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BALKAN AND BALTIC
STUDIES

VOLUME 5
MEMORY, TRADITION, AND RITUAL IN THE
BALKAN AND BALTIC CONTEXTS

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INTRODUCTION

This volume of *The Yearbook of Balkan and Baltic Studies* comprises the papers presented during two international conferences: “Balkan and Baltic States in United Europe – History, Religion, and Culture IV: Religiosity and Spirituality in the Baltic and Balkan Cultural Space: History and Nowadays” (11–13 November, 2020, rest of them published in *The Yearbook of Balkan and Baltic Studies*, Vol. 4) and the 15th Congress of the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF, 19–24 June, 2021, within two panels organised by the SIEF Ritual Year Working Group, “Perf01: Calendric Rituals: A Time to Break the Rules” and “Perf03c: Old Rituals, Changing Environments, New Rules”).

The work on this volume and its publication coincided with significant geopolitical cataclysms separating nations and academic institutions. This issue demonstrates our will to continue strengthening bonds between academics, both within the European Research Area (ERA) and in wider contexts.

The articles of the volume discuss various issues: what is happening with the traditional, religious and secular landscape in the Balkan and Baltic countries, Europe, and the world? What are the new aspects of the development of modern spirituality? What happens to memory, historical interpretations, and visions of the future in modern contexts? Are traditional beliefs, folklore, and rituals still relevant in the modern world? How is cultural heritage being preserved during migration and in new surroundings?

The first part of the volume “Concerns of Modernity: Memory, Religion, and Communication” addresses the issues that were discussed during the meetings of the fourth Balkan and Baltic conference. The first two articles scrutinise the topic of heritage and communication in migrant communities. **Tanya Matanova** (Sofia, Bulgaria) focuses on the sites commemorating prominent Bulgarian peo-

ple in Germany, and **Mariyanka Borisova Zhekova** (Sofia, Bulgaria) presents forms of Bulgarian national consolidation in the Maghreb country, namely, a Bulgarian school, a folklore dance ensemble, and cultural events organised by the Bulgarian community in Morocco. **Irina Dushakova** (Moscow, Russia), just like T. Matanova, addresses prominent historical figures and their perception by our contemporaries in her article on Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and the way his personality and memory of his deeds are framed by the Russian media.

Politics and religion are at the centre of the study presented by **Yuliia Uzun** and **Svitlana Koch** (Odesa, Ukraine). The researchers analyse the religious legislation of Baltic and Balkan countries and consider the changes in state-religion relations of the last two decades. The article by **Evgenia Troeva** (Sofia, Bulgaria) also deals with the changes that occurred in European culture in the last decade of the twentieth century and later. She addresses the topic of apocalyptic expectations in Bulgarian society and shows the palette of the modern images of the future, concluding that secular apocalypticism is coming to the fore.

The last article of this section was prepared by **Monika Balikienė**, **Jurgita Dečiunienė** and **Vytautas Navickas** (Vilnius, Lithuania). In their study of the traditional taboo in Lithuania, the authors demonstrate how generational change reveals itself in the cultural lexicon with the change of living conditions, the image system and family relations.

The second part of the volume, under the generalising title “The Ritual Year in the Context of Changing Rules” begins with the contribution of **Oleksandr Ganchev** and **Oleksandr Prigarin** (Odesa, Ukraine) on the fluctuations in the seasonality of births and marriages among Bessarabian Bulgarians. The authors lead us to the field of historical demography while establishing links with the issues relevant to the studies of traditional culture (those of family rites). This article serves as a bridge connecting the discussions held during the fourth Balkan and Baltic conference and the other five proceedings of the two panels organised by the Ritual Year Working Group at the 15th SIEF Congress.

The next four articles are written in a diachronic key and consider transformations of the traditional rituals and symbols in different Balkan and Baltic countries. The issues related to birth and marriage are analysed by O. Ganchev and O. Prigarin and are also addressed by **Rasa Paukštytė-Šaknienė** in her study of Lithuanian material. She scrutinises the ritual actions with two key participants of these events (a midwife and a matchmaker) and shows the development of respective rituals in the historical perspective.

Natalia Golant (St. Petersburg, Russia) centres her research on a symbolic object – a shirt made by Romanians in ritual circumstances to combat plague – and considers the changes in its functions and perceptions over time, while **Alexander Novik** (St. Petersburg, Russia) considers the border between the sacred and the profane, examining diachronic relations within the Albanian community.

The transformation of ethnological terminology in Lithuania is considered by **Dalia Senvaitytė** (Kaunas, Lithuania). The final article of this section by **Mare Kõiva** and **Andres Kuperjanov** (Tartu, Estonia) is devoted to the transformation of roles between a student and a teacher in the context of Estonian Teachers' Day.

In the closing section of the volume the reader will learn about the Bulgarian conference on the ethnology of socialism and will enjoy the short essays on the jubilee of Emily Lyle, the founder of the SIEF Ritual Year Working Group. The publication of this issue coincides with the ninetieth birthday of this exceptional scholar, to whom we are delighted to express our gratitude, respect, and admiration.

The studies presented in this volume address important and topical issues of our time related to memory, the ritual year, culture and heritage, religiosity and ethnicity, history and the future. We hope that this issue will find its reader and raise new questions.

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I

**Concerns of Modernity: Memory,
Religion, and Communication**

“BULGARIAN” SITES IN GERMANY: PEOPLE, COMMEMORATIONS, AND NATIONAL MEMORY

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Abstract: Many monuments and places related to historical events and people connected with Bulgarian history can be found throughout Western Europe (and beyond). They are often the result of the wish of Bulgarians to commemorate prominent figures in Bulgarian history. Such sites, depending on the visitors and the commemorative practices performed there, are perceived as national memorials or as religious sites. At the same time, they contribute to the preservation of Bulgarian national memory and cultural heritage beyond Bulgaria's borders. The text will explore “Bulgarian” sites (memorial plaques, chapels, and other places) in various locations in Germany, including Heidelberg, Ellwangen, Regensburg, Reichenau, and others, with a focus on the visits Bulgarians organise and the commemorative and religious practices they perform on-site.

Keywords: Bulgaria, collective commemorations, memory sites, prominent people, religious veneration

Introduction

Despite an increase in research on extraterritorial memory sites (in the sense of *lieu de mémoire*, Nora 1996 [1992]) and monuments of prominent Bulgarian persons and national heroes, saints, and other people associated with Bulgarian history (Gergova & Gergova 2017; Voskresenski 2017, etc.), there are few scientific publications (Stanoev 2015) on such places in Germany.

As this study is a part of the project called “Construction of Cultural Heritage Abroad. Transborder Pilgrim and Commemoration Practices” focusing on identity construction and transborder commemorations and practices of Bulgarians, the objects of the current article are selected sites of Bulgarian history related to nationally significant men who spent some time of their lives in the territory that Germany now occupies. Such persons are Saint Methodius and Saint Cyril (born in Thessaloniki), who lived in the ninth century and were creators of the Glagolitic alphabet, the first Slavic scripts from which the contemporary Bulgarian letters and language developed. They are recognised as Bulgarian saints. Not only they but also such prominent persons as Dr Petar Beron, Prof. Ivan Shishmanov, the second monarch of the Third Bulgarian State, Ferdinand I of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, and his daughters Eudoxia and Nadezhda connect Bulgaria and Germany.

As to the degree of recognition these sites receive, they could be divided into two groups: “Bulgarian” sites with memorial signs honoured with respect by Bulgarians and sites with less or no veneration. “Bulgarian” here is used as an adjective to describe sites in Germany which are connected with the lives of Bulgarians and other people of non-Bulgarian ethnic origin related to the Bulgarian history and cultural heritage. These sites (with memorial plaques, chapels, etc.) located in Heidelberg, Ellwangen, Regensburg, Reichenau Island, and other settlements in Western and Eastern German lands (the latter connected in the period of 1944–1989 with Bulgaria, as they both were socialistic countries at the time) are visited by Bulgarians on different occasions. In this regard, the focus of the study is on visits and commemorative and religious practices that Bulgarians organise and perform (or not) on-site. These religious and civil commemorations, together with the experienced emotions and shared historical knowledge, could be considered, on the one hand, as constructive elements of the Bulgarians’ national identity (Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm &

Ranger 1983) and their collective memory (Assman 2006), and, on the other hand, as contributing to the construction of Bulgarian cultural heritage, national memory, and the veneration of prominent persons in extraterritorial settings (i.e., outside Bulgaria).

The Bulgarian national memory was born in the period of the Bulgarian Renaissance. This period of social-economic development and national integration among the Bulgarians under Ottoman rule is thought to have started with the historical book *Istoriia Slavenobolgarskaia* written in 1762 by Paisius, a Bulgarian monk of the Hilandar Monastery at Mount Athos (Paisii Ieromonakh 1914), which led to the National Awakening of Bulgaria and modern Bulgarian nationalism, and lasted until the Liberation of Bulgaria in 1878 as a result of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878. After the Liberation, the Bulgarian national history was formed under the influence of the Balkan Wars, the World Wars, and the corresponding politics towards Western European countries and the Soviet Union after 1944. All of these events left their imprints on the Bulgarian national memory, as well as on the tendency to revere some prominent people while dismissing others.

In the following, the author will consider places in Germany connected with Bulgaria through the lives of people who played an important role in Bulgarian history. Some of these places still function as Bulgarian signs on German territory, while others have become significant memory sites in the sense of a “significant entity, whether material or nonmaterial in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community” (Nora 1996 [1992]: xvii).

Empirical data has been gathered since the end of 2018 through the methods of interviewing, observation, and online questionnaires. Afterwards, the collected materials and additional online publications, as well as archive materials, were revised through content analysis.

Memory sites venerating Saints Cyril and Methodius

“Bulgarian” memory sites in Germany connected with the veneration of Saints Cyril and Methodius could be visited in the towns of Ellwangen, Reichenau, and Regensburg.

Ellwangen

During the second Moravian mission, Saint Methodius was brought before a court in Regensburg, and, as a result, sent to exile. One of the hypotheses related to the exile of Saint Methodius is connected with the town of Ellwangen, situated in the Southwest German Baden-Württemberg Land. According to this “Ellwangen hypothesis” (Temelski 2005: 6), Saint Methodius was exiled for three years in the Benedictine monastery after he was convicted in Regensburg during a church trial in 870. In fact, German scientists haven’t yet found exact written evidence for that because every indirect piece of information was then kept secret (Grivec 1964: 158 apud. Stanoev 2015: 219; Eberl 1989/1990; Eggers 1996).

Bulgarians and Germans took the initiative to create a place in Ellwangen dedicated to Saint Methodius, and a first venerating celebration happened on the 12th June of 1970, 1100 years after the banishment of the saint. Then, a stone bas-relief, made by the German sculptor Hans Stäble, depicting the church trial was unveiled by Karl Wöhr, mayor of Ellwangen, in the presence of (the now deceased) engineer Dimitar Bachev, one of the Bulgarian organisers of the celebrations and chair of the board of the Bulgarian Christian Orthodox Community “Saints Cyril and Methodius” in Stuttgart and of the German-Bulgarian association for friendship in the town (Executive Agency n.d.). Five years later, the Bulgarian Embassy in Bonn hung a second bronze bas-relief, made by the Bulgarian sculptor Prof. Velichko Minekov (Stanoev 2015: 226; see also Spasov 2005). In May 1987, the square was renamed “Methodius Square,” and one of the renewed arms towers was transformed into an Orthodox Chapel of Saint Methodius with the support of the Bulgarian state, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, and Bulgarian emigrant Vasil Pomazanoff. It was frescoed by the Bulgarian icon painters Tsvetko Tsvetkov and Valentin Vitanov. A wooden iconostasis was made by Vladimir Zlatkov, and a memorial plaque was hung on the outer side. Another institution was founded there in 2011 as a result of the long-lasting Bulgarian-German relations, uniting several Bulgarian and German state and building institutions and non-governmental organisations. It was the South European-Bulgarian Culture Institute (Methodius Centre for South European Art and Culture Research), situated in one of the historic buildings of Ellwangen, “Palais Adelman” (Stanoev 2015: 225–226).

Since then, this place has gathered many Bulgarians on or near the 24th of May, the National Day of the Holy Brothers Cyril and Methodius, of the Bulgarian Alphabet, Education and Culture and of Slavonic Literature. The date for the festivities is always chosen to be on weekends so that more people could visit it and take part in the celebrations. Every year, guests include Bulgarian migrants, representatives of Bulgarian institutions in Bulgaria and Germany, as well as some Germans who feel connected with the Bulgarian language and culture. Regular participants are Bulgarian presidents, ministers, and other diplomats, mayors, priests, scientists, and representatives of the Bulgarian institutions from Munich, Nuremberg, Stuttgart, Mannheim, and many other cities in Germany. In 2014, Herzog Ferdinand von Württemberg (1925–2020), a grandson of Tsar Ferdinand I (who ruled Bulgaria from 1878 to 1918; see below), also attended the festivities.

Usually, the festivities start with a visit to Saint Vitus Cathedral, where a short service is held. Afterwards, Bulgarians light candles in the chapel of Saint Methodius, and in front of it, they sing together the anthem of the Bulgarian Enlightenment and Education “Forward, Revived People,” the official anthem of the Saints Cyril and Methodius’ Day festivities in Bulgaria. In the afternoon, after the mayor’s welcome speech, Bulgarian migrants from many German towns and diplomats from Bulgaria, North Macedonia, and Slovakia (from places that also have memorial plaques dedicated to these saints) lay flowers and wreaths at the bas-reliefs of Saint Methodius. Frequently, Bulgarian folk dance groups (formed by Bulgarian migrants in Germany) lead ring dances, and many Bulgarians join them. The festivities end with a cocktail party organised for everyone by the mayor. As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic that affected the whole world in 2020 and 2021, the celebration for the fiftieth anniversary of the event did not happen.

North Macedonians and Slovaks also initiated their festivities in the second half of the last decade of the twentieth century. North Macedonians feel connected with the saint brothers because they speak a Slavic language (Dveri 2011),¹ and Slovaks venerate the saint not only because of their Slavic language but also because they believe that Saint Methodius was exiled there and later, after he died, was buried in the small Slovakian village Mikulčice.² Both North Macedonians and Slovaks hang wreaths at their memorial plaques every year next to the Bulgarian ones and, as the Bulgarians do, perform commemora-

tive rituals during the formal part of the festivities (Stanoev 2015: 226–227, see Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Bas-reliefs of Saint Methodius of the Bulgarian, Macedonian, and Slovakian peoples at Methodius Square, Ellwangen, 2019. Photograph by Tanya Matanova. Personal archive.

Reichenau Island

Another place that should be mentioned in this context is Reichenau Island in Lake Constance. According to another hypothesis that was put forward in the 1980s, Saint Methodius was sent into exile to the Reichenau Monastery and was followed by five of his students. Alfons Zettler (1983)³ revealed that the names of the saint brothers were written down in Latin in the monastery codex, in the long lists of names: Saint Methodius and his students in one for living people, and Saint Cyril at the beginning of the obituary list (Shniter 2010: 70).⁴ Some scientists explained that the names of the missionaries are written down there because the monks passed through the monastery on their way back to the East, to Constantinople (Ziegler 1985: 548).

For more than thirty years, clerics of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and pious Christians from Germany have venerated Saint Methodius, his brother, and their students with a divine liturgy in the Church of Saints Maria and Markus (Ivanov 2011), built on the site where the monastery existed several centuries ago. Next to it, representatives of the Greek Christian Orthodox Community in Germany have built a chapel with a memorial plaque in Greek dedicated to the saint brothers. In 2011, the Bulgarian priest Viktor Zimmer participated in the divine services led by the Greeks. Five years later, Bulgarians began to visit this religious site too. Representatives of Bulgarian Christian Orthodox communities from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland go there on the 11th of June, Saint Bartholomew’s Day, the church patron’s day, for a joint celebration. The main initiator is the Bulgarian Christian Orthodox Community “Saints Cyril and Methodius” in Stuttgart, which celebrates its patrons’ day there. All present Bulgarians go to the church, enjoy the surrounding nature, and members of Bulgarian folk dance groups lead ring dances on the square in front of the cathedral. After the official part, all Bulgarians go for a festive drink in the nearby town of Constance.

These celebrations have never been attended by representatives of Bulgarian diplomacy, but only by clerics from Bulgarian Orthodox Church dioceses. The absence of the first could be attributed to the absence of a memorial plaque in Bulgarian language and the predominantly religious character of the performed festivities on-site. Similar to the case in Ellwangen, in 2020 (and in 2021) no pilgrimage or celebrations were organised due to the pandemic.

Regensburg

To commemorate Saint Methodius’ stay in Regensburg in 870 – his six-month detention and subsequent church trial against him held in the Benedictine Monastery of Saint Emmeram (not existing anymore) there⁵ – the Bulgarian government installed a memorial plaque in German at the Old Corn market in 1985, close to where the monastery once stood (Temelski 2005: 6). Since then, this place has attracted many Bulgarians. After Viktor Zimmer was appointed as a priest of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church for the Bulgarian migrants, religious worships were organised in the region. Every year on the 11th or 24th of May – the Day of Saints Cyril and Methodius according to the Julian and Gregorian calendars – after a festive divine liturgy held for the Bulgarians

there, all participants go to the memory site, singing during a *litiia* (Greek ‘a procession with an icon’) the anthem of the saint brothers. Thirty years later, as a result of the growing Bulgarian immigration in Regensburg, the foundation of the Bulgarian Christian Orthodox Community “Saint Nicholas,” the enthusiasm of the appointed Bulgarian priest Viktor Zimmer, the support of the Bulgarian diplomatic missions in Europe, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, and the donation of Petar Zhivanov (a Bulgarian emigrant in the US), another plaque in Bulgarian was hung. The text of both plaques says “In memory of the Great Slav Apostle Methodius, who was in Regensburg in 870” (Dveri 2015). The event is usually attended by thirty to fifty people from Regensburg and surrounding towns, but it has never been attended by Bulgarians from Bulgaria or other countries, and diplomats seldom take part in the event. In contrast to the previous examples, however, the event in Regensburg and, more exactly, the procession from the church to the memorial site and the short religious rituals performed there took place in 2020 despite the coronavirus difficulties.

In summary, it could be said that in Ellwangen, Regensburg, and Reichenau there are constructed sites of memory that are based on historic knowledge and the wish for a collective festive veneration of Saint Methodius. In Ellwangen, the totality of a chapel, bas-reliefs, a cultural centre, even the name of the square attract tourists, scientists, and migrants. The most regular annual visitors are Bulgarian migrants from Munich who come by bus to Ellwangen and label the event as “A travel following in Saint Methodius’ footsteps,” “A Pilgrimage to Ellwangen.” The celebrations in Regensburg and Reichenau are less extensive than those in Ellwangen and are visited by fewer people. Regardless the ways these people experience their stay there – as a pilgrimage, an excursion, or a holiday – and the motives for its happening – “as a business act” (AIF I, No. 468, a. u. 18), as a patriotic or religious veneration – they are sites which consolidate Bulgarians through the performed common activities (“Ellwangen is a very interesting experience ... It is a place that gathers people” (AIF I, No. 468, a. u. 19)) and contribute for the preservation of the historic memory about the national saint beyond the Bulgarian borders.

Sites connected with prominent persons of the Bulgarian history

All the prominent persons mentioned in this section played an important role in the Bulgarian Enlightenment, culture, and politics in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Petar Beron and Heidelberg

Other “Bulgarian” memorial plaques could be found in Heidelberg. They are placed on the side walls of houses where Dr Petar Beron (1799–1871), a famous Bulgarian researcher and enlightener and author of *Riben Bukvar*⁶ (Beron 1824, a primer with various instructions, which is considered to be the first Bulgarian encyclopaedia), lived. In the years 1825–1831, Petar Beron studied philosophy and medicine at the universities in Heidelberg and Munich.⁷

In honour of Beron’s life work and stay in Heildelberg, interpreted also as “a symbol of the spiritual connection between Bulgaria and West Europe” (Zlatanova 2014: 65), the Bulgarian Academic Association with headquarter in Heidelberg founded in Munich in 1965 was named after Petar Beron. Its members initiated the making of one of the memorial plaques, unveiled in 1966, that was placed at the house in which he lived in the years 1826–1827. The second one was placed at the other house in which he lived in 1825. Till the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century thanks to Prof. Romyana Zlatanova (lecturer at and founder of the Bulgarian Language Chair at the Heidelberg University) this place was included in the celebrations related to the 24th of May, when lecturers and students of the Department for Slavic Studies at the university visited the site (Zlatanova 2014: 65). After 2010, these plaques function only as a tourist attraction that occasionally witnesses (not as a part of a ritual year) Bulgarian guests of the town, Bulgarian students, or other Bulgarian migrants.⁸

Ivan Shishmanov and Freiburg

The next memorial plaque that should be mentioned here is placed at the Slavic Institute of the Albert Ludwig University of Freiburg and is dedicated to Prof. Ivan Shishmanov (1862–1928).

Ivan Shishmanov was a minister, ambassador, and polyglot interested in many scientific fields, doing research on Western European civilization, supporting the Pan-European idea based on the mission of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Western Europe, etc. It is thanks to the guest lecturer, Romyana Koneva, a historian of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, who, while searching for information about Bulgarians engaged before her in the university, found out that Ivan Shishmanov was the first Bulgarian professor who gave lectures in Germany in the period 1921–1924. A memorial plaque memorialising this fact was unveiled on the 8th of December, 2010, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Shishmanov's birth. Actually, the first idea for its making was of a fellow of Ivan Shishmanov, then-director of the university library. During her stay and work at the Slavic Institute of the Freiburg University, Romyana Koneva, with the support of Prof. Elisabeth Cheauré and other lecturers at the Slavic Institute in Freiburg, initiated the production of the plaque. It was the first memorial plaque of a Bulgarian placed at a German institution, which was produced and financed not by Bulgarian individuals or organisations but completely by German institutions: the West-East Society of the South Baden Association (West-Ost-Gesellschaft Südbaden e. V.), the Southeast Europe Society (Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft), the German-Bulgarian Forum Association (Deutsch-Bulgarischer Forum e. V.), and the German-Bulgarian Society for Support of German-Bulgarian Relationships (Deutsch-Bulgarischen Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Beziehungen zwischen Deutschland und Bulgarien e. V.) (Wladimirow 2011; Ban il 2012).

Despite the fact that there are many Bulgarian migrants and students in Freiburg, and the Bulgarian student association is called “Prof. Ivan Shishmanov,” this site, which serves actually as a symbol of Bulgarian culture and history, sad to say, is not honoured with respect by them or other Bulgarian migrants or organisations, as no commemorative practices (such as presenting wreaths, bringing flowers, etc.) are performed on-site.

Georgi Dimitrov and Berlin

The following example is from Berlin and is connected with the Bulgarian politician Georgi Dimitrov (1882–1949), Bulgaria's first prime minister after the communist takeover. He achieved a high degree of international popularity for his defence against Nazi accusations at the German Reichstag trial of 1933 in

Leipzig and “emerged as the icon of the anti-fascist struggle” (Wien 2004: 197). He lived and carried out illegal activity in Germany after he was forced to leave Bulgaria after an attempt to assassinate Tsar Boris III in 1924 (Wien 2004: 196).

Two Dimitrov’s plaques could be seen nowadays in the German capital (Gedenktafeln n.d.). They were placed at the houses in which he lived (between 1930 and 1933) and worked. One version says that the first bronze plaque in Berlin-Charlottenburg was put by the former Senate of West Berlin (Todorova 2010: 421), and according to the other version it was placed by representatives of Bulgaria (Radev 2015).

The copper plaque in Berlin-Adlershof, made by the art blacksmith Kühn, was unveiled in 1972, and it pointed to the action of an East German institution willing to memorise Dimitrov’s act. Even after the Bulgarian Socialist Party’s victory in the 1990 elections, Bulgaria’s opposition defaced the mausoleum of the mummified communist leader in Sofia (during this action, his family, being afraid that his body would be desecrated, secretly removed it and cremated his body (Verdery 1999: 19)), and the Dimitrov objects in Leipzig and Dresden were removed,⁹ but these memorial plaques in Berlin still hung there. However, they function only as symbols of the past, and now, no commemorative rituals are performed there.¹⁰

The tsar family, Coburg and Castle Altshausen

Even though the tsar family was not of Bulgarian origin, many Bulgarians pay tribute to them and their noble deeds related to Bulgarian history.

Ferdinand I of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (1861–1948) was elected Prince (Knyaz) of autonomous Bulgaria by the Bulgarian Third Grand National Assembly on 25 June 1887 after the abdication of Prince Alexander I Baternberg.¹¹ His election was not recognised by Russia, but some Western countries actually supported him on the Bulgarian throne, and in 1893 the Fourth Grand National Assembly amended the constitution, allowing the heir to the throne not to profess the Eastern Orthodox faith. These changes made possible his marriage with Princess Marie Louise of Bourbon-Parma, who gave birth to four children: Boris, Cyril, Eudoxia, and Nadezhda.

After abdicating in 1918 in favour of his son Tsar Boris III, Ferdinand lived in Coburg, then he moved to the Saint Anthony Castle in Slovakia, which was owned by the Koháry family, and died on the 10th of September, 1948, in

Coburg. By reason of his Austrian-French origin and the negative consequences for Bulgaria during the last six years of his government, he is still not a favourite nobleman for many Bulgarians.¹² Despite his final wish to be buried “in his loved Bulgaria,” next to his wife, in the Rome-Catholic Cathedral of Saint Ludwig in Plovdiv, neither the communist authorities in Bulgaria nor any other government since then have paid attention to his wish. That is why his sarcophagus, placed temporarily next to his parents’ sarcophagi in the family crypt in Saint Augustine’s Catholic Church in Coburg, still stands there. Unlike the other marble sarcophagi, his wooden sarcophagus has a white-green-red band.¹³ It is still waiting to be transported to Bulgaria.

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Ferdinand’s birth, two events were organised in Germany: in Bayreuth on the 2nd of August, 2010, and in Coburg on the 26–27 of February, 2011. Organisers were not Bulgarian diplomats or migrants but the Saxe-Coburg Gotha family and German institutions as the German-Bulgarian Society for Support of the German-Bulgarian Relationships (Deutsch-Bulgarische Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Beziehungen zwischen Deutschland und Bulgarien e.V.), the National History Museum and others. Ferdinand’s grandchildren took part in the celebrations: in the presence of Tsar Simeon of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha a commemoration ritual at the sarcophagus of his grandfather was performed. Simeon and his cousin Maria Luisa (Dimitrova 2011) placed a box with soil from the Vrana Park-Museum, which previously was a part of the estate of the Tsars Ferdinand I and Boris III. Other elements of the celebrations were an exhibition about Ferdinand I, a classic music concert and a presentation of the film *The Tsar in Exile*, showing the life of the tsar in Bulgaria and Germany (Schaller 2012: 160). The only other Bulgarians who visited the celebrations were a TV crew (lead by Eliana Dimitrova from the Bulgarian National Television) who went there to gather materials for the documental film *Ferdinand – the Unburied Tsar* (Dimitrova 2016).¹⁴

The last site that will be mentioned here refers to the daughters of Tsar Ferdinand, Princesses Eudoxia (1898–1985) and Nadezhda (1899–1958). They lived in the Bulgarian royal estates in Sofia and Euxinograd until 1918, when they moved to Coburg with their father (Edin zavet n.d.). Before Princess Nadezhda was married in 1924 to Duke Albrecht Eugen of Württemberg, she and her sister returned to Sofia and helped their brother Boris, then king of Bulgaria, and Bulgarian homeless children. Both sisters devoted themselves

to collecting charitable donations for the orphanage “Eudoxia and Nadezhda,” as well as supporting a variety of Bulgarian Red Cross initiatives.¹⁵ Later, after returning to Germany, they continued to give financial support to these and other similar institutions in Bulgaria. When the tsar passed away, Eudoxia settled down closer to her sister Nadezhda, who then lived with her family in Castle Lindach in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Baden-Württemberg Land. Soon after the death of Nadezhda, Eudoxia went to a Catholic home for the elderly near Lake Constance and died in 1985 in Friedrichshafen.¹⁶ Not far from this district’s principal town lie the mortal remains of both sisters, placed in sarcophagi in the duke’s crypt of Saint Michael Church, situated on the territory of Castle Altshausen (Monarchist 2018; Royalty (Travel) Guide n.d.).

Even though this site is not well known and thus usually stays on the outskirts of commemoration routes, it does receive visitors from Bulgaria up and then, who are interested in history and culture. The last Bulgarian visitors of 2020 left postcards and rose-oil flasks from Bulgaria (Matanova 2020, see Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Sarcophagi of Princesses Eudoxia and Nadezhda (with Bulgarian objects on them) in the crypt of Saint Michael Church in Castle Altshausen, Altshausen, 2020. Photograph by Tanya Matanova. Personal archive.

Conclusions and future prospects

In conclusion, I would like to summarise that the places of Bulgarian national and collective memory in Germany are not numerous. All sites mentioned in the text are related to Bulgarian history through the lives of persons of Bulgarian or other ethnic origin. And the main memorial activities associated with them are visits, commemorations, and the installation of memorial plaques. The memorial plaques described above could be regarded as transborder material symbols of Bulgarian history, national memory, and cultural heritage, the intangible forms of which are the performed actions on-site, including religious and pilgrimage practices (prayers and divine services, blessings, and candle lighting), commemorative ones (hymn singing, official greetings, and wreath presentation) and those of community fairs (collective folklore dances, feast meal, etc.).

Seen from a spatial perspective based on the localization of activities, at a leading position, or in the centre, is Ellwangen with its several Saint Methodius memory signs, which witness regularly many Bulgarian visitors of different social milieus (diplomats, representatives of Bulgarian institutions, and immigrants). The Methodius memorials in Ellwangen have become a part of the local history of the host society and function as bridges between both cultures and peoples. The other two places connected with the life of Saint Methodius – Regensburg and Reichenau – are close to the centre (Ellwangen) as they are visited regularly by Bulgarians, and commemorations happen annually.

The examples in the article demonstrate that the earlier the prominent people lived, the greater their veneration and collective memory about them are today. Thus, Saint Methodius and his brother Saint Cyril, perceived as a unity by Bulgarians in the homeland and abroad, are the most venerated and worshipped persons by Bulgarians (migrants including), and their memory sites remain at the centre of the periphery-centre dichotomy. Compared to them, the places connected to the lives of Dr Petar Beron, Prof. Ivan Shishmanov, Georgi Dimitrov, Tsar Ferdinand I and his daughters are in the periphery. The latter are often not recognised by the host society, and in some cases, even by Bulgarian migrants in Germany. This could be explained by the course of historical events, national politics, and (as a result) by the fact that few people know about their existence. As commemorative celebrations are rarely organ-

ised at these places and they are seldom included in the routes of Bulgarians from Bulgaria or elsewhere, they appear to be just Bulgarian signs on the map of Germany, which could permanently disappear from the collective memory of Bulgarians in Germany and in Bulgaria (and from the national memory as well) if no popularisation process is initiated.

In many of the mentioned cases, the ideas for the memorials are translated into action thanks to the cooperation of several agents – Bulgarian, German, or German-Bulgarian individuals and institutions. Similarly, the finances needed for their production are given by Bulgarian migrants and Bulgarian and/or German associations and establishments, who afterwards often become regular visitors.

Whether these “Bulgarian” sites serve as a symbolic presence of Bulgaria, as national, profane Bulgarian places in migratory context (where only speeches are delivered and wreaths are presented on-site) or as religious and pilgrimage spaces (where candles are lit, prayers are said, etc.), these sites and the commemorations performed contribute to the stimulation of the everyday nationalism (Billig 1995), the preservation of the collective memory about persons and events related to the Bulgarian history, as well as to the safeguarding of the Bulgarian cultural heritage in foreign cultural context.

These findings about the festivities and commemorations of the saint brothers, outstanding Bulgarians, and persons connected with Bulgarian history could be used for future studies focused on the construction and preservation of Bulgarian national memory and national identity abroad, in other European and non-European countries. They are also useful for research on transnational memory cultures. As the transnational approach directs attention to all kinds of permanent transborder relations linking national states (Vertovec 2009: 1), studies on memory from a transnational point of view open up the possibility to analyse the interaction between social formations and cultural practices of different peoples (Cesari & Rigney 2014: 4). Thus, the memory of Tsar Ferdinand I and his daughters Nadezhda and Eudoxia could be studied comparatively among Germans and Bulgarians. The focus of comparisons could also be placed on different Slavic peoples’ veneration and commemorations dedicated to the saint brothers that take place in the homeland or in foreign cultural contexts (in the diaspora), but also on pilgrimage routes (as in the framework of the European cultural route of Saints Cyril and Methodius (Cyril and Methodius Route 2014)), and the memory sites themselves could be studied as transnational spaces.

Regarding the “Bulgarian” sites in Germany, those dedicated to the saint brothers also function as transnational spaces as they gather not only Bulgarians but also other Slavs. From a national standpoint, these sites, celebrations, and commemorations associated with the saints’ noble act are among the most unifying events for Bulgarians abroad, confirming their national collective memory and identity.

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Notes

¹ As a respondent commented, “[North] Macedonians were strongly presented several years ago, but their interest began to flag over time. In my opinion, they perceived their presence in Ellwangen as a nationalistic act ... They are Macedonians who live in Germany. They organise, similar to us, Bulgarians, trips to Ellwangen and hold a Thanksgiving service” (AIF I, No. 529, a. u. 3).

² More about the festivities in Mikulčice see Borisova & Matanova 2019.

³ For earlier studies in German language, see Mareš 1971; Autenrieth & Geuenich & Schmid 1979.

⁴ The name of Methodius, together with six other names, could be found written in Greek in the other part of the book (Shniter 2010: 54). The theologian and historian Vladislav Atanasov commented on their appearance in Zettler’s book by saying the following: “All names are written in upper-case by one and the same experienced scribe, and very likely he had been Methodius, who was the leader of the group. Arguments for that include the fact that a Greek uncial font is used ... As a result, the Reichenau codex turns out to be the only document in the world that includes words written originally by one of the two brothers” (Atanasov 2014).

⁵ According to the early researches of Adolf Ziegler, nowhere in the documents of that time the name Regensburg is written down as a place of the church trial against Methodius. Regensburg is presumed to be the place because in the same year an Imperial Diet was held in Regensburg (Ziegler 1953: 371–382).

⁶ *Riben bukvar* (‘Fish primer’) is an unofficial title of Beron’s book, which received it because of a dolphin pictured at the end of the book.

⁷ Online searches about the existence of memorial plaques or organised festivities in honour of Petar Beron’s stay in Munich and Berlin are without result.

⁸ The lack of commemorations could be explained with the fact that the house with the older plaque is nowadays private, and formal celebrations require permission from the town planning department. The second plaque is placed on a house sidewall adjoining a small garden, but nowadays its entrance door is just under the plaque, which makes presenting wreaths and flowers inconvenient.

⁹ A Dimitrov object of the past is the building of the Supreme Court of the Reich in Leipzig which was turned into a Georgi Dimitroff Museum from 1952 till 1991. In Dresden, the old Augustus Bridge was named Georgi Dimitroff Bridge in the period 1949–1990, a memorial plaque with his image was added (and later removed). Another wooden Dimitrov’s plaque is kept in the Museum of the City in Leipzig.

¹⁰ A memorial plaque of Georgi Dimitrov made by the German sculptor Eugen Hoffman existed also in Dresden on the Augustus Bridge (Brendler 2016).

¹¹ On the 5th of October, 1908, celebrated nowadays on the 22nd of September as a national holiday, Ferdinand I proclaimed Bulgaria’s *de jure* independence from the Ottoman Empire. Since 1878, Bulgaria has been *de facto* independent.

¹² This could be seen in the negative comments posted in Bulgarian forums (see, e.g., Peicheva 2018).

¹³ Formally, the Council of Ministers, Parliament, and the President should begin discussions with Germany about recovering Ferdinand’s mortal remains from abroad in Bulgaria. More successful efforts to repatriate similar treasures occurred in Romania, when the Romanian government in 2003 brought back from Portugal the remains of King Carol II. The Russian Federation, too, re-buried the Russian Empress Alexandra Feodorovna in 2006. However, the question raised by the National Initiative Committee and other Bulgarians (Maksimova 2020) about Ferdinand’s funeral in Bulgaria is not being examined yet by the Bulgarian government. In contrast, Slovaks are ready to welcome his remains and bury him there, where he lived during World War I.

¹⁴ Critical to Ferdinand’s burial politics are his name and fame. If he were better accepted by the majority of Bulgarians, not only his relatives would care where his dead body is nowadays. Misfortunate is also the story of the death of his son, Tsar Boris III, Bulgaria’s last sovereign, loved by a great majority of Bulgarians. He was buried once in 1943 in a zinc sarcophagus in Rila Monastery, and his heart was put in a special flask. Three years later, communists, led by Georgi Dimitrov and following a programme to destroy national memory, transported his mortal remains in a small chapel in the Vrana

Park-Museum, which soon becomes also the place of residence of Georgi Dimitrov. Soon after that, an explosive was set off, and the chapel and the dead body of Tsar Boris III were destroyed and dispersed. Till nowadays, only the heart of Boris was saved and reburied in the first grave in Rila Monastery in 1993. According to one version, the widow Tsarina Ioanna, returning from Spain after 1989, brought Tsar Boris's heart for reburial, "which she had taken with her into exile" (Verdery 1999: 15). The other version is that it was put next to the gravestone in the chapel in Vrana and was found during the search of the tsar's grave in Vrana (Ivanov 2017).

¹⁵ At the initiative of the two princess sisters, the Fund for Orphans of the Last Liberation War, 1912–1913, was founded by a royal decree of the 15th of September, 1913, thanks to which a number of orphanages in county towns in Bulgaria were opened (Nikolova n.d.).

¹⁶ According to online sources, "in her last days she dreamed about the wonderful air in Bulgaria," and her favourite plant, the Bulgarian wild geranium, grows there (Peicheva 2018). The last information is false because she is not buried outside in a cemetery but in a crypt.

Archives

AIF I = (Written) Archive of the National Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences:

AIF I, No. 468, archive unit (here and below – a. u.) 18, male, (then) priest serving at the Bulgarian Christian Orthodox communities in Regensburg and Passau.

AIF I, No. 468, a. u. 19, male, (then) board member of the Bulgarian Christian Orthodox Community "Saint Petka" in Mannheim.

AIF I, No. 529, a. u. 3, male, chair of the church board of the Bulgarian Christian Orthodox Community "Saint Clement of Ohrid" in Munich.

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BULGARIANS IN MOROCCO – CULTURAL HERITAGE AND SOCIOCULTURAL INTERACTION

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Abstract: The article focuses on migration and cultural heritage. It presents the processes of transmission and use of Bulgarian cultural heritage abroad. The study outlines the sociocultural interaction between the Bulgarian community in Morocco and the host society. The Bulgarian migrant community established in Morocco's Kingdom mainly during the 1960s–1980s consisted mostly of professionals: hydro- and civil engineers, geologists, teachers, and architects. Their well-done work contributed to the excellent image of Bulgaria, and the Bulgarians in the receiving country are also present nowadays. At the same time, cases of Bulgarian immigration in Morocco due to mixed marriages could be observed. Although the Bulgarian community in this Maghreb country is not numerous (around 350–400 people), it is visible with a rich cultural calendar that includes sociocultural initiatives in the interaction with the host society. The Bulgarian migrants in Morocco do not have a formal organization. Meanwhile their community is proactive and consolidated around the Bulgarian Embassy. The Bulgarian school in various formats has been operating since 1986. A folk dance group was established in 2018. The paper attempts to answer why knowledge of Bulgarian traditions, folklore, history, and preservation of the Bulgarian language and cultural identity are important for the Bulgarian community in Morocco.

Keywords: Bulgarian school abroad, cultural heritage, institution, migration, sociocultural interaction

Introduction

In 1956, Morocco regained its independence and soon established diplomatic relations with Bulgaria. According to the economic agreement between the two countries, Bulgaria sent different professionals to Morocco. That's why the Bulgarian migrant community established in the Kingdom of Morocco (mainly during the 1960s–1980s) consisted mostly of hydro- and civil engineers, geologists, teachers, architects, and doctors. Their well-done work contributed to the good image of Bulgaria, and the Bulgarians in the receiving country are also present nowadays. Some of these specialists settled in this north-west African country with their families. Therefore, it can be summarized that the Bulgarian migration in Morocco is mainly of professional nature, economical for reasons and mainly family in composition. At the same time, cases of Bulgarian immigration to Morocco due to mixed marriages could be observed.¹ After the political changes in Bulgaria in 1989, there was no increase in emigration to Morocco, and today, the Bulgarian migrants in the kingdom, according to unofficial data, number about 350–400 people.² This little community is concentrated mainly in the capital Rabat and the city of Casablanca, as well as in Tangier, Mohammedia, and Temara.

