially celebrated again in 1989. The 3rd of May, in turn, celebrates to the Polish Constitution from 1791 which was the first European constitution embodying the spirit of democracy. It preceded the French Constitution and followed the American one from 1787 (Moyers 2009). Notably the 22nd of July holiday commemorates the Lublin Manifesto from 1944 when Poland was proclaimed a communist country. The Polish National Army Day was also moved from 15 August to 12 October. The former date stands for the Polish victory over the Soviet Army in the Warsaw Battle in 1920 during the Polish-Soviet War, while the latter for the Lenino Battle that took part on the territory of the Soviet Union in 1944. Moreover, the 1st of May became an obligatory holiday to be celebrated independently of individual political convictions. Similarly, the Anniversary of the October Revolution was added to the

inventory of Polish national holidays and was observed nation-wide with forced enthusiasm and engagement by most Poles.

Folk traditions and rituals, many of which have their roots in pagan times and belong to Slavonic mythologies, were freely practiced and even promoted by cultural policy. Among the most popular, we should mention *Marzanna*, a ritual performed on the 21st of March to say good bye to winter and to greet spring. Its main rite consisted in drowning an effigy of Marzanna in a river or burning it. It was an ugly puppet made of straw which was to symbolise winter. Also important is *Wianki* ('Wreaths' or St. John's Day), which is celebrated on the magic night of love of the 21st of June, the shortest summer night with *Sobótki* as its main rite of making bonfires. *Śmigus-Dyngus* was celebrated on Easter Monday, during which water was poured on ladies and especially on young girls for their good luck and quick marriage. As already said, these holidays belong to folk culture and thus, when practiced in the city, have undergone the process of iconisation.

However, if the rituals contained any religious references, which was true about most of them, these religious components were just eliminated, e.g. in the harvest festival of *Dożynki*. It was originally an old Slavonic Festival of the autumn solstice when people thanked the pagan gods for a successful harvest. Then it became a holiday celebrated in Polish country estates, and subsequently on the farms of wealthy peasants. During communism it served to express the ideology of the union between the workers and the farmers. Thus its main actor was the first secretary of the United Workers' Party, which made it a perfectly lay celebration full of folk dances and songs as well as rituals, e.g. the ritual of offering a loaf of bread made from the harvested corn to the first secretary, or a parade of harvest wreaths made with corn, fruits and field flowers.

Under communism many Poles lived as if a double life and such was their system of values together with rituals which were proper enough to be enacted. At home, traditional Polish values were cherished, and religious and patriotic rituals were celebrated, while in the public sphere new holidays and celebrations enacting the communist ideology were observed. A public participation in new rituals was to evidence politically correct identity as well as an attitude of approval of, support to and an implementation of the cultural policy formulated in a strict relation to the politics of the communist party.

Global versus glocal rituals in Polish ritual year nowadays

The political *caesura* is marked by the year 1989 when Poland regained its democracy and stopped being a satellite of the Soviet Union. This had a threefold effect on Polish culture and cultural policy. Firstly, a planned and carefully executed return to traditional Polish values and celebrations which stem from them, most of which are of religious origin, could be observed. Secondly, political and economic reforms resulting in an exposure of Polish culture to global influences (cf. Americanisation of culture and an introduction to its consumption- and market-oriented character) have accounted for an adoption of many rituals that were formerly alien. Thirdly, many Polish rituals have been modified and have now a very conspicuous economic and consumption-like dimension on both the national and local scale. A revival of local rituals is a new important phenomenon which indicates a search for local identities and the means of conveying them, corresponding to a creative tension between the global and the glocal (where the glocal tends to win). This is where we can also observe the process of indigenisation of culture (Appadurai 2006), which follows the first period after becoming open to global cultural trends. Unlike the first few years after the emergence of the Polish Republic when global patterns of culture tended to be enthusiastically adapted without hardly any critical discrimination, nowadays local communities consciously shape their local culture and proudly display it as their heritage and a marker of their identity. The above changes correspond to the transformation of Polish society and also reflect world-wide tendencies. They are not typical just of Poland but can be found on a global scale, especially in the societies which are latecomers to the ‘global village’.

