

Preface

Ekaterina Anastasova and Mare Kõiva

This publication is an interdisciplinary collection of studies that focus on cultural and religious processes and their current observation results in the example of two countries with a long-standing tradition of cultural research: Estonia and Bulgaria. The collection of articles is the outcome of joint research carried out by the Department of Balkan Ethnology, the Institute for Ethnology and Folklore Studies with the Ethnographic Museum, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Department of Folkloristics at the Estonian Literary Museum. Mutual fieldwork and observations started 10 years ago, and the Centre for Landscape and Culture at the School of Humanities of Tallinn University was involved in practical work. In the last three years we focused on changes in the cultural processes of both post-socialist nation states, with due consideration of the historical framework and major problems that exist in modern society: sacral places and religiousness, minorities/small communities with their identity creation, and migration patterns. Collaborative work between Estonia and Bulgaria also forms part of a larger project observing common and distinctive features of the Balkans and Baltics, mainly in the field of religion and ethnic cultures.

The results of this cooperation have been published in scientific publications (Болгарский фольклор, *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore and Mäetagused*) and in the collections of articles ‘Balkan and Baltic States in United Europe. History, Religion and Culture’ edited by E. Anastasova and M. Kõiva, Sofia & Tartu, 2009 and ‘Balkan and Baltic States in United Europe II’ (forthcoming), edited by Ekaterina Anastasova and Svetoslava Toncheva. Researchers into the Baltics and Balkans have presented the results of their studies at special international conferences such as *Balkan and Baltic States in EU I* (2008, Sofia), *Balkan and Baltic States II* (2014, Sofia) and *Balkan and Baltic States III* (2017, Vilnius). The results of the project have also been presented at other international scientific

forums. On the initiative of the researchers, the foundations for the creation of a society that will bring scientists from both regions together have been laid.

However, the articles in this publication do not only deal with the territories of Bulgaria and Estonia: the topography under observation covers the lands from Spain to Greece, the South-Balkan area more extensively and stretches from Ukraine to modern-day Russia. The national groups under observation (Estonians, Bulgarians, Serbians, Albanians, Roma, Turks and other groups) as well as religious trends and confessions (Lutheran, Orthodox, Catholic, Moslem, Christian mystic and representatives of New Spirituality) and modern hobby groups (geocaching), or those who are connected through a particular cultural phenomenon (carriers of pet culture), exert a multi-faceted effect on transcultural phenomena today. The new image of society against the backdrop of the unifying trends of the socialist period needs to not only be studied, but also positioned against a broader backdrop. For example, a prominent place in the post-social cultural space is held by the processes of religious syncretism and identity (its restoration) and the provision of equal opportunities to national groups. At the same time, the diversity of manifestations of national identity in both countries is astonishing.

Thus the aim of the collection of articles is to observe the variability of cultural processes, using the opportunities provided by the humanities. Since we are dealing with multi-religious and multi-ethnic societies, cultural models are also of major importance alongside transcultural processes. These models are important in the context of social sciences and humanities, since they allow the dynamics of culture and more general processes, interaction between phenomena, their similarities and differences to be compared, especially since we are dealing with areas that have different historical fates.

The humanities are also characterised by the heterogeneity of theoretical approaches: they differ in terms of taxonomies and the ontological background. In this collection we have once again felt it expedient to maintain the pluralism of methods used by different researchers, which helps to bring out the knowledge and goals of the researchers more vividly, and at the same time allows us to gain a more accurate insight into subtopics. In addition to the materials collected in the course of fieldwork, the authors have also

utilised the results of earlier ethnological and folklore research. Information collected from local communities and minorities is also of great importance.

We hope that this book will be extremely interesting to read and will expand your knowledge about both cultures considerably.

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Note on transliteration

In the case of the names of authors and institutions we have usually maintained the way these names are spelled in Latin script by the persons or institutions themselves so as to make it easier for the reader to find these in bibliographies.

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