Cultural heritage and migration

The Bulgarian cultural heritage abroad is an object of numerous researches about Bulgarian migrant communities in Europe and the USA.³ This article, too, focuses on migration and cultural heritage, but it presents the processes of transmission and use of Bulgarian cultural heritage outside of Europe – in an African, non-Christian country. The present study's task is to determine the role and significance of the cultural heritage for the Bulgarian community in Morocco. The research focus also includes sociocultural interaction with the host country. For this study's purposes, the active elements of the cultural heritage are analyzed through the activities of the Bulgarian consolidation forms in Morocco.

Cultural heritage, seen as a social and political construct, includes cultural expressions inherited from the past, reflecting and validating our identity as a nation, community, family, or individual, and deserving respect and preserva-

tion (Logan & Smith 2009: XII). It is through inheritance that the significant past fits into the present (Ganeva-Raicheva et al. 2012: 6). The cultural heritage that Bulgarian migrants have inherited from their home country and which they transmit, maintain, construct, and popularize in the host society includes elements such as language, festivity, literature, folklore, rituals, orthodoxy, music, dances, and so on (Gergova 2017).

As for the relations “cultural heritage – migrant community”, on the one hand, the cultural heritage unites the migrant community, but on the other, the cultural heritage legitimizes the latter in the host society. The maintaining, presenting and transmitting cultural heritage abroad depend on the reasons for migration, the existence of a relatively consolidated and organized migrant community, and the policies of the sending and the receiving countries. The degree of adaptation and integration in the host society also influences the need to state and show one’s cultural identity (Elchinova 2010). The cultural heritage is the basis of the cultural identity, which in the conditions of migration is characterized by dialogical formation, combining the sending and receiving society’s cultural specifics. This heritage is concurrently a reason for and a result of migrant consolidation in formal and informal unions. The connection with Bulgaria and the Bulgarian cultural heritage is maintained not only through the Bulgarian events, festive calendar, literature, language, and the possibilities of internet connection but also through the annual summer returns to the homeland.

In the Maghreb, as the southernmost part of the Mediterranean and the closest part of the African continent to Europe, traditional local cultures, Islam, and European cultural influences intertwine and interact. The official languages in the Kingdom of Morocco are Arabic and Berber; the diplomatic language is French; in the areas under the Spanish protectorate, Spanish is spoken; and in business communication, English dominates. In such a multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual environment, the Bulgarian migrant community represents, transmits, and promotes the Bulgarian cultural heritage. The Bulgarian migrants in Europe and North America, for example, live in a cultural environment similar to their own, with dominant values of Western civilization and Christian religion. These features facilitate the process of the migrants’ adaptation and transmission of cultural heritage. The local context in Morocco is different: Asian, African, and European cultural influences intertwine there, and a leading religion is Islam. As a result, these differences

make the migrants' adaptation and children's training in Bulgarian cultural heritage more time- and energy-consuming. At the same time, the fact that Bulgarian culture is unknown and attractive to the local people is one of the reasons Bulgarian cultural events in Morocco are attended by Moroccans. The professional trajectories of the migrant community are also specific. A significant difference between the Bulgarian migrants in Western Europe and North America and those in the Kingdom of Morocco is that the Bulgarian higher education is recognised in Morocco, and the Bulgarian specialists in the Maghreb country do not have to take equivalency exams to practice their professions, which facilitates their career development.

The study results from fieldwork conducted in the Kingdom of Morocco in December 2019,⁴ using the methods of semistructured interview, observation, archival research, and analysis of publications in social networks.

Although the Bulgarian migrants in Morocco do not have a formal organization, the community is proactive and consolidated around the Bulgarian Embassy. Two small but important migrant organizations function in the embassy building, aimed at children and folklore dances lovers: a school and a folklore dance ensemble. As for the formal/informal union distinction, a definition of the informal associates it with the unstructured and the normatively non-fixed, while the formal is considered mainly as an activity of official policies and is normatively fixed (Lauth 2004: 6; Ostrom 2006; Grzymala-Busse 2004; Voskresenski n.d.). In this aspect, the Bulgarian schools abroad are located between formality and informality: they are formal insofar as they are registered in Bulgaria and the host country, and informal insofar as they offer additional education one day a week (Gergova & Borisova 2021). Children of Bulgarian origin are educated in a Bulgarian school with two branches – in Rabat and Casablanca. A beneficiary of the school is the Bulgarian Embassy. As for the folklore dance group “Hortse”, it is an informal consolidation union.

Moroccan citizens who have graduated from higher education in Bulgaria or have worked for a long time in our country and maintain contacts with Bulgaria⁵ also gravitate towards the Bulgarian community. They are welcome at all Bulgarian events: celebrations, concerts, and holidays. Most of them speak fluent Bulgarian.⁶

The Bulgarian school⁷

The Bulgarian school in Morocco has been functioning since the 1986/87⁸ school year. The migrant community itself established it. Bulgarian schools abroad function parallel to the local education system and offer additional education. They are voluntary and offer classes once a week, usually on one of the holidays. Since 2009, the Bulgarian schools abroad have been funded by the Bulgarian state (Kulov & Borisova 2017). Since 2011, the Bulgarian school in Morocco has had “Rodolyubie” as a name (the name means ‘Patriotism’), which meaning is also related to the cultural heritage. The school functions in two branches: in the Bulgarian Embassy in Rabat and in the Bulgarian diplomatic agency in Casablanca. The school educates children from the age of four (carries out preschool educational activities) and students from the first class to their twelfth (equivalent to the so-called senior year). Our respondents shared that every Bulgarian child in Morocco attends the “Rodolyubie” school. The school principal, Ani Radeva, says that some of the children travel from other cities, over long distances, to visit the Bulgarian school, which is indicative of the interest in this institution.

Preschool education is necessary because many of the children come from mixed marriages and are born in Morocco, so Bulgarian is a mother tongue, not a native language, and in most cases is not the preferred language for family communication (Matanova & Borissova 2021). The ability to communicate in Bulgarian is a priority of the Bulgarian school,⁹ because it is the key to master the other elements of cultural heritage. Children in the Bulgarian school and the students in the other schools abroad study Bulgarian language and Bulgarian literature, history and civilization, geography and economics of Bulgaria and have extracurricular activities to keep their cultural identity. Children and parents take part in workshops and together they make *martenitsi* (traditional white and red amulets for 1 March), Christmas cards, and miniature models of Bulgarian cultural and historical objects.¹⁰

The Bulgarian school abroad consolidates the Bulgarian community in the receiving country, and the school festivals become festivals of the whole community (Borisova & Kulov 2017). This process is strengthened by the fact that the embassy and the school function under one roof in Rabat. The Bulgarian

school in Morocco is especially important as an educational centre and incubator for cultural heritage, as well as a consolidating core for the small Bulgarian community in the kingdom. The Opening of the School Year, the National Holiday 3 March, 24 May (the Day of the Holy Brothers Cyril and Methodius, of the Bulgarian Alphabet, Education and Culture and of Slavonic Literature) gather children, parents, embassy diplomats, representatives of the Bulgarian community not related to the school, and Moroccan guests. The Christmas concert we attended in 2019 gathered Bulgarian migrants from all over Morocco in the embassy. It became a community festival with carol songs and blessings, the dance of the snowflakes, poems, gifts from Santa Claus (Fig. 1), Bulgarian folklore dances, and traditional dishes. The Bulgarian school students take part in the diplomatic reception on 3 March, the National Holiday, which is another way of popularizing the Bulgarian cultural heritage. The school and the embassy function together by supporting each other.



Figure 1. The school Christmas concert. Rabat, December 2019. Photograph by Mariyanka Borisova Zhekova. FtAIF 1840, photo 29.

In pandemic conditions, Bulgarian school education was carried out remotely, as the online connection offers new opportunities. For the Enlightenment Leaders Day (1 November) in 2020, under the teachers' guidance, students prepared and recorded videos with their performances of poems and songs dedicated to the Enlightenment Leaders and Bulgaria. The videos have been uploaded

on the Facebook page of the Bulgarian Embassy in Morocco. The students of the Bulgarian school “Rodolyubie” celebrate in videoconference together with students from the Bulgarian school “Ran Bosilek” in Gütersloh, Germany.¹¹ The workshops for Christmas cards in 2020 were also held online, as the cards are photographed and posted on the Bulgarian Embassy’s Facebook page. Thus, the Bulgarian holiday calendar is maintained among the children of Bulgarian origin. At the same time, the tradition of making the results of the education of the children in the Bulgarian school available to the Bulgarian community in the Maghreb country is preserved. The children from the Bulgarian school in Morocco commemorate online the Day of the death of the national hero Vasil Levski (19 February) through recitals and drawings dedicated to the Apostle of Freedom, as well as through a virtual meeting at the National Museum “Vasil Levski” in the town of Karlovo (where the hero was born).

Bulgarian school “Rodolyubie” in Morocco follows the models of the Bulgarian schools abroad to preserve, construct, transmit, and valorize the Bulgarian cultural heritage in its various manifestations – language, literature, folklore, music, dances, traditions, and skills – and to consolidate the Bulgarian community in the respective host country. Particular emphasis is placed on the spoken mastery of the Bulgarian language. The teaching staff appreciates the cooperation of a series of ambassadors who have contributed to the prosperity of the Bulgarian school in the Kingdom of Morocco, as well as the parents and children for their diligence and dedication. The school’s holiday calendar traditionally becomes a holiday calendar of the Bulgarian community in the Maghreb country. The preservation, transmission, and manifestation of the Bulgarian cultural heritage in Morocco, analysed through the example of the school, are important for different generations of migrants in different ways. If in its first years the Bulgarian school educated children living with their Bulgarian parents in Morocco, today’s students are mostly children from mixed marriages and were born in the kingdom. Transnationalism is a suitable theory for understanding the current situation of the Bulgarian school in Morocco, opening a horizon for complex identities, loyalties, and commitment (Krasteva 2014: 146).

Folklore dance ensemble¹² “Hortse”¹³

The folklore dance ensemble “Hortse” was established in 2018 by enthusiastic Bulgarian women to maintain social contacts, tone, relaxing, and performances. The rehearsals happen once a week in the building of the Bulgarian Embassy (Fig. 2). The ensemble leader is Eugenia Nikitina-Spiridonova, who has lived in Morocco for the last 35 years. Apart from folklore dances, she also occupies herself with ballet and is the founder of a prestigious academy for a classical ballet called “Artemesia Club” in Rabat¹⁴. Another participant of the folklore ensemble “Hortse” is Tatyana Trifonova, a Bulgarian jazz singer famous in Morocco. In the ensemble, she sings and dances. The ensemble participates in different Bulgarian initiatives.



Figure 2. Folklore dance ensemble “Hortse”. Rabat, December 2019. Photograph by Mariyanka Borisova Zhekova. FtAIF 1840, photo 275.

While the “Rodolyubie” school focuses on Bulgarian language, history, folklore, and literature, the folklore dance ensemble emphasizes dance folklore. In addition, both organizations maintain and promote the Bulgarian cultural

heritage within the very migrant community and in front of different audiences in the host country. The Bulgarian school “Rodolyubie” and the folklore dance ensemble “Hortse” fit into the model we have observed in Bulgarian migrant institutions in Europe and the United States, namely: the most popular migrant consolidation forms are the school aimed at children and the folk dance group aimed at adults. At the same time, there is a specific attachment of these migrant consolidation forms to the official Bulgarian representation in the north-west African country. There are rare cases when a Bulgarian school abroad is housed in an embassy (Rabat, London), a consulate (until 2012, two Bulgarian schools were housed in the Consulate General of the Republic of Bulgaria in New York), or the Bulgarian Cultural Center (Rome).

Sociocultural interactions

The sociocultural interactions between Bulgaria and the Kingdom of Morocco stimulate the mutual knowledge of the two cultures, strengthen the relations between the two countries, and create conditions for fruitful cooperation in the cultural, economic, and social spheres. At the core of the sociocultural interactions, initiated by the Bulgarian side, is the cultural heritage as a resource both of the official Bulgarian state representation in Morocco and the migrant consolidation forms in the Maghreb country. Another specific feature of cultural heritage is its function to integrate into the receiving culture by establishing a positive image. Even if the Bulgarian community in this Maghreb country is not numerous, it is visible with a rich cultural calendar that includes sociocultural initiatives interacting with the host society.

The art installation

The art installation “The Bulgarian Letters” is a traveling exhibition of the Read Sofia Foundation. It represents colorful benches in the shape of Cyrillic letters, placed in 2019 by the yacht harbor in the city of Sale, which is next to Rabat (the Bow Regreg River separates Sale from Rabat). This initiative, managed by the Bulgarian Embassy, is a stage of a project called “The Hidden Letters” which creates new places for reading and meeting in the open air in the city environment (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Opening of the art installation “The Bulgarian letters”. Sale, December 2019. Photograph by Mariyanka Borisova Zhekova. FtAIF 1840, photo 197.

The exposition contains some letters of the Cyrillic alphabet that do not have a Latin or Greek equivalent (Б, З, П, Ш, Ж, Ч, Ц, Г, И, Ъ). The Cyrillic alphabet is the third official alphabet in the European Union, and this project aims to popularize it. In 2018, this art installation took place for the first time in Sofia. In 2019, it was presented in Paris and Sale, and in 2020, in Berlin and Budapest. The art installation in Sale is the first exposition of the project outside of Europe and is being accepted warmly by the Bulgarian community and the locals. In Morocco, where the people use Arabic, Berber, and Latin alphabets, the Cyrillic letters provoke curiosity and interest. The location of the art installation in an open-air public space (a yacht harbor) is aimed not only at promoting the Cyrillic script in the Moroccan environment but also at strengthening bilateral cultural and economic contacts. The designer of the letter-benches in Sale is a Bulgarian, and the producer is a Moroccan company, whose representatives were guests at the opening of the art installation in December 2019. On the occasion of Enlightenment Leaders Day in 2020, the Bulgarian Embassy organized a virtual flashmob urging Bulgarian citizens in Morocco to take photos with the letter benches at the Sale’s marina and send them to the embassy, accompanied by a quatrain of a beloved Bulgarian poet. The ambassador’s family is also involved in the initiative. Through this initiative, “The Hidden Letters”

not only emerge as a favorite meeting place for Bulgarians and Moroccans, but they are also revived and promoted in a new and unexpected way.

The Diplomatic Bazaar

The Diplomatic Bazaar occurs annually in Rabat at the end of the year and is organized by the Diplomatic Women's Club (International Women's Club), which includes women ambassadors and ambassadors' wives. This organization runs charity campaigns and supports social projects. In 2019, the bazaar incomes were aimed at funding projects of Moroccan NGOs helping women and children in Morocco. The king of Morocco also supports the Diplomatic Bazaar. Embassies, NGOs, and companies take part in the bazaar. Bulgarian companies offer products made of rose oil. The Bulgarian school joins in with Christmas decorations and cards made by the children (Fig. 4).



Figure 4. The Bulgarian stand at the Diplomatic Bazaar. December 2019, Rabat. Photograph by The Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in the Kingdom of Morocco. Source: <https://www.mfa.bg/upload/46451/rabat4.jpg>.

In 2019, for the first time, Bulgaria took part in the cultural program along with the bazaar. The folklore ensemble “Hortse” presents traditional folklore

dances. Bulgaria also participates in the international culinary stand with *banitsi* (traditional Bulgarian pastry) and Christmas cakes. In 2019, the highest income in the history of Bulgarian participation in the Diplomatic Bazaar was collected. The reaction of the Bulgarian ambassador about the support of the Bulgarian community and teamwork is favorable.

Conclusions

Bulgarian cultural heritage and sociocultural interaction with the receiving country could be observed through the case of two migrant organizations and two official events in Morocco. The Bulgarian school and the folklore dance ensemble were created by the very migrant community to practice, keep, and transmit Bulgarian cultural heritage.

At the same time, they are located in the Bulgarian Embassy and are supported by it. This assistance is mutual. The Bulgarian school and the ensemble “Hortse” take part in a number of embassy initiatives. When it comes to socio-cultural interactions with the receiving country, their initiator is the Bulgarian Embassy as a Bulgarian official in Morocco. Initiatives such as “The Bulgarian Letters” and participation in the Diplomatic Bazaar popularize the Bulgarian culture in the receiving society and have social dimensions. Through publicity, the Bulgarian migrant community creates its own image, presents itself, and communicates with the host society. The Bulgarian migrant organizations and the Bulgarian Embassy work together and rotate roles as initiators or mediators in popularizing the Bulgarian cultural heritage. This cooperation makes Bulgaria more visible and recognizable by the receiving country and helps keep its positive image.

There is a close connection between the official Bulgarian institutions in Morocco: the embassy and consulate, on the one hand, and the Bulgarian school with two branches (Rabat and Casablanca) and folklore dance group “Hortse”, on the other. Probably, due to the small size of the Bulgarian community in the Maghreb country, it seeks support and legitimacy through the official Bulgarian institutions in Morocco.

Although the Kingdom of Morocco is located in North Africa and its proximity to Europe has its influence, the border is significant in terms of spatio-temporal parameters (water barrier – Atlantic Ocean, Mediterranean

Sea; time difference). This border is overcome mentally (through the Bulgarian language, festivities, rituals, music, and dancing) and physically (through annual returns to Bulgaria during the summer).

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Notes

¹ As a result of students' interstate exchange, a number of young Moroccan people completed their higher education in Bulgaria and subsequently returned to Morocco with their Bulgarian wives. Moroccan students in Bulgaria: "Since the 1970s, Moroccan students have been studying in Bulgaria. Before – medicine, now – engineering is the focus of their interest" (interview with Ambassador Yuri Shterk – National Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage, Phono-archives FnAIF 3077, file 1. December 2019. Recorded by: Tanya Matanova, Mariyanka Borisova. For the Bulgarian students in Morocco – see Central State Archives of Bulgaria, fund 1477, inventory 20, archive unit 1678.

² See interview with Ambassador Yuri Shterk – National Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage, Phono-archives FnAIF 3077, file 1.

³ For example, Penchev et al. 2017; Gergova & Matanova 2017; Borisova & Gergova 2017; Maeva 2017; Iankova 2014; Maeva & Zakhova 2013; Ganeva-Raicheva et al. 2012; Elchinova 2010; Ganeva-Raicheva 2004.

⁴ The field research was carried out by Tanya Matanova and Mariyanka Borisova in December 2019.

⁵ See interview with Ambassador Yuri Shterk – National Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage, Phono-archives FnAIF 3077, file 1.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ About Bulgarian schools abroad see for example Gergova & Borisova 2021; Matanova 2017; Gergova 2017; Borisova & Gergova 2017; Kulov & Borisova 2017; Gergova & Borisova 2015.

⁸ Central State Archives of Bulgaria, fund 142, inventory 26, archive unit 149, sheet 1. A letter from the Bulgarian school in Rabat to the Ministry of Education in Republic of Bulgaria.

⁹ See interview with the teacher Marin Radev – National Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage, Phono-archives FnAIF 3077, file 8.

¹⁰ The models were exhibited at the Russian Cultural Center in Rabat. See interview with the school principal and teacher Ani Radeva and her husband Ivan Radev – National Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage, Phono-archives FnAIF 3077, file 2.

¹¹ Bulgarskoto nedelno uchilishte “Rodoliubie” v Maroko otbeliaza Denia na narodnite buditeli. [The Bulgarian Sunday School “Rodolyubie” in Morocco celebrated Enlightenment Leaders’ Day.] *Mfa.bg*, 5 November 2020. Available at <https://www.mfa.bg/embassies/morocco/news/26987>, last accessed on 18 November 2022.

¹² About Bulgarian dance folklore groups abroad see for example Borisova 2020; Gergova & Matanova 2017; Toncheva 2009; Ivanova 2003.

¹³ *Hortse* is the diminutive name of the Bulgarian folklore dance *hora*.

¹⁴ This Academy organizes a spectacular ballet performance every spring at the Mohammed V National Theater.

Archives

Central State Archives of Bulgaria. Fund 1477, inventory 20, archive unit 1678; fund 142, inventory 26, archive unit 149, sheet 1.

FnAIF = Phono-archive of the National Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage at the Institute for Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

FtAIF = Photo-archive of the National Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage at the Institute for Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

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CONTESTED MEMORY: HOW STALIN IS FRAMED BY CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN MEDIA

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Abstract: The article discusses the ways the personality of Joseph Stalin was framed in the Russian media from February 2011 to February 2021. The data corpus was collected from the “Medialogia” media database using keyword searches. As a result of the framing analysis of the relevant media messages, four dominant types of Stalin’s personality framing were revealed: positive, negative, ambivalent, and corrective (devoted to the fight with myths about Stalin). Positive and negative ways of framing are used in the publications throughout the entire analysed period, while ambivalent and corrective appear in 2016–2017 only and show a slight shift toward more positive coverage of J. Stalin’s personality. Positive and negative framing are shown in a case study in a more detailed way. The case concerns the media coverage of the results of a public opinion poll conducted in 2019 by the Levada Center on the attitude of Russians towards Stalin. The analysis of this case shows that, despite the predetermined negative assessment of Stalin’s personality in the poll itself, media platforms can present positive framing to the audience. At the same time, the neutral transmission of information is used in some of the analysed texts, which shows avoiding evaluative

framing in some publications. The article discusses framing devices used to achieve the necessary tone of the coverage.

Keywords: frame, historical memory, media framing, opinion polls, public, Stalin

Introduction

As Reinhart Koselleck stated, the concepts of past, present, and future are interrelated through what he called the “space of experience (Erfahrungsraum)” and “horizon of expectation (Erwartungshorizont)” (Koselleck 1995). It means that the current political development of any country is directly related to the ideas of its population about the past, as the past is a resource for interpreting the present and predicting the future. The ideas about the past, in turn, are deeply affected by the media.

In the situation of former Soviet republics with a partially shared past, the media can have some common motifs and cover the same issues when discussing historical milestones or the most influential historical personalities. It can be seen on the example of the Estonian media which analysis was presented in a collection of papers *The Curving Mirror of Time* (Harro-Loit & Kello 2013). As the research shows, different numbers of references to different historical periods were used in Estonian media in 1994 and 2009. Thus, the number of references to the 1940s was significantly higher than, for example, the beginning of the twentieth century (Jakobson 2013).

As the researchers from various disciplines claim that the contemporary world is media-saturated and media-driven, one can suggest that when discussing a contested past and the future that comes out of it, the audience will be largely guided by the media. Based on various theoretical approaches, media researchers are unanimous that objective reflection of information in the media is simply impossible (for an overview of classical approaches to media research, see, e.g., Kiriia & Novikova 2017: 239–390; about media logics and media events, see Chernykh 2015: 69–81; for new approaches in multimedia journalism, see Kachkaeva & Shomova 2017). Starting with the research of the news issues by Glasgow Media Group (Beharrell et al. 1976; Broadbent et al. 1985) it was discovered that the media not only form the agenda (Gross & Moore & Threadgold 2007; Davis 2003), but they are limited in the ways of delivering information.

They are not usually focused on the deep causal relationship or a developed context, but rather shape a simplified representation of what happens (Lewis & Mason & Moore 2011). All of these lead media researchers to the conclusion that the way events are covered in the media is not spontaneous or true. The information is packed (i.e., framed) in a certain way. Following the classical research on media framing, “media discourse can be conceived of as a set of interpretive packages that give meaning to an issue. A package has an internal structure. At its core is a central organizing idea, or frame, for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue” (Gamson & Modigliani 1989: 3).

This paper analyses framing as one of the basic media effects that influences the audience. As Dietram A. Scheufele and Shanto Iyengar state,

The concept of framing embodies a context-sensitive explanation for shifts in political beliefs and attitudes. Framing defines a dynamic, circumstantially bound process of opinion formation in which the prevailing modes of presentation in elite rhetoric and news media coverage shape mass opinion. (Scheufele & Iyengar 2017: 619)

In other words, “framing effects refer to communication effects that are not due to differences in what is being communicated, but rather to variations in how a given piece of information is being presented (or framed) in public discourse” (ibid.: 621). This means that social researchers should nowadays be focused not only on the events themselves but rather on their media coverage.

As for the coverage of the historical past, the main issue is what events or personalities will be chosen and described. Thus, Alexander Filippov reveals the basic principle of the events’ selection:

An event leads us to a past event chosen as a relevant past from the chains of prior events. Relevant means applicable for inclusion in the chain of events in which the past is causally connected to the present and the present is also causally connected to the expected future. (Filippov 2005: 120)

The inclusion of disputable and argumentative parts of the past leads to controversial media coverage and, consequently, may not receive any consensual framing for a long time. A vivid example of such a case makes media framing of Joseph Stalin’s personality and the epoch of his rule. This personality is widely known not only in Russia, but also in other former Soviet republics such as Baltic States (Harro-Loit & Kello 2013) or the Republic of Moldova that after

the dissolution of the USSR reoriented their official course to European integration and refer to the Soviet past as one of the main reasons of that course (Dusacova 2018).

The media framing of the same period and the same personality in the Russian media can serve as a starting point for further discussion and comparison of how cultural memory is preserved in media in different countries with a shared Soviet past. The research question of this paper is how J. Stalin is framed by contemporary Russian media. To answer this question, I will analyze:

- 1) a corpus of media text collected in “Medialogia” media archives based on the keyword request for 2011–2021 to suggest common frames; the texts are originally in Russian; the keywords are Stalin, Stalinist, Stalinism;
- 2) a set of eight texts that represent the results of the last opinion poll about J. Stalin in Russia (in 2019) as a case for a more detailed analysis of positive and negative types of framing.

Media and memory

The research questions of the paper require a comment on the way media and historical memory influence each other. The issue is whether the media form historical memory and influence assessments of the historical past or whether the mechanisms of memory affect the way history is depicted in the media, usually through the description of events that are believed to be important.

Every time a phenomenon is analysed in the media field, there is a choice for a media analyst to assign explanatory power either to the phenomenon or to the media field in the research. Since I wrote this paper from the perspective of communication research, the basic process that interests me within the framework of this article is framing information (following the tradition of media framing analysis by Todd Gitlin (1980), Robert M. Entman (1991; 1993), William A. Gamson and Andre Modigliani (1989)) about J. Stalin. I am focusing not on the rules explaining the preservation or reproduction of memory and other processes associated with it but on the frames that are used to pack information about Stalin, which show what information is seen as relevant for the contemporary Russian media field.

Concerning the influence of memory mechanisms, I believe they are secondary, but I would like to highlight an important distinction that would regulate the relationships between media presentation of events, memory, and social construction of the past. As A. Filippov claims, the researcher should consider the distinction between memory and representations of events. Thus, the phenomenon of memory “in any case from a sociologist’s point of view means exactly ‘vivid involvement’” is “opposed to detached representation of the clearly defined events” (Filippov 2005: 116). Moreover, “simple repetition of an event doesn’t give it the status of a memorable past. Social memory is the thematization of the moments presented in current interaction in the mode of significant past. They point to what’s passed, but they motivate, involve, paralyse reflection as a relevant present” (Filippov 2005: 118).

At the same time, social memory requires “the operation of a wide variety of cultural devices and of elements of institutional or social structure, whose effect is often to loosen the connections that given bodies of data may have to specific contexts of individual recollection” (Cubitt 2007: 16). According to Aleida Assmann (2013), media can be seen as one of these cultural devices.

This brings me back to the ideas of R. Koselleck about the connection between the past and the future. The historical events are framed being included not in the context of the past but in the current situations and processes. This problem is also considered in the works of Jan Assmann (2011) and Aleida Assmann (2013), as well as those of Motti Neiger, Oren Meyers, and Eyal Zandberg (2011). A bright shift to the issue of the relevance of the past for the present can be seen in David Lowenthal’s *The Past Is a Foreign Country – Revisited* (2015), where the researcher refocuses from the fundamental difference between the past and the present to their interconnection. Among Russian researchers, Irina Savelieva and Andrei Poletaev (2008) studied the creation of social constructions of the past. The monograph by Iulia Safronova (2019), who paid attention to the complex relationship between historical memory and media, should also be mentioned while researching the issues of historical memory and types of memory in the Russian-speaking space.

The influence of media on memory can be identified in the framework of two trends that are relevant for this paper. First, researchers note the growing interest in historical topics in the media and the development of thematic publications (Kinnebrock 2015: 147). Second, given the government and social institutions that are guided by their own interests in the creation and consumption of media

products, the question arises of “who has the right to be remembered” (Zierold 2010). As for the nature of media products, the main objections of memory researchers are focused on the fact that “the mass media form the memory of collective experience using the example of individual celebrities” (Safronova 2019: 177–178), as the experience of individual celebrities is more represented and in demand in the media space, rather than some collective experience (Garde-Hansen 2011).

At the same time, up to these days, a number of studies have already been conducted on the people’s attitude towards J. Stalin in various information fields. For example, Jan Plamper’s research is devoted mainly to media content. In his work *The Stalin Cult: A Study in the Alchemy of Power* (2012), considering the production of visual representations of J. Stalin, the author draws attention to his portraits and photographs, as well as drawings in newspapers. There are various papers exploring not only media but also folklore ideas about Stalin’s personality. Thus, Konstantin Bogdanov (2009) analyses legends about the positive qualities of J. Stalin. The collective research by Alexandra Arkhipova and Mikhail Melnichenko (2011) that is devoted to anecdotes about J. Stalin can serve as another example. It is interesting that even in the papers written in the historical framework, one can find references both to folklore stories about this historical personality and different type of media content, for example, street leaflets distributed in 1938 in Moscow (Khlevniuk 1992: 53, 245).

At the same time, the works mentioned do not address the issue of media framing of the historical past in its connection with the present, which remains under-researched.

Theoretical approach: media framing analysis

Media framing analysis as the main method in the presented research has proved to be connected to a set of cognitive effects that influence the perception of events (de Vreese 2005; 2007; 2012) and people’s behaviour (e.g., Gross 2008; Iyengar & Simon 1993), as well as the question of how long these effects last (Baden & Lecheler 2012). These effects depend on a variety of factors, including, but not limited to, the strength or repetition of the frame, the framing environment, and individual motivations (Chong & Druckman 2007; Hopp &

Fisher & Weber 2020: 338). The proven influence of framing as a media effect is one of the advantages of the method I apply.

As media framing analysis developed, there appeared to be a need to reconsider what had been done in this field of research. Some detailed information about it can be found in overviews (Hallahan 1999; Borah 2011; Entman 1993; Knüpfer & Entman 2018), but the most frequent questions there were about the way the researchers should understand the concept of frame (Sniderman & Theriault 2004; D'Angelo & Kuypers 2009; Vliegenthart & Zoonen 2011) and how the frames should be distinguished (Matthes & Kohring 2008; David et al. 2011). As the latter researchers point out,

There are many different ways to derive a set of frames given a particular issue under scrutiny. These were developed, in part, because questions continue to be raised about the validity and reliability of different types of framing analysis of media texts ... Content analyses of media frames range from completely qualitative interpretive or hermeneutic-qualitative approaches to purely automated device-oriented methods such as semantic network analyses. (David et al. 2011: 331)

In this paper, I used a qualitative interpretive approach that allowed me to be led by the corpus on the first round of coding rather than try to find the frames that I suggested before reading the corpus. On the second round of coding, I checked if all the texts could be distributed among the frames that I found during the first round of analysis. After this procedure, I analysed each type of the derived frames.

Technically, it is, as R. Entman describes,

Comparing media narratives of events that could have been reported similarly helps to reveal the critical textual choices that framed the story but would otherwise remain submerged in an undifferentiated text. Unless narratives are compared, frames are difficult to detect fully and reliably, because many of the framing devices can appear as “natural”, unremarkable choices of words or images. Comparison reveals that such choices are not inevitable or unproblematic but rather are central to the way the news frame helps establish the literally “common sense” (i.e., widespread) interpretation of events. (Entman 1991: 6)

There is a discussion about how narrow the concept of frame should be understood (D'Angelo & Kuypers 2009; Scheufele & Iyengar 2017). In this paper, I follow the wide understanding of the concept, as suggested by Claes de Vreese:

There is disagreement in the literature about the conceptualization of frames. Some theoretical arguments support the use of the narrow definitions ... The vast majority of framing studies, however (more or less explicitly), apply a broader definition of frames. Conceptually, a broader notion of news frames is indebted to a definition of a frame as "a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them" ... (Gamson [& Modigliani] 1989). In short, a frame is an emphasis in salience of different aspects of a topic. (de Vreese 2007: 25)

Four types of framing the personality of J. Stalin

The analysis of the media messages in 2011–2021 in the Russian media shows that the most stable types of framing Stalin's personality are pretty simple and come down to two frames:

- 1) "Stalin as evil" (critical assessment): messages containing a critical assessment of a person and the period of its rule. These messages usually cite different types of newsmakers (these can be comments of scientists, personal opinions of sports stars, statements of politicians, etc.), and the content of such messages often concerns the topics of repressions and Stalin's responsibility for massive deaths during the epoch of his rule;
- 2) "Stalin as a hero (or a great leader)" (positive assessment): messages aimed at creating a positive assessment of J. Stalin's personality and the decisions he made. These messages are often focused on the same events as in the negative framing, but they depict the value of the experience gained, its positive sides and emphasise the important contribution of J. Stalin to the economic development of the USSR and its political stability on the international arena of his time.

The fact that the agenda for the last two types of framing partially overlaps allows me to say that the messages from these parts of the analysed corpus

can be used as a striking example of framing in the narrowest understanding of the term. It means that the audience encounters the opposite evaluation of mostly the same events. The detailed analysis of these frames based on a case study of the opinion polls about the attitude of Russians towards Stalin will be given in the next section of the paper.

Although these two frames have been widely spread and stable for quite a long time in terms of media flexibility, there are other frames that show the general shift in the evaluation of Stalin's personality. Thus, since 2016–2017, two more frames have appeared in the media:

1) ambivalent assessment: messages containing the initial premise of an ambiguous assessment of Stalin's personality. These messages usually cover two positions with regard to the personality and the epoch, and also highlight both the achievements and mistakes of J. Stalin. There are several strategies of such framing:

a) by combining positive and negative assessments within the experience of one person or a family, which gives the evaluator a basis for a controversial description;

b) by opposing positive and negative attitudes chronologically. In this case, the contemporary assessment will be negative, but the right of previous generations to a different attitude is acknowledged;

c) by separating positive and negative attitudes between different groups of people; in this case, both assessments coexist synchronously but can be explained by different historical experiences that could be caused by many reasons. Unlike positive or critical framing, this frame works the least well with forgetting as a technique for avoiding complex topics. Significant parts of the information about Stalin simply cannot be logically embedded into positive or critical frames; therefore, they have to be missed, thereby creating the effect of forgetting. Ambivalent framing, on the contrary, creates space for articulating the positions of different parts of society and justifying their argumentation. This is how both the victory in the Great Patriotic War and the Great Purge can be represented in the same text;

2) memory correction: messages aimed at discovering myths and fakes about J. Stalin. These messages become a widely spread type of publica-

tions built into a more general media discourse of fighting disinformation which got topical all over the world since around 2016.

The fight against the myths about Stalin can be seen as one of the ways to restore a positive assessment of this person, which, however, is embedded not in the theme of historical memory but in the modern trend of fighting fakes. Interestingly, this frame shows the classical structure described by R. Entman. As he stated, frames work by “selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and make(ing) them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman 1993: 52). The problem in this case is defined as the spread of fakes, and causal interpretation usually points to the work of primary sources (from specific newsmakers, whose statements formed the basis of messages, to social networks in general) disseminating false information with varying degrees of accuracy. As for the moral evaluation, this group of texts is aimed at correcting ideas about the analysed historical period and personally about J. Stalin, since they claim to change stable and mostly negative ideas about them. It is the notion of fakes that makes the issue of forgetting processes relevant, because this frame works with what the media call “wrong” memory, i.e., memory built on information that is framed as false. The treatment recommendation is stated as fighting for correct information, which can hardly be argued. Although the notion of fake as a floating signifier should be addressed while analysing this frame (Farkas & Schou 2018).

Positive and negative framing of J. Stalin

As positive and negative types of framing are stable and quite rigid for at least 2011–2021, I decided to focus on them by analysing a case that can serve as a vivid example for these two frames. The case is built on the representation of the results of opinion polls about the attitude of Russians towards Stalin.

Levada Center, one of the three leading polling companies in Russia, has been conducting a periodic poll since early 2000s that consists of several questions about the attitude of Russians towards the personality of J. Stalin and his politics.

Without focusing on the poll itself and the sociologists’ methodological critique, I will dwell upon framing used by media companies to present the

results of the poll conducted in 2019 on eight leading Russian media platforms including the initial publication on the website of Levada Center (Pipiia 2019). This periodic poll is usually widely represented in Russian media and causes a vivid discussion. One of the most frequent questions in the discussion is what the results say about people who answer the questions. Leading media outlets publish analytics based on these data, comparing the results with previous polls.

All the analytical comments added to the results of the poll can be reduced to two simple labels: “Stalin as a hero” and “Stalin as evil.” While giving a detailed analysis of the texts below, I will show how the media platforms implement either of these two frames.

This case has a direct connection to memory and forgetting, and it overcomes the abovementioned critique of the media’s interest in celebrities only as it refers to what “common people” (as George Gallup and Saul Forbes Rae (1940) stated) think of a part of their country’s history. The subject of the analysed texts is closer to people’s attitudes towards the past than many other media publications that usually represent the opinion of the journalist or the editorial team of the media platform.

As usual with the issue of relevance of the past, the results of this poll are always interpreted in relation to the current political situation in Russia. In other words, the analysis of the texts covering the results of this poll shows the way the contemporary Russian media determine the political situation in the state, referring to the opinions of its citizens. This process is largely based on a binary opposition in the assessment of Stalin’s personality and his political decisions. Being built on the assessment of the characteristics of Stalin, the poll predetermines the way media platforms transmit information, select part of the poll data, accompany the data with expert comments, and also reduce analytical stories to assessment labels.

The first framing sources: press release of the Levada Center and the text of RBC

On April 16, 2019, a press release titled “Dynamics of Attitude Towards Stalin” was published on the official website of the Yuri Levada Analytical Center (Pipiia 2019). The report cited the results of a public opinion poll among Russians aged 18 and over about their attitudes towards Stalin’s personality, the role of

Stalin in the life of the USSR, and the victims of that epoch. The exact wording of the questions and the statistical distribution of answers were given with a small preamble on the page of the Center. The text contained seven analytical storylines described in the previous section of the paper:

- 1) “the sum total of the positive attitude of the people of Russia towards Stalin”;
- 2) three periods in assessing Stalin’s personality since the early 2000s;
- 3) the same periods concerning his leadership in the USSR;
- 4) establishing a positive assessment of Stalin’s personality and his leadership in the USSR as a social norm;
- 5) positive assessment of the personality and role of Stalin among those who voted for different political parties;
- 6) age does not differentiate the assessment of Stalin (but young people from 18 to 24 years old are more often indifferent);
- 7) fewer people support the idea of unjustified losses during the years of Stalin’s power.

After these storylines, there are charts presenting the results of the poll, mostly comparing them to the data from previous years.

The storylines indicated in the preamble mix up statistics and value judgement. Thus, the description of the distribution of assessments by age or by the political preferences of respondents is a more neutral presentation of the results than the statement that a new social norm is being established, which requires wider data than a poll but is presented as scientifically proven fact. In addition, the last conclusion contains a strong interpretive framework: “the support of the opinion about unjustifiable (in fact, about the acknowledgement of crimes) ‘human losses that the Soviet people suffered during Stalin’s epoch’ is gradually decreasing” (Pipiia 2019). Thus, the original source for the media already contains an interpretative potential, which means the non-recognition of the unjustifiable losses in that era as the recognition of crimes and the growth of the overall positive assessment as the establishment of a new social norm.

Early in the morning of the same day, RBC, with a reference to Levada Center, publishes a text based on the polling data with the heading “The Level of Stalin’s Approval by the Russians Has Broken a Historical Record” (Der-

gachev 2019). In addition to the figures with the results, this text contains the opinions of two experts.

This text becomes a source for a number of mainstream media publications that use the article published in RBC. So the text of this publication, along with the press release of the Levada Center, was one of the first to set an interpretive frame “Stalin as evil,” which means that to frame him positively based on the results of this poll was more difficult. It’s worth mentioning that there is the option of a neutral framing, which also takes additional effort on the part of a journalist. This case is quite typical in this matter, as most informational triggers are presupposed to have either a positive or negative framing by the issue they cover.