National holidays are a good example to illustrate the reintroduction of traditional Polish values into the public sphere. Thus, both their religious and patriotic character has been strongly expressed, e.g. *Dożynki* is celebrated in the Polish national Shrine of Częstochowa, where delegations of farmers from all over Poland bring the fruits of their work to solemnly thank the Virgin Mary, the Queen of Poland, for the crops, and ask for her blessing for the next year. The so-called harvest wreaths made of corn are often decorated with icons of Virgin Mary, Jesus and the saints. Similarly, most celebrations which commemorate important national or local historical events start with a holy mass, e.g. the Independence Day, the anniversary of a city location act, etc.

Globalisation of Polish culture has significantly enriched the Polish ritual year with American holidays celebrated not only by the American community living in Poland but also by young Poles. St. Valentine’s Day has become so popular that many young Poles do not treat it as an imported tradition any

longer. Its unquestionable success is due to marketing campaigns as well as a mass effort of shops, shopping malls, restaurants, TV and radio programmes, magazines and dailies, cultural institutions, etc., which not only sell all kinds of gadgets and offer entertainment suggestions but also make its celebration a must. It thus becomes a new and indispensable element of modern consumption identity, a factor that marks the belonging of Poles to a global diaspora of mass culture users. This typically market- and consumption-oriented holiday pretends to become a new *sacrum* and its function seems to be fully accepted. Other imported holidays include Halloween, although its popularity is much smaller, probably because its celebration falls nearly on the same time as All Saints Day, which has always been a very important religious remembrance day. St. Patrick's Day, this time borrowed from Irish culture, finds more and more followers among Poles mainly because of a new drinking pattern being created in the last decades. Pubs have outnumbered bars, many local breweries restarted their production and very successful marketing campaigns of all kinds of beer (see also Wójcicka 2013, this volume), and this has helped to (re) create a rather strong beer culture in Poland. Pubs have additionally become a part of newly invented sport rituals: important football matches tend to be watched in local pubs over a pint of beer. Pubs are also places where fans celebrate victories of their favourite teams. They have become a new symbol for the male world, male solidarity and male asylum (cf. the role of TV advertising spots in promoting this idea).

In many cases a change of ritual scripts and their new interpretation have happened because of the domination of mass culture and of its main determinants – consumption and entertainment. We live in the epoch of spectacle and, to be successful, each activity must become a show. Thus many rituals have become an invented tradition in the sense given to the term by Hobsbawm (1983: 115), who claims that an invented tradition uses old elements in new roles or reconfigures them to make them work in a new setting. Old rituals performed during religious holidays have undergone such change. They have lost their sacred character because the profane has become their dominating feature (through the proliferation of the culture of consumption). The Day of the First Communion is a good example of the change. It is still commonly celebrated in Poland but apart from a holy mass, all other rituals have become typically commercial and secular. As in the advertising slogan “The Day of the First Communion, the day of the first cell phone”, much more pain is taken to organise a proper lunch for the guests (their number may reach even fifty) and buy presents (the more expensive, the better) than to focus on the spiritual dimension of the day. Commercialisation of life has also resulted in a change of Christmas

celebrations. Christmas used to be a typical family holiday. Today, there are two scripts in use: the traditional one observed by elderly people and the new one mainly practiced by youngsters, who usually leave their family and together with friends go skiing after enjoying the Christmas Eve Dinner at home. Time pressure and an abundance of typical Christmas and Easter ready-made dishes in shops, restaurants as well as fairs / markets – the latter guarantee a better quality and more authenticity than shops – have resulted in the tradition of preparing food at home being gradually abandoned. Moreover, the Christmas menu also changes following trends such as an internationalisation of the Polish cuisine and a tendency to make dishes leaner in order to conform to the slimming fashion. On the other hand, the modernisation is counterbalanced with a strong popularity of the Polish noble tradition of Christmas and Easter. Many luxury shops prepare traditional dishes using old recipes and informing potential clients about the noble, aristocratic origin of the product. The name itself is to indicate the origin, e.g. Chamberlain's ham (*szynka szambelana*).