In general, the text of the RBC mostly repeats the press release of the Levada Center with minor changes. An important difference here is that RBC cites an expert from the polling company, K. Pipiia, who delivers an interpretation of the polling results. It makes the presentation of information less manipulative than on the Levada Center website, where interpretation is simply mixed up with statistical data.

RBC also slightly changes the focus in the plot (6), where Levada Center simply records the difference in one of the age groups, but RBC adds to this new data by focusing on the low awareness of young people about Stalin’s activities. These are the results of another poll conducted a year before the poll about Stalin, and the relationship between these datasets is not indicated in any way.

The last storyline from the preamble of the Levada Center press release is included in the text of RBC in the analytical section “Mythologizing Stalin.” An expert from the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Leontii Byzov, comments on the polling results and connects “the record love of Russians for Stalin with politicization and a split in society, which leads to more radical assessments of history” (Dergachev 2019). According to the expert, “The personality of Stalin is beginning to be perceived as a symbol of justice and an alternative to the current government, which is assessed as unfair, cruel and not caring about people. This is a purely mythological image of Stalin, very far from the real historical personality” (ibid.). This part of the text explains why Russians consider the victims of that era to be justified. At the same time, one can notice a switch from the wording of the question to the wording “in fact, on the recognition of Stalinist repressions.” These two phrases are not connected in an obvious way. Towards the end of the section, however,

the victims of the Great Patriotic War are added to the victims of repressions: “The last year’s poll of the Levada Center showed that the number of Russians who believe that the Stalinist leadership is to blame for the large number of deaths in the USSR during the Great Patriotic War has decreased by four times compared to 1991” (ibid.).

There are two basic assumptions behind these largely identical texts. The first can be described in terms widely used by the Russian media: “Stalin as evil,” while the second is that the attitude towards Stalin reflects the current state of society and the current government. It also turns out to be associated with a split in society and its politicization.

After RBC: Meduza, RIA Novosti, and Kommersant

During the same day, many other media platforms, including RIA Novosti, Kommersant, and Meduza, published materials with a reference to RBC.

The publication of Meduza (2019, “Levada Center: Stalin’s Approval Rate Among Russians Reaches a Record 70%”) contains the basic assumption “Stalin as evil” (which can be seen in the switch from “the idea of unjustified victims during his reign” to “crimes in the Stalinist era”), but the publication does not make the transition to assessing contemporary politics and does not involve experts for comments.

Covering only plots (1) and (7), Meduza nevertheless chooses peak figures to describe the results of the poll. Thus, they cover the figures for the overall positive assessment of Stalin’s role in the country as the maximum indicator “for the entire period of the polls,” as well as the attitude toward Stalin’s personality “with respect” as the maximum indicator since 2001.

Much like Meduza, Kommersant provides a shortened version of the poll results, dwelling on only three topics: the overall positive assessment of Stalin (1), the correlation of Stalin’s assessments with current political preferences (5) and the attitude towards (non)justification of victims in the epoch of Stalin’s rule (7).

As in the previous reviewed texts, Kommersant (2019, “Levada Center’: The Approval of Stalin by the Russians Reached a Record”) does not invite experts for comment. However, it adds information about the Stalinist rally, which took place on March 5, 2019. Together with the reference to the plot (7),

reduced to the question only about repressions, I see the presupposition that “Stalin as evil.” This basic idea serves as a connection between the results of the poll about the past and the present by mentioning “an alternative impromptu picket of citizens whose loved ones died or suffered as a result of Soviet policy in 1924–1953” (ibid.).

RIA Novosti (2019, “Poll Shows Record Level of Stalin’s Approval in Russia”) uses a different framing. The news agency cites data on the attitude of Russians towards Stalin, touching upon only one of the seven subjects indicated as the results of the poll. The expert in this text is Dmitry Peskov, the press secretary of the President of the Russian Federation, who broadcasts the position of the Kremlin. The commentary of the spokesperson turns out to be as neutral as possible and does not contain any discussion of the polling results, since they have not yet been reviewed.

However, RIA Novosti makes two important framing moves that lead to a fundamentally different interpretation of Stalin’s role in history and different ideas about his support by Russians. RIA Novosti adds a paragraph entitled “Successes of the USSR in Stalin’s Time” to the article. In this paragraph, the deputy chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation is invited as an expert. In this paragraph, the media audience is offered the frame of Stalin as the great leader, as the difficult position of the USSR in the international arena due to the sanctions imposed on the young Soviet state is described in a very detailed way. In the final part of the text, the initiatives of the Communist Party in the installation of monuments to J. Stalin are described.

Such framing contradicts the analytical story (5) about supporting Stalin’s personality, regardless of the political preferences of Russians. The storyline (5) is not covered in the news issue, and the audience of this site is offered a connection between representatives of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and the support of J. Stalin.

Without RBC: Novaya Gazeta, TASS, Interfax

A number of platforms that reacted to the polling results on the same day referred directly to the polling company and not to RBC. As with the previous group, these texts do not cover all of the storylines from the original Levada Center press release.

Thus, *Novaya Gazeta* (2019, “Levada Center’: 70% of Russians Positively Assess the Role of Stalin in the Country’s Life”) does not cover the storyline about a new social norm (4), as well as the one about the distribution of answers among those who voted for different political parties (5) and between age groups (6). At the same time, the author of the publication adds data from a Levada Center poll conducted in December 2018 on the number of Russians who regret the USSR’s collapse. This introduction of an additional storyline frames the results of the analysed poll as nostalgia for the Soviet past, including the epoch of Stalin. The basic presupposition here is “Stalin as evil,” which can be decoded by the same transition from the wording about the “unjustified victims” to the wording of the “crime” (like in *Meduza*).

The method of framing the polling results proposed by TASS (2019, “The Kremlin Does Not Comment on the Conclusions of Sociologists About the Growth of Russians’ Sympathy for Stalin”) is the closest to the one in the publication by RIA Novosti. The text provides the results of the poll only for the total positive attitude (1). However, the newsworthiness of the text is built on the Kremlin’s reaction, transmitted by the press secretary of the President of the Russian Federation, D. Peskov. It is not possible to reveal the attitude toward Stalin’s personality.

Interfax has a similar neutral presentation with TASS (2019, “For the First Time in the Twenty-First Century, the Role of Stalin Was Positively Assessed by the Majority of Russians”): while covering storylines (1) and (7), the news agency nevertheless avoids reformulating the questions asked by the polling company, does not involve expert comments, and does not provide additional data or stories.

“Crime” and “trust”: how the source affects labels

As already noted, the reduction in the wording of the question about the unjustified victims of Stalin’s rule in most publications led to the rather judgmental label “repression” or “crime.” Only RIA Novosti, referring to this story, included the results of the poll in the positive context of the multiple victories of a great state.

However, this is not the only evaluative label that plays an important role in the analysed framing. Thus, the content of the storyline (1) about the total positive attitude towards the personality of Stalin and his role in the history of

the country was reduced to the label “trust.” This label was introduced by RBC and reproduced by the media that referred to RBC as their source. Moreover, this label was placed in the title of the articles. The problem is that the term “trust” was not used by the polling company in the variants of answers to questions about attitudes toward Stalin, and thus the polling company had no data on trust toward Stalin.

The second group of texts summarized the data more accurately, mentioning the growth of sympathies (TASS) and positive assessment (Novaya Gazeta, Interfax).

Conclusions

There are four basic types of framing J. Stalin in contemporary Russian media:

- 1) “Stalin as evil” (negative assessment);
- 2) “Stalin as a hero” (positive assessment);
- 3) ambivalent assessment;
- 4) correcting memory and fighting fakes about Stalin.

The first two types are stable and were used during the whole analysed period (2011–2021). The last two are mostly used since 2016, when the structure of the media field changed and the phenomenon of fake news became widely spread. In a more detailed way, I analysed the two stable frames based on a case study devoted to the opinion poll conducted in 2019 about the attitude of Russians towards J. Stalin.

The basic presupposition “Stalin as evil” was used within the framework of the analysed poll itself, which made changing this part of the frame much more difficult and required selective coverage of the results. Still, all the platforms that I analysed chose different strategies for presenting the results of the poll. Thus, there were several platforms that used neutral coverage, which means they tried to avoid any of the judgmental frames. They succeeded mostly because they did not cover all the storylines from the original publication and because they did not summarise the results using catchy labels. It’s important to notice that such labels, in fact, violate the correct representation of the polling results, as the wording matters when we cover people’s answers to specific questions.

As the case of RIA Novosti showed, even with the original negative framing, it is possible to present the information in a positive way. Thus, this platform chose only the most favourable storyline and added historical background about the success of the USSR in the times of Stalin's rule. There was one more plot about contemporary public action that showed the positive attitude toward the analysed personality. Comparing this coverage with the press release, one can see that this framing angles the initial message, but this strategy helps the platform reach the estimated result of the positive framing.

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POSTSECULAR CONFLICTS IN THE CONTEXT OF RECONSTRUCTION OF NATIONALISMS IN THE STATES OF THE BALTIC – BLACK SEA – ADRIATIC TRIANGLE

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Abstract: The article focuses on the main trends in the development of state-religion relations in the era of post-postmodernism as represented at the International Conference “Balkan and Baltic States in United Europe – History, Religion, and Culture IV: Religiosity and Spirituality in the Baltic and Balkan Cultural Space: History and Nowadays” (November 11–13, 2020). The article aims to define and analyse postsecular conflicts that are manifested in the construction of new nationalisms in the countries of the Baltic – Black Sea – Adriatic Triangle. The main problem is the ascertainment of the primary trend in transforming religion-state relations in the transition

to post-postmodernity. The research methodology is the differentiation and systematisation of conflicts as markers that characterise the sociocultural crisis that erupted in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The concept of conflict is understood as a discrepancy, contradiction, and clash of positions that not only form new foundations of sociocultural and political discourse about the norm of religion-state relations but also influence the establishment of new trends in the formation of the legal basis for the statuses of religious organisations. As an empirical basis for the research, some countries' regulatory legal acts in the region under study are used, along with data and maps of well-known research centres.

Keywords: Baltic – Black Sea – Adriatic Triangle, conflicts, post-postmodernism, postsecularism, state-religion relations, state policy, statuses of religious organisations

Introduction

Europe is renewing itself. The utilitarian need to maintain economic development pace dictates demographic replacement measures of a declining population, immigration, and cultural policies that cause conservative resistance within the nation-states. This situation is demonstrated by the situation in Europe and, especially, in the Baltic – Black Sea – Adriatic Triangle countries, where in recent decades there has been a struggle between the ideas of European postmodernism and national modernity. The coming cultural wave – a new modern, destroying the past and forming a new metatheories system – recognises as a dissent the attempts of the liberal postmodern to promote the themes of recognition of absolute diversity. Increasingly, postmodernity is recognised not as a fixed chronological phenomenon but as a spiritual state of transition that accompanies the end of any era and its discursive rethinking.

Furthermore, if for treatment in medicine ligatures are used – threads connecting a blood vessel – then the tasks of overcoming the historical transition explain the search for ligatures that will connect with the “Other,” who is essential for the dialogue. This search leads to the reaffirmation of religion. Therefore, desecularization processes – the restoration of the connection between the church, religious institutions, and political and state institutions – are becoming more in demand. Religious institutions acquire functionality in building the lost order, value hierarchy, and return to tradition, which is evidence of a conservative post-postmodern reversal, which corresponds to

the Hegelian scheme of “denial of negation”: modern – postmodern – post-postmodern.

Our research aims are to identify and analyse the postsecular conflicts that are manifested in the construction of new nationalism in the countries of the Baltic – Black Sea – Adriatic Triangle. The research methodology is the differentiation and systematisation of conflicts as markers that characterise the sociocultural crisis that erupted in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. We use the concept of conflict in order to emphasise the discrepancy, contradiction, and clash of positions that not only form new foundations of sociocultural and political discourse about the norm of religion-state relations but also influence the establishment of new trends in the formation of the legal and regulatory framework of the statuses of religious organisations. As an empirical basis for the research, we use the regulatory legal acts of some countries in the region under study and data and maps of well-known research centres.

Historical and theoretical foundations of the study

The twentieth century, which took place in the context of dialectical methodology against the background of the discourse “scientific materialism – religion – philosophy,” experienced rationalisation, as indicated by Weber’s metaphor about “disenchanted the world” (Weber 1993 [1963]: 61), and reductionism of religious and sociopolitical issues to biological and neuropsychiatric aspects. Then, as Robert Palmer noted in the Introduction to “Dionysus: Myth and Cult” by Walter Otto, call to “‘kill (God) to dissect’ ... burst into the field of Biblical Scholarship” (Palmer 1965: xii). Marxism’s ideological antagonism to religious beliefs led to the formation of secular systems in which the state ideology became a religion.

Decades later, in the second half of the twentieth century, totalitarian ideologies and metatheories, like the Gods they killed, were subjected to deconstruction in the ideas of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard (Seidman 1994). Niklas Luhmann and Jürgen Habermas believed that the logic of postmodernity would balance the system of state-religion relations. N. Luhmann believed that religion could be realised only in a postmodern situation when it will be liberated in favour of the self-reflection (Luhmann 1977). J. Habermas, developing methodological

atheism, proposed the equalisation of science and religion as two metaphysical doctrines (Habermas 2011: 115). Peter Berger's ideas about historically "falsified secularization" (2008) were developed mainly thanks to J. Habermas, who substantiated the concept of postsecularism as a characteristic of a society in a state of rethinking relations with religion when, in the absence of a clear border, the intersection of secular and religious spaces occurs. By that time, the rationalizers' enthusiasm and a revolt of the iconoclastic elites had lost their strength. In the vacuum created by secularization, the discursive problem of the relationship between private and public has arisen in the context of the problem of delimiting religious/sacred and secular/profane.

The sacred/profane and public/private relationships continued to be rethought in the early twenty-first century. Postmodernism, developed from the 1960s to the turn of the twenty-first century, was criticised in scientific-theoretical and sociopolitical discourse. Philip Rieff (2006) characterised postmodernism as a period when the modernist inversion of the sacred order experienced violation and denial of power, as well as suppression of the prophets. He described postmodernism as a decline characterised by a culture of permissiveness, the transformation of the traditional norm into deviation, the fall of the public person, the end of democracy, and the inability to create a metatheory.

The tendencies of the transition to the era of postsecularism were noted by Daniel Bell (1996 [1976]), Robert Bellah (Bellah & Tipton 2006), Peter Berger, Grace Davie (Berger 1999), Jürgen Habermas (2008; 2011), John Caputo (2001), Ph. Rieff (2006), Ch. Taylor (2015), Bryan S. Turner (2010), Brian T. Trainor (2010), and others. In 2004, Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler named seven reasons why modern "leads to the revival of religion" (Fox & Sandler 2004: 24). P. Berger established a connection between modernity and desecularization but did not prove the latter's direct causal dependence on the former (Berger 2008). Researchers noted the undulating disintegration processes and search for a new sacred order and a new round of militancy between new atheists and carriers of religious proselytising ideas.

Speaking about the carriers of the idea of a new order, Ch. Taylor noted that "to be modern means to believe in individual aspirations as a source of meaning and self-determination," and therefore, in the postsecular era, group claims of rights are insignificant compared to the claims of the state, which is pursuing a "policy of recognition" that violates the established pluralism and equality in

the existence of religious groups (Taylor 2015: 231). Anticipating postsecularity as a reaction to the profanation of culture as a result of secularization, D. Bell noted that due to the state's inability to resist globalisation and the destruction of national ligatures, it is the state that initiates the search for cultural support and the returning of the sacred (Bell 1996 [1976]: 168).

The process of returning to the idea of re-enchanting has begun. It was manifested by many conflicts that testify to the acuteness of the transition to postsecularism in the context of the general tendency of the conservative turn towards post-postmodernism.

Manifestations of the metahistorical shift

The reason for the growth of postsecular conflicts is the state of metahistorical transition. Seventy years ago, postwar economic priorities dictated a network-centric logic of development: the rejection of the idea of nationalism in Europe in favour of the idea of a “Europe of regions.” The transition to a new logic of development was named “postmodern” and manifested itself in four components:

- 1) in a metaideological transition as a rejection of the principles of totality, ideocracy, and hierarchy;
- 2) in a cultural transition. It appears as a rethinking, dialogue, and act in the “network of meanings”; deconstructing and equalising theological and secular type of discourses in their rights to exist;
- 3) in a political transition. It manifested itself in the concept of a “Europe of regions” popularisation, in large-scale reforms of decentralisation and devolution, in the enlargement of the EU and development of European solidarity policy, and the approval of the phenomenon of transnational law;
- 4) in an economic transition, which manifested itself as a movement to create a single market, Euroregions, eroding the rigid borders of nations.

However, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the economy dictated a new transition:

- 1) the economic transition. It manifested itself in the economic crisis as well as in the regional demographic decline in Europe and the need for demographic replacement of the labour resources;
- 2) the political transition. It manifested itself as a crisis in the EU's 2015 migration policy, integration policy, recognition policy, and multiculturalism. It appeared in the Visegrad Group's demands, the UK's Brexit, and the growing influence of national patriotism and protectionism;
- 3) the cultural transition. It was marked in the fashion for populism, in returning for "folk aesthetics," in the essentialism establishment in the understanding of race and ethnicity, in a new eschatology, and in the growth of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia;
- 4) the metaideological transition manifested in the concept of post-truth, political process absurdism, and "culture of the silent majority," establishing liberal values criticism and searching for mobilisation foundations for constructing the new order. So it explains rethinking God like returning to tradition, which is evidence of the conservative turn – to post-postmodern.

In the trilogy "denial of negation": modern – postmodern – post-postmodern, the latter returns to the renewed modernity (understood in the contexts of the Westphalian era), which is accompanied by a search for ways of national renaissance. The reconstruction of national states in the Baltic –Black Sea – Adriatic Triangle region, experiencing a national revival, is accompanied by desecularization and intensification of the detonation of postsecular conflicts.

The ongoing global changes in culture, economy, and politics are superimposed on specific situations in countries that differ:

- 1) in the level of religious diversity;
- 2) by the acuteness of the problems of the status of religious organisations;
- 3) by the level of interest and readiness of the secular state to be part of (quasi)theological disputes, to use cultural field as a battlefield for national revival and sociopolitical mobilisation.

The level of religious diversity, defined by the Herfindahl-Hirschman index, which ranges from high (in Asia and Africa) to low (in the Middle East and the Caribbean), is moderate in Europe (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Level of religious diversity. Source: Pew Research Center 2014b*

High level (from 7 to 9.4)	Moderate level (from 3 to 5.4)	Low level (from 0.4 to 2.9)
Countries in Asia-Pacific and sub-Saharan Africa	Countries of Europe	Countries of the Caribbean, Middle East, and North Africa

However, European countries also differ in the level of religious diversity. Table 2 allows us to see the difference between the countries of the Baltic – Black Sea – Adriatic Triangle.

Table 2. *Level of religious diversity, determined by the Herfindahl-Hirschman index scores by country in Europe. Source: Pew Research Center 2014b*

High level (from 7 to 9.4)	Index	Moderate level (from 3 to 5.4)	Index	Low level (from 0.4 to 2.9)	Index
Bosnia and Herzegovina	6.0	Belarus	4.7	Slovakia	2.9
Latvia	5.7	Czechia	4.1	Greece	2.5
Macedonia	5.4	Montenegro	4.0	Lithuania	2.1
Estonia	5.5	Slovenia	4.0	Serbia	1.6
Sweden	5.4	Hungary	3.7	Croatia	1.4
		Albania	3.7	Poland	1.2
		Ukraine	3.1	Moldova	0.6
				Romania	0.1

Although Europe is defined as a region with a moderate level of religious diversity, more of the Baltic – Black Sea – Adriatic Triangle countries have either moderate or low religious diversity levels, except for Latvia, Estonia, Sweden, Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is illustrated by the Pew Research Center’s religious diversity index scorecard (Fig. 1). On the map, it can be seen that the countries of the Baltic – Black Sea – Adriatic Triangle are painted predominantly white in comparison with other regions in Europe.

Also, thanks to Figure 2, which was prepared by J. Evans and C. Baronavsky (2018), we can see that the countries of the Baltic – Black Sea – Adriatic region, especially Romania, Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Poland, Serbia, and Ukraine, stand out in Europe, showing an increased level of religiosity. In the map below, it is shown in a darker colour.

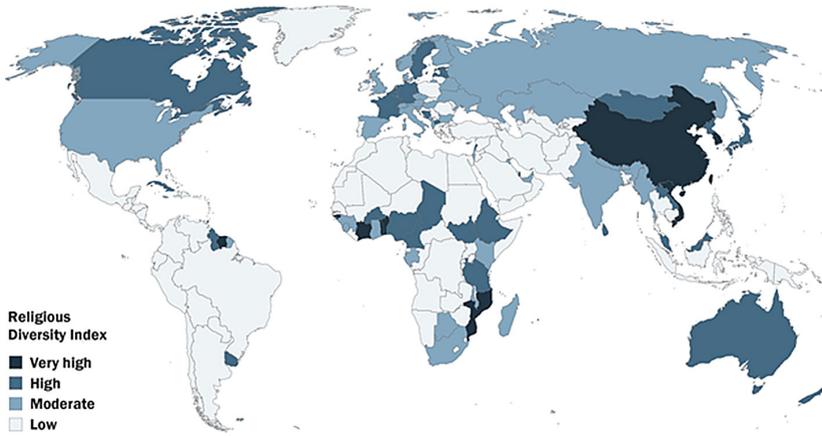


Figure 1. Levels of religious diversity. Countries are shaded according to level of religious diversity. Source: Pew Research Center 2014a.

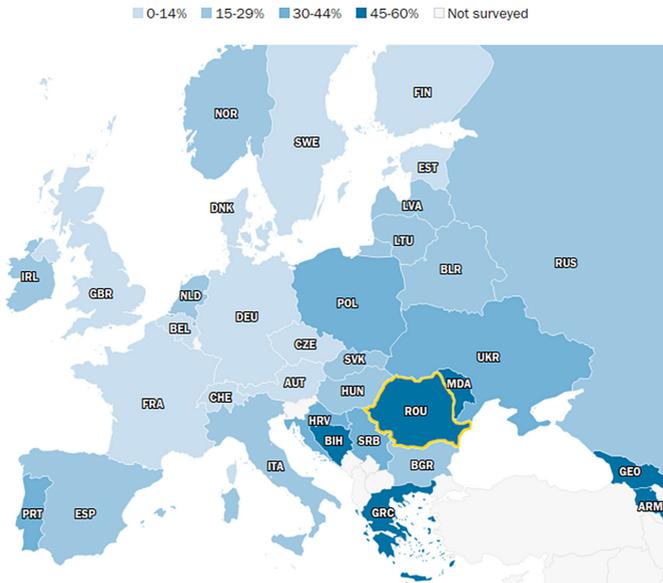


Figure 2. Overall religiosity by country, percents of adults who are highly religious. Source: Evans & Baronavski 2018.

The specificity of this region should be reflected in the policies of states, when equality and nondiscrimination of religious organisations, as well as the preservation of strict secularity, are recognised as guarantees of social stability. However, in practice, we can observe a common tendency towards desecularization, that is, a tendency towards a potential increase in conflict and the use of a religious factor.

In the context of the reconstruction of nationalisms, potentially possible postsecular conflicts become:

- 1) the conflict of recognition of the significance of religion in postsecular society in the context of metatheory development;
- 2) the conflict of commodification models: the “supermarket of religions” vs. “state-religious monopoly”;
- 3) the conflict of the recognition of religious organisations. Conflicts of recognition ethics;
- 4) the conflict of postsecular hierarchisation of religious organisations in the public space;
- 5) the conflicts of ownership and of church property restitution.

We consider these conflicts in order.

The conflict of recognition of the significance of religion in postsecular society in the context of metatheory development

The capacious twentieth century was twice going through the process of rethinking the significance of religion as a strategy for explicating personal experience, conceptualising and categorising the system of personal experiences about its interpretation and metatheories as “generalizing systematic critical interpretations of religious theory and practice” by the definition given by Gavin Flood (1999: 4).

The first rethinking of metatheories, or “three revolutions of thought” (Darwin’s, Marx’s, and Freud’s theories), those which deprived meaning of religious identity and turned the world into a secular one, led to the assertion of relativism (Palmer 1965: xi). Relativism became the principle of reconciliation

of views when scientific and religious views of the world were recognised as different but equally possible ways of describing reality. The postmodern norm of these two positions' ambivalence has actualised the Pierre Bayle Paradox, known since the seventeenth century. It defines that the recognition of the fact that the level of morality in an atheistic society can be comparable to or even higher than that in religious society does not diminish the significance of religion as a mechanism for solving social problems and restraining the retention of the state's power. In history, this conflict has already been considered. Charles Montesquieu, who formulated the Bayle paradox, criticised relativism, believing that "the non-religious (person) is like an animal that feels freedom only when it is beaten and tortured" (Montesquieu 1996: 33), and advocated religious tolerance, considering this a measure warning against religious tyranny and noting that "the religion that is oppressed, in turn ... as soon as chance allows it, will attack the religion that oppressed it, but not as a religion, but as a tyranny" (ibid.: 36).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, established relativism began to be recognised as a crisis and a state of searching for a new order basis. Criticism of the postmodern theory of deconstruction as crisis relativism was expressed in the critique of the profanation of culture, in the ideas of premonition of postsecularity, and in the ideas of finding a new co-participle.

The empirical basis for the theoretical shift was the growing activity of competing faith practices in European countries and religious reintegration in response to such activity. Religious structures that are nontraditional for the country (region), which can be presented as cultural and political competitors, are mastering the cultural field and participating in the political process, performed as competing faiths. The search for recognition demands positive discrimination and complete protection by both new and traditional religious groups in the country, and this demand finds a response in the region's national policies.

Thus, if we observed relativism at the first stage – the rejection of secularism as the only possible principle of systemic religion-state relations – then at the second stage, we observe the process of instrumentalisation of religious ideologies and institutions.

The conflict of commodification models: the “supermarket of religions” vs. “state-religious monopoly”

The profanation of culture determined the survival of the *sacred* in the commodification process – the transformation of the *sacred* into a commodity. It is manifested in the existence of religion – in everyday practices:

- 1) religious labelling of belonging to a religious tradition without realising one’s faith, which is defined as belonging without faith or low-emotional religiosity;
- 2) domestic confession, that is, the manifestation of faith without belonging;
- 3) syncretism, provided by the constant process of creating self-made religions, combining, for example, yoga practices and self-determination as a Christian;
- 4) consideration of religious practices for utilitarian purposes, for example, therapeutic purposes;
- 5) pilgrimage tours, combining utilitarian tourism, therapeutic goals, and religious labelling;
- 6) one-time religious manifestations, accompanied by the processes of their commercialisation;
- 7) the deritualisation of a person’s life cycle cut off from the agricultural circle;
- 8) consumerist perception of services provided by a church or other religious organisation.

In this situation of commodification, religious institutions behave like competing firms, and the state chooses one of the models for minimising management risks in a polyreligious system of relations: 1) the model of “state-religious monopoly”; 2) the “supermarket of religions” model.

The “state-religious monopoly” model is based on the idea of functional postsecularity. The weakness of state institutions may cause the choice of this model due to the low loyalty of the population to state power, the state’s need for an alternative system of providing a mobilised basis, interest in creating a mythologeme for national consolidation, and due to the political

activity of marginalised religious movements and groups striving for positive discrimination, and causing spontaneous reintegration of traditional beliefs in this society. By choosing such a model, the state carries out protectionist recognition of the chosen religious organisation, grants it special status, and engages in positive discrimination. For religious teachings that receive such support, this brings positive and negative results, expressed in the doctrine's conservation and a decrease in "marketing attention to a potential buyer." A decrease in religious diversity also accompanies this choice.

An alternative model of the "supermarket of religions" is based on religion-state relations' secularity. This model's choice is caused by the state's recognition of freedom of the market and the encouragement of competition between ideas and beliefs. This model is chosen by a self-sufficient state that is capable, on a political and legal basis, of ensuring the consolidation of all strata of society and dialogue with various religious organisations. Under this model, there is a lack of government interference in theological issues and demonstrated recognition. It supports institutional distancing and anti-defamation policies and promotes equal conditions for religious organisations. Maintaining the state's position as a guarantor of equal opportunities contributes to the liberalisation of religious teachings in their competition for adherents. With this model, a high level of religious diversity remains.

The conflict of the recognition of religious organisations. Conflicts of recognition ethics

State guarantees to religious organisations can be provided in two ways: recognition or way of protection.

The recognition of rights manifests itself in the establishment of state-controlled pluralism, which implies strict state control over intolerant groups and manifestations. There is no systemic anti-cult activity with such control, and state is implementing the PACE and the EU's recommendations on the anti-defamation policy (Guidelines 2014). Also, the standard or simplified registration mechanism for religious organisations is a marker of the ongoing recognition policy.

The mechanism provided for state-religion relations, for example, in the legislation of *Ukraine* can demonstrate such a simplified type of registration. Article 14 of the Ukrainian law states that the founders of a religious organisation

can be at least ten citizens who have reached the age of 18 (Ukrainian Law 1991). They must submit to the registration authorities its statute (charter), the resolution about creation, and a document confirming its right to own or use premises. Religious organisations include congregations, schools, monasteries, brotherhoods, missions, and administrations of religious associations consisting of religious organisations. Religious centres register with the State Service at the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy. A religious congregation registers as a legal entity with the regional authorities. They may form the constituent units of a nationwide religious association, which does not register on a national basis and may not obtain recognition as a legal entity. Without legal-entity status, a religious group may not be considered as nonprofit organisations, can not own property, or be qualified for property tax exemptions.

Protection manifests itself as a set of measures that ensure positive discrimination. Affirmative actions of the state are aimed at the legislative provision of guarantees of a special status for a specific religion or a group of selected religions. Today, it is no longer a rarity when the state ensures preferential rights to selected organisations and introduces a complicated registration procedure to restrict others. We will consider the complicated procedure for registering religious organisations using the examples of Latvia, Romania, and Hungary's legislation.

A more complicated procedure for registering religious organisations (in comparison with the Ukrainian one) we can see on the example of the law adopted in *Latvia* in 1996, and currently in force with amendments of 2022 (Reliġisko 2022). By law, to register as a congregation, a religious group must have at least 20 members of the age 18 or older. To apply, religious groups must submit charters; a list of all group members; minutes of the meeting of founding; confirmation that members voted on and approved the statutes; and a list of members of the audit committee, which is responsible for preparing financial reports on the group and its statutes. The Ministry of Justice determines the possibility of its registration as a congregation. Ten or more congregations – at least 200 members – of the same faith or denomination may form a religious association or church. The law does not permit the simultaneous registration of more than one religious association of a single faith or denomination or more than one religious group with the same or a similar name. For example, the law prevents any association other than the Latvian Orthodox Church from registering with the word “Orthodox” in its name. Other Orthodox groups,

such as Old Believers, are registered as separate religious associations (Latvia 2019). The provision of the law stipulating that a community formed for the first time must reregister annually during the first ten years was cancelled in 2018 (Religijsko 2022: Art. 8, P. 4). Under the law, all registered organisations must submit an annual report to the Ministry of Justice regarding their activities.

Romanian legislation sets out a complicated procedure for registering religious organisations. Thus, Article 6 of the law of 2006, as amended in 2014, provides a three-level religious classification system: 1) a denomination (Rom. *cult*); 2) a religious association; 3) a religious group (Lege 2014). Organisations in the top two tiers are legal entities, while religious groups are not. A religious association consists of at least 300 citizens and receives legal status through registration with the Registry of Religious Associations in the court's clerk's office, where the association's main branch is located. To register, religious associations must submit their members' data. To operate as religious associations, organisations also require approval from the National Secretariat for Religious Denominations, which is under the authority of the Office of the Prime Minister (Romania 2019). Articles 17–19 of Section 2 of the law state that recognition by the state as a denomination is acquired through a Government Decree, following a proposal submitted by the State Secretariat for Cults, and goes to religious associations that provide guarantees of sustainability and public interest (Lege 2014). To request recognition as a denomination, citizens shall provide to the Ministry of Culture the following documents: a) proof they are legally established and have been operating uninterruptedly in Romania for at least 12 years; b) the membership lists containing citizens of Romania equal to at least 0.1% of Romania's population. Today, it should be 19,511 people; c) their declaration of faith and documents on the structural organisation.

Hungary's legislation demonstrates an incredibly complicated procedure for registering religious organisations. In 2019, a 2018 parliamentary amendment to the 2011 religion law entered into force. Now the law replaces the previous two-tier system of incorporated churches and religious organisations with a four-tier system of, in descending order (Törvény 2011; Hungary 2019):

- 1) established or incorporated churches (Hung. *A bevett egyház*);
- 2) registered churches, also called Registered II (Hung. *A bejegyzett egyház*);

3) listed churches, also called Registered I (Hung. *A nyilvántartásba vett egyház*);

4) religious associations (Hung. *A vallási egyesület*).

To be recognised as established churches, they should obtain support from Parliament. The Budapest–Capital Regional Court reviews registration applications in the remaining three categories. Religious groups at all four levels have a status of legal entities. However, to qualify for established church status, a religious group must first obtain registered status and then conclude a Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement with the State (Törvény 2011: 3/B, 9/G. § *1). The government submits such an Agreement to Parliament, which must approve it by a two-thirds majority vote. The registered church becomes established when the Agreement is approved by Parliament. To qualify for registered church status, a religious group must have operated as a religious association for at least 20 years in the country or at least 100 years internationally, or have operated as a listed church for at least 15 years in the country or at least 100 years internationally. This status also requires that the group has 10,000 registered members residing or staying in Hungary and that the group has received tax donations from an average of 4,000 persons per year in the five years before the application (Törvény 2011: 3/A, 9/E. § *). To obtain the listed church status, a religious group must have been in the status of a religious association for at least five years in the country or at least 100 years internationally and receive tax donations on average from 1,000 people per year for three years before applying (Törvény 2011: 3, 9/D. § *1). Religious association is the union of individuals professing the same convictions.

The laws of all four states mentioned above proclaim secularism, pluralism, and the equality of religious organizations. However, we see entirely different recognition mechanisms and volumes of opportunities provided in practice. The ethical conflict of recognition manifests itself in the contradiction between the legal norms that guarantee the equality of religious organisations and the legal norms that establish the hierarchy of recognition. It is a conflict between the norms of formal ethics and the circumstances that has developed in the state's political activity.

The conflict of postsecular hierarchisation of religious organisations in the public space

The state, which guarantees religious organisations' rights through protection, seeks to emphasise the elitism of a particular religious organisation. It is done by building a hierarchical pyramidal model of various religious organisations' statuses.

At the base of the pyramid presented, below the first lowest level of recognised organisations (let us call it level zero), are unregistered religious groups or even sects. Further, at the first lower level, there are officially registered religious groups with the status of private-law entity. As a rule, they do not have special agreements with the state and do not have state support, concessional financing, or special rights. At the second level, there are religious organisations with the status of public-law entity, which are recognised as partners of the state, acting based on special agreements, special laws, or statutory norms. At the highest third level are preferential religious organisations that have the status of folk, traditional, historical, prevailing, which replace the status of a state religious organisation.

Below, we will consider examples of such pyramidal systems provided for in the legislation of states, many of which, as former socialist ones, have reconsidered their relations with religious organisations over the past decades, having enlisted traditional religions' support while formally proclaiming secularity.

Hungary demonstrates the most controversial new system of religion-state relations. In recent decades, Hungary's state policy has instrumentalised the dialogue between the state and traditional religious organisations. The Constitution of Hungary stipulates that the state and the church operate separately but provide for "cooperation ... to achieve the public good." The Hungarian Constitutional Court also ruled that religious differentiation is permissible if it is based on actual differences in social roles. Therefore, the Preamble to the 2011 Hungarian Constitution states: "We are proud that our King St. Stephen ... made our country a part of Christian Europe. We recognise the role of Christianity in the preservation of statehood. We value the various religious traditions of our country" (Hungary 2019).

The 2011 law on religion automatically deregistered more than 300 religious organisations that had incorporated church status. These organisations had

to reapply if they wanted to regain incorporated church status, and their applications were to receive support from Parliament. As a result, the 2011 law listed 27 incorporated churches, while the total number of registered churches was 32. Under the amended law of 2018, 32 churches maintained their incorporated (or, in the new terminology, established) status (Hungary 2019). The updated church law of 2018 introduced a four-tier classification system for religious groups with different registration forms: established, registered, listed churches and religious associations (Törvény 2011), with which the government has signed the different in duration and scope of rights types of agreements. With the religious association, the agreement is signed for five years, with the registered church – for ten years, and with the listed church – for fifteen years. The agreement with the established church is valid indefinitely. We already pointed out that established churches are comprised of registered churches that have entered into comprehensive agreements with the state. Such type of agreements must be approved by Parliament with a two-thirds majority, and after that, the church law is amended to include the new church on the list of established churches (Törvény 2011).

Thus, the government may enter into agreements with registered, listed churches, but these agreements would not be comprehensive and therefore would not require parliamentary approval. However, they can include government subsidies for both “public interest” and “religious” activities (Hungary 2019). It means that even within the same level – recognised churches – the state has discretionary powers to treat religious groups differently. David Baer defined the new Hungarian law as “legal fiction.” He rightly pointed out that the space for self-will of the government is manifested in obtaining the highest level’s status. The 2018 law fixes the Parliament’s political prerogatives about the established churches and expands the government’s discretionary powers to select applicants to lower levels. The law treats religious communities in a completely arbitrary manner by assigning privileges based on state discretion (Baer 2018).

The law allows taxpayers to donate one percent of their income taxes to any religious community in any of the four categories since 2020. However, only established and registered churches are eligible to receive a state subsidy matching the one percent tax donations as state support. Religious communities registered in one of the four tiers have the right to open their schools. The state provides a subsidy, based on the number of students enrolled, for employee

salaries at all such schools. Only established churches automatically receive an additional subsidy for the schools' operating expenses. Established, registered, and listed churches may perform pastoral services in military facilities, prisons, and hospitals. The Catholic, Reformed, and Lutheran Churches, and Jewish congregations (which the government calls "historical churches") may provide pastoral services without seeking permission (Hungary 2019). Other established churches must seek permission. And here again, we see that the state has discretionary powers to treat religious groups differently, even within the same level. Thus, tiers are a mechanism for distributing different rights to different religious groups.

Similar examples of emphasising the privileged status of particular religions are to be found in *Finland*, where a four-tiered classification system for religious groups exists.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) of Finland has a constitutional status. Only Finland's ELC is enshrined in the 1999 Constitution (The Constitution of Finland 1999: 76 §). The hallmark of the special status of the ELC is a special church law that regulates its status and the order of its enactment (Kirkkolaki 2019: 1O, 2L, 2 §), which includes the exclusive initiative of the church's organ, the General Synod, and noninterference by government legislative bodies in the content of ecclesiastical bills. It means that the General Synod has the power to introduce bills enacting and changing the church law. Parliament, which enacts the law, only has the right to approve or reject an ecclesiastical bill. The ELC of Finland and its parishes are a self-administered body like the municipalities. After 1869, the ELC of Finland is no longer a state church. However, it maintains ties with the state, and therefore the debate over whether the Lutheran Church is a state church or a folk church continues.

The Finnish Orthodox Church (FOC) has a traditional legal status (Kotiranta 2015: 277). In the Constitution, there is no direct provision for the FOC. Thus, the Orthodox Church's legal status differs from that of the Lutheran Church. The FOC status is regulated by new laws of 2003 and 2006. The "Freedom of Religion Act" mentions two churches: the ELC of Finland and the FOC (Uskonnonvapauslaki 2003: 1L, 3 §). The particular law of 2006 states the FOC has the special status under public law (Laki 2006).

The two higher-level churches have in common that the ELC Church Act is an Act of Parliament, just as the Act of Parliament also regulates the confession

and structure of the FOC. ELC and FOC also receive church taxes and an annual subsidy from the state budget.

On the bottom, two hierarchical pyramid levels are registered religious organisations, whose legal status is enshrined in the law (Uskonnonvapauslaki 2003: 3L), and unregistered religious groups. If registered groups have the right to acquire property and enter into legal relations with other legal entities, then unregistered groups can only conduct worship.

Sweden is even more conservative than Finland. In Sweden, only in 1999, the Church of Sweden was separated from the state: the state status of the church was replaced by the status of the national church. The Church of Sweden is “an Evangelical-Lutheran religious community, is an open National Church.” It is the only religious organisation regulated by its law (Swedish Law 1998a: Ch. 1, Art. 1–3). However, it is classified as a semi-state church due to ties with Riksdag and the monarch. The Act of Succession, which is part of the Swedish Constitution, maintains the requirement that the monarch always adheres to a pure evangelical doctrine (Swedish Constitution 1810: § 4). In another part of the Constitution, the Instrument of Government states: “The opportunities of religious minorities ... shall be promoted” (Swedish Constitution 2016: Ch. 1, Art. 2). Other religious groups’ rights are determined by the Act 1998, according to which registered religious communities refer to 1) the Church of Sweden and 2) the registered religious communities (Swedish Law 1998b: S. 5). Only those who register with the Swedish Agency for Support to Faith Communities (SST) are eligible to receive tax and grants.

We also find the elements of hierarchy in the system of religious relations in *Latvia*’s legislation, although the law of Latvia mentions that the state is separated from the church (Reliģisko 2022: Ch. V, Art. 5). Latvian law grants the eight traditional groups – Lutherans, Catholics, Latvian Orthodox Christians, Old Believers, Baptists, Methodists, Seventh-day Adventists, and Jews – some rights and privileges not given to other religious groups, including the right to teach religion courses in public schools and the right to officiate at marriages without obtaining a civil marriage licence from the Ministry of Justice. The Christian denominations are given the privileged right to teach the Christian faith basics in public schools and local government schools through government funding (Reliģisko 2022: Art. 6). For other religious groups, the law does not provide for such funding. These eight groups are also the only religious groups

represented on the government's Ecclesiastical Council, chaired by the Prime Minister.

The lower level of hierarchy consists of registered religious groups. For them, the guaranteed rights are the following: to engage in religious activities in hospitals, prisons, and military units; to own property; to conduct financial transactions to receive donations that are not taxed; and to apply for funds for the restoration of religious buildings. At the bottom level of the pyramid are unregistered groups.

In a number of the region's countries, especially in Orthodoxy, we are considering reviving the model of the church-state symphony. It is becoming typical for church-state relations in Greece, Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Belarus, and Ukraine.

In *Greece*, the Constitution recognises Greek Orthodoxy as the prevailing religion (Greek Constitution 2019: Art. 3, S. 2). The law establishes the hierarchy of religious organisations (Greek Law 2014):

- 1) an ecclesiastical legal entity or church (Ecclesia) or religious body is the association of three religious legal entities of the same religion with central structure; it operates upon its statute and is administered by religious bodies;
- 2) religious associations (they are religious legal entities after registering if they have at least 300 citizen members; they do not receive government funding but do receive limited tax exemptions);
- 3) a religious community is a group with a confession of faith (they are not legal entities and do not receive support from the state).

Recognition is done through the civil courts, and registration is done with the General Secretariat for Religious Affairs. The number of recognised religions is eighteen. The law does not apply to organisations belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church (GOC), or other Eastern Orthodox Church, to a Judaism organisation, and to a Muslim organisation of minority of Thrace (Greek Law 2014: Art. 16). They are formally equal to the GOC and have status of official religious public law legal entities. Nevertheless, in terms of constitutional status, the GOC occupies a higher hierarchy position. The Catholic Church, Anglican Church, two evangelical Christian groups, and the Ethiopian, Coptic, Armenian Apostolic, and Assyrian Orthodox Churches automatically acquired the status of religious legal entities or ecclesiastical legal entity of private law

(Greek Law 2014: Art. 13). A group recognised as ecclesiastical legal entity is eligible for state support. State-provided funding is determined by the number of adherents and the religion's actual needs. The GOC, the Muslim minority of Thrace, Jewish communities, and the Roman Catholic Church continued to receive government benefits not available to other communities.

In **Romania**, the 2006 law with amendments from 2014 emphasises the unique position of the Romanian Orthodox Church (ROC), its “important role,” and the role of “other churches and confessions recognised in the national history” (Lege 2014). After the 2014 amendments to the law, which have provided for the creation of a three-level hierarchy in the system of religious organisations (groups, associations, and denominations), and as a result of the complexity of the procedure for registering denomination status, in Romania, there are eighteen organisations recognised as cults (denominations). They include the ROC, the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Catholic Church, and others (Romania 2019). Under the law, recognised cults (denominations) are legal entities of public utility (Lege 2014: Art. 8, P. 1). The state promotes the support given by the citizens to the cults through withholdings from income tax; provides tax benefits and support upon request; and, through contributions, depending on the number of Romanian citizens and actual needs, provides the payment of salaries to personnel (Lege 2014: Art. 10). Thus, the hierarchy of organisations in Romania looks like this: at the highest level is the ROC with the status of a cult, which plays an “important role” for statehood. The seventeen cults are at a lower level, and their status in terms of formal law is equal to that of the Romanian Orthodox Church and is defined as a public legal entity or legal entities of public utility. The lower level of hierarchy consists of religious associations with the status of a private legal entity. At the bottom level of the pyramid are religious groups without separate legal entity status (Lege 2014).

The **Serbian** Orthodox Church “has had an exceptional historical, state-building and civilizational role in forming, preserving and developing the identity of the Serbian nation,” as established in the law of Serbia (Serbian Act 2006: Art. 11). The law grants special treatment to seven groups:

- 1) traditional churches include the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Slovak Evangelical Church, the Christian Reformed Church, and the Evangelical Christian Church; and

2) two traditional religious communities: an Islamic and a Jewish religious community. They have the status of a legal entity under certain laws (Serbian Act 2006: Art. 10). These groups have been automatically registered and are eligible for value-added tax refunds and chaplain services to the military. Those organisations that are not called traditional can obtain the status of a legal entity under civil law. Only registered groups can be exempted from multiple taxes, receive government funding, and are provided with governmental pensions for clerics. Twenty-five groups enjoy these benefits.

The Preamble of the 2002 *Bulgarian* law emphasises the “special and traditional role of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (BOC) in the history of Bulgaria,” expressing respect for Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and other religions (Bulgarian Law 2002). The law establishes the BOC as a legal entity, exempting it from the mandatory court registration required for all other groups. There are 191 registered religious groups in addition to the BOC. The government provides equal rights and funding for all registered groups. Unregistered religious groups may be engaged in religious practice but lack the privileges granted to registered groups.

The Preamble of the *Belarusian* law, as amended in 2011, states the recognition of a “determining role” of the Belarusian Orthodox Church (BOC) in the “historical formation and development of ... state traditions,” a “historical role of the Catholic Church in Belarus,” and the “inseparability from the general history ... of Belarus of the Evangelic Lutheran Church, Judaism, and Islam” (Belarusian Law 1992). The law does not consider traditional faiths such as the priestless Old Believers, Greek Catholics (Uniates), and the Calvinist churches, which have roots in this country dating to the seventeenth century. The Cooperation Agreement between the state and the BOC aiming to “solving problems of ... moral improvement of society,” provides the BOC with a special relationship with the state (Cooperation 2003). Unlike other groups, the BOC receives state subsidies and possesses the exclusive right to use the word “Orthodox.” Article 2 of the Agreement calls to fight against unnamed “pseudo-religious structures that present a danger,” while not restricting the religious freedom of other religious groups (ibid.).

The formation of a new model of national-religious relations is observed in *Ukraine*. The interest of politicians in constructing a new format for these

relations and the involvement of state structures in theological disputes demonstrated the process of obtaining a Tomos of autocephaly for the newly created Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU). The initiative of creating the OCU and the appellation to the Ecumenical Patriarchate to obtain the Autocephaly of the OCU was voiced by former President Petro Poroshenko in Ukrainian Parliament on April 17, 2018. On October 11, 2018, Patriarch of the Ecumenical Church Bartholomew announced the abolition of the legal force of the Synodal Letter of 1686 on the entry of the Kyiv Metropolis into the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate and on the recognition of the heads of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – the Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP) – Filaret and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC) – Makariy by the canonical hierarchs of the Orthodox Church. The creation of the united OCU, headed by Metropolitan Epiphany, was announced in the Tomos provided by Patriarch Bartholomew on January 6, 2019. With the subsequent merger of the UOC-KP, the UAOC, and five percent of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP) communities into the OCU, a long-standing conflict between diocesan administrations about supremacy emerged (Mitrokhin 2020; OCU 2020). As a result, Filaret, the UOC-KP head, refuses to recognise the Tomos. The situation with the OCU remains difficult, including the issues of redistribution of property and recognition, taking into account the split in international Orthodoxy on this issue.

The activity of politicians can be observed in Latvia, where there is a struggle around the Latvian Orthodox Church and the Latvian Orthodox Autocephalous Church, as well as in Montenegro, where in 2019, at the initiative of President Milo Đukanović, the issue of autocephaly of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church was raised, which implies the loss of the canonical connection with Serbian Orthodox Church.

The tendency to create their own national churches and the revisionism of canonical territories are associated with the deepening of postsecularization processes, which paradoxically do not coincide with the general tendency to decrease believers' numbers. This paradox confirms the strengthening of the religious factor's instrumentalization in reorganising national spaces and geopolitical reconstruction.

The conflicts of ownership and of church property restitution

The materialisation of the ideological and ideological-political postsecular conflicts of revisionism has expressed the emergence and growth of the number of property conflicts, their redistribution, and disputes arising in connection with various national approaches to policy restitution of church property. The peculiarities of the legislation on restitution are markers of the (non)recognition of a religious organisation. Most countries of this region under consideration adopted property restitution laws in the 1990s. The practice of restitution processes often manifests preferences of the state towards certain religions.

For example, in **Ukraine**, the restitution of church property is provided by the 1991 law, in which stipulates that religious buildings and property that are state property are transferred to the organisations on whose balance they are free of charge or returned to the ownership of religious organisations free of charge by decisions of Regional State Administrations (Ukrainian Law 1991: Art. 17). The 2002 Government Decree established that religious buildings could be transferred to a religious organisation, provided that the relocation of organisations occupying these buildings was ensured (Decree 2002). However, restitution is impossible as a rule due to the financial impossibility of resolving issues with the relocation of organisations located there. For example, according to Yosyf Zisels, co-chairman of the Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities – VAAD of Ukraine:

The issue of restitution does not ... even theoretically discussed in the public space, although under the Memorandum between the World Jewish Restitution Organization and representatives of Jewish organizations of Ukraine on joint action on the issue of restitution 1994 – it should be about restitution of 2,500 objects. (Shchur 2020)

Between 1992 and 2019, the government returned to the Jewish community 2,4 percent of the objects (JUST 2020: 187). Y. Zisels points out, for instance, that the return of the Choral Synagogue of Brodsky in Kyiv within six years was crowned with success thanks to a “ransom” of \$100,000 transferred to the city (Shchur 2020). This situation has drawn criticism from the WJRO (WJRO Ukraine n.d.). Restitution disputes also arise between Orthodox churches

connected with creating a single OCU and the redistribution of property (Teise 2019). Also, it concerns disputes between Orthodox churches and the Ukrainian-Greek Catholic Church, for example, over the right to worship in the Saint Sophia Cathedral of Kyiv in 2019–2020.

Poland is listed as the EU state with the worst legal provision for restitution. Sixteen attempts to create a comprehensive programme to address these issues also failed (JUST 2020: 139–140). There is no agreement in Polish society on this issue. The Polish Confederation of Freedom and Independence seeks to criminalise WWII restitution (Kasztelan & Hruby 2019). Nevertheless, Poland has laws enabling the restitution of particular communal religious property. The property of religious organisations is returned to them only in an administrative manner through five special commissions (for the Jewish community, the Lutheran Church, the Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church, and one for all other denominations). The Catholic Church in Poland has made great strides in this process. The Polish State provided this church with direct funding and the return of 93 percent of the nationalised property (JUST 2020: 141). However, other congregations were less successful in it. For example, the Orthodox Church has achieved the return of only 52 percent of religious property, while the Jewish one has returned 45 percent (JUST 2020: 138).

In **Hungary**, restitution was ensured by the 1991 law (Törvény 1991). The law established the right of ownership of religious organisations to property taken from them after 1948. The law stipulated that cultural and educational institutions that use church property should not suffer from the restitution process, and provided for the return of buildings to religious communities within ten years, but the state's financial problems did not allow this requirement to be met. The 1997 Agreement with the Holy See stipulated that almost half of the buildings subject to restitution would remain in state ownership, but their value would become a source of annual income for the church. For the amount of the assessed property subject to restitution, securities were issued – for 143 billion forints, of which compensation was paid to churches (Palinchak 2015: 168). Due to financial issues, the time limit for resolving all issues was extended from 10 to 20 years in 1997. The state also resolved the restitution of property of persons who suffered during the Holocaust, as Act XXIV was adopted (Törvény 1992). However, claimants faced numerous procedural challenges (JUST 2020: 85).

Serbia is the only country in the Baltic – Black Sea – Adriatic region that has adopted comprehensive legislation on real estate restitution. The Law on Restitution and Compensation of Property No. 72/2011 was adopted here in 2011. The law established that restitution took precedence over compensation, made no distinction between nationals and foreign applicants, did not set deadlines for applying for restitution, and guaranteed compensation of up to € 500,000 to successful applicants if the property could not be returned. Although Article 1 states that the law only applies to property confiscated after March 9, 1945, the Serbian government has stated that paragraph 2 of this article also allows a request for restitution of confiscated property during the Holocaust to be filed without specifying any deadlines (Nelson 2019: 721).

Conclusions

The five types of conflicts addressed in this article demonstrate the deepening of postsecularism and the contradictions it generates. The signs of a postsecular situation are an aggravation of cognitive-discursive contradictions between supporters of militant atheism and carriers of religious proselytism in the issue of recognising the importance of religion as a relevant way of knowing and describing reality; articulation of religious themes in the context of describing the foundations of statehood, nation; the popularity of the model of state-religious monopoly with the formal declaration of the secularity and equality of religious organizations; public marking of belonging to the tradition at the level of the state political elite and bureaucracy; recognition of the possibility of differentiating religious groups according to their significance in the history of statehood; granting religious structures the status of public-law entities and returning them to public and political spheres; rejection of religious liberalism and violation of the ethics of recognition; normative and legal regulation of the hierarchisation of recognition, legislative registration of pyramidal models in the system of religion-state relations; replacement of the state church status with more liberal statuses of prevailing, established, folk, national, traditional, and others; lack of equal and transparent approaches in the policy of providing restitution.

The Baltic – Black Sea – Adriatic Triangle states, which occupy a particular geopolitical location and are characterised by a multivector nature and severity

of ethnic and religious contradictions are in the epicentre of these contradictions. The activation of geopolitical actors about the existing order's remodulation is observed in the instrumentalisation of religious themes. Religious identity, like ethnic identity, in this region at the present stage is becoming a mechanism for modelling the political process. The states of the region are strengthening the policy of differential treatment of religious organisations to construct nations-states while demonstrating the fulfilment of the recommendations of the common European structures with regard to the state's preservation of an impartial and neutral position toward religion. European norms do not exclude the possibility of differential treatment. Under the OSCE Guidelines, the "State may choose to grant certain privileges to religious or belief communities," provided that "they are granted and implemented in a non-discriminatory manner" and that "there is an objective and reasonable justification for the difference in treatment" (Guidelines 2014: § 38–40). These recommendations aim to ensure the protection of religious minorities and preserve maximum pluralism. However, these recommendations are used for political mobilisation and ensuring the neoconservative development of nations in practice.

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ESCHATOLOGICAL NOTIONS IN POST-SOCIALIST BULGARIA

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Abstract: The text presents the most popular ideas about the end of the world that spread in Bulgaria in the post-socialist period. In the years of transition after 1989, social and political changes, as well as an economic crisis, favoured apocalyptic expectations. In contrast to the past, when the religious explanation of the world's end dominated, in contemporary times the apocalypse is more frequently related to cosmic and natural disasters or to the negative effects of human activity. A characteristic view of the end of the world is imagining it as a new beginning. In the present, there is also a transformation in the mechanism for shaping ideas about the end of the world. Modernization, globalization, and new technologies are changing both people's daily lives and their ideas about the fate of the human world. After the boom of apocalyptic expectations in Bulgarian society at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, in recent years we have seen a rationalization of the eschatological notions and their close connection with ecological and political arguments.

Keywords: apocalypse, Bulgaria, eschatology, post-socialism

Introduction

Some of the foundational questions concerning the essence of reality are those about the beginning and end of the world. In pre-industrial societies, the answer to these questions lay in the competence of a particular religious doctrine and religious experts. The great monotheistic religions and the numerous local religious teachings offer various explanations for the origin of the world, and many of them have an idea of its end (Brandes & Schmieder & Voß 2016), regardless of the linear or cyclical model in which the development of time is thought. The coming of the end of the world has been announced many times, with apocalyptic expectations being updated in the face of major sociopolitical cataclysms. Eschatological notions can take the form of apocalypticism¹ (Robbins & Palmer 1997: 4), through which people express distancing themselves from the existing social order and hope for the creation of a new world (Bromley 1997: 34). This hope is related to the creation of the “new man” and is characteristic of various teachings and doctrines, including Christianity, utopianism, communism, and new religious movements (Küenzlen 1992: 44). The establishment of the new kingdom in Jewish apocalypticism is associated with the appearance of the messiah, who is perceived as the ideal ruler in the “last days” (Petkanova & Miltenova 1993: 234). Christian eschatology is also closely related to the idea of salvation and achieving the Kingdom of God (Nedialkova 2006: 13). It offers a vision of the end of individual human destiny at the second coming (Tupkova-Zaimova & Miltenova 1996: 11). Christian eschatological ideas are primarily based on the final part of the New Testament:² the Apocalypse of John (Book of Revelation). Since the creation of the new doctrine, the Christians have lived in expectation of the end of the world. In the thirteenth century in Western Europe, the idea of the Last Judgement almost completely replaced the idea of the Second Coming of Christ (Ariès 2004: 141).

In traditional society, notions of the end of the world are influenced by both prevailing religious doctrine and apocryphal ideas. The influence of the Apocalypse of John on the folk eschatological beliefs of the Balkan peoples can be traced in the notions of drought and famine, earthquakes, the disappearance of the Sun and the blood-covered moon, the fiery rain, the invasion of locusts, and the outbreak of great war (Timotin 2005: 18). Human sins are usually thought of as the cause of the end of the world (Georgieva 2000: 48).

This text presents the most popular ideas about the end of the world that spread in Bulgaria in the post-socialist period (see also Troeva 2012). In the years of transition after 1989, socioeconomic and political changes in Bulgaria favoured apocalyptic expectations. The all-encompassing crisis that gripped society in the mid-1990s, the feeling of insecurity, the loss of perspective, and the wars in the neighbouring Balkan countries created a sense of decline and a coming end. The former socialist societies were unprepared for the capitalist reality, which at the same time was approaching “an apocalyptic zero-point” with its “four riders”, being the ecological crisis, the consequences of the biogenetic revolution, the imbalances in the system, and the growth in social divisions and exclusions (Žižek 2010: X).

The present article is a research result of an inter-academic project between the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the University of Latvia, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology. The focus of the study is on widespread notions of the causes of a possible end of the world, which are also a reflection of contemporary social, economic, and environmental problems in the Bulgarian post-socialist society. The study does not aim to present apocalyptic ideas of particular religious, prophetic, and/or millennial groups and movements that have an ideologically more structured form and function in a more closed social environment. Publications in the media, internet forums, film productions, and interviews with respondents are used as source material. They allow to trace the dynamics of the notions about the end of the world in the context of the diversification of information flows and access to them by various age and social groups. The interviews with elderly respondents from small settlements show a greater influence of tradition on their notions about the end of the world, although influences from television and the press are evident as well. If in rural areas the notions of the end of the world of the elderly are mostly the result of an oral tradition based on religious affiliation, then in the cities older people use more diverse sources of information. For example, an elderly woman from Sofia used the *Eternal Calendar* from 1918, which she inherited from her grandmother. She told her relatives that the calendar predicts many deaths for 2012. The interviews with younger respondents and internet resources give a different picture of the current ideas about the end of the world. Interviewed younger people from Sofia, in most cases, either completely rule out the possibility of an impending apocalypse or see the impending change not as an end but as a transformation and a new beginning. They draw information mainly

from the Internet, the virtual space offering numerous publications on the subject. Of interest to the ethnologist are the shared opinions of the readers of these articles. A number of online publications on the issue of the end of the world have dozens, and in some cases, hundreds, of comments that reflect the views of a younger age group.

The apocalyptic ideas in the international context of popular culture

Cinema,³ television, and access to movies over the Internet are some of the main factors in forming ideas about the apocalypse, including it in the imaginary world of popular culture. In the last few years, the Bulgarian audience has had numerous opportunities to watch productions dedicated to the apocalypse. The BTV Action Television channel showed the film *Ice Apocalypse* (with the original title *Post Impact*, 2004), according to which the Earth was hit by a meteor on October 18, 2012. The impact caused earthquakes, tidal waves, and clouds of dust that drastically changed the face of the planet. The film *2012: Doomsday* is also dedicated to 2012, and many Bulgarians are familiar with its visions. Very popular is also the film *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), which has been broadcast several times in Bulgaria and describes a new ice age on Earth and its consequences for human civilization. Common for such films is the view of the apocalypse as caused by nature or by humans, and in that respect, they secularised the end of the world and proposed the idea of the possibility of human agency (Walliss 2009: 72–73). In 2009, BTV showed Borislav Lazarov's film *Fear for the Future*, which presents various possible scenarios for the end of the world. The first part of the film was broadcast on December 19, 2009, and the second – on December 20, 2009 (Btv.bg 2009).⁴ This film, like many others, shows the scientific perspective on the issue. For example, periodically in 2011 and 2012, National Geographic aired its popular science film *2012: The Final Prophecy*, which connects the beginning of the Mayan calendar with a sudden glaciation before 5200 years, which was reflected in people's perceptions of cyclical cataclysms. Many other films show imagined fictional worlds in which the apocalypse is a possible scenario. All of them reflect not only the concerns of the people but also the geopolitical realities after the Cold War (Walliss 2009).

During the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century, a number of translated books about the apocalypse were published, as were several books by Bulgarian authors, which shaped the ideas of a wide readership. One of the most influential in this respect is Paco Rabanne's book *Apocalypse* (published in Bulgarian in 1994). In it, he talks about his vision of World War III. According to the author, the apocalypse will be a cleansing of the Earth. It will not be a final destruction but a "restructuring and revival before the New Age" (Rabanne 1994: 75). In 2001, Marvin Moore's book was also published in Bulgarian, which presents the Adventist view of the imminent end of the world and offers guidance on how to prepare for it (Moore 2001). A popular writer that a Bulgarian reader met was also Marie Jones. The author collects predictions, myths, and scientific theories about the year 2012 in a book entitled *2013: The End of Days or a New Beginning* (Jones 2009). It presents various, often opposing ideas about the coming "end": the population of the Earth will perish, and a large part of the people will be raised to a higher level of consciousness. In 2010, the book of Anna Marianis *2012 – Apocalypse from A to Z* was published in Bulgarian market, in which many hypotheses for possible causes of the apocalypse were presented. The author offers an interpretation of the apocalypse from the standpoint of the teachings of theosophy and Agni yoga, believing that the apocalyptic events will be followed by a new golden age on Earth (Marianis 2010). At the end of 2011, Frank Joseph's book *2012. Atlantis and the Maya* (the original title was *Atlantis und 2012. Warum die Prophezeihungen der Maya aus Atlantis Stammen*) was translated into Bulgarian (Joseph 2011) and offered in newsstands in the country. In it, the author connects the Mayan calendar with the sunken city of Atlantis. He hypothesises the possibility of a new ice age, the danger of solar storms, and a change in the poles of our planet.

Bulgarian authors also dedicate books to the apocalypse. In 1999, a book by Aleksandr Liubenov, entitled *Is the End of the World Coming?* was published. In it, the author aims to dispel the "misconceptions" about the coming end of the world in the year 2000 (Liubenov 1999: 152). In 2009, the *Standart* newspaper published a book called *2012: The End of the World*. It sets out various popular hypotheses about the possible causes of the end of the world, such as the influence of the planet Nibiru and solar eruptions. The notions of the end of the world and of December 21, 2012 were considered in connection with other popular esoteric topics, such as the symbolism of cereal circles, indigo children, and the coming of the sixth race on Earth (Staridolski & Grigorova 2009).

The media also offer information about possible causes for the future end of the world. For example, the *Monitor* newspaper in 2000 informed its readers about some possible scenarios for an apocalypse, including a collision with a comet or other body from space, the explosion of a supernova, the onset of an ice age on Earth, and the suggestion that by 2050 the Earth will collide with a space object (Milanov 2000: 21). Thus, in contemporary times, apocalyptic notions are not an isolated phenomenon, but the contexts that give rise to them are different. The main media for translation are completely new, as are some of the images in which the end of the world is thought.

On the occasion of natural phenomena, notions of the end of the world are also updated. For example, on August 11, 1999, during a solar eclipse, a number of Bulgarian villages were deserted because residents (especially the elderly) hid in their homes, fearing that the eclipse was a harbinger of the apocalypse. The Pernik earthquake of May 22, 2012, caused strong fears and associations with the coming end of the world. The approach of the year 2000, which raised the expectation of a cataclysm, has renewed notions of the end of the world.⁵ In the first years of the new millennium, the mass consciousness had already been conquered by a new image – the “Mayan prophecy” about the end of the world on December 21, 2012 (Sitler 2006).

Apocalypse as seen through the categories of religious doctrine

(Post)modernity offers a variety of scenarios in which the apocalypse is thought of, and in most of them there is no religious element. However, it continues to be present in some of the attested notions, usually with references to the Book of Revelation. An example is the opinion (from 2008) of an internet user, who refers to her vision as well as to texts from the Revelation. According to her, we were the last generation to experience “the biblical truths of the end times. Everything that is foretold for the coming of the Antichrist, who will present himself as Jesus, we will experience” (Forum.xnetbg.net 2008).⁶ A lasting element in contemporary notions of the end of the world, influenced by the religious worldview, is the belief that the apocalypse is a kind of punishment for human sins. One internet user shared the view that all who believe in God will have a good destiny, as Jesus will come down to Earth to take them with

him. According to him, all good people will become angels and enter heaven, and bad people will remain on Earth, where the apocalypse will occur (2010) (Apokalipsis 2008). Another person commented (2011) that as long as there are good people on Earth, the end of the world will not come (Dnes.bg 2011a). An internet user shares (2009) that the cause of the apocalypse is the sinfulness of the people (Apokalipsis 2008). The belief that we live in the “last days” (Bnews 2011) is shared by a number of people. Disasters, floods, earthquakes, crises, unemployment, disunity, and greed among the people are cited as signs of the end of time that are already present (2009) (Apokalipsis 2008). In addition to traditional signs of the approaching end (as earthquakes and floods), current political events (the crisis in the European Union, the unrest in the Middle East, and wars) are also perceived as precursors of the coming apocalypse.

The impossibility of determining the time of the end of the world is argued with the authority of the Bible: “The truth is in the Bible – believe in it or not, everything that is written will happen! No one knows when the end of the world will come” (Dnes.bg 2011a). Often, those who express their opinion about the end of the world believe that one cannot know when the end of the world will come because this is the only prerogative of God – “Only God knows when and no one else” (Tracheva 2019); “Only God the Father knows when the end of the world will come. Read the Revelation of John. There will be a series of events that will destroy humanity. The Earth will perish in fire. There is no sign yet that the Antichrist has come” (2020) (Blitz.bg 2017).

War

The idea of the sinfulness of people and the resulting future punishment is also related to the vision of war as a possible end to the world. This traditional view of the end of the world is still valid today. The memory of the devastation caused by the two world wars in the twentieth century, the threat of a new world conflict during the Cold War, and possible uses of nuclear weapons, the war against terrorism (Germanà & Mousoutzanis 2014: 1) make the fears of a global armed conflict very real. In the 1990s, in unison with the growing socio-economic crisis in Bulgaria, apocalyptic expectations and fears intensified. They, in turn, stimulated the appearance of compensatory notions, as for example about the new national pilgrimage center Mount of the Cross (*Krastova gora*), which

respondents believed would remain safe during a future world war (Troeva 2011: 102–103). The stories recorded in 1994 that the Mount of the Cross protects Bulgaria from war were also considered a reaction to the military conflict in the former Republic of Yugoslavia at that time (Karamihova & Valtchinova 2009). In the mid-1990s, the proximity of the war to the country's territory naturally made a war the most common threat to the existence. As the military conflict in the former Yugoslavia got the characteristics of a religious clash, it is natural for the people of Bulgaria, who live in region mixed in religious and/or ethnic terms, to be more sensitive to the events. At the same time, the notion from the same region that during the flood only the region around Krastova Gora will survive and the people there will “eat with golden spoons”⁷ has particular traditional mythological and religious elements.

The constant military conflicts in different parts of the world add a great deal of realism to the scenario of a military cataclysm as a reason for the end of the world. It should be noted that the apocalypse has also been a geopolitical phenomenon (Quinby 2014: 18), reflecting power struggles. The inevitability of a new world war is often argued by citing prophecies ascribed to Nostradamus or to the Bulgarian seer Vanga. After some shared notions, Nostradamus has predicted that the global nuclear war that will destroy humanity will begin in 2018 (BNews 2011; Dnes.bg 2011a). It was also believed that Vanga predicted a chemical war for 2014, when millions of people would be struck with purulent ulcers, skin cancer, and other diseases (BNews 2011). Following another prediction of the prophetess, World War III would begin after the war in Syria in 2020 (Standart 2019). According to an opinion shared on social networks,

All the prophets and Buddha and Christ and Muhammad, and all others have said and taught PEOPLE to live in peace, love and understanding. The most important thing is to love our neighbour! If the wars continue, if we do not take care of people, animals and the WHOLE nature, bad things await us!!!! (Khristova 2018)

Russia's war against Ukraine in 2022 heightens fears of a third world war (Actualno.com 2022).

Ecocatastrophes caused by humans

Many people associate the end of the world with ecocatastrophes caused by human activity. These notions can be seen as a form of “environmental apocalypticism” (Fedele et al. 2013). Nuclear energy is pointed to as a threat, and the Fukushima accident is cited as an example of that: “It has been clear for years that we will destroy ourselves; we do not need any planets X – see Fukushima!” (Dnes.bg 2011a). A new threat from human technology is seen in the Large Hadron Collider at CERN (opened 2008), whose launch has sparked widespread fears that it will have catastrophic consequences for Earth (see, e.g., Ilieva 2009). A much-discussed topic in recent decades has been global warming and its possible consequences, including the disappearance of human civilization. Scientists alarmed about the possibility that global warming could stop the warm Gulf Stream and cause the continent of Europe to enter a new ice age (ibid.). This danger is perceived as very real by many (News.bg 2016). The commented consequences of global warming are the destruction of a large part of the Earth’s fertile lands, famine for humanity, and massive floods, which will render parts of the land uninhabitable (BNews 2011).

Geocataclysm

Though most people associate the threat to life on Earth with a danger coming from space, some believe that such a threat can be found in a possible geocataclysm. It is expected in the form of powerful earthquakes and eruptions of supervolcanoes. The change in the Earth’s magnetic poles is not uncommonly pointed to as a possible cause of the end of the world (Ilieva 2009). The phenomenon is periodic in the history of the planet, and according to scientists, there is no reason to expect a change in magnetic polarity in the near future or to expect adverse effects on life if this happens (Dnes.bg 2011a). Proponents of the apocalypse, however, think differently: “If the poles really shift, don’t you think it will be an apocalypse...?!?!? With so many earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis? We’ll see what happens then...” (2011) (Mystics.eu 2009). Another mentioned cause is the imagined displacement of the tectonic plates in 2022–2025, which will lead to the sinking of a number of countries. The last prophecy is attributed to Peter Danov and the Bulgarian propheticess Slava

Sevryukova (2019) (Tracheva 2019). The expectation of the eruption of the supervolcano under Yellowstone is also mentioned as the “most real threat to the end of the world” (Khristova 2018; Dnes.bg 2017).

Asteroids

Various assumptions about the cosmological cause of the end of the world have been launched on the Internet and in a number of media sources in recent years. The inevitable end is justified by the great cataclysms that our planet has experienced in the past. An example is the catastrophe caused by the fall of a large asteroid at the North Pole 250 million years ago, which led to the extinction of 80% of living organisms on the planet (Dnes.bg 2011b), as well as the extinction of dinosaurs 65 million years ago as a result of such a collision. Possible future threats to our planet include the asteroid Apophis, which will approach the Earth in dangerous proximity in 2029 and 2036 and in 2068 could possibly crash into it (BTA 2020). Numerous publications with similar content, as well as films featuring the plot of an asteroid colliding with the Earth, contribute to this being one of the most popular end-of-the-world scenarios. The expectations that the apocalypse will be caused by a collision of our planet with an asteroid are also supported by the frequent media reports about the next asteroid passing by our planet.⁸

The Planet Nibiru

A variant of the notion of an upcoming cosmic collision is the relatively new hypothesis of the Earth colliding with the hypothetical planet Nibiru. According to popular belief, it revolves around the Sun in a distorted orbit and periodically approaches the Earth, causing disasters (Tracheva 2018). Claims that Nibiru is a planet and was known to the Sumerians are refuted by scientists. Nibiru is a name from Babylonian astrology, sometimes associated with the god Marduk. According to David Morrison of the NASA Institute of Astrobiology, claims that Nibiru, a supposed planet discovered by the Sumerians, is headed for Earth are based on the artwork of Zecharia Sitchin. According to this author, the planet Nibiru orbits the Sun with a period of rotation of 3600 years, which is reflected in Sumerian legends about “ancient astronauts” (the Anunnaki)

visiting the Earth (Dnes.bg 2011a). According to the discussed ideas, the approach of Nibiru will cause a change of magnetic poles and change the orbit of the planet, and a giant flood will submerge the continents in water and destroy life on Earth (BNews 2011). The forums are full of opinions and detailed descriptions of the planet Nibiru (Forum.xnetbg.net 2008).⁹ According to what was shared on the Internet, “a killer planet is flying to Earth”. It will cause huge destruction – tsunamis, earthquakes, and volcanic activity (Dnes.bg 2011a).

Aliens

One of the products of the twentieth century is the notion that there is a threat to Earth from an alien civilization. The theme is one of the favorites exploited by Hollywood (for example, in the films *Independence Day* (1996) and *War of the Worlds* (2005)). This is also one of Stephen Hawking’s fears about the end of our civilization, which has been popularised in the last years (Dnevnik.bg 2010; Nauka Offnews.bg 2016). Clearly expressed pessimism about this scenario for the end of the world stands out in the comments on the subject (Dnes.bg 2015). However, according to some opinions expressed on Bulgarian websites, our planet is threatened by aliens from Orion, and the satellites of Mars, Phobos and Deimos, are their ships. On Earth, they have underground bases and are trying to create a new world order (Dnes.bg 2011a).

Lining up of celestial bodies in a row

Another possible cause for the end of the world often mentioned is the ordering of celestial bodies in a straight line, although this phenomenon is often observed without adverse consequences (Dnes.bg 2011a). Many sites discuss the ordering of the planets of the solar system in a row (parade of the planets), which could lead to catastrophic consequences for the Earth’s climate (Mikhailova 2012).

Solar activity

Information and comments on solar activity as a possible cause for the end of the Earth are not rare (OffNews.bg 2014). Some of those sharing their opinions

in the forums link the information about increasing solar activity with the era of global warming (Dnes.bg 2011a). Many opinions are based on actual scientific hypotheses about the end of the solar system in five billion years (Dnevnik 2018), when our star will run out of fuel, turn into a red giant, and probably engulf the Earth.¹⁰ Another scientific hypothesis is commented, according to which the galaxies Andromeda and the Milky Way will collide in a few billion years, resulting in the end of the Earth (Khristova 2020).

December 21, 2012

The most widespread fears of the coming end of the world were associated with the date December 21, 2012. The expectations for the end of the world on this date were based on the found in Mexico so-called “Monument Six” – a stone tablet with a Maya inscript indicating the end of one chronological period (Dnes.bg 2012). Since the 1980s, the 2012 prophecy has gradually gained popularity worldwide (Fedele et al. 2013: 168). This has resulted in increased interest and dissemination of information about the Mayan calendar issue in a variety of media. Despite the opinions aimed at reassuring society, many people shared the belief that some of the apocalyptic scenarios listed so far will be realised on December 21, 2012. At the same time, 2012 was considered the beginning of a new stage in the development of our civilization, with the predominance of the spiritual over the material. Similar tendencies were also observed in other south-european countries as part of the so-called “process of spiritualization” (Fedele et al. 2013: 173). In the years after 2012, apocalyptic expectations in Bulgaria decreased, and the arguments for this were that the end was scheduled many times but the predictions did not come true: “Nothing will happen, because in 2012 they said, but nothing happened” (Tracheva 2019).

The end as a beginning

A number of interviews and opinions shared on the Internet express the idea that the upcoming global cataclysm is not really the end but the beginning of a new phase in human development. These ideas are generally characteristic of religious eschatological expectations of collective salvation by a divine power.¹¹ In our time, such notions are typical of the New Age movement with its hopes

for social transformation and the emergence of a new type of people in a new, better, and more harmonious world.¹² Examples of such views were/are very common: “There will be no end to the world. We will reach ‘almost the end of the world’, but this will be a turning point for us to the new life” (Dnes.bg 2011a); in 2012 will come “the end of the old world and the beginning of the new one”; “2012 is the beginning of a new world and the end of the present one” (2011) (Mystics.eu 2009). The apocalyptic notions are closely linked with social criticism, and thus they also include the idea of a transformation of the world and of the mankind (Rosen 2008).

Pandemics

A popular idea for the end of human civilization is the outbreak of a deadly pandemic. The theme has been developed in a number of films: *The Andromeda Strain* (1971), *12 Monkeys* (1995), *Outbreak* (1995), *28 Days Later* (2002), *Pandemic* (2007), and *Contagion* (2011) (Sega 2020). In 2020, the pandemic from SARS-CoV-2 was described in some media as a harbinger of the biblical Apocalypse (Newsfront 2020) and has been associated with its fourth horseman (Dein 2021). Even the UN Secretary-General António Guterres called in September 2020 the pandemic the “fifth horseman of the Apocalypse” (UN.org 2020). In Bulgaria, Vanga’s prophecy that “the corona will tread over us”, which some associate with the current pandemic, has come to people’s attention in the late 2020 (Blitz.bg 2020). At the same time, opinions that the pandemic from SARS-CoV-2 will put an end to the human race are limited (Khristova 2020; Webcafe.bg 2020).

Politics

Many of the end-of-the-world opinions on the Internet also shared numerous political comments.¹³ They cover both domestic and foreign policy issues. Some of the expressed negative opinions are regarding the political transition in Bulgaria in the last 30 years and the social, political, and economic crises in the country: “We are in a long apocalypse of 20 years with no hope of a near end” (Vasileva 2011). The idea of a possible end to the world provokes also very

human thoughts about the commitment of people and the loss and loneliness that would follow the cataclysm (Ilieva 2009).

Conclusions

Bulgaria's first post-socialist decade after 1989 was marked by a growth in apocalyptic expectations reflecting the fear of social insecurity, economic crisis, unemployment, war conflicts, and ecological threats. It is not accidental that these have been recognized as the signs heralding the apocalypse. The global economic crisis, the problems of the European Union, the Arab revolutions, and the wars are also considered as such. The country, like many others, was gripped by fears of an upcoming end to the world around 2000 and 2012. Religious and secular scenarios for the end of the world are substantiated with references to authorities – scholars' arguments are used, but so are predictions of prophets and quotations from the holy books. Too often, notions of the end of the world are actually compilations of more than one hypothesis. This is particularly evident in the December 21, 2012 ideas. The reasons why the end of one of the cycles in the Mayan calendar has become the most popular date for the expected apocalypse can be sought in different directions. On the one hand, people tend to attribute secret knowledge inaccessible to modern civilization to ancient cultures such as the Maya. For every contemporary who believes in the apocalypse the proximity of the date in question in time is important, as it is already thought of as the near end of his/her own life. The date concentrated all the potential dangers for the Earth, which are also observed as separate end-of-the-world scenarios. In the information age, any such sensational hypothesis quickly travels around the globe and becomes accessible to broad strata of society. The idea of the future end of the world exists in many cultures and is periodically associated with current events and dates, and December 21, 2012 is just one of a series of identifications of the apocalypse.