Wianki is another holiday illustrating the issue. As already mentioned, this old pagan holiday is celebrated on the night of 21st June, which is a night of love and mystery. Its roots are in the magic night of *Kupala*, who was a pagan goddess of fertility and love from the Slavonic mythology. It used to be a lovers' festival with lots of personal, very emotional undertones. Today, it has become a commercial and mass culture entertainment which has lost its roots and original meaning, and is celebrated with fireworks, concerts of popular bands, food festivals, souvenirs, etc. Shop keepers and restaurant owners support the tradition mainly because of its economic advantages. The same has happened with local holidays and rituals, many of which have been retrieved from collective memory and reintroduced to the community's ritual year. Poznań, a city in the north of Poland (in the region of Wielkopolska) celebrates St. Martin's Day with its symbol – a Saint Martin croissant with white poppy seeds filling. The pastry is baked only once a year to celebrate the holiday and its recipe is kept secret. Moreover, only the pastry shops in Poznań have the right to bake these croissants. The main event of the holiday is the croissant eating competition. It is accompanied with lots of popular shows, concerts, spectacles, etc. of a purely commercial and popular character. Poznań uses the tradition as a brand name to promote itself and to make its image competitive. Kraków takes pride in *Lajkonik*, a legendary Tartar horse rider, commemorating his role in the successful defence of the city and a victory over the Tartar attackers in 1281. The ritual of Tartar's dance in the streets of Kraków has also been used for branding the city and adding another event to its tourist attractions. These two examples of local rituals show very clearly their economic dimension and market value, which, in many cases, dominate the other aspects.

The same can be said about another ritual of celebrating St. Martin's Day with goose meat dishes according to the old Polish proverb that "Goose is the best on Saint Martin's Day". Many restaurants put goose dishes on their menu and advertise the day in advance for purely commercial reasons. It resembles the story of *le nouveau Beaujaulet* whose promotion has made it not only a widely known French ritual and cultural symbol but also a global market success.

Conclusions

Even our very short discussion of Polish rituals makes it plausible to claim that similarly to Polish culture, rituals have been in the process of a continual change. As their celebration and presence in the public sphere depend on cultural policy which, in turn, tends to be defined by politics as well as its ideological principles, Polish ritual year is a reflection of the political system. It also depicts global trends in culture, e.g. Americanisation, which, however, has been successfully counterbalanced with the process of indigenisation and a strong identification with both national and regional (local) rituals. The last trend has been inspired by the EU model of cultural policy, which stresses and empowers the value of local cultures. An unquestionable development of a civic society in Poland, emphasising the role of national and local culture(s) in the identity discourse, has also contributed to reviving rituals from collective memory. Finally, we should also stress the economic aspect of intangible culture and the consequent use of various rituals in promoting and branding places.

Considering the political factors (e.g. the communist ideology), and the social and economic sphere which impact the type, number and nature of rituals performed in Poland, it becomes obvious why some rituals were removed from the calendar year and destined to be forgotten. Some, especially patriotic and religious ones, were changed and modified even to such an extent that their original character was lost while some others were added to fill up the blanks. Unlike in the past when the 'import' of some rituals was due to politics and political ideology and as such they were treated as manifestations of an alien, imposed culture never fully accepted by Poles, today many foreign rituals tend to serve as factors of inclusion of the Polish into the global culture. They are easily and eagerly adopted and find an important place in the Polish ritual year. They are also tangible examples of Americanisation of the Polish culture, which also underlines the market- and consumption-oriented nature of the culture. Another shift concerns their becoming more carnivalesque and more focused on pure entertainment to meet the needs for a spectacle. This new role is also

marked by rituals losing their sacred character and becoming a manifestation of the profane.

Many Polish rituals have pagan and old Slavonic origins, which clearly points out cultural continuity on the one hand and cultural dynamic on the other. Some of the rituals have been preserved nearly intact while others underwent Christianisation in the past, became desacralised under communism, and today are shaped by the process of commercialisation and marketisation, which means that to survive they must find a potential client interested in them. It can be claimed that the above pattern of a triple change of some rituals is not typical of only Polish rituals but is common in all post-dependent countries. A certain tendency can be noted, especially among young people, themselves a product of the culture of spectacle and consumption, who are much less interested in observing national holidays and participating in patriotic events. Thus, most probably only the rituals which sell well, are intellectually and economically available to a large public, and provide an easy entertainment, have a chance to survive and be performed today.

On the other hand, a simultaneous interest in local rituals is increasing. It stems from a much stronger glocal cultural identification which successfully counterbalances globalisation trends. Probably, this will be the direction of cultural development as well as of cultural policy for the future, which makes us believe that many local rituals will be rediscovered and reintroduced into public discourse. Many of them, however, will be treated instrumentally as merely a source of mass entertainment and consumption.

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