The apocalypse is thought of in different images in different historical periods. In contrast to the past, when the religious explanation of the world's end dominated, in contemporary times the apocalypse is more frequently related to cosmic and natural disasters or to the negative side effects of human activity. Improper human behaviour was cited as the cause of the end of the world in the past and continues to be so nowadays. In traditional beliefs, it is a sin.

Its modern equivalents are the unscrupulous attitude towards nature, which has been destroyed as a result of human activity and technologies. Thus, human behavior and ethical notions of good and evil continue to be thought of as determining Earth's fate and reveal one of the characteristic features of the notion of the world – its anthropic nature. A characteristic view of the end of the world is imagining it as a new beginning. Thus, the linear model of time imposed by the great monotheistic religions turns out to be included in a larger cyclical model, through which the mass consciousness edits the idea of the end of human history. This cyclical model proposes the idea of progress, which is perceived mainly in moral terms. A number of contemporary ideas about the apocalypse representing a new beginning could be connected to the New Age movement. They present a two-way process. On the one hand, the eschatological idea has been secularized, with a number of religious elements removed. On the other hand, personal spiritual development is set as a goal, supporting the process of spiritual transformation of the world. This is one of the new forms of religious and spiritual expression today.

In the present, there is a transformation in the mechanism of shaping ideas about the end of the world. Scientific discoveries, the educational system, the media, and the Internet all contribute to a very dynamic process of forming new ideas about the fate of the world and the potential threats. The tradition of oral transmission of knowledge is increasingly giving way to drawing information from various sources – television, cinema, literature, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet – as communication, sharing and online discussions are typical for younger people. Different generations live in different information flows, which determine the significant differences in their worldview and, in particular, in their ideas about the apocalypse. Modernization, globalization, and new technologies are transforming both people's daily lives and their ideas about the fate of the human world.

The apocalypse itself is imagined as coming from outside the Earth. According to religious notions, it is God's punishment, which is poured on the Earth as a flood or devastating fire. Nowadays, the danger to our planet is also often seen in outer space in the face of asteroids, comets, supernovae, the Sun, or aliens. Unfulfilled prophecies in the last ten years have led to growing scepticism in the general public about the upcoming end of the world. After the boom of apocalyptic expectations in Bulgarian society at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century, in recent years

we have seen a rationalization of the eschatological notions and their close connection with ecological and political arguments, i.e., a predominance of a secular apocalypticism.

Notes

¹ The word *apocalypse* is of Greek origin and means ‘revelation’. Being associated with the Apocalypse of John, over time the term began to be used to mean the end of the world. For apocalyptic expectations in different historical periods and cultures, see Cohn 1957; Himmelfarb 2010. For apocalyptic notions in Islam, see Filiu 2011; for apocalyptic notions of the Muslim Bulgarians, see Lozanova 2000; Troeva 2012.

² Eschatological notions are also characteristic of the Old Testament. On the issue, see Shivarov 1999.

³ For the influence of cinema on the formation of apocalyptic notions, see Bendle 2005.

⁴ An edition of the show “The Day Begins” (November 23, 2010) was dedicated to the topic of the end of the world and of the film. Available at <https://www.btv.bg/shows/deniat-e-prekrasen/videos/shte-nastapi-li-krayat-na-sveta-prez-2012-godina.html>, last accessed on 3 December 2022.

⁵ More on that issue see in Patkin 2009.

⁶ The internet sources are cited in the text with their year of publication on the Internet.

⁷ See Troeva 2011. Similar notion also exists in region of Chepelare (Liubanska 2005: 148).

⁸ For example, on November 9, 2011, a 400-meter asteroid was reported to have passed the previous day. The article reminds us of the threat of a collision of our planet with a large asteroid in 2028 (Dnes, 2011, No. 118, 9 November, p. 6). The “Retro” newspaper from May 26–30, 2012, No. 21, p. 6, warns of a possible collision with a large asteroid in 2013 or in 2020.

⁹ The expected end of the world following the collision was April 23, 2018 (Smolyan. bgvesti.net 2018).

¹⁰ See, e.g., Kalinkov 2004: 11. The author defines the assumptions of scientists about the end of the world as “physical eschatology.”

¹¹ On the question of millennialism, see, e.g., Wessinger 1997.

¹² For the New Age movement in a post-socialist context, see Potrata 2004.

¹³ Political references are also present in the apocalyptic narratives in other European countries, see Brzozowska & Laineste 2014.

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MANAGING THE MENSTRUAL COMMUNICATION TABOO IN LITHUANIA: PAST AND PRESENT

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Abstract: The paper is based on anonymous questionnaire surveys and interviews of women. One sample involved 423 young women (mean age: 21.04) surveyed by means of an anonymous questionnaire in 2016–2018. The survey produced a collection of 896 words and phrases used to denote menstruation. These lexical finds may be regarded as euphemisms/dysphemisms for taboo words representing an integral part of a secret language shared by women. Another sample involved 208 significantly older women (mean age: 73.66) interviewed individually in 2005–2012. The interviewing produced 117 lexical substitutes for menstruation. This research is a part of a wider inquiry into the ways in which everyday practice, experience and

knowledge affect the social and cultural constructions of menstruation. Seeking to record the widest possible range of popular knowledge and discourse about menstruation, including menstrual beliefs and practices, we shall try to interpret these data, focusing on how everyday experience, everyday knowledge, and encrypted language can shape behaviour, experience, and attitudes of contemporary people.

Keywords: Lithuania, menstrual communication taboos, menstrual euphemisms, menstrual taboos, menstruation

Introduction

Menstruation as a cultural phenomenon covers a wide range of beliefs and practices, such as menstrual superstitions and taboos, menarche rituals, menstrual blood magic, menstruation-related religious restrictions, and menstrual health communication (Montgomery 1974; Buckley & Gottlieb 1988; Gottlieb 2020).

A substantial part of menstruation taboos are connected with the imparting/exchanging information on menstruation. Like a wealth of lexical substitutes for the word *menstruation*, silence also has a share in this communication (Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler 2020: 186). A robust research on euphemisms used by women to denote their periods has been going on for several decades (Gottlieb 2020: 145). Exploration of this subject is carried out in many countries (Joffe 1948; Hays 1987; Agapkina 1996: 104–110; Newton 2016; Gathigia & Orwenjo & Ndung'u 2018).

Ingrid Johnston-Robledo and Joan C. Chrisler argue that a communication taboo is supported by the existence of dozens of euphemisms/dysphemisms for menstruation. When talking privately to their daughters about facts of life mothers convey not only the facts to them but also the guidelines for communication (Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler 2020: 185–187; McHugh 2020: 411–412). Elizabeth Arveda Kissling states that adolescent girls develop creative linguistic strategies, such as the use of slang terms, circumlocutions, pronouns, and euphemistic deixis. These communication strategies allow them to avoid descriptive language, such as *menstruate*, *blood*, *menarche* or even *period*. These and similar manoeuvres help the girls maintain the norms of menstrual concealment and manage simultaneously menstrual communication taboos (Kissling 1996: 292, 299–302).

In Lithuania, like in many other countries, menstruation is a taboo topic. This is witnessed by lifelong experiences and attitudes shared by elderly women. At the first occurrence of menstruation (menarche) their knowledge of this major event in a woman's life was very poor or, sometimes, totally absent (Šaknys 1996: 40–41; Račiūnaitė 2002: 87; Šatkauskienė 2005: 110–111; Navickas & Piliponytė 2009: 993–994; Balikienė & Navickas 2013a: 245–246; 2013b: 1518).

Menstruation-related secrecy, shame, and anxiety were reflected in a special language. One of its purposes was to hide these monthly female troubles – especially from males. However, media-assisted modernisation of the traditional style of living lifted the veil on these secrets over the past decades. Inevitably, definite aspects of menstrual communication, including menstrual language, had to change.

From the point of view of sexual attitudes and personal hygiene, much has changed in Lithuania over the past century and recent decades. Ongoing changes have made the menstrual experience of the oldest now living Lithuanian women dissimilar to the menstrual know-how of modern-day girls. However, in order to evaluate the difference, specific empirical data are needed. The early twenty-first century offers the last chance to gather unique data able to compensate, to a certain extent, for the missing studies in this field.

Lithuanian ethnologists Žilvytis Šaknys and Rasa Račiūnaitė inquired into the experience of the first menstrual period in the context of rites of passage (Šaknys 1996: 49–54; Račiūnaitė 2002: 85–89). Lithuanian philologist Marius Smetona examined Lithuanian lexical substitutes for *menstruation* against the background of euphemisms used to denote illnesses and diseases in Lithuania (Smetona 2015: 131–136). Still, many other important aspects of menstruation are open to investigation.

Cultural and social constructions of menstruation are certainly influenced by daily practice, experience, and knowledge of people. Although the immediate purpose of this research was to record popular discourse about menstruation, menstrual beliefs, behaviours, and vocabularies, its ultimate goal is wider: to explain the meaning of research findings, highlighting the process in which everyday menstrual experience, menstrual know-how, and menstrual communication mould behaviour, experience, and attitudes of present-day people. In this article our plan is to show a rich contents of secret menstrual vocabulary used by women in contemporary Lithuania, paying special attention to a variety of euphemisms/dysphemisms included in it. We will try to compare the

traditional menstrual vocabulary with the modern one in order to demonstrate how secret vocabularies change.

Participant recruitment and data collection

The paper is based on anonymous questionnaire surveys and interviews of women.

Sample 1 involved 423 young women (mean age: 21.04) surveyed by means of an anonymous questionnaire in 2016–2018. The anonymous questionnaire on the experience of the first menstruation (menarche) started with a question about the respondent's age at menarche and ended with a question about words and phrases used by people to denote menstruation. Respondents were asked to list them. The questionnaire included other questions about who was the first to hear respondent's personal account of her menarche experience; when this confidential conversation occurred; whether respondent knew before getting her first period that she was going to menstruate; when and from what sources respondent learned about menstruation; and whether she ever talked about menstruation with her mother.

Data collection procedure. At the initial stage of the survey, participants were recruited from second, third, and fourth year psychology and medicine students (females exclusively) enrolled at Vilnius University. These recruits were surveyed in class when taking courses in Developmental Psychology. Survey participants got acquainted with the generalized findings of the survey during Pubertal Development classes. After that, these students were invited to take part in the research on female pubertal development. Those who volunteered (the number of volunteers was impressive) received special instructions. After a corresponding briefing and training, they distributed questionnaire forms among their girlfriends themselves. Questionnaire distributors as well as surveyors had to keep to the following two basic rules: not to transcend the limits of the chronological age of their respondents (from 18 to 25), and not to allow respondents to take questionnaire forms home. Without exception, respondents were required to complete the forms in front of the surveyor. This measure was included to secure respondents against the temptation to consult the Internet and other sources when filling out the questionnaire forms.

In this way, 423 questionnaire forms were gradually filled in. One third of the survey material was collected by Vytautas Navickas; the rest – by students who participated in the surveying. As can be seen, Sample 1 was mostly composed of students studying at higher educational institutions in Vilnius and other Lithuanian towns.

Sample 2 involved 208 significantly older women (mean age: 73.66) interviewed individually in 2005–2012. At the moment of interviewing, 54 of them were between 50 and 70; 154 were 70 and over. These 208 interviewees provided in total 174 words and phrases denoting menstruation. Of these 174 expressions 57 denoted menopause and menopausal women.

Data collection procedure. Ethnographic material for this article was gathered in various places in Lithuania (Pilviškiai (2006); Obeliai and Kriaunos (2007); Panemunis (2008); Onuškis (2010); Užpaliai (2010); Vieکشniai (2010); Žemaičių Kalvarija (2010); and Kaltanėnai (2011 and 2012)) by Monika Balikienė and Vytautas Navickas during ethnographic expeditions sponsored by the Versmė Publishing House. The authors were also assisted by Vilnius University psychology and sociology students. For the purpose of this article, ethnographic material collected by Vytautas Magnus University ethnology students Regina Mikštaitė-Čičiurkienė and Diana Mikužienė (15 interviewees) was utilized. The questionnaire “Menstruation in the Lithuanian culture” (Balikienė & Baranauskaitė & Navickas 2006) was used for conducting the survey. The questionnaire was designed to cover the whole menstrual experience of women, starting with the first period (menarche) expectations and finishing with the permanent stoppage of menstruation (menopause). The 68 questions constituting the questionnaire reflect the following basic themes: menarche encounter, menstrual restrictions and superstitions, menstrual hygiene, menopause experience, and mother-daughter communication on the subject of menstruation.

Results: popular discourse about menstruation, menstrual beliefs, behaviours, and vocabularies

Sample 1 (young women) comprised four hundred twenty-three (423) young women (mean age: 21.04). All of them were requested to list words/phrases denoting menstruation. Overall, by means of the survey 1036 lexical units denoting menstruation were elicited from young participants.

Forty-three (43) respondents did not give a single requested word/phrase; eighty-seven (87) produced only one word/phrase per respondent; ninety-eight (98) – 2 words/phrases per respondent; eighty-nine (89) – 3 words/phrases per respondent; sixty-eight (68) – 4 words/phrases per respondent; twenty-three (23) – 5 words/phrases per respondent; eight (8) – 6 words/phrases per respondent; five (5) – 7 words/phrases per respondent; and two (2) – as many as 8 words/phrases per respondent.

Having deducted *menstruation*, *menarche*, *menstrual cycle* and *PMS* (this premenstrual syndrome abbreviation is well known in Lithuania) from the overall number of expressions provided by young women, we received 896 lexical units. Having examined these finds from the point of view of dominant characteristics, we combined the 896 units into groups. The resulting nine (9) groups were given the following names: *Time*; *Colour*; *Teen slang*; *Relatives, guests, and other visitors*; *Illness and indisposition*; *Gender specific*; *Blood*; *Technical failure*; *Natural phenomena and calamities*. A small number of expressions did not fit into any of the above nine groups. For these ambiguous lexical finds, we formed a separate group. We called this group *Not ranked among any of the above groups*.

As a result of such grouping, some words and phrases inevitably ranked among more than one group. E.g., *raudonos dienos* ('red days') got both into the group *Time* and the group *Colour*. The commonly-used euphemism *pusseserė iš Raudondvario* ('female cousin from Raudondvaris') also occupied a place in two groups simultaneously. Firstly, this *pusseserė* ('female cousin') naturally entered the group *Relatives, guests, and other visitors*. Secondly, having in mind that this cousin arrived from a particular place called Raudondvaris ('Red Manor'), we included this euphemism also among words/phrases representing the group *Colour*. The euphemism *dienos* (*tos dienos*, *mano dienos*) ('days, those days, or my days') was given a place only in the group *Time*. However, *moteriškos dienos* (women's/feminine days) we listed among two groups, namely, *Time* and *Gender specific*. In our opinion, such display of our lexical material demonstrates more clearly what portion of expressions young women consider to be the property of women's sphere exclusively. What is more, it shows that strict borders among these groups do not exist.

Having distributed our lexical material among the groups, we calculated how many lexical units each of them contains. The summing up of scores produced the overall number of units (1054) which will be used for calculating

the percentage of lexical finds contained in every group. The groups will be described in order of size from largest to smallest.

Time. This group represents the richest gathering of words and phrases denoting menstruation. It comprises 297 expressions out of the total amount of lexical substitutes for menstruation (1054); percentage: 28.18%.

The component *dienos* ('days') (267) is found in the biggest number of expressions. Among them *tos dienos* ('these days') (147) are very conspicuous. Circulated vigorously by mass media and widely used for the promotion of women's hygiene products, this euphemism is very popular in Lithuania. Some young women identified menstruation days as *moterų, moteriškos, mergaičių, mergaitiškos dienos* ('the days of women and girls', 'women's or girls' days', 'feminine or girly days') (29), indicating the colour of such days (48). Small was the number of words and phrases showing extremely negative attitude to menstruation directly and indisputably, e.g., *blogos dienos, juodos dienos, pragaro dienos, skausmingos dienos* ('bad days', 'black days', 'hellish days', 'painful days') (7). The group *Time* also contained some comparatively rare but powerful expressions, e.g. *braškių sezonas, žuvų sezonas* ('strawberry season', 'fishing season'). Possessing a great connotative power, they can evoke not only feelings and ideas but also vivid images and even smells.

Colour. This group includes 228 words and phrases out of the total number of lexical finds (1054); percentage: 21.64%.

The group is numerous but not multicoloured. Out of all words and phrases ranked among this group only two (2) describe menstruation using colours other than red, e.g., *juodos dienos ir žalios dienos* ('black days and green days').

In this group, names of cities, towns and villages containing a red colour component can be found, e.g., *Raudondvaris* ('Red Manor') (76), *Krasnodaras* ('Red (=beautiful) Present', a city in southern Russia) (7), *Krasnojarskas* (derived from 'Red coast', a city in Eastern Siberia) (4). These and similar red colour names of Russian and Siberian cities are widely used to denote menstruation in Russia. But they may evoke bad memories in Lithuanian respondents, reminding even young individuals of mass deportation to the places of evil, cold and death. However, the most frequently mentioned red colour locality is *Raudondvaris* ('Red Manor'), a village well known in Lithuania.

Numerous are words and phrases which dye menstrual flow days red, e.g., *raudonos dienos* ('red days') (46). This is a relatively simple way to bypass the taboo word *menstruation*. More artful courses of action are also taken, e.g.,

Raudonoji armija ('Red Army'). This euphemism features prominently in the stock of our lexical finds (17). However, we have recorded some expressions which refer to the Red Army without spelling its name directly. People more or less acquainted with the history of Vilnius will easily identify them with the group of euphemisms stressing the element of colour. Let's take a closer look at the euphemism *Krasnucha* (5). This Russian word is still used by Vilnius residents to denote a non-prestigious residential district located along Savanorių Avenue. Since times immemorial this area has been notorious for its high crime rate. In the years of Soviet occupation, the avenue and surrounding residential district was officially called Red Army Avenue. However, unofficially Vilnius residents called it *Krasnucha*. The reason is obvious: *краснуха* in Russian means *rubella*, a contagious viral infection best known by its distinctive red rash. Although the avenue was renamed as Savanorių Avenue 30 years ago, *Krasnucha* survived. As can be seen from our research, today it is even used as a substitute for *menstruation*.

The euphemisms *barščiai* ('thick beetroot soup') was mentioned 11 times. Nine (9) times respondents were laconic, writing just *barščiai*. Other variants of this euphemism were more descriptive, e.g., *barščiai užvirė* ('beetroot soup has reached the boiling point') or *virti barščius* ('to cook beetroot soup'). *Barščiai*, a nourishing soup of intensively red colour, is a traditional menu item in Lithuania.

Teen slang. A quite numerous group of lexical substitutes can be regarded as teen slang words/phrases. It contains 157 lexical units out of the total number of substitutes used by young women instead of the word *menstruation* (1054); percentage: 14.90%.

The most common of such teen slang words is *menkės* (110) plus variants: *mėnkės* (17), *menkes* (4), *mynkės* (1), *menzės* (3), *memes* (1), *mėmės* (2). In the Lithuanian language, *menkė* means 'cod fish'. However, we think that there is no relation between this popular type of fish and menstruation. As shall be seen later, such word was never used to denote menstruation by our oldest Lithuanian interviewees. So it is possible to state that this particular word emerged in the past decades. Together with its derisive variants aping each other, it expresses contempt and ridicule of menstruation. It is very likely that the principal slang word *menkės* together with a string of its scornful variants has evolved simply from the Lithuanian word *mėnesinės* ('menstruation').

The group also contains euphemisms provided in the form of abbreviations, e.g., *mnsn* (1), *M* (3), *MS* (1). To this subgroup the euphemism *S* (6) with its variants, such as *S raidytė* (small letter *S*) (1) and *S dienos* (days *S*) (1) must be added. Deciphering of such lexical finds seems impossible without assistance from respondents' side. Consultations, however, are out of the question, since the survey was anonymous. Luckily, one of respondents left an explanatory note next to *S* in her questionnaire form. The note read: "Teacher used to mark it in this way". So, the origin of *S* is clear: *S* stands for *serga* ('is ill'). Physical education instructors and teachers traditionally write *S* in their notebooks if a menstruating student asks for a release from training.

Relatives, guests, and other visitors. This group comprises 140 expressions out of the total amount of words and phrases denoting menstruation (1054); percentage: 13.28%.

Female cousins, aunts, sisters, and other visitors often appear having some red attribute, e.g., wearing a red dress or skirt, or arriving from localities the names of which contain the word/component *red*.

The euphemism *svečiai* ('guests') (19) turned out to be not as common as expected. It must be noted that our expectations seemed to be well grounded. They rested on our observation: elderly female interviewees used this euphemism in their narratives quite often. It should be mentioned that the gender of these *guests* or *visitors* is not pronounced. However, it is very likely that all *guests* are females. Actually, the Lithuanian language has a special word to denote a female guest (*viešnia*). But not a single *viešnia* is present in our stock of euphemisms.

Other visitors and relatives identified in our collection of euphemisms were females without any doubt. Among them, *pusseserės* ('female cousins') used to arrive most frequently (72). Aunts (20), sisters (13), and girl-friends (8) paid less frequent visits. The least frequent visitor was *močiutė* ('grandmother') (1).

Although Lithuanian girls host such aunts, female cousins, and sisters on a regular basis, these female guests or visitors are anonymous. In our collection not a single visiting relative, friend, or guest has a name. This is strange, compared to the findings of Victoria Louise Newton. In her collection aunts, for example, may have various names: Aunt Flo, Aunt Norah, Aunt Hilda, Aunt Muriel, Aunt Sally, Aunt Irma (Newton 2016: 198–199).

Interestingly, some *draugai* ('friends') (2) also arrive. These *friends* are somewhat mysterious entities. Obviously, they cannot be girl-friends. In order

to denote a girl-friend, the word *draugė* is used in the Lithuanian language. Had respondents meant any girl-friends, they would have written in the questionnaire form the word *draugės*. Instead, respondents mockingly wrote the word *draugai* in inverted commas. It is very likely that they had in mind so-called *towarishchi*, a gang of over politicised intruders carrying with them red-coloured Communist Party membership cards. Surely, this is only our supposition. Overall, male relatives, male guests, and other male visitors are missing among our lexical finds.

Illness and indisposition. This group consists of 81 words and phrases out of the total number of lexical substitutes for menstruation (1054); percentage: 7.68%.

Illness-related euphemisms total up to 19. The word *liga* ('illness') was used to denote menstruation only once. Quite often a descriptor was added to *liga* to stress that the illness was *moteriška*, *moterų liga* ('female illness', 'illness of women') (14). In one instance, euphemism containing the component of *illness* also contained the component of colour: *raudona liga* ('red illness') (1). Sometimes (4) the illness was specified: *inkstų vėžys*, *raudonoji karštinė*, *raudonasis maras*, *spazmai* ('kidney cancer', 'red fever', 'red pestilence', 'cramps').

The largest number of expressions was connected with *sirgimas* ('being ill') (42). These euphemisms were mostly simple, from the point of view of form and contents, e.g., *susirgti*, *susirgau*, *sako*, *kad serga*, *aš sergu* ('to fall ill', 'I've fallen ill', 'says that is ill', 'I'm ill'). More spectacular substitutes, such as *skendimas*, *dramos*, *hormonai siaučia* ('drowning', 'dramas', 'hormones are raging') can be also found.

Bėdos ('mild illness', 'general indisposition') and variants, such as *moteriškos bėdos*, *bėdelės*, *problemytės* ('female indisposition', 'mild problems') were not very popular among respondents (7). We think that *kraujavimas*, *kraujuoja* ('bleeding', 'is bleeding') could be added to this subgroup of indisposition (7).

Among euphemisms belonging to this group one interesting borrowing is present: *nusikaltimas kelnėse*. This funny definition of menstruation is a Lithuanian translation from the English language ('a crime scene in my pants')

Gender specific. This group includes 61 expressions out of the total amount of words and phrases denoting menstruation (1054); percentage: 5.80%.

The group represents words and phrases indicating clearly that menstruation belongs exclusively to the women's sphere. The biggest number of such expressions state plainly that periods are *moteriškos dienos* ('women's days')

(29) or *moterų liga* ('women's illness') (13), or *moteriškos bėdos (problemos)* ('women's troubles (problems)') (9), demonstrating distinctly that menstruation is *ne vyrų reikalai* ('not men's concern') (1). As is noted by Victoria Louise Newton, such euphemisms stress gender difference (Newton 2016: 199–200).

Blood. This group comprises 47 expressions out of the total number of lexical substitutes for menstruation (1054); percentage: 4.46%.

Without any doubt, *Kruvinoji Merė* ('Bloody Mary') (22) occupies the first place among euphemisms directly connected with blood. This globally popular substitution for menstruation is well known to Lithuania's womanhood. Popular in Lithuania among young girls, *Kruvinoji Merė* is a borrowing from Western culture. Respondents in their answers give it in Lithuanian, English and Russian.

Respondents wrote this euphemism in English using its standard spelling (*Bloody Mary*). Some respondents deviated a little from standard, e.g., *Blood Mary*, *Bloody Merry*. Lithuanian translations of this euphemism were also present. Some of them differed only in minor details, e.g., *Kruvinoji Merė* or *Kruvinoji Meri*. Other translations were more creative, e.g., *Kraujuojančios Merės* ('Bleeding Maries'). In this case, the plural form is probably used to bring this euphemism closer to the Lithuanian word *mėnesinės* or *menstruacijos* ('menstruation'), both, as a rule, used in the plural.

In addition to Bloody Mary, other bloody entities were mentioned, e.g. *kruvinoji sesė* ('bloody sister') (1), *kruvinoji pusseserė iš Kauno* ('bloody (female) cousin from Kaunas') (1). Interestingly, this cousin comes from Kaunas although this Lithuanian town, unlike Raudondvaris, has nothing to do with red colour.

The euphemism *kraujo prakeikimas* ('curse of blood') (1) could easily fit into the group *Biblical terms* which was formed by Victoria Louise Newton from her lexical finds (Newton 2016: 199). Since our respondents did not provide more euphemisms of this kind, we did not have a chance to form such group.

The euphemism *karas* ('war') was offered by one respondent who, fortunately, added to it the following explanatory note: "Because lots of blood is shed".

As expected, expressions containing both blood and time components were also present, e.g. *kruvinos dienos* ('bloody days') (3) and *kruvinoji savaitė* ('bloody week') (4).

Technical failure. This group is composed of 22 words and phrases out of the total amount of lexical substitutes for menstruation (1054); percentage: 2.08%.

Although not too numerous, the group is eloquent: *kranas* (*čiaupas*) ('water tap/faucet') plus variants, such as *čiaupas atsisuko*, *atsisuko čiaupas*, *atsuktas kranas*, *kranas atsisuko*, *paleido kraną*, *kranai atsisuko*, all of them meaning roughly the same: the water tap/faucet is turned on (8); *vamzdis* ('sewer/water pipe') in an emergency situation, such as *prakiuro vamzdis*, *vamzdis prakiuro*, *trūko vamzdžiai*, *vamzdžiai trūko*, meaning 'sewer/water pipe leakage', or 'sewer line stoppage' (*kanalizacija užsikimšo*) (5); *katastrofa* ('catastrophe') plus variant *katastro* given in non-standard Lithuanian (2); *avarija* ('breakdown') (1); *nešvarumai* ('dirt') (1); *tepliojimas* ('smearing') (1); *fontanas* ('fountain') (1); *lašėjimas* ('drip') (1); *tepalai išbėgo* ('grease leakage') (1); *prakiurau* ('I've started leaking') (1).

Expressions connected with technical non-performance are represented chiefly by *kranas/čiaupas* ('water tap/faucet') (8) or *vamzdis* ('sewer/water pipe') (5). Predominant euphemisms, such as *kanalizacija užsikimšo* ('sewer drain clog, 'sewer line stoppage'), *vamzdis prakiuro* ('sewer/water pipe leakage'), *tepalai išbėgo* ('grease leakage'), *čiaupas atsisuko* ('water tap leakage problem'), *nešvarumai* ('dirt'), suggest that menstruation is regarded mainly as a top plumbing emergency.

Since it is widely known that menstruation is associated with dirt, we entered *nešvarumai* ('dirt') and *tepliojimai* ('smearing') into the group *Technical failure*.

We expected to collect many dirt-related expressions, but actually we obtained only two (2). What is more, words and phrases from our collection tell absolutely nothing about the smearing or ruining of women's underwear or clothes. This indicates that today young women, compared to their mothers and grandmothers, no longer encounter such problems. Lithuanian women of older (especially oldest) generation complained during their interviews mostly about the absence of menstrual hygiene products immediately after WWII and also in the years of the Soviet rule. In that era product deficiencies troubled womanhood immensely (Balikienė & Navickas 2013a: 245–248). As will be seen later, these menstrual worries found their direct reflection in the narratives and lists of menstruation euphemisms/dysphemisms produced by older/oldest women.

Natural phenomena and calamities. This group consists of 14 expressions out of the total amount of words and phrases denoting menstruation (1054); percentage: 1.32%.

Although modest in size, the group is spectacular: *Motina gamta* ('Mother Nature') (6); *kriokliai* ('waterfalls') plus 2 variants: *Niagaros kriokliai* ('Niagara Falls') and *raudonieji kriokliai* ('red waterfalls') (3); *tsunamis* (the Lithuanian spelling of this word is non-standard) plus variant *raudonasis cunamis* ('red tsunami') (2); *Nilo patvinimas* ('high tide on the River Nile') (1); *Gamtos išdaiga* ('Nature trick') (1); *Motinos gamtos dovana* ('Mother Nature's gift') (1).

Very positive-sounding expressions, such as *Motina gamta* ('Mother Nature') or *Motinos gamtos dovana* ('Mother Nature's gift'), or even a mildly amusing *Gamtos išdaiga* ('Nature trick') are borrowings from Western literature and humorous advertisements for Tampax menstrual hygiene products (Newton 2016: 176). As is witnessed by our research findings, these Western euphemisms not only reached Lithuania but were readily absorbed by young women.

Not ranked among any of the above groups. This group includes seven (7) words out of the total number of lexical substitutes for menstruation (1054); percentage: 0.66%.

Here are the seven words which did not fit neatly into any of the above groups: *uogos* ('berries') (1); *žvaigždutė* ('starlet/asterisk') (1); *liniuotė* ('ruler, an instrument to draw straight lines or measure distances') (1); *pliusas* ('plus', a symbol +) (1); *silkės* ('herrings') (1); *riešutas* ('nut') (1); *mokesčiai* ('taxes') (1).

Since young women were surveyed anonymously, there was no chance to ask them what they actually had in mind when putting these items on their lists of euphemisms/dysphemisms. Possibly, respondents left out some elements which are vital for grasping the sense of these obscure lexical finds. What may be missing, we can only guess, e.g., *uogos* ('berries'). Maybe the respondent meant *red berries* or *strawberries* but wrote only *berries*. When writing *žvaigždutė* ('starlet/asterisk') the respondent possibly meant a star-shaped symbol used for marking the menstrual flow days in a calendar. Perhaps, a similar idea rests behind the euphemism *pliusas* ('plus')? If we are right, then both *starlet/asterisk* and *plus* should be added to the group *Time*. It is very likely that into this group the euphemism *mokesčiai* ('taxes') can also fit easily. Respondent who wrote *silkės* ('herrings') most probably omitted a couple of words. If these lost words are *pomidorų padaže* ('in tomato sauce'), then we can safely place these *herrings* (and also the above-mentioned *berries*) among expressions constituting the group *Colour*. Cf. *silkės pomidorų padaže* ('herring in tomato sauce') was actually listed by our respondents.

Sample 2 (elderly women) involved two hundred and eight (208) significantly older women (mean age: 73.66). The women mentioned in total 174 phrases and words denoting menstruation. Among them 57 were used to denote menopausal women and menopause. Having deducted them from the overall number of expressions provided by elderly interviewees, we received 117 lexical substitutes for menstruation.

We combined these 117 expressions into groups. Like in Sample 1 (young women), the grouping was done on the basis of dominant characteristics displayed by our lexical finds. Here are the names of the nine (9) groups obtained in this manner: *Time; Colour; Relatives, guests, and other visitors; Illness and indisposition; Gender specific; Blood; Flowering; Material culture of menstruation; and On oneself.*

In consequence of grouping, some words and phrases got into more than one group as expected. However, this time only 18 (15.38%) expressions migrated among groups, compared to 158 (17.63%) in Sample 1 (young women). These migrants represent a fraction of lexical finds. Containing several semantic nuclei of equal or similar power, they do not possess a dominant characteristic. For this reason, words and phrases of such kind may fit quite easily into more than one group.

Having distributed our lexical material among the above-named groups, we summed up the scores shown by each of them. The resulting amount (135) will be used for calculating the percentage of expressions per group.

Here are the groups – from largest to smallest – combined from lexical material provided by elderly interviewees.

Illness and indisposition. This group consists of 54 words and phrases out of the total number of lexical substitutes for menstruation (135); percentage: 40.00%.

Words and phrases contained in this group are very similar, compared to a parallel group in Sample 1 (young women). However, Sample 2 (elderly women) provides a large number of expressions, such as *savo/savos ligos* (4), *savo/sava liga* (8), *sergu savo ligomis* (1), *savom ligom* (2) (meaning ‘one’s own illness(es)’, ‘I’m ill with my own illnesses’). Not a single such expression is found in Sample 1 (young women). The euphemism *bėdos* (‘mild illness’, ‘indisposition’) is present in both samples. But *bėdos*, and especially *savo bėdos* (‘one’s own troubles’, ‘indisposition’) feature more prominently in Sample 2 (elderly

women), representing 20% of the lexical units contained in this group. Young women use these euphemisms less frequently (8.64%).

Gender specific. This group includes 19 expressions out of the total amount of words and phrases denoting menstruation (135); percentage: 14.07%. Words and phrases contained in this group do not differ in principle from expressions constituting a parallel group in Sample 1 (young women).

Material culture of menstruation. This group comprises 18 words and phrases out of the total number of lexical substitutes for menstruation (135); percentage: 13.34%.

Elderly women produced a rich array of expressions relating to the material aspect of menstruation hygiene. Euphemisms stressing clothing and articles of dress were numerous, e.g. *drapanė* (1) or *antdrapanės* (1), or *rūbiniai*, *rūbinė*, *rūbinės* (6) (all meaning something unmentionable on dress/clothing/underwear), *ant drabužių* (2) or *ant rūbų* (2) ('on dress/clothes'), *ant baltinių turi* (1) ('has on her (white) undergarment') or simply *ant baltinių* (1) ('on (white) undergarment'), *ant rubačkos* (1) ('on undergarment'), *ant belyznos* (1) ('on (white) underwear'). Young respondents did not provide any words connecting menstruation with clothes or dress smeared with menstrual blood. This can be explained in the following way: young girls no longer have big hygienic problems, compared to the troubles experienced by the older generation of women.

Having analysed numerous collections of menstruation-related beliefs and rites practiced by Slavs, Tat'iana Agapkina concludes that lexical substitutes for menstruation, such as *рубаша, на рубаше* ('undergarment', 'on undergarment') were widely popular in traditional Slavic cultures (Agapkina 1996: 104).

Victoria Louise Newton states that as many as 20.1% of expressions provided by her respondents (males and females) were connected with the material culture of menstruation. These words and phrases were often archaic (e.g., *on the rag, on the cloth, on the towel*). As indicated by the findings of Victoria Louise Newton's survey, these archaisms were doing quite well in the contemporary world (Newton 2016: 192–193). Even so, young women participating in our survey did not produce a single word or phrase able to enter a group of expressions referring to the material culture of menstruation.

Flowering. This group includes 14 words and phrases out of the total number of lexical substitutes for menstruation (135); percentage: 10.37%.

Elderly interviewees produced euphemisms related with flowering and flowers, e.g. *žydėjimas* ('flowering') (3), (*mergaitė*) *jau pražydo* ('(the girl) has

already burst into flower') (2), *žydi gėlės* ('flowers are blooming') (1), *moterų žiedai* ('women's flowers') (1), (*panos*) *Marijos žiedai* ('(Virgin) Mary's flowers') (2). Among flowers, roses and lilies are distinguished, e.g. *žydi raudona rožė* ('a red rose is blooming') (1), *rožės / lelijos žydi* ('roses/lilies are blooming') (2). Flowers occupied an important part also in a group of euphemisms denoting menopause (5). Only in this case, flowers were wilted, e.g., *jau nuvyto* ('already wilted') (1), *rožės nežydi* ('roses have stopped blooming') (1), *peržydėjo* ('past flowering age/flowering is over') (1), *nukrito žiedai* ('blossoms have drooped') (1).

Young respondents did not provide a single word or phrase connected with flowering. So, it is possible to state that these beautiful old euphemisms are becoming extinct in Lithuania.

Keith Allan and Kate Burridge describe the history of euphemism *flower* (including its variants, such as *flowering* or *rose*, etc.) in great detail. The authors argue that this euphemism is the most positive in the menstrual period vocabulary (Allan & Burridge 2006: 167–169).

Colour. This group consists of 9 words and phrases out of the total number of expressions (135); percentage: 6.67%.

The group is monochrome. Only red colour is represented, e.g., *raudonos vėliavos jau pakeltos* ('red flags are already raised') (1), *burokėliai verda* ('beet-root soup is boiling') (1), *Raudonosios armijos žygis* ('Red Army on the march') (1).

Relatives, guests, and other visitors. This group comprises 6 lexical substitutes out of the total amount of words and phrases denoting menstruation (135); percentage: 4.45%.

In this group, the euphemism *svečiai* ('guests') prevails, e.g., *svečiai atvažiavo* ('guests have arrived') or *turiu svečių* ('I have some guests'). Among these visitors only one female cousin can be found (*pusseserė atvažiavo*).

Blood. This group includes 5 words and expressions out of the total number of lexical substitutes for menstruation (135); percentage: 3.70%.

Among plain euphemisms, such as *kraujavimas* ('bleeding') (1) or *kraujuoju* ('I'm bleeding') (1), more sophisticated phrases, such as *vėdarus kraujinius dirba* ('is making blood sausages') (1) can be found.

On oneself. This group comprises 5 euphemisms out of the total number of words and phrases denoting menstruation (135); percentage: 3.70%.

Young women and girls did not mention such euphemisms at all. Judging from literature, the euphemism *ant savęs* ('on oneself') (3) and its pronunciation variants, such as *ant savy* (1), *unt sau* (1) used to be widely popular in the past (Šatkauskienė 2005: 111; Smetona 2015: 133). Lexical substitutes of this type are characteristic of Slavs (Agapkina 1996: 105–106).

Time. This group consists of 5 euphemisms out of the total number of substitutes for menstruation (135); percentage: 3.70%.

Unlike in a parallel group of Sample 1 (young women), words and phrases containing the component *day* were not represented excessively. This component is present in 3 lexical finds out of the 5 constituting this small group of euphemisms, e.g., *mano dienos* ('my days') (1), *tavo dienos* ('your days') (1), and *blogos dienos* ('bad days') (1).

Menopause

To the question: "What words do people in your environment use when referring to women who stopped menstruating for good?" interviewees would usually answer: "Now they are called *klimaksinės* ('stricken with menopause'), but in former times other words and names were used, too."

However, the women were not eager to share their knowledge with interviewers. Some of them stated directly: "Those words were bad, I do not remember them, I do not want to repeat them."

Not too willingly the interviewees produced in total 57 lexical substitutes for menopause and menopausal women. A large portion of them included words, such as *klimaksas*, *klimaksinės*, *klimakterinės* ('climacteric (menopause)', 'menopausal'). The number of expressions stressing old age, e.g., *senos moterys* or simply *senės* ('old women'), *senos* ('old') is not large. More numerous are words and phrases stressing time, e.g., *atėjo toks laikas* ('time has come'), *laikas pasibaigė* ('time has run out'), *atėjo jos laikas* ('her time has come'). By the way, these are the most positive expressions denoting menopause.

As already mentioned, words and phrases connected with flowering can be found also among substitutes for menopause. However, these positively-sounding lexical finds are not numerous. The largest number of expressions describe menopausal women negatively or very negatively, stressing the loss of reproductive power. Here are several examples of such dysphemisms:

nevaisingos ('infertile'); *bevaisės, bergždžios* ('barren'); *nebetinkamos* ('no longer useful'); *niekam tikusios* ('good for nothing'); *niekam nereikalinga* ('no longer needed by anybody'); *netikros moteriškos* ('fake females'); *nebemoteriška* ('no longer female'); *sausos* ('dry'); *išdžiūvusios* ('dried-up'); *tuščia kaip špokinyčia* ('as empty as a nesting-box for starlings'); *sudegė pinigai* ('money has burnt'); *atimti dokumentai* ('documents seized').

Menstrual know-how

Menstrual knowledge of pre-menarche adolescent girls, as witnessed by Lithuanian women of older generation, was less than minimal if not totally absent. They knew almost or absolutely nothing about menstruation. Only those girls who started menstruating relatively late had a vague understanding of what was in store for them. Basing on her research findings, Rasa Račiūnaitė argues that in the late nineteenth – the second half of the twentieth century, mothers in Lithuania did not tell their adolescent daughters anything about menstruation. With the exception of several cases, mothers avoided talking on this subject with their daughters (Račiūnaitė 2002: 84–85). Our findings show clearly that such behaviour of Lithuanian mothers started to change only in late twentieth century.

Answers given by our respondents and interviewees to the following questions indicate very convincingly how menstrual communication taboos and attitudes to menstruation have changed over the past fifty years.

All participants of this survey were asked the following question: "Did you know anything about menstruation before you started menstruating yourself?" All young respondents (423; mean age: 21.04) answered: "Yes". Mean age at which they got such information was 10.1. Elderly women (208; mean age: 73.66) had a different answer to this question: 108 (52%) interviewees did not know anything about menstruation before experiencing menarche themselves.

Answers to the question: "Did your mother tell you anything about menstruation before you started menstruating?" were equally eloquent. As many as 271 (64%) young respondents talked with their mothers about menstruation. Among elderly interviewees, only 39 (18.75%) talked with their mothers. Elderly women stated that they obtained vital information about this major event in a woman's life from their older sisters or female cousins, or more

speedily maturing girl-friends. Very rarely they learned about menstruation from their mothers.

Comparison of results shown by sample 1 (young women) and sample 2 (elderly women)

It is fairly difficult to compare not only the samples but also the lexical material produced by members of these samples. Firstly, sizes of the samples differ. Secondly, data collection procedures differ. Thirdly, education of young and elderly participants differs. Fourthly, data collection time differs. However, having assessed our lexical finds as a body, we can state that several things in this collection have caught our eye.

In order to see whether the menstrual period vocabulary has changed over the past fifty years, and – if it has – to identify the changes, we compared data produced by young women (Sample 1) with corresponding data obtained through interviewing elderly women (Sample 2).

Similarities. Viewed as a whole, words and phrases provided by elderly women fall into almost all groups created for organizing lexical material produced by young women. We could easily distribute them among the following groups: *Time, Colour, Relatives, guests, and other visitors, Illness and indisposition, Gender specific, Blood.*

Basic differences. Expressions filling three groups in Sample 1 (young women) (*Teen slang, Technical failure, Natural phenomena and calamities*) are absent in Sample 2 (elderly women). Teen slang words and phrases obviously do not appeal to elderly women. The same is true for frivolous euphemisms from the group *Technical failure*. The contents of group *Natural phenomena and calamities* in Sample 1 is less frivolous. However, it consists of borrowings from Western culture. Loanwords/phrases of such origin can hardly enter the vocabulary of elderly women.

In the sample of young women, words and phrases containing a temporal component occupy the highest position in the hierarchy of expressions. Lexical substitutes of this kind are very popular in Lithuania owing to mass media. Promoters of women's hygiene products can hardly do without euphemisms marking menstruation as a specific temporal event. However, in the sample of elderly women, such euphemisms fall to the lowest position. Elderly women are

certainly susceptible to ads promoting hygiene products, only they are affected by the ads adversely. Often during our interviews, elderly women grasped a chance to express their personal opinion about too annoying, open and embarrassing promotion of menstrual hygiene products on TV.

Compared to Sample 2, three groups of lexical substitutes (*Flowering, Material culture of menstruation, On oneself*) are missing in Sample 1 (young women). It must be noted that lexical material filling these groups in Sample 2 (elderly women) was supplied by the oldest participants of our survey. The age of each of them was above 70.

Borrowings. In Sample 1 (young women), the number of lexical borrowings from Western culture is large. Practically all euphemisms contained in the group *Natural phenomena and calamities* (14) are loanwords. Among loanwords/phrases *Bloody Mary* and all its variants (22), and *bloody days* (1), *pragaro dienos* ('hell days') (1) together with *day x* (1), *big day* (1) and *shark week* (1) must be counted. A list of borrowings also includes *Red Lady* (1), *red herring* (1), and *red wedding* (1). Seas, rivers, waterfalls feature prominently in this list, e.g., *Raudona / Raudonoji jūra* ('Red Sea') (2), *pasiplaukiojimas Raudonojoje jūroje* ('having a swim in/sailing the Red Sea'), *Nilo patvinimas* ('high tide on the River Nile'), *kriokliai* ('waterfalls') (1), *Niagaros kriokliai* ('Niagara Falls') (1). Among foreign countries only Japan is distinguished, e.g., *Japonija* ('Japan') (1) and *išvykau į Japoniją* ('I've left for Japan') (1). Euphemisms containing a Japanese component, such as *flying the Japanese flag, Japanese flag day* are discussed more exhaustively by Victoria Louise Newton. In her opinion, a red sun disk on a white background is seen in these phrases as symbolic of menstrual blood on a white sanitary towel. In her classification, phrases of this type fall into the category of *Events* since they mark menstruation as a specific event (Newton 2016: 200–201). Our list of borrowings contains also more traditional or even archaic euphemisms, such as *kraujo prakeikimas* ('blood curse') (1) and *nuotakos mirta* ('bride's myrtle') (1).

Conclusions

Lithuanian menstrual communication underwent a change in the late twentieth – the early twenty-first centuries. At the beginning of that period, the problem of menstrual hygiene – a major difficulty encountered by Lithuanian

womanhood for decades – was finally solved. This welcome relief affected two essential aspects of menstrual communication, namely the menstrual silence and the menstrual secrecy.

As indicated by the findings of this research, silence and secrecy are closely connected with menstrual hygiene: if menstrual hygiene products are unavailable, a special effort must be made in order to keep menstruation in secret.

Research data also show that mothers have started to communicate more willingly with their adolescent daughters on the subject of menstruation. This indicates that a vital element of communication taboo forbidding mothers to discuss menstruation with their daughters has crumbled in Lithuania.

As evidenced by research findings, menstrual knowledge has also increased in Lithuania. Today it is hardly possible to come across a premenarcheal girl absolutely ignorant about menstruation.

Comparison of data provided by Sample 1 (young women) and Sample 2 (elderly women) demonstrates that menstrual communication through encrypted language has also changed in Lithuania. Lexical material produced by Sample 1 (young women) and Sample 2 (elderly women) differs. The number of strategies used to convey menstruation messages has actually grown over the past fifty years. Menstrual vocabulary has become more diverse, e.g., numerous teen slang words/phrases substituting menstruation have emerged, and the number of borrowings from Western culture has increased.

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II

**The Ritual Year in the Context of
Changing Rules**

SEASONALITY OF BIRTHS AND MARRIAGES AMONG BESSARABIAN BULGARIANS IN THE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

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Abstract: The article looks at the seasonality of birth and marriage rates among the Bulgarian population in Bessarabia in the nineteenth – early twentieth centuries. The authors argue that the transition from traditional to modern models of reproduction is accompanied by a transformation in the religious identity of Bulgarians. The work demonstrates that starting a family with children becomes more secular and not as dependent on the practices of the church calendar taboos. The main determinants of marriage and birth seasonality are the mechanisms of migration and further adaptation to new conditions.

The calculations reveal the levelling and relative uniformity in the distribution of births through the months of the year. These trends highlight the transition from the traditional to the modern model. The dependence on religious factors is gradually weakening while the agricultural work cycle becomes dominant. It evidences the pronounced secularization of the worldview and social practices.

Keywords: birth rate, Bulgarians, demographic transition, demographics, marriage rate, migration, southern Bessarabia

Introduction

The working hypothesis is based on the suggestion that the transition from the traditional to the modern models of reproduction in the population (Vishnevskii 2014) was accompanied by the secularization of the religious mentality. It resulted in changes in relevant social practices: the creation of the family and the birth of the children were gradually getting detached from the church calendar taboos and increasingly gaining secular and pragmatic nature. We are going to demonstrate this trend by employing empiric materials about the seasonal nature of childbirth and marriage among the Bulgarian community of Budzhak or Bessarabia.¹ Massive formulary data expose the procedurality of these two factors of natural movement during the 1810s–1940s. What is significant for this context is the comparison of the calculation results, which enables us to reconstruct specific historical models of transition to the modern forms of natural population movement in the region.

From a historical and anthropological perspective, childbirth is defined in science as a category of the mass phenomenon of how new individuals appear in the population. With such an approach, this category is traditionally explored using statistical methods, with the two concepts being differentiated: number of births and birth rate. The former implies an absolute extensive index of the number of people who were born within a certain chronological interval (usually one year). Meanwhile, the birth rate indicates the intensity of the childbirths within a specific historic and ethnocultural environment. Before historical demographics became widely established as a subdiscipline (not until the mid-1970s), the synonymic terms of *fertility/productivity* were used. In particular, the main focus was placed on the research into the *fertility coefficient*. This physiological femiocentrism is now perceived exclusively in terms of the

“biological ability of women, men, a married couple to conceive and give birth to a certain number of children, regardless of the fulfilment of this ability; it is measured by the number of a potentially possible number of live-birth infants in women, which depends on the genetic features and wellness of the spouses as well as the co-existence of their physiological characters in marriage” (Borisov 2003 [1999]: 139). In other words, *fertility* is determined by the results of the interaction of physiological and biological factors. Meanwhile, the *birth rate* is influenced not only by biological factors but also by social and economic, geographical, ethnic, and historical factors. The latter is more efficient for the reconstruction of historical and cultural environments. In this context, “birth rate is an actual realization of fertility amid a number of conditions (where fertility is, certainly, the most significant one), as well as economic, cultural, psychological, and other factors” (Borisov 2003 [1999]: 141–142).

According to historical demographic projections, it is a common practice to reveal the “natural birth rate” as a process under the circumstances, where the birth rate is not consciously restricted by means of contraception and abortions. It is determined only by physiological and structural factors, i.e., fertility and population structure in terms of sex, age, and marital status (Borisov 2003 [1999]: 176; Melik’ian 1994: 197). The fulfilment of biological potential in ethnocultural contexts is studied via “reproductive behaviour” – “a system of actions and relationships that determines or rejects childbirth in the marriage or beyond it” (Melik’ian 1994: 348).

Outlining calendar periods when weddings take place plays an important role in understanding the population’s marriage and reproductive strategies in traditional society. These are the indices that reflect the settlement and economic specifics as well as the religious mindset. Among the entire corpus of actualized sources, only metrical books proved to hold relevant information about the dates of the marriages of the young spouses. Such circumstances of source content underline the focus of our analysis on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The everyday life of a Bulgarian family in Bessarabia during this time was determined by two groups of factors. On the one hand, all areas of life were subject to the seasonal cycles of agriculture, which is a feature of societies with agricultural economies. On the other hand, there is a profound influence of the Orthodox Church, with its system of religious taboos intertwined with the norms of customary law, which can be perceived as ethnocultural traditions.

Based on such a sophisticated life structure, similarly complex ideas about holidays and leisure time are formed. A special case here is understanding that both church and out-of-church weddings are celebrations of the birth of a new family. In the traditional world view, the births of children followed the same cycles.

For such reconstructions, we use methods of grouping the average and relative values, the index method, correlation-regression analysis, and the construction of sample time series. Moreover, engaging mass formulary documents as sources leads to applying the constructs of *conditional* and *actual generations*. When used together, they enable characterizing the typicality of phenomena, as well as the traditionalism (“patriarchy”) of reproductive behaviour, and its dependence on ethnocultural and historical factors.

For the purpose of these options of analysis, we are going to turn to sources of ecclesiastical origin. Monthly data from the metric book records enable us to trace the seasonality of such demographic phenomena as fertility, marriage, and mortality. The expediency and productivity of using historical demography in seasonal factor investigations have been proven since as early as the nineteenth century. Based on metric book records and personal observations, the researchers explore the seasonality of infant mortality and fertility (Arkhangel'skii 1872).

Over time, there have been attempts to unravel the correlation between the seasonal fluctuations of marriages, births, and deaths (Avdeev & Blum & Troitskaia 2002). In addition to demographic characteristics, the seasonality of birth provides a wide range of heuristic opportunities in the context of research into the processes of society's secularization, its worldview, and social norms. We will make an attempt to unfold this historical and cultural approach on the basis of seasonality. However, we should first focus on three main issues:

(1) Firstly, according to Maria Todorova's research into a Bulgarian family in the Balkans, within the first year of marriage, 68% of women give birth to their first child (Todorova 2006: 62). However, the marriage seasonality is quite clearly regulated by the church. Due to this fact, the seasonality of births is expected to reflect the regular distribution by months of the year.

(2) Secondly, according to Orthodox Church customs, intimate marital relations are forbidden during any fast. Formally, strict compliance with such restrictions is expected to reduce the birth rate during a certain

time of the year to a minimum level. The long-lasting fasts (such as a 40-day Easter Lent or a month-long Christmas Fast) are expected to affect the December and September birth rates. Therefore, verification of these data can expose the extent to which the Bulgarians of Bessarabia adhere to this tradition at different stages of their lives.

(3) Thirdly, throughout its life in Budzhak, the Bulgarian community has been explicitly agrarian. In this context, all areas of life are closely linked to agricultural cycles. We will verify this statement by matching the seasonality of conception and birth to these cycles.

Seasonality of births

Following Louis Henry and Alain Blum, when processing data from small groups, it is customary to study seasonal movements over long periods of time – in 20, 50, and even 100 years (Henry & Blum 1997: 62).

This approach seems practical since the number of days in different months varies, so they should all be reduced to a common indicator. A certain value is usually obtained by dividing the number of births per month by the number of days in it. This number of events per month is then converted into a notional amount based on 1,200 events per year. It provides for each month to be determined by the number of 100, regardless of its duration in days. Based on this calculation method, we present the analysis and empirical data on the seasonality of births and conceptions in the Bulgarian settlements of Budzhak in the tables below.

Table 1 presents the results of our data processing, retrieved from the current statistics of the church records. The metric books of the Bulgarian settlements of Bessarabia include information about 3311 facts of births between 1812–1850.

The distribution by month clearly shows a high birth rate in January-March, a significant decline from April to October, and high rates in October-November. According to the conventional assumption of a typical pregnancy period, children born in January-March are conceived in April-June, and children born in October-November are conceived in January-February, respectively. Given the seasonality of marriages, the largest number of weddings takes place in January-February and October-November. On the one hand, these months give the population a break from agricultural work, and on the other hand,

this time precedes the long Christmas Fast and Easter Lent, when the clergy are allowed to perform marriage ceremonies.

Table 1. Seasonality of births. 1812–1850²

1812–1850	Month of birth												Total
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	
	Month of conception												
	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Absolute number	379	359	329	239	239	248	249	251	250	338	288	142	3311
Days in a month	31	28.3	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	
Births per day	12.2	12.7	10.6	8.0	7.7	8.3	8.0	8.1	8.3	10.9	9.6	4.6	109.0
Relative data	135	140	117	88	85	91	88	89	92	120	106	50	1200

Comparing these materials, we can indicate that the high birth rate in October-November allegedly coincides with a high proportion of marriages (conceptions) in January-February. At the same time, the interdependence of these two groups of events is hardly factorial. It can be assumed that the seasonality of marriage is expected to determine the seasonality of the first births in Bulgarian families. It is unlikely, however, that fluctuations in marriage would have even a minor impact on the birth of the second and subsequent children, which clearly fall into the empirical array. There is another point that supports this idea. The number of births in July-August is quite small, which convincingly demonstrates a small number of conceptions in October-November. And this was one of the significant peaks in the popularity of church weddings in those days. Therefore, the correlation between marriage and birth seasonality among Bulgarians in Bessarabia is insignificant for the first half of the nineteenth century. Quantitative models show that the facts of the births of the first children (who provide the existing determinant) are almost dissolved in the births of other children – they make up at most 15% of all births, given the total birth rate of eight children per woman.

Seeking the answer to the question about the influence of clerical customs on the matrimonial and reproductive behaviour of the Bulgarians in Bessarabia in the first part of the nineteenth century, we pursue further calculations. It is

known that the most strictly observed fast is Easter Lent. During 1815–1861, Lent started on February 3 at the earliest and on March 6 at the latest. They would end on March 30 and April 30, respectively (i.e., on the Easter days) (Avdeev & Blum & Troitskaia 2002). Therefore, in the vast majority of cases, every March fell within Lent. From this perspective, children conceived in March are expected to be born in December. This is exactly what we see in Table 1: the lowest birth rates are found in December, and the highest are found in January, which corresponds to the period of conception after Lent. However, one should keep in mind the influence of pragmatics because March is the time of intensive agricultural work in Budzhak.

The next fast on the calendar is St Peter's Fast, which covers almost the entire month of June. Babies conceived at this time amount to almost 10% of all births during the year. Such high birth rates in March clearly indicate that either the taboo during the fast was not as strict and was often violated, or it was non-existent due to regional peculiarities.

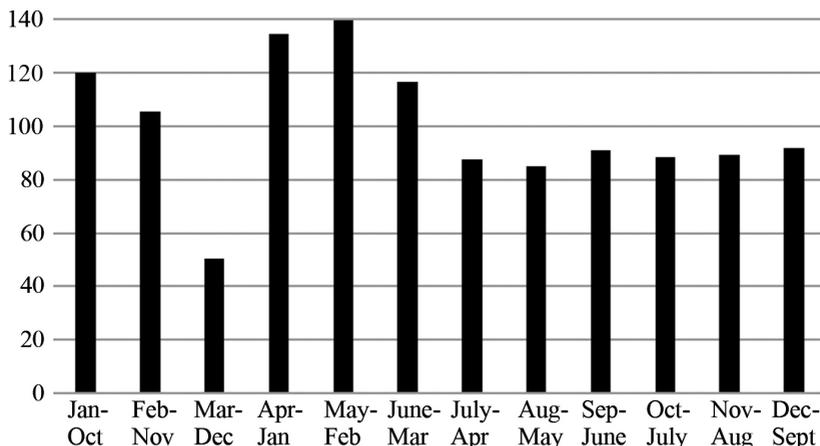
Assumption Fast is quite short and lasts only two weeks during the second half of August. Children conceived in August are born in May, where we observe the lowest birth rate of the year. Meanwhile, the birth rates in April and June are similarly low. It indicates a small number of conceptions between June and September. Certainly, it is the most intensive stage of fieldwork. This clearly shows the agrarian nature of the population group.

The fourth fast, which is rather long and strict, precedes Christmas. Going through December, it begins on November 15 (28) and ends on December 25 (January 6). The low number of births in September indicates a high degree of compliance with sexual prohibitions during this fast. This is directly evidenced by the explosion of the birth rate in October, as a consequence of the January conceptions after the end of the Christmas Fast.

Let us summarize the analysis of the seasonality of births by arranging these indicators in the order of conception months. Chart 1 reveals that in January there is an outbreak of conceptions after Christmas fasting. In February, it somewhat decreases, but the indicators remain quite high. It can be explained by the length of the gap between fasts, the lack of agricultural work, and perhaps the short daylight hours. As we have mentioned above, March is the month of strict Easter Lent as well as intensive sowing work in the fields. After a long Lenten period, there is a maximum number of conceptions in April and May, followed by a slight decrease in June. July, August, and early September are

the months of active harvesting. It can be assumed that active involvement in the labour process during this period plays a crucial role in shaping the births' seasonality. The number of children born between June and September is nearly identical. It suggests that during the autumn months and December, despite the Christmas Fast and a dramatic increase in the number of marriages, the mechanisms of population reproduction work in the same manner.

Chart 1. Seasonality of births. 1812–1850³



To determine historical dynamics in the seasonality of births in the first half of the nineteenth century, we are going to analyze the evidence in more detail. For this purpose, we grouped up our calculations with shorter time periods (Table 2).

With this approach, there is a clear distribution of the births number during 1812–1820. In absolute data for this period, there are records of 136 births in 5 colonies. They include Karagach, Tashbunar, Imputsita, and Chiishiya – the colonies of the Tukan group and the colony of Cheshma-Varuita, founded in 1810 (Ganchev 2014: 215). Accordingly, this scope of data largely illustrates the state of reproductive behaviour that had been transferred from previous territories, namely the Balkans. We are going to consider these aspects separately

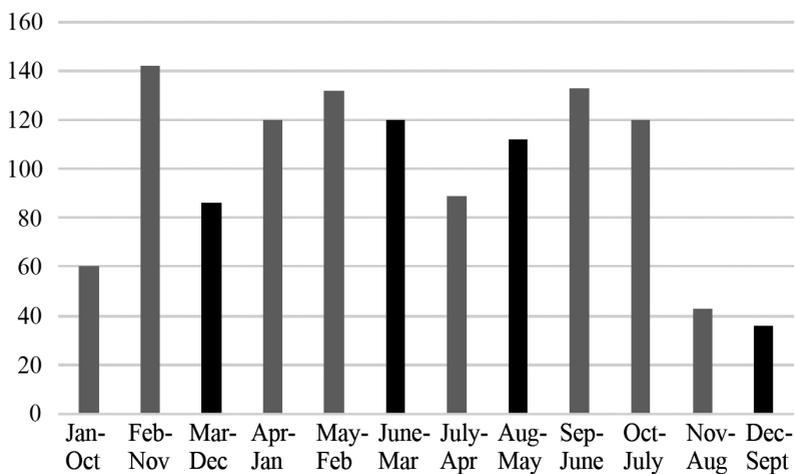
Seasonality of Births and Marriages Among Bessarabian Bulgarians

since they are significant characteristics that allow us to reveal the transition situation (Chart 2).

Table 2. *Dynamic of the seasonality of births 1812–1850⁴*

	Month of birth												Total
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	
1812–1820	120	132	120	89	112	133	120	43	36	60	142	86	1200
1822–1825	117	137	144	96	80	78	84	103	90	105	86	80	1200
1827–1830	140	131	136	52	80	107	98	121	64	118	98	56	1200
1831–1835	108	144	89	103	96	90	83	83	96	131	123	54	1200
1839–1843	151	132	108	76	80	97	103	87	102	119	97	48	1200
1846–1850	162	148	120	91	79	83	79	79	103	131	106	20	1200
Total	137	130	119	87	87	90	90	91	91	122	104	51	1200

Chart 2. Seasonality of births. 1812–1820⁵



For the sake of better perception, the conditional indicators of the number of births are arranged in the order of the months of conception, while the months that are covered by fasts are marked black. As a result, among the four fasts, the restrictions were observed only during Christmas. The figures for March, the time of Easter Lent, are higher than in January. The births level of children conceived in January is among the three lowest. Meanwhile, the September figures are high on the list. The data presented in Chart 2 show an almost complete absence of seasonality, determined by church fasts, the agricultural cycle, and fluctuations in the level of marriage. It can be suggested that this absence relates to insufficient sampling of the number of births, although we extrapolate it from similar studies. This is the reason why we seek other explanations to reflect the ethnocultural and historical specificity of the group.

Bulgarians were resettling throughout Bessarabia in the early nineteenth century and tried to escape the danger of Kirdzhalis and Bashi-bazouk gangs in the Balkans. As a result, they found themselves in a rather difficult situation because of the unresolved land issue. The new land redistribution for Bulgarian immigrants was first discussed at the early stages of the Russo-Turkish War of 1806–1812 (Meshcheriuk 1970: 10). This issue, however, was finally resolved only by the Senate Order of December 29, 1819, and a special Interior Ministry Act of March 12, 1820 (Meshcheriuk 1970: 15). It means that for over a decade, the early Bulgarian immigrants were uncertain about their position and the corresponding financial security. The scarce pre-1820 records relate to agriculture and animal husbandry and significantly hinder the clear statement of the existence of any agricultural system. We believe that the permanent inflow of new migrants from the Balkans and the internal migrations of the Bulgarian population across Budzhak do not contribute to the coordination of the entire migration community of a particular colony to the seasons of fieldwork. What is more, many residents were engaged in cattle breeding.

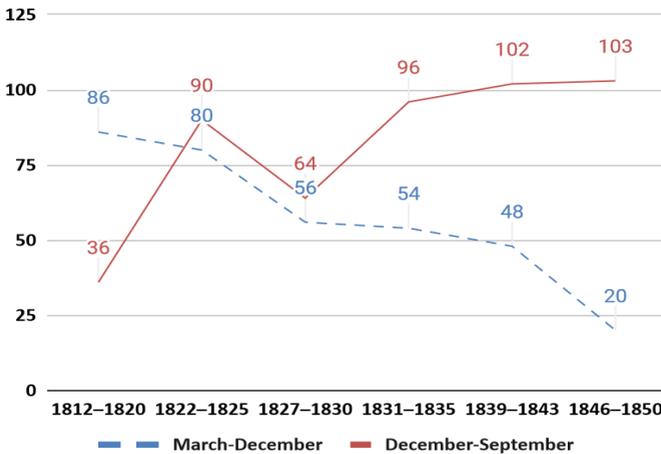
It is not clear why Bulgarian immigrants do not strictly observe the fasts. One can only assume that over four hundred years of Ottoman rule in the Bulgarian lands had affected popular Orthodoxy and the degree of the population religiosity.

The Bulgarians moved to the Budzhak territories with their priests, traditions, and, perhaps, their version of the religious rules' perception and a variant of customary law. The role and authority of the clergy among the settlers are not known yet. However, half a century later, one of the priests, Vakkh Gur'ev,

in his letters from the fronts of the 1877–1878 Russo-Turkish War, mentioned that “Bulgarians go to their churches very rarely, reluctantly, and never stay there long. They just light a candle and go home as soon as possible, because in the church nothing appeals to or interests them” (Gurev 1883: 105). This is one of those arguments that does not allow for the establishment of the characteristics of the phenomenon but provides grounds to change the wording of the scientific approach to the forms and levels of folk religiosity among Bulgarian immigrants.

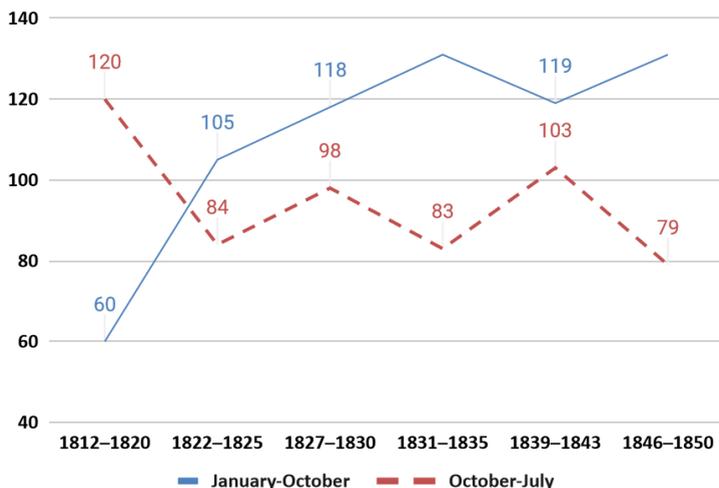
Within the dynamic analysis of the changes in the seasonality of births among the Bulgarian settlements in Bessarabia in the first half of the nineteenth century, we would like to bring one more fact to the spotlight. Chart 3 clearly shows the transformation in the relative number of births in September and December. These two months reflect the dependence on conceptions during the Christmas Fast and Easter Lent. The diagram shows two opposite trends. One evidences the growing importance of Easter Lent for Bulgarian expats. The second refers to the gradual loss of the meaning of fast observation before Christmas.

Chart 3. *Changes in the number of births in September and December of 1812–1850⁶*



Another illustrative trend is shown in Chart 4. It provides graphical data on changes in the number of births in October and July. These children were conceived, accordingly, during the two months with the largest number of weddings. And yet again, we can observe two opposite regularities. Similar to December-September, in January-October the number of births clearly increases, while in October-July there is a downward trend.

Chart 4. *Changes in the number of births in October and July 1812–1850⁷*



Therefore, the analysis of the seasonality of births in the Bulgarian colonies of Bessarabia in the first half of the nineteenth century enables us to argue about several significant features of the historical and demographic behaviour of this group. Despite the pronounced seasonality of marriages, determined by fasting periods and cycles of agricultural work, it does not affect the seasonality of births. Unfortunately, the scarce and fragmented nature of some metric books prevents us from reproducing the singled-out image of the birth of first children, which is directly influenced by marriage seasonality.

Of the four main Orthodox fasts during the year, only two (Christmas Fast and Lent) affect the seasonality of births. This correlation should be seen as

factorial and is the one that determines the stronger influence of Lent until the middle of the nineteenth century. Along with fasting, the influence of agricultural cycles is still active. Jointly, they lead to a resonant minimum value of conceptions in March and, consequently, a record low number of births in December. At the same time, despite the fasts and fieldwork, there is an absolute levelling of seasonality in the second half of the calendar year, from July to December. An explanation for this is yet to be found, but thus far we can only assume the beginning of the secularization processes of the worldview and relevant social practices, which are superimposed on the pragmatics of engagement in agricultural work.

Data on the intervals between the birth and christening of children can be very important indicators of how these trends spread. For this purpose, we created a database of 2470 cases, extracted from the metric books as of 1812–1850. To identify the historical dynamics of these processes, all cases are grouped into two chronological segments that correspond to the first and second quarters of the nineteenth century. Analysis results and empirical data are presented in Table 3.

Above all, we pay attention to the sex ratio in the group of children born. During 1812–1825, this figure equalled almost 100, with a slight advantage in favour of boys. The next period of 1827–1850 sees the ratio of 103.5, and the total for the entire first half of the nineteenth century is 102.8. Such a ratio is considered typical and falls fully within the allowable range from 100 to 110 (Henry & Blum 1997: 27). According to the data, it can be argued that in the Bulgarian family of Bessarabia, the most common practice was to baptize a child during the first week after his or her birth. In some regions of Bulgaria, the best day for that matter was the third day after birth, except when the child was “weak”. In such cases, the parents would take an effort to baptize him/her during birth or on the same day (Todorova 2006: 56-57). Based on popular practice, the intervals between the birth and christening are divided into five groups: children baptized on the day of birth, those baptized on the following day (second or third day), those baptized during the first week (in this case, on the fourth-seventh day), and those baptized before the fourteenth day and in other calendar terms.

Table 3. Intervals between children's births and baptizing in 1812–1850⁸

	1812–1825				1827–1850				Total
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls		
	Abs. number	%							
Date of Birth	15	4.8	9	2.9	15	1.6	14	1.5	53
Second-third day	57	18.4	56	18.2	57	6.1	50	5.5	220
Before the seventh day	146	47.1	146	47.4	491	52.1	454	49.9	1237
Before the fourteenth day	62	20.0	66	21.4	349	37.0	365	40.1	842
After the fourteenth day	30	9.7	31	10.1	30	3.2	27	3.0	118
Total	310	100.0	308	100.0	942	100.0	910	100.0	2470

Such filtering of metric book data shows that in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, almost 5% of boys and 3% of girls were baptized on their birthday. It can be assumed that such a high percentage is rooted in high infant mortality. This is the reason why parents seek to baptize their children as soon as possible. In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the share of such early christenings was reduced to 1.5% and the sex-related peculiarities were leveled. Somewhat paradoxically, this practice contradicts the smallpox outbreak and, thus, the high mortality rate. A similar trend is observed for newborns in the second group – those who were baptized on the second or third day since they were born. By 1825, such cases accounted for more than 18%. However, in 1827–1850, there were only 6.1% of boys and 5.5% of girls (average of 5.8%). In other words, if in the first chronological period 22.1% of all children (every fifth) were baptized on the first, second, or third day of their lives, then during the second period the percentage of such cases decreased significantly – down to 7.3% (more than three times). It can be explained by a certain stabilization and improvement of living conditions in the Bulgarian colonies in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. It resulted in the reduction of serious risks and, consequently, fear for the lives of newborns.

The data presented in Table 4 highlights the dominance of the infants' baptizing tradition before the seventh day since their birth. Almost half of

all children in this period were baptized on the fourth or seventh day of their life. The comparison with the percentage of the baptized during the second week of their lives in both quarters of the first half of the nineteenth century shows that during 1827–1850 the share of such children doubled. This trend yet again contributes to our argument about the better living conditions and the well-being of the colonists.

The latter group deserves particular attention. Why do parents not baptize their children for such a long time? Quite a high percentage of such cases brings this issue from the dimension of individual views to the context of social practices and social phenomena. It can be assumed that in some cases, a delay like this is associated with the absence of a priest. However, it is highly likely that parents simply have no concerns about the life of the child and are indifferent to the correlation between health and religious ritual. But this civil secularized worldview is not yet widespread among the Bulgarians of Bessarabia. The longest period before baptizing a child in 1825 was 38 days. In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, there was a similar interval of 39 days. What is significant is that the whole data set reveals no cases of baptism after the fortieth day.

Yet another illustrative fact is discovered here: the changing dynamics in the last group. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, approximately 10% of all children were baptized after two weeks since their birth. In the second quarter of the same century, the percentage of such cases decreased more than threefold. The factors of such transformations may vary. One of the reasons is a process of changing traditions, influenced by priests' recommendations who sought to reduce the number of babies who die unbaptized. However, it seems possible that paperwork (besides the actual religious sacrament, metric books also function as administrative and fiscal records of the population) was established and improved. Therefore, parents try to register their children as soon as possible.

When analysing baptismal data, we distributed the entire database for the first half of the nineteenth century by months of the year to trace the dependence on months or at least certain seasons (Table 4). The highest percentage of infant baptisms is recorded in winter, December-February. When explaining it by natural conditions, we should remember that similar monthly averages are found in April, August, and September. In the second group, children are

most often baptized in January, March, and October. Evidence of baptism up to the seventh and fourteenth days of life is quite uniform.

What should also be outlined is the peculiarity of the distribution of baptism rituals in September (as a reminder, this is one of the months in which the minimum birth rate is recorded). The percentage of baptisms in these two groups is over 88%, divided into 42% and 46.1%, respectively. It can be assumed that this is due to the special engagement of Bulgarians during the harvest. In this context, similar trends are expected to be observed during July-August, but they are not. Thus, it is impossible to detect a more or less pronounced correlation between the interval from birth to baptism of the child and the seasons or people's economic employment. It brings us to the thesis that the Bulgarian population in the first half of the nineteenth century understood the importance of the baptism ritual in people's lives. The risk of the death of an unbaptized child is perceived by the parents as a serious matter, hence the attempt to perform the rite regardless of the external circumstances.

Table 4. *Intervals between births and baptizing by months 1812–1850⁹*

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
On the birthday	Abs. number	6	9	3	7	3	3	1	6	5	2	4	4
	%	2.2	3.4	1.2	3.7	1.6	1.6	0.5	3.2	2.6	0,8	1.9	3.6
Second-third day	Abs. number	30	17	28	13	15	16	11	14	12	33	17	14
	%	11.1	6.4	11.4	6.9	7.9	8.5	6.0	7.6	6.2	13.0	7.9	12.6
Before the seventh day	Abs. number	140	139	125	97	90	87	101	90	81	114	124	60
	%	51.7	52.3	51.0	51.6	47.1	46.0	55.2	48.6	42.0	45.1	57.7	54.1
Before the fourteenth day	Abs. number	85	93	78	63	73	72	59	63	89	95	60	22
	%	31.4	35.0	31.8	33.5	38.2	38.1	32.2	34.1	46.1	37.5	27.9	19.8
After the fourteenth day	Abs. number	10	8	11	8	10	11	11	12	6	9	10	11
	%	3.7	3.0	4.5	4.3	5.2	5.8	6.0	6.5	3.1	3.6	4.7	9.9
Total	Abs. number	271	266	245	188	191	189	183	185	193	253	215	111
	%	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 5. *Seasonality of births in 1851–1941¹⁰*

Year	Month of birth												Total
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	
	Month of conception												
	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
1851–1910	124	95	116	83	105	106	82	111	110	116	88	64	1200
1924	79	61	79	74	143	172	103	111	57	87	147	87	1200
1941	85	221	85	110	149	132	85	64	44	64	77	85	1200

Researching deeper into the seasonality of births among the Bulgarians of Bessarabia, we will extrapolate our observations of the first half of the nineteenth century. Further, we are going to generalize the frequency of births and its fluctuations in the second half of the nineteenth century and almost the entire first half of the twentieth century – 1851–1941 (Table 5). Identification of the historical dynamics of births’ seasonality demonstrates that at the beginning of the twentieth century, all potential features of the first half of the nineteenth century are still observed, including conditional monthly averages, which are almost the same. There is a trend, though insignificant, to balance the distribution between the months – a slight decrease in the popularity of January and February (124 and 95 births, respectively, instead of previously recorded 135 and 140 births); increase in the number and conditional indicators for May and September (105 and 110, respectively, instead of 88 and 92).

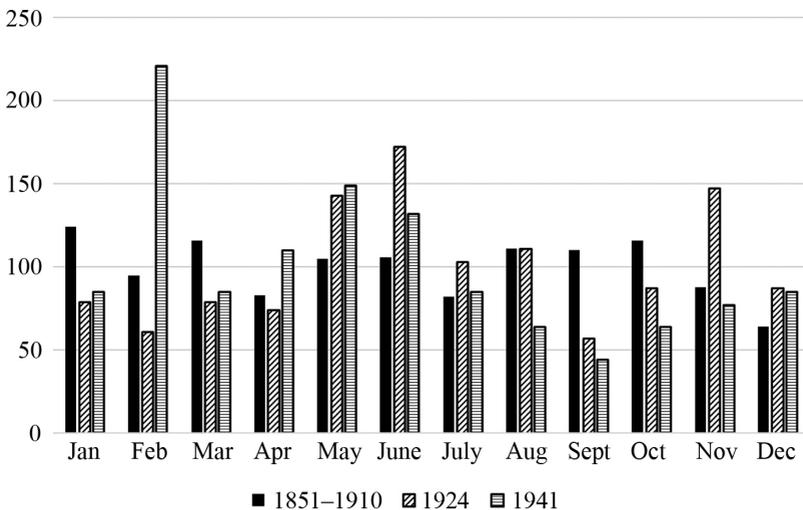
The trend towards equalising of the number of births by months continues. In 1924, there was a significant transformation, namely, the reorientation of the popular months. Now the leaders are June (172 against 91 in the first half and 106 in the second part of the nineteenth century), February (147 against 106 and 88, respectively), May (143 against 88 and 105, respectively). Thus, the number of conceptions in September, July, and August increases. It is not yet possible to identify any factor contributing to such an increase, so we will focus only on the weaker dependence on the agricultural work calendar. It is likely the way how early urbanization manifests itself: some men leave the communities to earn money.

By 1941, most of these trends were consolidated, albeit with some specificity. In particular, February regains its popularity as a record holder in the seasonal birth rate (221; that is, every sixth child is born this month); May (149) and June

(132) retain their maximum positions. As of 1941, together with April (110), these three months gave life to every third child born. Notably, December as the month of conception remains the lowest on the list with 44 births (half of the other months' average). This situation indicates the traces of relict religiosity in behaviour as well as the complete loss of correlation between the calendar of conceptions and agricultural work cycles.

Such historical dynamics are best presented in Chart 5. Gradual evolution is demonstrated only in August, while regression (the gradual loss of indicators) can be observed in January, February, and December. The remaining months do not have a clear geometric relationship. Paradoxically, the indicators of 1941 look the least balanced: the May figures are not only fundamentally different from the previous data (by two and three times, respectively), but are also three times larger than the other figures for this year. This imbalance significantly narrows the heuristic value of our assumptions about 1941; we are dealing with a coincidence that cannot yet be explained due to a lack of sources.

Chart 5. Seasonality of births in 1851–1941¹¹



Seasonality of marriages

To analyze seasonal and calendar projections of young spouses and their parents, all the records on church weddings are divided according to the months when the ceremonies took place (Table 6). Further, the data are divided into three intervals to expose the possible dynamics during almost forty years of the first half of the nineteenth century.

Table 6. Seasonality of marriages in 1812–1850¹²

	1812–1825		1827–1835		1839–1850		Total	
	Abs. number	%	Abs. number	%	Abs. number	%	Abs. number	%
January	43	41.7	87	37.7	81	35.4	211	37.5
February	13	12.6	30	13.0	21	9.2	64	11.4
March	0	0.0	1	0.4	0	0.0	1	0.2
April	4	3.9	2	0.9	4	1.7	10	1.8
May	6	5.8	9	3.9	5	2.2	20	3.6
June	3	2.9	6	2.6	4	1.7	13	2.3
July	3	2.9	4	1.7	2	0.9	9	1.6
August	2	1.9	7	3.0	3	1.3	12	2.1
September	1	1.0	5	2.2	0	0.0	6	1.1
October	10	9.7	24	10.4	30	13.1	64	11.4
November	18	17.5	51	22.1	79	34.5	148	26.3
Total	103	100.0	226	97.8	229	100.0	558	99.1

The Table shows that in 1812–1825 the vast majority of weddings took place in January (41.7%). There were fewer in February, October, and November (12.6%, 9.7%, 17.5%). From April to September, there are only several weddings recorded, and only one ceremony in March. A similar choice of a wedding date is observed in 1827–1835. In January, the number of weddings decreased by only a few percent (37.7%) and then climbed slightly in February, October, and November (22.1%). In 1839–1850, the share of marriages in January decreased by another 2.3% (35.4%); besides March, weddings no longer took place in September. Instead, the share of weddings scheduled for November (34.5%) and October (13.1%) was growing.

The estimates indicate that the largest number of marriages falls between the end of the agricultural year in the autumn and the beginning of the following spring. The most popular months of autumn are October and, to a greater extent, November. It matches not only with the completion of major household and fieldwork but also with economic calculations for the harvest. During this period, there are conditions for observing a wedding ritual according to all traditions, which often regulate this event throughout the year.

Table 6 does not feature December. Of the entire array of metric books for this month, there is not a single case of marriage in that month. This is due to the strict observance of the Christmas Fast and the ban on marriage ceremonies. However, the following two months of winter (especially January) host the largest number of weddings. This tradition is justified by the fact that, according to the observations of doctors and priests, winter weddings and, consequently, conception during January-February provide the healthiest children. Meanwhile, women set the biological rhythm of conception and birth. The time of the wedding determines the entire further course of family life (Mironov 2003 [1999]: 170).

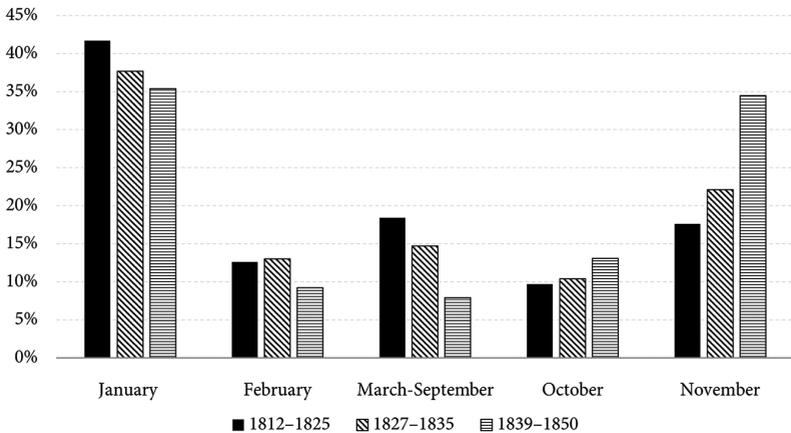
Despite the strict ban on weddings, the 1834 Metric Book of Chiishiya holds an entry about such a ceremony, performed on March 15. The colonist Petro Ivanov Gechov and Nedilya Zlateva, the daughter of the colonist Zlate Kostev, got married.¹³ That year, Easter was celebrated on April 22, and, accordingly, March 15 was the Saturday of the second week of Lent. Of course, such exceptions were extremely rare. Nonetheless, Maria Todorova, studying a similar issue, cites ethnographic materials associated with the settlement of the Gabrovo region. She mentions that poor people tend to get married during the Christmas Fast, despite the religious ban, because such a wedding costs much less (Todorova 2006: 36).

Besides Easter Lent, March features the beginning of intensive fieldwork. The interval between it and late September and sometimes mid-November is a period of extremely low marriage rates. A surge in the number of weddings can be detected closer to late November. Notably, the obtained data shows that the church carries on wedding ceremonies even during the St. Peter's Fast, which covers the whole of June, and the Assumption Fast, lasting for two weeks in August.

Chart 6 is drawn up to trace the dynamics of changes in marriages' seasonality during the first half of the nineteenth century. For display purposes, all

marriages between March and September are grouped into one cluster. In this way, two parallel trends are clearly demonstrated. The first is a clear increase in the share of marriages that take place in November and, in part, in October. This trend derives from the shorter interval from January to September. It means that among the Bulgarian population of southern Bessarabia, November is increasingly preferred as the most popular month for weddings. The second trend, which is not represented clearly but comprehended intuitively, is the process as a result of which, by 1850, the boundaries of the seasonality of marriages became clearer. The percentage distribution of marriages in the March-September cluster should also be addressed. At the first stage (1812–1825), the total share is 18.4%, at the second (1827–1835) – 14.7%, and at the third (1839–1850) – only 7.9%. It means that in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, during active agricultural work, every fifth marriage was consecrated in church, while in the middle of the nineteenth century, it was only every twelfth marriage.

Chart 6. Dynamics of marriage seasonality in 1812–1850¹⁴



The transformation processes described above bring us to the following conclusion. The Bulgarian immigrants who arrived in Bessarabia in the early nineteenth century made a very diverse group in terms of economic traditions. A part of this population in the Balkans was engaged in agriculture, others

in animal husbandry. A significant number of people in this resettlement environment were artisans. Such heterogeneity led to a certain blurring of interseasonal marriages. In the process of adapting to new economic conditions, the vast majority of colonists were engaged in agriculture. It triggered the process of changes in marital seasonality, the formation of clearer boundaries, and drastic transitions.

From the perspective of historical demography, marriage seasonality is usually explored over long periods: 20, 50, and 100 years (as is the birth seasonality). Since the number of days in months differs, it is necessary to correlate the obtained values with one period. For this purpose, we divide them by the number of days in the month or, for February, the average of days. Then this number of events per day is replaced by relative values, totaling 1200 (Henry & Blum 1997: 62). This method will be utilized to analyze the marriage seasonality among Bulgarians in Budzhak.

Table 7. Relative values of marriage seasonality in 1812–1850¹⁵

1812–1850	Month of church wedding												Total
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Absolute number	211	64	1	10	20	13	9	12	6	64	148	0	558
Days in a month	31	28.3	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	
Church wedding ceremonies per day	6.81	2.06	0.03	0.32	0.65	0.42	0.29	0.39	0.19	2.06	4.77	0.00	18.00
Relative values	454	138	2	22	43	28	19	26	13	138	318	0	1200

Table 7 shows the data of the metric books dating back to the first half of the nineteenth century in accordance with the method of marriage seasonality analysis suggested by Louis Henry and Alain Blum. The obtained relative figures of weddings per month provide us with a ratio identical to that described above. It can be established that despite certain transformational processes in marriage seasonality for almost forty years, January and November remain the leading months in the number of marriages.

Table 8. *Days of the week of church weddings in 1812–1850*¹⁶

	1812–1825		1827–1835		1839–1850		Total	
	Abs. number	%						
Monday	8	8.2	26	11.5	6	2.6	40	7.3
Tuesday	54	55.1	108	47.8	185	81.5	347	63.0
Wednesday	9	9.2	29	12.8	14	6.2	52	9.4
Thursday	7	7.1	17	7.5	3	1.3	27	4.9
Friday	8	8.2	6	2.7	3	1.3	17	3.1
Saturday	9	9.2	17	7.5	10	4.4	36	6.5
Sunday	3	3.1	23	10.2	6	2.6	32	5.8
Total	98	100.0	226	100.0	227	100.0	551	100.0

Table 8 determines the days of the week on which weddings are scheduled by the Bulgarian population of southern Bessarabia in the first half of the nineteenth century. During 1812–1825, over half of the weddings were scheduled for Tuesday. On other days of the week, there was approximately the same share of ceremonies (from 7.1% to 9.2%), and only Sunday featured 3.1% of weddings. In 1827–1835, the share of weddings held on Tuesdays dropped by 7.8% to 47.2%. Slightly fewer weddings started taking place on Fridays and Saturdays. Meanwhile, Monday, Wednesday, and Sunday became the days when weddings were scheduled more often (10%). During 1839–1850, the share of weddings scheduled for Tuesday almost doubled to 81.5%. At the same time, weddings became much less frequent on other days of the week (6.2–1.3%).

Thus, until the mid-nineteenth century, the vast majority of newlyweds opted for Tuesday as their wedding day. We believe this is due to an increased level of religious education among the population. At the same time, village priests had a significant influence on wedding day selection. This influence is likely to become determining in a considerable number of cases.

Table 9. *Days of the week of church marriages by months in 1812–1850*¹⁷

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Total
Monday	19	3	1	1	0	0	0	3	0	2	11	40
Tuesday	141	32	0	6	7	3	7	2	2	44	104	348
Wednesday	15	9	0	1	6	1	0	3	0	2	17	54
Thursday	6	8	0	1	0	3	1	0	1	3	6	29
Friday	6	3	0	0	1	2	0	2	0	1	2	17
Saturday	11	5	1	1	1	1	0	2	2	9	3	36
Sunday	9	6	0	0	4	3	1	0	1	3	5	32
Total	207	66	2	10	19	13	9	12	6	64	148	556
%	37.2	11.9	0.4	1.8	3.4	2.3	1.6	2.2	1.1	11.5	26.6	100.0

Table 9 shows the monthly choice of Bulgarian colonists of Budzhak in terms of days of the week for wedding ceremonies. It enables us to compare the results of the analysis of the population's choice for wedding ceremonies and days of the week and month.

Notably, the priority of both January and Tuesday is confirmed in this case too, as on January Tuesdays most weddings are held (141). The second most popular were November Tuesdays (104). The third is ranked by October Tuesdays, and the fourth – by Tuesdays in February. The next most frequent weddings are on January Mondays (19). All other January days of the week, too, witness more marriages than their counterparts in other months. The only exception was January Wednesdays with 15 weddings, which are second to November Wednesdays with their 17 weddings.

Table 10 shows the population's choice of individual colonies for the days of the week for wedding ceremonies. Among them, Tashbunar is believed to be inhabited by representatives of the Tukan ethnographic group of Bulgarians. The colony of the Imputsita is a home for many Tukans, yet since this settlement lies on the path of migration routes, its population shows manifestations of other cultural features. The village of Chiishiya is inhabited by Tukans and Balkans. Cheshma-Varuita includes the members of the Syrian group of Bulgarians (Serts) (Ganchev 2014: 215-222). Therefore, we can trace the influence of certain ethnocultural features of these settlements' residents on their choice of time of wedding ceremonies.

Therefore, in Tashbunar, the vast majority of marriages (69.4%) were held on Tuesday, and another 14.5% of weddings would take place on Wednesday. On other days of the week in this locality, there were 1.7–5.2% of weddings. A similarly large share of Tuesday weddings was typical for Chiishiya (69.2%). In contrast to Tashbunar, in this colony, almost as many marriages would take place on Wednesday (11.0%) as on Monday (9.9%). On other days of the week, Chiishiya held from 2.2% to 4.4% of wedding ceremonies. No weddings were scheduled for Sunday. In Imputsita, most weddings would take place on Tuesday (54.5%), although they were a little fewer than in Tashbunar and Chiishiya. This weekday is followed by Sunday (13.9%) and Saturday (11.9%). On other days of the week, 3.0–6.9% of weddings were held. The population of Cheshma-Varuita also held more than half of their weddings on Tuesday (52.5%). Their other preferred days were Monday (13.5%), Sunday (9.9%), and Thursday (9.2%).

Table 10. Weeks of the wedding days by individual colonies in 1812–1850¹⁸

	Tashbunar		Imputsita		Chiishiya		Cheshma-Varuita	
	Abs. num.	%	Abs. num.	%	Abs. num.	%	Abs. num.	%
Monday	3	1.7	7	6.9	9	9.9	19	13.5
Tuesday	120	69.4	55	54.5	63	69.2	74	52.5
Wednesday	25	14.5	6	5.9	10	11.0	10	7.1
Thursday	8	4.6	3	3.0	3	3.3	13	9.2
Friday	5	2.9	4	4.0	2	2.2	6	4.3
Saturday	9	5.2	12	11.9	4	4.4	5	3.5
Sunday	3	1.7	14	13.9	0	0.0	14	9.9
Total	173	100.0	101	100.0	91	100.0	141	100.0

The comparative perspective with the Balkans is indicative. According to the calculations of M. Todorova, during the years 1834–1886, among the Bulgarians of the Baltaji region, January (549 out of 757 cases) and Tuesday (60%) were also the most popular for weddings (Todorova 2006: 36–38). As a result, the author concludes that “Bulgarian Christian marriage (both Orthodox and Catholic), with its tabooed days and periods, becomes an integral part of the national calendar” (Todorova 2006: 37). This proves the stability of the ethnocultural tradition, formed in Bulgaria and functioning in Budzhak. The

enhancement of this tradition is observed in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Table 11). Our selective calculations from the metric books of 1851–1910 strongly indicate the absolute dominance of Tuesday (the total of 64.8% or two-thirds of all church weddings) and Monday (17.6%). In dynamics, one can consider the growing significance of Monday as a “lucky day” for weddings.

Table 11. Days of weddings in 1851–1910¹⁹

	Years								Total	
	1851	1877	1882	1883	1886	1887	1906	1910		
Monday	0	4	0	0	0	0	12	6	22	17.6%
Tuesday	17	7	24	10	11	9	1	2	81	64.8%
Wednesday	0	0	6	0	0	3	0	0	9	7.2%
Thursday	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	4	3.2%
Friday	4	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	6	4.8%
Saturday	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2.4%
Total	23	15	30	11	11	12	14	9	125	100.0%

Table 12. Months of weddings in 1851–1910²⁰

	Years								Total	%
	1851	1877	1882	1883	1886	1887	1906	1910		
January	1	6	2	0	0	0	3	0	12	9.6%
February	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	1.6%
March	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	1.6%
April	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	2.4%
June	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	4	3.2%
July	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	2.4%
September	15	0	18	7	0	11	7	5	63	50.4%
October	6	5	5	3	9	0	4	2	34	27.2%
November	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1.6%
Total	23	15	30	11	11	12	14	9	125	100.0%

Table 13. *Relative values of months of weddings. 1851–1910*²¹

	Month of church wedding												Total
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Absolute number	12	2	0	2	3	0	4	0	3	63	34	2	125
Days in a month	31	28.3	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	
Church wedding ceremonies per day	0.39	0.06	0.00	0.06	0.10	0.00	0.13	0.00	0.10	2.03	1.10	0.06	4.03
Relative values	115	19	0	19	29	0	38	0	29	605	327	19	1200

There is stability regarding the days of the week. However, the calendar months undergo fundamental changes (Table 12). If in the first half of the nineteenth century, January, February, and November were apparent leaders, then in the second half of the same century they were outpointed by September and October. More than half of all weddings took place in September (50.5%) and a quarter was held in October (27.2%); together, they accounted for more than three-quarters of all weddings. January stands but as a relic, holding almost every tenth wedding (9.6%), against every third in the first half of the nineteenth century (37%). May becomes the month in which, as in December, no wedding is recorded.

The calendar marriage seasonality shows clear regrouping. Suppose that they reflect the processes of stabilization of the economic structure of the Bulgarians of Bessarabia. It is the agrarian nature of this community that determines the popularity of the autumn months when all fieldwork ends, as do the harvesting and financial calculations. An important part of any wedding celebration is the collective meal, which has all the staples of September and October (from food to wine).

This transition is well illustrated by comparing the two periods utilizing relative values (Table 13). In the first half of the nineteenth century, January and February accounted for almost half of all weddings – 454 and 138, respectively. Meanwhile, in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, they were only one-tenth – 115 and 19. The same picture is applied to September and October – 13 and 138 (the first half of the nineteenth century)

against 605 and 327 (the second half of the nineteenth century – beginning of the twentieth century).

Conclusions

Exploration of specific historical aspects of demographic reproduction in the Bulgarian population of Bessarabia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries makes it possible to focus on the seasonality of birth and marriage rates. Separately, we identified the trends in the factors underlying the changes in the processes mentioned. In particular, the eclectic nature of both seasonal variants is demonstrated. The research also characterizes the transformations concerning the factors that determined the popularity of certain months of births and marriages.

It demonstrates certain patterns despite the stochastic nature of the population's natural movement. For instance, we revealed the influence of the church and religious norms on marriages in certain months and days of the week throughout the year. Sometimes, the fluctuations of such a marriage also determined the birth processes (especially in the first half of the nineteenth century regarding October-November matching the weddings in January-February). However, what was more significant were the factors of economic pragmatics, which can be detected in a kind of explosion of births in January-March (respectively: April-June).

Another productive factor is the process of adaptation to the resettlement environment. We tend to see it as a manifestation of society modernization through migration models. It has been proved that resettlement groups have greater demographic potential. Artificial 'rejuvenation' of the population in this way generates more rapid patterns of population reproduction. In its turn, it determined new trends in seasonality. This correlation was detected and demonstrated by comparing different ethnocultural groups of Bulgarians in Bessarabia: Serts, Tukan, and Balkans (Ganchev 2014: 215–222).

Over time, the results of our calculations indicate a conditional equalization and an approximate uniformity of the distribution in births number by months. It is this trend that can be characterized as the transition from the traditional agrarian model to the new or modern one. Dependence on religious factors is gradually weakening, and the economic cycle of work prevails. It determines

both the marriages' seasonality and, accordingly, the birth rate. This is a strong illustration of the secularization of world views and social practices.

Our observations and calculations are made on the ethnocultural community of the Bulgarians of Bessarabia. The identified patterns of marriage and birth rate seasonality require careful extrapolation to other territorial and ethnic groups. However, it can already be argued that the demographic transition from traditional to modern models of population reproduction was clearly expressed not only in direct factors (transformations in the structure and number of deaths and births) but also in changes in ethnocultural factors (the transition to new world views and modern social practices). This is specifically exposed in a comparative analysis of seasonality, which reflects trends in the context of our working hypothesis.

Notes

¹ In linguistic and cultural terms, the Bulgarians of Budzhak represent four groups of immigrants: Tukan or Chiishiya group – people from the Surnena Sredna Gora region in southern Bulgaria; Chushmeli group – immigrants from a group of villages between the cities of Shumen and Provadia in eastern Bulgaria; Thracian group – people from southeastern Bulgaria and a number of villages located on the territory of modern Turkey; and South Balkan group – immigrants from the Sliven and Yambol districts of Bulgaria (see more in Ganchev 2014: 215–222).

² National Archive of the Republic of Moldova (NARM). Fund (F.) 211. Description (Descr.) 1. Case 1. Sheet 220–221, 216–219, 263–266; Descr. 4. Case 46. Sheet 96–151, 261–311, 693–737, 1062–1091, 1127–1148; Descr. 21. Case 1. Sheet 10–18, 19–32 overleaf (ol.), 33–46, 72–89, 216–223 ol., 314–323 ol., 257–264, 199–204 ol.

Municipal Enterprise “Izmail Archive” (MEIA). F. 630. Descr. 1. Case 6. Sheet 25–37, 224–228; Case 9. Sheet 111–116; Case 14. Sheet 43–53, 99–107, 271–281, 421–439; F. 631. Descr. 1. Case 2 [Colonies of Tashbunar, Imputsita, Cheshma-Varuita, Chiishiya]; Case 3. Sheet 234–248, 431–447, 692–704, 758–768; Case 5. Sheet 264–272, 484–524, 776–792, 852–866; Case 6. Sheet 300–313, 534–548, 844–858, 934–944; Case 7. Sheet 218–223, 398–407, 730–745; Case 9. Sheet 113–141, 183–199, 585–607, 807–820; Case 10. Sheet 113–130, 669–685, 693–718, 921–934; Case 11. Sheet 122–144, 192–203, 648–660; Case 12. Sheet 113–130, 172–184, 244–258, 445–461, 560–569, 613–625, 631–648; Case 13. Sheet 91–110, 153–173, 448–463; Case 15. Sheet 1–35 ol., 285–327; Case 16. Sheet 306–357; Case 18. Sheet 236–279 [Colonies of Tashbunar and Chiishiya]; Case 20. Sheet 42–93, 289–331, 885–921; Case 23. Sheet 55–110; Case 24.

Sheet 112–172, 279–321, 536–605; Case 27. Sheet 303–357, 629–703; Case 28. Sheet 136–199, 336–388, 648–723, 371–417 ol.

³ See the note to Table 1.

⁴ See the note to Table 1.

⁵ See the note to Table 1.

⁶ See the note to Table 1.

⁷ See the note to Table 1.

⁸ See the note to Table 1.

⁹ NARM. F. 211. Descr. 1. Case 1. Sheet 216–221, 263–266; Descr. 4. Case 46. Sheet 96–151, 261–311, 693–737, 1062–1091, 1127–1148; Descr. 21. Case 1. Sheet 10–32 ol., 33–46, 72–89, 199–204 ol., 216–223 ol., 257–264, 314–323 ol.

MEIA. F. 630. Descr. 1. Case 6. Sheet 25–37, 224–228; Case 9. Sheet 111–116; Case 14. Sheet 43–53, 99–107, 271–281, 421–439; F. 631. Descr. 1. Case 2 [Colonies of Tashbunar, Imputsita, Cheshma-Varuita, Chiishiya]; Case 3. Sheet 234–248, 431–447, 692–704, 758–768; Case 5. Sheet 264–272, 484–524, 776–792, 852–866; Case 6. Sheet 300–313, 534–548, 844–858, 934–944; Case 7. Sheet 218–223, 398–407, 730–745; Case 9. Sheet 113–141, 183–199, 585–607, 807–820; Case 10. Sheet 113–130, 669–685, 693–718, 921–934; Case 11. Sheet 122–144, 192–203, 648–660; Case 12. Sheet 113–130, 244–258, 172–184, 445–461, 613–625, 631–648, 560–569; Case 13. Sheet 91–110, 153–173, 448–463; Case 15. Sheet 1–35 ol., 285–327; Case 16. Sheet 306–357; Case 18. Sheet 236–279 [Colonies of Tashbunar and Chiishiya]; Case 20. Sheet 42–93, 289–331, 885–921; Case 23. Sheet 55–110; Case 24. Sheet 112–172, 279–321, 536–605; Case 27. Sheet 303–357, 629–703; Case 28. Sheet 136–199, 336–417 ol., 648–723.

¹⁰ NARM. F. 211. Case 36. Sheet 32–108 ol., 279–318; Descr. 20. Case 16. Sheet 65–106; 497–538; Case 17. Sheet 72–112; Case 19. Sheet 224–264; Case 20. Sheet 73–109; Case 107. Sheet 364–401; Case 162. Sheet 1–79.

MEIA. F. 26. Case 2. Sheet 1–79; also according to the data from House-books of the village councils of the villages Hlavany, Vynohradne, and Zadunaivka of Bolhrad district of Odesa oblast (kept in the village councils).

¹¹ NARM. F. 211. Case 36. Sheet 32–108 ol., 279–318; Descr. 20. Case 16. Sheet 65–106, 497–538; Case 17. Sheet 72–112; Case 19. Sheet 224–264; Case 20. Sheet 73–109; Case 107. Sheet 364–401; Case 162. Sheet 1–79.

MEIA. F. 26. Case 2. Sheet 1–79; also according to the data from House-books of the village councils of the villages Hlavany, Vynohradne, and Zadunaivka of Bolhrad district of Odesa oblast (kept in the village councils).

¹² The table is drawn up by the authors according to: NARM. F. 211. Descr. 4. Case 36. Sheet 32–108 ol., 279–318; Descr. 20. Case 16. Sheet 65–106, 497–538; Case 17. Sheet 72–112; Case 19. Sheet 224–264; Case 20. Sheet 73–109; Case 107. Sheet 364–401; Case 162. Sheet 1–79; F. 211. Descr. 1. Case 1. Sheet 216–221, 263–266; Descr. 4. Case 46. Sheet 96–151, 261–311, 693–737, 1062–1091, 1127–1148; Descr. 21. Case 1. Sheet 10–46, 72–89, 199–204 ol., 216–223 ol., 257–264, 314–323 ol.

MEIA. F. 630. Descr. 1. Case 6. Sheet 25–37, 224–228; Case 9. Sheet 111–116; Case 14. Sheet 43–53, 99–107, 271–281, 421–439; F. 631. Descr. 1. Case 2 [Colonies of Tashbunar, Imputsita, Cheshma-Varuita, Chiishiya], 3. Sheet 234–248, 431–447, 692–704, 758–768; Case 5. Sheet 264–272, 484–524, 776–792, 852–866; Case 6. Sheet 300–313, 534–548, 844–858, 934–944; Case 7. Sheet 218–223, 398–407, 730–745; Case 9. Sheet 113–141, 183–199, 585–607, 807–820; Case 10. Sheet 113–130, 669–685, 693–718, 921–934; Case 11. Sheet 122–144, 192–203, 648–660; Case 12. Sheet 113–130, 244–258, 172–184, 445–461, 560–569; 613–625, 631–648; Case 13. Sheet 91–110, 153–173, 448–463; Case 15. 1–35 ol. Sheet 285–327; Case 16. Sheet 306–357; Case 18. Sheet 236–279 [Colonies Tashbunar and Chiishiya]; Case 20. Sheet 42–93, 289–331, 885–921; Case 23. Sheet 55–110; Case 24. Sheet 112–172, 279–321, 536–605; Case 27. Sheet 303–357, 629–703; Case 28. Sheet 136–199, 336–417, 648–723.

¹³ MEIA. F. 631. Descr. 1. Case 12. Sheet 631–648.

¹⁴ See the note to Table 6.

¹⁵ See the note to Table 6.

¹⁶ See the note to Table 6.

¹⁷ See the note to Table 6.

¹⁸ See the note to Table 6.

¹⁹ The table is drawn up by the authors according to: NARM. F. 211. Descr. 4. Case 36. Sheet 32–108 ol., 279–318; Descr. 20. Case 16. Sheet 65–106, 497–538; Case 17. Sheet 72–112; Case 19. Sheet 224–264; Case 20. Sheet 73–109; Case 107. Sheet 364–401; Case 162. Sheet 1–79.

²⁰ See the note to Table 6.

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OLD RITUALS IN A NEW CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT. THE 'DROWNING' OF A MIDWIFE AND THE 'HANGING' OF A MATCHMAKER IN LITHUANIA AND WESTERN BELARUS

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Abstract: In the analysis of baptism rituals in eastern Lithuania and western Belarus, I have repeatedly drawn attention to the similarity in the structure of individual traditional wedding and baptism rites and even the transition of some ritual acts from one ritual to another. The similarities noticed in the ritual acts performed at baptisms and weddings in the first half of the twentieth century have led to a more detailed analysis of these life-cycle celebrations in the twenty-first century. In this article, I examined the peculiarities of the ceremonial/symbolic killing (or attempted killing) of a midwife and a matchmaker. Analysing both rituals I revealed the differences between the traditional ceremonial killing of a midwife and the 'hanging' of a matchmaker; uncover and compare modifications of these rites in modern society. I showed that, with the loss of their former ritual value and the absence of matchmakers and midwives in real life, the ritual practice of symbolic drowning or hanging has remained. This indicates a

desire to preserve the old customs and, with modifications, practice them in today's baptism and wedding ceremonies as the final part of the ritual. On the other hand, a thorough analysis of the ceremonial acts has shown that both the symbolic hanging of a matchmaker and, in particular, the drowning of a midwife (*bobutė*) are late cultural phenomena, dating back only one or several hundred years in the areas studied.

Keywords: baptism rituals, Belarus, Lithuania, matchmaker, midwife, ritual purification, symbolic death, wedding rituals

Introduction

The midwife played an important part in the baptism ceremony ritual in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In eastern Lithuania and western Belarus,¹ the ceremonial acts of taking away the midwife and/or the symbolic midwife's drowning were performed at the end of baptism.² Although the institution of midwives ceased to exist in Lithuania by the second half of the twentieth century, as women began giving birth in hospitals, the 'drowning' of a midwife at the end of baptism had not changed. Only the ritual functions of the midwife (sometimes in Lithuanian called *bobutė*³) were taken over by an older female relative of the person being baptized, usually a baby's grandmother. Sometimes both grandmothers of a baby (in rare cases, even to this day) took part in baptism. Therefore, in the above-mentioned areas, even in the early twenty-first century, the baptism ceremony often ends with the symbolic drowning of a baby's grandmother. I pose a question: in what ways do these old ceremonial practices persist in today's culture despite the social and cultural changes in society?

In the analysis of baptism rituals, I have repeatedly drawn attention to the similarity in the structure of individual traditional wedding and baptism rites and even the transition of some ritual acts from one ritual to another. At the end of a wedding, as well as at the end of a baptism with the midwife or, the grandmother, the matchmaker was symbolically killed, usually hanged or in rare cases, drowned. He was an eloquent, witty, older rural man, usually a stranger (not a relative) to the young man's family, the person, who arranged the marriage partners, negotiated the girl's share, and took part in the wedding ceremonies. Like the midwife, who helped the baby to arrive into the world and 'created' a new person through ceremonial acts, the matchmaker's role was 'to

create' a new family. Nowadays, the traditional roles of the matchmaker and the midwife are no longer performed either before or during weddings and baptisms. However, the symbolic hanging of a matchmaker, like the drowning of a midwife, has remained one of the most striking ceremonial moments and one of the most entertaining parts of the wedding or baptism rituals to this day.

The similarities noticed in the ritual acts performed at baptisms and weddings in the first half of the twentieth century have led to a more detailed analysis of these life-cycle celebrations in the twenty-first century. In this article, I examine the peculiarities of the ceremonial/symbolic killing (or attempted killing) of a midwife and a matchmaker and try to reveal the differences between the traditional ceremonial killing of a midwife (when in addition to her medical function, she also performed a social function by introducing a new member to the family and local community) and the 'hanging' of a matchmaker. I will also try to compare the modified rituals (when the institution of midwives ceased to exist and the role of the midwife in baptism was taken over by a baby's grandmother; whereas the symbolic role of the matchmaker was replaced by the 'steward' of the wedding).

Personal field research material collected in Lithuania in 1988–2010 and in western Belarus in 2011–2012⁴ constitutes the main source of this article. The absolute majority of respondents are Lithuanians and profess the Roman Catholic faith. I also relied on the research of Lithuanian ethnologists, archival material, and historical sources. Larger-scale research on weddings was conducted by Juozas Baldžius (Baldauskas 1936, Baldžius 1940), Angelė Vyšniauskaitė (2008), Irena Čepienė (2012), and Irma Šidiškienė (2003; 2007; 2009; 2012). Vincas Krėvė Mickevičius (1933) and Rasa Paukštytė-Šaknienė (Paukštytė 1999; Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2007; 2009; 2012) have carried out more extensive research on the topic of baptism. Saulė Matulevičienė (2011) has published the most comprehensive description of the midwife's drowning.

Sources of wedding customs of the early nineteenth century, describing the trial of a matchmaker, were published by Stasys Skrodenis (1966; 1972) and Viktoras Gidžiūnas (1994). The works of Motiejus Valančius (1972: 311–312), Antanas Juška (1880: 71–78), Juozas Mickevičius (1933: 47–125) and others are also significant. The sources describing both wedding and baptism rituals have been studied by Angelė Vyšniauskaitė (1964) and Pranė Dundulienė (1999). This, in turn, allows comparison of the two.

Acts imitating the symbolic killing of a matchmaker and a midwife in the nineteenth and early twentieth century

The ethnologist A. Vyšniauskaitė observed that the ritual of the matchmaker's hanging in western Lithuania was formed between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, while in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the trial and the symbolic hanging of a matchmaker were recorded not only in western Lithuania but also in central Lithuania (Vyšniauskaitė 2008: 414). The oldest source attesting to the 'hanging' of a matchmaker comes only from 1820. In the sermons of the priest Jurgis Ambraziejus Pabrėža, who lived in western Lithuania,⁵ one can find the following:

From the very morning, the 'headsman,' dressed in a frightening manner, with his tongue lolled out towards the guests, is talking and showing all kinds of gestures, as if he intends to hang the matchmaker ... The headsman and his friends have been gulping down vodka under the gallows. (Skrodenis 1972: 70)

A source from 1822 also mentions the 'hanging' of a matchmaker. It states that this ritual has been preserved in Lithuania since ancient times (Daukantas 1976: 19). In the absence of written sources of the functioning of the custom in old times, it can be assumed that this ritual was already present at least in late-eighteenth-century weddings. It also suggests that the ritual has developed in the present-day territory of Lithuania. Juozas Baldžius, who searched for surviving traces of kidnapped wedding customs, supported this argument. He wrote,

It would seem that the hanging of a matchmaker, found perhaps only in our wedding ceremony rituals, should be considered to be the surviving traces of a kidnapped wedding; neither the Latvians, nor the Russians, nor the Belarusians, nor the Ukrainians, nor the Bulgarians, nor the Poles, nor the Germanic peoples have this custom. (Baldžius 1940: 115)

In 1869, Motiejus Valančius described in detail the ritual acts of the 'hanging' of a matchmaker in western Lithuania. According to him, at the end of the wedding, the bride would save the matchmaker who was about to be hanged by throwing a towel around his neck (Valančius 1972: 311–312). The 'hanging' of a matchmaker was also mentioned in Juška's description of nineteenth-century

Lithuanian wedding customs in south-western Lithuania, which was written in 1870 and published in 1880 in *Svotbinė rėda* [A Wedding Party]. The book describes the trial of a matchmaker. It says that a judge is appointed from among the wedding party and decides to hang the matchmaker in the manor house under a green lime tree for “kidnapping a live man”. The description is accompanied by an exhaustive decree specifying which part of the matchmaker’s body is to be used for what purpose. From the forehead it is promised to make a lantern, from the nose to make a rifle, from a moustache to make a brush for shoes and so on. The matchmaker, who is about to be hanged, is defended by girls and is ransomed by the bride, who gives him a linen cloth or a towel. After the ransom is received, a straw scarecrow dressed in men’s clothing is hanged (Juška 1880: 71–78).

In the late nineteenth century, in the north-eastern part of Lithuania, as well as in western Lithuania, the wedding party tried to kill a matchmaker. When the matchmaker was ransomed, the scarecrow was hanged, less often burned or drowned. The timing of the execution of a matchmaker differed between western and north-eastern Lithuania. While in western Lithuania, he was executed at the end of the wedding, in north-eastern Lithuania, the matchmaker was not allowed to go to the church with the wedding party. The women who stayed at the bride’s house pursued relentlessly the matchmaker in every possible way, ordering him to write a will until the bride’s mother took pity on him and bought him off with a towel or a cloth. The matchmaker was then dressed in an entertaining way, given a gift and allowed to go to the groom’s house (Šidiškienė 2003: 54). I. Šidiškienė notes that a comparison of the maps of the prevalence of symbolic acts at weddings shows similar areas of the prevalence of the symbolic acts of the groom’s hostile welcome at the bride’s house and the trial of a matchmaker in north-eastern Lithuania. The author argued that this meant that “at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the bride’s community treated the groom as an ‘intruder from a foreign country’ and his main representative, the matchmaker, as a ‘robber’ and ‘deceiver’” (Šidiškienė 2003: 54).

In this region, we also know of the matchmaker being taken to the tavern on a harrow turned upside down or being tied to a harrow (Čepienė 2012: 123). Similarly, a midwife was also taken away, which clearly shows the similarity between baptism and wedding ceremonies. However, according to researchers of wedding rituals, we can say that at the beginning of the twentieth century,

when the regional features of the wedding ceremony began to disappear, the 'hanging' of a matchmaker, which existed in western Lithuania, became popular throughout the country due to its entertaining nature and was performed at the end of weddings (Vyšniauskaitė 2008: 414–415). In the early twentieth century, the role of a matchmaker as a wedding steward increased (Čepienė 2012: 124).

The oldest descriptions of the 'drowning' of a midwife (*bobutė*) at baptism date back to the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. They are specific to eastern Lithuania. Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius, who described baptismal rituals of an earlier period in his *Krikštyną apeigos Dzūkijoje* [Baptismal Rituals in Dzūkija], which also covered part of eastern Lithuania, did not mention this ritual yet (Krėvė Mickevičius 1933). Nor do we have data from other sources earlier than the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. A publication by A. Vyšniauskaitė in 1964, based on the author's ethnographic field research, showed that in eastern Lithuania and western Belarus the baptism feast ended with the taking away of the midwife, who had already done her job and was no longer needed by the household. During baptism, the village men would also take the midwife on a harrow turned upside down, in a trough, in a skiff, on a sledge, or on a two wheeled cart to a body of water. If they demanded a ransom, they would take the midwife to the inn or to their neighbors' house who were expecting a baby. For this ceremony, the midwife would be specially wearing a fur coat inside out, a tall hat made of coloured paper, straw and feathers, and adorned with 'earrings' made of nut shells and 'necklace' made of onion braids. In one hand, she would hold a pine broom or a long whip to drive the 'horses,' and in the other, a red scarf tied to a long pole, symbolizing the 'flag.' The 'horses' were mainly village men, although women also took part in the ritual (Vyšniauskaitė 1964: 474).

My ethnographic fieldwork data collected in 2012 in the Gervėčiai area (Lithuanian settlements in western Belarus) also showed that in this area, at the end of baptism, the *bobutė* ('midwife') was taken to be 'drowned.' The respondent, who was born in 1931, said that in the old days, the midwife used to dress in an ugly way, like a gypsy, with soot on her lips, and always tried to kiss somebody. The midwife was taken away on a sledge or *račiukai* ('a small wagon'). The other guests at baptism changed their clothes too, and sometimes the parents as well. They would walk disguised through the village singing and visiting every house. Upon coming to a courtyard, they would eat, sing, dance

and try to steal something, such as a sausage or onions. Later, the stolen item was returned.

Alternatively, according to other respondents interviewed in those areas, the dressing-up party would carry vodka and snacks with them and treated everyone they met. Everyone in the village would come out to see the disguised party. After they had passed (and the midwife had been transported), the whole village would go back. According to one respondent, the godparents usually did not travel with the procession, only the *pastaroninkai* ('strangers'). After the whole village had been covered, the dressers would take a bath and that would be the end of baptism (R. Paukštytė-Šaknienė's notes from the Gervėčiai area in western Belarus made in 2012).

I would like to point out that in baptism rituals, some parallels exist with calendar festivals. The persons who carried and accompanied the midwife often wore masks, as at Christmas – Epiphany Day period or Shrove Tuesday. Moreover, as on the aforementioned festivals, the ceremony was very noisy. Although A. Vyšniauskaitė's study of baptism rituals mentions only the taking away of the midwife (*bobutė*), some also mentioned taking her to a body of water. A. Vyšniauskaitė also noted that such a ritual act also existed in Slavic lands, when the day after baptism the midwife was taken away with the godparents on a harness or two wheeled cart in order to obtain ransom from her (Vyšniauskaitė 1964: 474). This ritual was known in Belarus and Ukraine (Kabakova 1999: 660). Also such ritual act one can see among the Ukrainians from the Russian Far East; the midwife was seated on a harrow and driven to a tavern. In the same region, Russians put a midwife on brushwood and rode around the village (Argudiaeva 1997: 177). Also we can see symbolic killing of midwife. The Ukrainian scholar Olena Boriak observed that at the end of baptism, the carrying away of the midwife to her house, to a tavern or to the water and pulling her down was a climactic moment of the ritual complex (Boriak 2009: 198).

The symbolic drowning of a midwife is also mentioned in early twentieth-century sources. Reda Kralikauskaitė, describing the rituals of Dieveniškės (south-eastern Lithuania), wrote,

The men put the bobutė in a harrow or a cart and take her away. They transport her around the fields until she pays them off. The ransom was a 'rooster' (a lozenge. — RPS), money or sweets. If the men do not get the

ransom, they take the bobutė to a river or a puddle and dump her there. Later, of course, they would bring her back. (Kralikauskaitė 1995: 373)

Antanas A. Bielinis, describing the baptismal rituals of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century north-eastern Lithuania (Tverečius area), also recorded the ritual of the drowning of a midwife.

When brought to the puddle and when the guests tried to turn the harrow over with the bobutė in it, she would begin to say some inarticulate words and wave her arms to the sky as if she were calling out something, as if she were asking for something. When the men stopped in fright, she would threaten them that if they laid a finger on her, she would turn them into rams, calves or stones. The men were all frightened by such bobutė's incantations and threats and, leaving her alone by the puddle, would run away. After that, the bobutė would go home and not show up at baptism again that evening. (quoted in Matulevičienė 2011: 46)

Leaving aside A. Bielinis's integrity and refraining from commenting on the situation described, I must stress that it is one of the oldest accounts of the 'drowning' of a midwife, and one of the few accounts that does not mention the ransom of a midwife. At the same time, similar ritual acts related to the 'drowning' of a midwife were also documented in Belarus, where the midwife was transported on a harness in the presence of people disguised in various costumes (a doctor, a soldier etc.). The ritual even had a name: *везці маніўчэ бабы* ('taking the midwife to drown her') (Kucharonak 2001: 319).

The analysis of the available material suggests that the rituals of ceremonial killing of a midwife are known only from ethnographic sources from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, covering eastern Lithuania and Belarus (also in some part of Ukraine). However, the territory of this ritual act does not correspond to the symbolic custom of the 'hanging' of a matchmaker, which existed in western, partly central and northern Lithuania during the same period. According to Slavic ethnological studies, the symbolic killing of a matchmaker by hanging has been unknown in their territory. It is true that matchmaker was sometimes punished or ridiculed in the Slavic states, but the actions of direct symbolic killing (by hanging) are not mentioned (Gura 2012: 539–540),

The links between ritual acts of execution at baptisms and weddings

A review of the above-mentioned sources and related studies raises the question: what is the meaning of those ritual acts? In order to answer this question, let us look at the analogies and differences between baptism and wedding rituals. In both cases, the midwife and the matchmaker were accused of wrongdoing. The midwife was accused of having ‘caught’ an ugly baby (assisted in childbirth) – without teeth and hair, looking nothing like their godparents (Vyšniauskaitė 1967: 62). The matchmaker was accused of lying about the groom’s wealth. The bride usually saved the matchmaker from execution, while the midwife had to save herself from being drowned. Sometimes women tried to rescue her. However, there is no record of the midwife being rescued by the childbearing mother. There is a rare mention of the baby’s father buying her out. In the case of weddings, the matchmaker was usually sentenced to be hanged – the scarecrow representing him was hanged or otherwise destroyed. In contrast, at baptism, the scarecrow representing the midwife was not presented and destroyed. At both baptisms and weddings, in most cases the symbolic killing was performed by men, while the buying out of both the midwife and the matchmaker was carried out by girls or women.

There are other similarities between baptisms and weddings. In some areas of north-eastern Lithuania, a similar symbolic killing was carried out at both weddings and baptisms. In the Ignalina area (north-eastern Lithuania), at the end of the nineteenth century, the custom was to kill with a knife the *meškos močia* (‘mother of a bear’). Such a name was given to the hostess of a wedding or baptism, the woman who prepared the feast for the party. At the end of the wedding, she is “laid down on a bench; a trough is brought in, a rolling pin is rolled over her, the axes are taken out, and the woman screams, ‘*Ratavokit* (‘Rescue me’)! They’re killing me!’” She would buy out herself (like a midwife at baptism) with a drink or a cake (Karaliūtė 1966: 172). The ‘mother bear’, like the midwife who was taken for drowning, was wearing a fur coat inside out.⁶ When describing the cases of killing the ‘mother bear’ at weddings, A. Vyšniauskaitė assumed that the ritual was taken over from baptism rites, where, according to the ethnologist, the ‘mother bear’ could be considered as a representative of the other world, who by her mysterious acts helped a new person to arrive

to this world. The killing of the ‘mother bear’ may have been associated with the destruction of the old, former life necessary for birth (Vyšniauskaitė 2008: 416). The author also pointed to a similar ritual in Germany of collecting money for a cook dressed as a bear at a wedding. However, no symbolic killing was performed (Vyšniauskaitė 2008: 416).

Why do baptism and wedding rituals feature a bear, and why does a midwife or a bride wear a fur coat? The mask of a bear was also worn by the party disguised in various costumes at the wedding (they would go for a stroll at various stages during the wedding, including the ‘hanging’ of a matchmaker (Vyšniauskaitė 2008: 408–409)). The mask also functioned in calendar customs. According to Arūnas Vaicekauskas’s map dedicated to dressing-up characters, the mask of a bear was popular in western Lithuania during the Shrove Tuesday carnival. In northern Lithuania, the mask was worn at Christmas and, to a lesser extent, at Three Kings Day. In north-eastern Lithuania, the bear character appeared at youth gatherings from Christmas to Shrove Tuesday (Vaicekauskas 2005: 118–119).

As Vaicekauskas noted, in order to make the bride rich, she was enveloped in a fur coat at the wedding. The author also points to another ritual mentioned in sixteenth-century sources: eating the genitals of a bear at the wedding in order to make the bride and groom fertile (Vaicekauskas 2005: 118–119). The bear motif is also present in the mid-twentieth century customs during the first day after Shrove Tuesday in western Belarus (Rasa Paukštytė-Šaknienė and Žilvytis Šaknys notes from the Grodno area in 2011). On that day, children were required to do a somersault to make it easier for the animals to produce offspring, as the “bear was also somersaulting.”

The bear was also mentioned in an unpleasant joke performed on the first day after Shrove Tuesday. The children were told that the bear was giving away shoes outside the barn. They were told to run there barefoot, “otherwise you will be left with nothing.” When the children ran barefoot through the snow, their feet would turn red from the cold, and the adults would say that these were their shoes. Later, the supposed gifts were replaced by real ones, i.e. new shoes. It was said that “the bear turned over the fence and left the gift,” and children had to run barefoot to get them (the material collected by Žilvytis Šaknys in 2012 from the Gervėčiai area in western Belarus). It is clear that the symbol of the bear is multidimensional, present in many cultural spheres.

Why was the symbolic killing of a midwife or a matchmaker associated with the end of baptism or wedding? The Ukrainian scholar Natalia Gavriľiuk observed that in Ukraine a water purification ritual was performed on the midwife to enable her to receive the next baby. Apparently, according to the folk belief, the midwife after receiving the baby, like the mother after giving birth, became impure (Gavriľiuk 1981: 99). This interpretation could also be applied to the ritual drowning of a midwife. Water rituals we can see in the *Babinden* ('Midwife Day'). In Bulgaria on the 8 of January, the woman takes the midwife onto a cart to the river or the well, where the ritual bathing takes place. The midwife is bathed in the water and carried back home to the woman (Benina-Marinkova Dimitrova & Tsanova Antonova & Assenova Paprikova-Krutilin 2019: 12–13).⁷ Another traditional activity on this day involves boys dunking girls in the icy waters of rivers and lakes, supposedly to bring them good health in the coming year (Henderson 2005: 35). It also supports the purifying function of water.

However, in such a case, the 'hanging' of a matchmaker can hardly be linked to purification. Irma ŒidiŒkienė, a researcher of wedding customs, noted that the wedding ritual shows the connection between the activities of the matchmaker and the groom. These activities are terminated by the trial of a matchmaker. The matchmaker no longer has the right to provide similar services to the same groom, as a new life cycle of the married man begins (ŒidiŒkienė 2003: 55). The ritual of taking away of the midwife was perceived in a similar way in the KaiŒiadorys area (eastern Lithuania). Gintarė Daunoraitė, who had written on the customs of baptism, said that at the end of baptism, the midwife was taken away "as she was no longer needed" (Daunoraitė 2011: 69). However, weddings were usually a one-off event, and women gave birth to many children, and the same midwife was often needed the following year.

Apparently, in both cases, the symbolic killing of a matchmaker or a midwife usually marked the end of baptism or wedding. As Irina Sedakova has noted in her analysis of the Bulgarian material, it is possible to identify in the customs of the nativity rituals the ritual acts that determine married life. Proper observance of the traditional childbirth rituals can mark the right path in a person's life (Sedakova 2007: 236–252). In the case of Lithuania, we can also see the intertwining of baptism and wedding rituals. Both the ritual killing of a matchmaker and midwife are intended to pave the way for the next stage of a person's life. The similar location of the performance of the ritual act in the

structure of the celebration and the similarity of some of the ritual acts allow us to relate the symbolic hanging of a matchmaker and the drowning of a midwife. In the second half of the twentieth century, the institutions of both the midwife and the matchmaker had disappeared, but the characters continued to function at weddings and baptisms.

The transformation of the characters of a matchmaker and a midwife in the second half of the twentieth and early twenty-first century

If in the second half of the twentieth century, the territorial range of the symbolic hanging of a matchmaker gradually expanded across Lithuania, while the symbolic drowning of a midwife diminished and even disappeared in north-eastern Lithuania. The participants of the ritual also changed. The midwife was replaced by a baby's grandmother and less often by another woman of the family. Meanwhile, the matchmaker at the wedding, who no longer performed the traditional function of introducing the future bride and groom, could be a relative, a non-family member, and even a hired man.⁸

The ritual of drowning a baby's grandmother (as the equivalent of a midwife) survived the longest in south-eastern Lithuania and western Belarus, even up to the beginning of the twenty-first century. In the second half of the twentieth century, the ritual changed very little, but it was supplemented with entertaining acts. The drowning of a midwife involved a certain amount of risk. For example, in 1992, in Vilnius area in south-eastern Lithuania, the grandmother of a baby at the end of baptism was put into a wheelbarrow and taken away to be 'drowned,' even though it was late October. The woman was thrown into the water, and afterwards she had to "treat the guests out of her own pocket." Another respondent, also from Vilnius area, told about a baptism in her family that taken place in 1991–1994. According to her, baptism was celebrated for one or two days with a large number of guests. At the end of the party, a baby's grandmother or both grandmothers were put in a cart (wheelbarrow) loaded with hay and were taken to a pond supposedly to be 'drowned,' or, if they were not near a body of water, they would simply be sprinkled with water. This ritual took place whatever the time of year.⁹

In 2005, a grandmother of a baby was ‘drowned’ at the end of the baptism ceremony. She was taken for a ride in a cart through the snow in the winter and then brought back to be sprinkled with water. Meanwhile, a respondent from Šalčininkai area in south-eastern Lithuania, born in 1989, said that she bathed and ‘baptized’ her grandparents on the second day of baptism. They were put in a wagon, taken to the river and dunked (pushed) into the water. The woman observed that this is done on a warm day. If baptism takes place in winter, the grandparents are ‘baptized’ (poured with water) from a bucket (Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2009: 32).

During my research conducted in 2012 in the Gervėčiai area in western Belarus, it turned out that the tradition of ‘drowning’ of the baby’s grandmother still exists and is practiced by the local population. A respondent from Mockai, born in 1938, said that she *bobutę tapijo* (‘drowned the grandmother’). In 2010, at the baptismal ceremony of her great-granddaughter, she took on a ride the two great-granddaughter’s grandmothers through the village (Paukštytė-Šaknienė’s material collected in 2012 from the Gervėčiai area in western Belarus).

Folklorist Saulė Matulevičienė has published a detailed description of this ritual, illustrated with photographs (Matulevičienė 2011). The author attended the ceremony and described the memorable event she witnessed.

After the ceremony in the church and a filling feast, on the evening of the first day of baptism, all participants rushed to get ready for the fun part of the celebration – the ride of the grandmother/grandmothers ... the two girls’ grandmothers, one Lithuanian and the other Belarusian, seated in a cart were pushed out by a colourful group of people dressed in costumes, accompanied by the noise of pots beaten with sticks. The whole group approached every village gate: the doctor ‘treated’ the neighbours with drinks; the gypsy woman smeared their faces with soot, and when the soot was gone, with lipstick; the ‘old man’ ‘harassed’ them and made them kiss each other; and the other participants of baptism were ‘stealing’ household items from the farmstead and tied them up to the grandmothers’ cart. The party was greeted differently ... Some hosts were annoyed by the ‘stealing,’ others were amused, while there were those who didn’t even notice it ... When they approached the puddle that flooded the road, they remembered the purpose of the procession — the ‘drowning’ of grandmothers. Threatening

and witty negotiations ended happily that time, but on the return back, the water could no longer be avoided. (Matulevičienė 2011: 37–38)

So, at the end of baptism, baby's two grandmothers were literally, not even symbolically, dunked in a rainwater harvesting cauldron, while all the other guests were splashed with water. The ceremony was over, and the baptism party continued.

S. Matulevičienė noted that the observed playful act was characterized above all by carnivalesque, and the typical participants disguised as a doctor, a Jew, a gypsy, an old man, in her opinion, showed clear parallels or a merging of customs with other traditions of dressing up, such as weddings or Christmas (in the Gervėčiai area, western Belarus). The latter visit neighbours during the Christmas period, while Shrove Tuesday is associated with riding and visiting crop fields (Matulevičienė 2011: 38–39).

It is interesting that in the second half of the twentieth century, the symbolic killing of a matron in honour began to take place in almost all of Lithuania as well.¹⁰ A. Vyšniauskaitė says,

When a matchmaker is hanged, an attempt is made to deal with the matron of honour. She is also sometimes in hiding and wanted. If she is found, she is put in a wheelbarrow or a trough, and taken to be drowned or burnt. (Vyšniauskaitė 2007: 102)

The matron of honour, who represented the female side at the wedding, was often the wife of the matchmaker and had nothing to do with the bride's relatives (in older times the matron of honour was usually the bride's aunt or godmother).

In the second half of the twentieth century, a new symbolic act linking baptisms and weddings became widespread, when the matron of honour was seated in a wheelbarrow or a trough and taken out to be drowned or to the woods, in the same way as the midwife at baptism. The matron of honour was usually 'saved' by the matchmaker, or the bride, the groom, both newlywed, or the bridesmaids, that is, they would entertain the *torturers* (Vyšniauskaitė 1985: 175–176; Šidiškienė 2007: 140; Šidiškienė 2009: 129; Šidiškienė 2012: 159). In Irma Šidiškienė's opinion, taking away and 'drowning' or 'burning' of the matron of honour at weddings is a new practice, which has been established from the second half of the twentieth century and corresponds to the symbolic meaning of matchmaker's 'hanging', while her taking away in a wheelbar-

row corresponds to the symbolic taking away of the mother-in-law from her home, which was featured at the nineteenth-century wedding. It was part of the symbolic act of elevating the bride to the status of housewife (Šidiškienė 2007: 141; Šidiškienė 2009: 129). The ethnologist argued that the symbolic acts with matchmakers and matrons of honour – the destruction and separation of the character itself – was perceived as the termination of the duties they had performed (Šidiškienė 2007: 141).

A predominant gender distribution of the ways of symbolic killing of characters can also be observed. If the matchmaker is symbolically hanged, the matron of honour or the midwife is symbolically drowned. On the other hand, as S. Matulevičienė has noted, the ritual act of killing is also present during calendar festivals. Irena Čepienė, who has studied weddings, draws a parallel with the custom of destroying the mythical creature *Morė* (western Lithuania) or *Gavėnas* (eastern Lithuania) during Shrove Tuesday (Čepienė 2012: 123).¹¹ However, in western Lithuania, where a matchmaker (male) is hanged, the female creature *Morė* is burnt during Shrove Tuesday. Meanwhile, in the eastern part of Lithuania, where the midwife (female) is ‘drowned’, the male creature *Gavėnas* is drowned or beaten during Shrove Tuesday.

The study confirmed the similarity between the rituals of baptisms and weddings and the need for the ritual to migrate across life cycles and even calendar festivals. After the changes in living conditions and the decline and loss of meaning of the institutions of the midwife and the matchmaker, the traditional characters of the matchmaker and the midwife remained in the wedding and baptism rituals in the second half of the twentieth century, playing the roles assigned to them in earlier times. When analysing the survival of the ritual act in terms of territory, it becomes evident that the wedding ritual has remained more stable in Lithuania, while the baptism ritual has remained more unchanged in western Belarus.

Conclusions

The functioning of old rituals in today’s culture has once again shown the similarity and migratory nature of baptism and wedding ceremonial acts (as rituals of passage) in different life cycle celebrations. It could be assumed that the symbolic act of killing of a matchmaker in the wedding ritual originated in the territory of present-day western Lithuania (Žemaitija) in the eighteenth

century. Meanwhile, the symbolic act of killing of a midwife is mentioned only in the late nineteenth-century sources, and it is assumed that it was adopted from the territory of present-day Belarus.

When comparing wedding and baptism rituals, one discovers many differences and similarities. One of the motifs that show the commonality of the rites is the killing of the 'mother bear' performed at both weddings and baptisms in north-eastern Lithuania. One can also trace the analogy of the specific vehicles used to transport a midwife, a matchmaker and a matron of honour. Often a harrow turned upside down or a trough was used.

By analyzing the symbolic execution acts of a midwife and a matchmaker, one can see that it travelled from weddings in western and northern Lithuania to eastern and southern Lithuania. The act remained stable in baptism rituals in eastern Lithuania and western Belarus.

Research into baptism and wedding customs in the second half of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has shown that as living conditions have changed and the institutions of the midwife and the matchmaker have lost their meaning, the traditional characters of weddings and baptism, i.e., the matchmaker and the baby's grandmother, have remained. They are also symbolically killed. In the second half of the twentieth century, the symbolic murder of a matron of honour also began to take place almost all over Lithuania, but most often, she is not hanged like the other wedding character, the matchmaker, but is drowned like a midwife. The analysis of the symbolic killing of a matchmaker has parallels with calendar customs. However, while during Shrove Tuesday in the nineteenth century, the female scarecrow *Morė* was destroyed in the area of the matchmaker's hanging, whereas in eastern Lithuania, where the symbolic drowning of a midwife was performed, the male scarecrow *Gavėnas* was destroyed.

To sum up, even with the loss of their former ritual value and the absence of matchmakers and midwives in real life, the ritual practice of symbolic drowning or hanging has remained. This indicates a desire to preserve the old customs and, with modifications, to practice them in today's baptism and wedding ceremonies, as the final part of the ritual. On the other hand, a thorough analysis of the ceremonial acts has shown that both the symbolic hanging of a matchmaker and in particular, the drowning of a midwife (*bobutė*), are late cultural phenomena, dating back only one or several hundred years in the areas studied.

Table 1. *Symbolic execution of baptism and wedding participants: the dominant cases in Lithuania and western Belarus*

Period	Baptism Party	Wedding Party
1820–1900	*Killing mother bear with a knife (north-eastern Lithuania) ↓↓↓↓	*Matchmaker’s hanging (western Lithuania) ↓↓↓↓ *Killing mother bear with a knife (north-eastern Lithuania) ↓↓↓↓
1900–1950	*Killing mother bear with a knife (north-eastern Lithuania) *Midwife’s drowning (south-eastern and eastern Lithuania, western Belarus) →→ ↓↓↓↓	*Killing mother bear with a knife (north-eastern Lithuania) *Matchmaker’s hanging (western and northern Lithuania) ↓↓↓↓ *Matchmaker’s drowning or burning (north-eastern and western Lithuania) ↓↓↓↓
1950–2000	*Midwife’s/ grandmother’s drowning (south-eastern Lithuania, western Belarus) →→	*Matchmaker’s hanging (all over Lithuania) *Matron’s of honour drowning or burning (various regions of Lithuania)

Notes

¹ The larger part of the research area belonged to one state for a long time – for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (thirteenth century – 1795; after 1569 the Grand Duchy of Lithuania became part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), Tsarist Russia (1795–1915), and the USSR (1940–1941, 1944–1990). The eastern part of Lithuania and the western part of Belarus were occupied by Poland in 1920–1939, as the Vilnius region (Zinkevičius 1993). This led to many common cultural traits and my choice of this area.

² I do not associate the word ‘ritual’ only with religious practices (cf. Platvoet 2006). In this article, I analyse the ceremonial acts of social recognition performed during baptism and wedding receptions.

³ In Lithuanian, the word *bobutė* can mean both a baby’s grandmother and a midwife.

⁴ Individual accounts of the respondents in Lithuania were also collected later, up to 2021. The Belarusian material collected by the author of this article has not yet been published. The material was collected within the Vilnius University project ‘Gervėčiai:

Historical Memory and National Identity" (2010–2012). The project was led by Saulė Matuliavičienė. The audio recordings of the interviews are kept at Vilnius University. The material collected in Lithuania is stored in the Lithuanian Institute of History.

⁵ By the term western Lithuania, I mean Žemaitija, one of the five regions of Lithuania: Aukštaitija, Dzūkija, Suvalkija, Žemaitija, and Lithuania Minor. It does not include Lithuania Minor, which is located on the Baltic Sea, where the ritual of the hanging of a matchmaker was not practiced.

⁶ In eastern Lithuania, the bride was given to wear a fur coat inside out, when she crossed the threshold of the young man's house, or the fur coat was placed at the threshold, so that the bride would step over it and the young couple's life would be 'prosperous' (Vyšniauskaitė 2008: 353–354).

⁷ It is interesting that ritual in Bulgaria common only to Orthodox and unknown to Catholics (Iankov 2003: 235). The tradition of driving a midwife away at the end of the Day of the Midwife is known to the Don Cossacks (Vlaskina 1998: 47) and also to Russian Old Believers (Plotnikova 2016: 48).

⁸ Irena Čepienė noted that the matchmaker is invited from the groom's side, and his ingenuity, wit, and humour usually determine the mood of the celebration. In contemporary weddings, a matchmaker does not play the role of a matchmaker, and the term 'matchmaker' does not correspond to its meaning. However, it is quite common to refer to the leader of the wedding as a matchmaker (Čepienė 2012: 196).

⁹ In 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the respondent attended the baptism of a relative's baby, which only lasted for 2–3 hours and the drowning of a grandmother was no longer performed, as well as the other ritual acts.

¹⁰ According to Irena Čepienė, the matron of honour is usually a married woman, invited by the bride. The matron of honour wears dark clothes to distinguish herself from the bridesmaids. She also attaches a flower to her chest as a distinguishing mark. She helps the bride to dress in her wedding clothes before the marriage, put on a veil, and crown her head with a wreath made of rue (Čepienė 2012: 206).

¹¹ In Slavic countries, the destruction of the scarecrow during calendar festivals is much more frequent than during family festivals (Agapkina & Vinogradova 2012: 467).

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“PLAGUE SHIRT” AND PLAGUE COMMEMORATION AMONG THE ROMANIANS OF OLTENIA AND TIMOK VALLEY

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Abstract: The article considers mythological representations and ritual practices associated with the personification of the plague among the Romanians of Oltenia (Romania) and the Romanians (or Vlachs) of the Timok Valley (Serbia). It is based on materials from the author’s field research in south-western Romania and eastern Serbia. The custom of organising the plague commemoration on different calendar dates is analysed. Along with it, the author consistently examines the ways of making a “plague shirt” (Rom. *câmașa ciumii*), the spread of this ritual practice, and the contexts of its use as a protection against diseases (plague and cholera) and death during the war, as well as correlations between the practice of making a “plague shirt” and the custom of the plague commemoration.

Keywords: eastern Serbia, Oltenia, plague, Romanians, symbolic objects, Timok Valley, Vlachs

Introduction

During field studies in Romania and in the Romanian settlements of the Timok Valley in eastern Serbia, the author of the article repeatedly recorded mythological ideas about diseases, primarily about the plague. The article considers mythological representations and ritual practices associated with the personification of the plague among the Romanians of Oltenia (Romania) and the Romanians (or Vlachs) of the Timok Valley (Serbia). It is based on materials from the author's field research conducted in 2011 in southwestern Romania (in the villages of Ponoarele, Şipotu, Cracu Muntelui and Gărdăneasa of the Ponoarele commune in the Mehedinţi district in Oltenia) and in 2014, 2021, and 2022 in eastern Serbia (in the villages of Bukovče and Kobišnica of Negotin municipality of Bor district and in the villages of Gradskovo, Halovo, Mali Jasenovac and Šipikovo of Zaječar municipality and Zaječar district). Residents of the listed villages in eastern Serbia are native speakers of the Oltenian subdialect of the Romanian language. In Serbia, this subdialect is called Tsaran.

Personifications of the plague and calendar dates associated with it

Inhabitants of the Ponoarele commune, in the Mehedinţi district (Oltenia, southwestern Romania), imagined the plague as an old, ugly woman who could enter any house. The barking of dogs for no reason was considered a sign of her appearance. According to some locals, the plague came during the wars with the Turks.¹ The notion of the plague as an ugly old woman was also recorded during field research in the Buzău district (Muntenia, southern Romania) (Golant & Plotnikova 2012: 361–427).

Among the Vlachs (Romanians) of eastern Serbia, the author came across the idea of the personification of the plague in the form of several women bringing the disease (in the village of Halovo, Zaječar district). According to a legend spread in the Ponoarele commune, in the Mehedinţi district of Oltenia, the Plague once came to the house of a widow who had a sick child (during the plague epidemic) and asked the widow to sew a shirt. The Plague promised to keep the widow's child alive and to leave the village if the widow

sewed the shirt overnight. The widow called the women of the neighborhood, and together they weaved, cut, and sewed all night, and by morning the shirt was ready. One of the local place names is inspired by this legend (a hill located near the village of Ponoarele is named Shirt Hill, Rom. *Dealul Cămăși*). There is also a saying: “Works like on a ‘plague shirt’” (Rom. *Lucrează ca la cămașa ciumii*). This saying, widely known among Romanians, is used when talking about a person who is fervently working to complete a task.

The inhabitants of the Ponoarele commune also associate the celebration of Plague Friday with the events described in this legend. Plague Friday (Rom. *Vinerea Ciumii*) is both a family and, at the same time, a public holiday. Each village of the Ponoarele commune celebrates its own Plague Friday – in the period from the Day of St. Elijah (July 20) until St. Paraskeva’s Day (October 14). Many families organize a feast on Plague Friday, which is attended by relatives and friends from neighboring villages. Traditionally, meatless dishes are served at this feast because Friday is a fasting day. However, at present, many locals serve both meat and meatless dishes on this occasion. In the Sălaj district, in Transylvania, a holiday called *Vinerea Ciumea* (Plague Friday) was celebrated on the first Friday after Christmas. (Vilcovschi 2020).

It should be noted that the calendric period that includes Plague Fridays in the villages of the Ponoarele commune also includes a number of traditional Orthodox Church holidays associated with diseases and various disease preventive measures in the Romanian folk calendar. These are, for example, St. Pantaleon’s Day (Rom. *Sfântul Pantelimon*, July 27), the Transfiguration of Jesus (Rom. *Schimbarea la Față, Obrejenie* or *Pobrejenie*, August 6), the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (Rom. *Ziua crucii*, September 14), and St. Paraskeva’s Day (Rom. *Vinerea Mare*, October 14). St. Pantaleon’s Day is associated with the plague in the Romanian popular mind (Burgehele 2003: 406). Veneration of St. Pantaleon as a healer is also common among Bulgarians and Greeks. The notion of the connection of this saint with the plague is reflected in the rite of expelling diseases (plague and smallpox) from the village, which is practised on St. Pantaleon’s Day by residents of the Belogradchik municipality of the Vidin district in northwestern Bulgaria (Popov 1999: 369). However, in a number of areas inhabited by Romanians, a winter holiday is associated with the plague in the folk calendar: St. Charalambos Day (Rom. *Sfântul Haralambie* or *Ziua ciumii*, ‘Plague’s Day’) on February 10 (Stahl 1983: 212; Arapu 2019). Romanians have a tradition of depicting St. Charalambos on icons holding the

Plague, represented as a chained dog or a monster. For example, on icons from Transilvania, the Plague is sometimes represented as a monster with a human head, sheep ears and the body covered with scales (see, e.g., Muzeul Constanța 2019). Residents of Romanian (Vlach) villages in the Bregovo municipality of the Vidin district in northwestern Bulgaria call St. Charalambos Day “Holiday of the Plagues” (Romanian dial. *Praznicu ciuimilor*). On this day, they bake and eat a loaf of bread for the health of family members, domestic animals, and crops, so they would not be struck by the plague – “so that there are no plagues on livestock” (Rom. *să nu fie ciume pe vite*), “so that there are no plagues on the wheat” (Rom. *să nu fie ciume pe grâu*). They break the loaf in pieces that are eaten for the health of specific people or specific domestic animals (horses, donkeys, chickens, etc.) (villages of Bregovo and Kosovo, Bregovo municipality, Bulgaria) (Golant 2014: 235). The association of St. Charalambos’ Day with the plague also exists in the Bulgarian tradition. In some regions of Bulgaria, for example in Thrace, this day is known as the Plague Day (Bulg. *Чумин ден*) (Plotnikova 2009: 23; Trefilova 2012: 280–281).

As a parallel to the Oltenian custom of celebrating Plague Fridays, one can mention the custom of organizing plague commemoration, which is known in the villages of Gradskovo, Halovo, Mali Jasenovac, and Šipikovo in the Zaječar municipality, in eastern Serbia.

The custom, in which the “plague shirt” and plague commemoration are simultaneously present, existed in the village of Gradskovo (Zaječar municipality and Zaječar district). Here the plague commemoration is called *pomana la ciumā*, ‘alms for the plague.’ The Romanian word *pomană(-a)* can be used in the meanings of ‘funeral meal,’ ‘funeral gift,’ ‘the coil bread that is given at funerals,’ ‘funeral boiled wheat porridge’ as well as ‘alms’ (Ciorănescu 2007 [1954–1966]: 619). In the subdialects of the village of Gradskovo and the other Romanian villages of the Timok Valley studied by the author, this word is used only in the context of funeral and memorial rituals. The only exception encountered by the author is the use of this word in the expression *pomana la ciumā* (or *pomana ciumii*), where it denotes the gifts (food, drinks, etc.) that people present to the Plague so that it does not enter their homes/villages. In the villages of Halovo, Mali Jasenovac and Šipikovo (Zaječar municipality and Zaječar district), there are also customs associated with the plague commemoration. However, in these settlements, unlike in Gradskovo, these customs are not connected with the making of the “plague shirt.” In Šipikovo

and Mali Jasenovac, the plague commemoration is called *pomana ciumii*, while in Halovo, it is called *pomana ciumilor*. Residents of Mali Jasenovac organised *pomana ciumii* in every neighborhood of the village on Maundy Thursday (Rom. *Joi Mari*). A small round table was set at crossroads, on which treats were placed: Lenten pastries (Rom. *colaci, ghibanițe*) and eggs. During this commemoration, an old man played the flute (rom. *fluier*), and women danced. The participation of a man in this rite was motivated by the fact that, traditionally, only men played musical instruments among the Romanians of the Timok Valley. Apparently, the age of the musician did not matter. However, during the period to which informants referred, an old man played the flute in the village of Mali Jasenovac. According to informers from this village, the plague commemoration was organized in order to prevent children from contracting the disease. It should be noted that the offering of eggs as a gift is typical for the ritual of Maundy Thursday throughout the Carpathian-Balkan region. Among the Romanians (in Romania, in the historical regions of Oltenia and Muntenia, and in eastern Serbia) and the Greeks, on Maundy Thursday children or young people collect eggs from the henhouse, for the Easter celebration (Golant 2017; Kabakova 1989: 200–201; Zaikovskaia & Zaikovskii 2001). In addition, Maundy Thursday rites are associated with the commemoration of the dead, both among the Romanians (Vlachs) of eastern Serbia and among the Romanians living on current Romanian territory. On this day, they visit cemeteries and burn bonfires “for the dead” (Golant 2017).

In Šipikovo, women left Lenten food “for the Plague” at the crossroads. The informers from this village could not name the holiday nor the exact date on which this commemoration was held, but they claimed that it was organized in the spring. In Halovo, the plague commemoration was organized in the summer. Apparently, there was no specific day. In this village, the memorial meal was prepared by three women named Floarea or Stana. They baked bread in silence and cooked meals for the commemoration, and then in the evening they took the food, as well as a new table and chair, to the bank of the pond named *Lacu lu Ghigă* located on the outskirts of the village.⁵ In the morning, empty, overturned plates were found there. The custom of giving away a table or other pieces of furniture as a memorial gift to the soul of the deceased is characteristic of the funeral rites of the Romanians (Vlachs) of the Timok Valley. It is believed that the deceased will thus receive these items in the other world. It can also be noted that among the Romanians of the Timok Valley, some rites related

to the commemoration of the dead can be performed outside of the cemetery, mainly at crossroads (for example, in some Romanian villages of the Zaječar district, on Shrovetide (Rom. dial. *Stămâna Albă*, ‘White Week’) bonfires for the dead are lit at crossroads (this custom is called *priveghi* ‘vigil’).

Residents of the villages of Bukovče and Kobišnica in the Negotin municipality of the Bor district, in Serbia, similarly organize “monster commemoration” or “snake commemoration” (Rom. dial. *pomana alilor*). The word *ală* or *hală* (from Serb. or Bulg. (x)ала) can be used in Romanian to mean monster, demon, or storm (DEX 1998: 442). In Oltenia, this word means ‘dragons’ (Rom. *balauri*), which are connected with storms in legends. In the Romanian subdialects of eastern Serbia, the term *ală* (-a, pl. *ale, alile*) can also be used to mean a snake or (figuratively) a gluttonous person. The phrase *ala plaiului*, which can be translated as ‘demon of the hill’ or ‘snake of the hill’ was recorded in Kobišnica and Bukovče. *Pomana alilor* in these villages is dedicated to the week of St. Theodor (Rom. *Sân-Toader, Sân-Toager*) at the beginning of Lent. During this period, in Kobišnica, women left Lenten food at the spring, while in Bukovče, corn and beans were cooked in large cauldrons, in the square situated in the center of each neighborhood.⁶ This funeral meal, according to local residents, is arranged to protect the area so that these demons or snakes (*alile*) do not bring misfortune. According to the Serbian ethnographic literature, the Serbs in the Danube region have the custom of holding a cholera commemoration (Serb. *daħa kolери*), combined with the making of a “one-day shirt.” Cholera was offered bread, cooked/roasted chicken, and a spinning wheel with wool and a new spindle. These offerings were left at the crossroads outside the village (Radovanović-Zatonjac 1984: 67–68). A similar meal, intended for the Plague but timed to coincide with St. Charalambos Day, was found among Bulgarians – for example, in the town of Tvarditsa, in the Sliven region (the historical region of Upper Thrace), women go to the field on this day and leave a Lenten treat for the Plague in the thorny thickets – bread, green beans, and halvah (Trefilova 2012: 280).

Sewing of the “plague shirt” and its usage in different contexts

During field research in eastern Serbia, the author recorded the presence of ideas about a “plague shirt” in the village of Bukovče of the Negotin municipality, of the Bor district, as well as in the villages of Šipikovo, Mali Jasenovac, Gradskovo, and Halovo of the Zaječar municipality and district.

Dara Ivanović, who lives in the village of Bukovče of the Negotin municipality, in eastern Serbia, told the author the following information about the “plague shirt”:

Once upon a time, three old women made a shirt overnight to save a sick child. When the shirt was ready, one of these women put it on so that the Plague would leave the child and go after her. Soon after, the child recovered, and the old woman who put on the “plague shirt” suffered a mental illness which remained for the rest of her life.

According to another informer from the same village, the “plague shirt” was made in one night, not by three but by nine old women, and this shirt was small (it could only be worn on a baby or a doll). In the 1980s, the informer herself bought a small “plague shirt” in order to be cured of infertility because she could not get pregnant for a long time. The author has not yet found information about the purchase of a plague shirt in other villages. The article by Milorad Dragić provides information about the making of a “plague shirt” in the village of Bukovče in the late 1930s. This shirt was to be made by nine old widows. According to observations of M. Dragić, collected in the 1960s, the inhabitants of Bukovče could use this shirt to protect people in the event of an epidemic, newborn babies from any disease and danger (especially often in those families where children died), as well as to cure nervous diseases and protect soldiers from enemy bullets. For apotropaic purposes, adults crawled through the “plague shirt,” while children were pulled through it (Dragić 1969). Pulling newborns through the “plague shirt,” according to M. Dragić, was also practiced in the Romanian village of Boljetin (Majdanpek municipality, Bor district of Serbia) (ibid.).

The custom of making the “plague shirt,” with the purpose of warding off diseases and epidemics, was recorded by the author in the village of Gradskovo,

in the Zaječar municipality and district. According to Mila Đorđević, a resident of the village of Gradskovo, in the first half of the twentieth century, local women would gather and make a small “plague shirt” in one night. Then, taking this shirt with them, together with some food, they went to the crossroads. On the way, they sang, shouted, and rattled dishes. The shirt was thrown into the wind, and the food was left “for the plague, for diseases.”

In the villages of Šipikovo, Mali Jasenovac and Halovo of the Zaječar municipality, the “plague shirt” was made for men going to war or simply serving in the army, but not for warding off diseases or epidemics. A particular situation was encountered in the village of Mali Jasenovac, where all operations involved in the making of the “plague shirt” had to be performed in one night by six widows who had the same name: Stana.

Currently, “plague shirts” are no longer made, but one such shirt was kept, until recently, in the village of Šipikovo, by a family nicknamed *a lu Ciupitu*. A young man sent to the army or to war could crawl through the “plague shirt,” or he could take a shred or a thread from this shirt with him. Vencislav Dujnović, a resident of the village of Šipikovo, who served in the army in 1991, during the Bosnian war, crawled through the “plague shirt” three times and took with him a thread. According to his recollections, the “plague shirt” did not look like a real shirt, but like a cut hemp sac (according to informers, the “plague shirt” in the village of Mali Jasenovac looked the same way). Vencislav performed the ritual of crawling through the “plague shirt” with the help of his neighbor, Dobrila *a lu Rumânu* (Dobrila (of the) Romanian, Serb. *Dobrila Rumunski*). In 1999, during the Kosovo conflict, another resident of the village of Šipikovo, police officer Miroslav Dubrić, who was sent on a mission to Kosovo, also crawled through the same “plague shirt” three times and took a thread from it with him.² Later on, he handed over the thread from the “plague shirt” to his colleague, also a policeman, with him in Kosovo.³ All of these people, who served in war zones and had previously performed manipulations with the “plague shirt,” returned home safe and sound. In her article on the custom of making a “one-day shirt” in Serbia, Suzana Antić reports a case that also occurred in 1999 involving a resident of a Vlach town in the Braničevo district. The man was drafted into the army and was supposed to be sent to Kosovo, but upon arrival in the city of Požarevac, was sent back home due to an error in his documents. His compatriots were convinced that this was due to the fact that before leaving for the army he crawled through a “one-day shirt” (Antić 2001).

Serbian and Romanian ethnographic literature reports that the custom of making a “plague shirt” also exists in other settlements of eastern Serbia where Romanians (Vlachs) live. The existence of such a shirt, for example, has been documented in the villages of Kobišnica (located near Bukovče), Jabukovac of the Negotin municipality of the Bor district, and Mosna, Boljetin and Donji Milanovac of the Majdanpek municipality of the Bor district (Šolkotović 2018–2019). There is also information about the existence of the “plague shirt” in Romanian (Vlach) villages of the Braničevo district (Antić 2001).

The idea of the “plague shirt” is found almost everywhere among Romanians – not only in Oltenia and on the territory of the distribution of Romanian subdialects in the Timok Valley, but also in Muntenia, Dobrogea, Transilvania, Maramureş and Bucovina (this was written, for example, by Tudor Pamfile (1916), Adrian Fochi (1976), Ion Aurel Candrea (1999 [1944]), Ion Ghinoiu (2001), Camelia Burghel (2003), and other researchers). The first mention of the “plague shirt” in Romanian lands is found in the book *Istoria delle moderne rivoluzioni della Valachia* by Anton-Maria del Chiaro, published in Venice in 1718.⁴ Making a “plague shirt” was thought to be the most common way to stop the plague epidemic. All operations for the making of a shirt (spinning, weaving, cutting, and sewing) had to be performed within one day or one night (Evseev 1994: 31, 37; Candrea 1999 [1944]: 166–167; Ghinoiu 2001: 49). In some areas of Oltenia, such a shirt could be called *câmaşa de izbândă* ‘victory shirt’ or ‘success shirt.’ According to T. Pamfile, this shirt was made to avoid cholera: “When the shirt is ready, two or three people go on the road or to a larger place in the middle of or on the edge of the village. People follow them, and while one of them holds this shirt ... all the men and women crawl through it to avoid cholera” (Pamfile 1916: 332). In his monograph, published in 1944, Ion Aurel Candrea cites information on the existence of the “plague shirt” in many parts of Romania (in particular, in Transilvania, Oltenia, and Dobrogea), which implies that practices associated with it were still in use during World War II (Candrea 1999 [1944]: 166–167). Adrian Fochi describes the Romanian custom associated with the making of the “plague shirt” as follows: “The women gather, make a rag doll in the shape of a woman, then make a blouse at night, which on the same night is woven and sewn, and dress the doll with it ... The doll dressed in this shirt is then buried in the morning near the village crossroad and the women mourn as if it were a dead person” (Fochi 1976: 83–84).

The custom of making a shirt within one day during an epidemic is also found among Bulgarians, Serbians, Hungarians, and Transilvanian Germans (Tolstaia 2004; Candrea 1999 [1944]: 166–167; Antić 2001). Bulgarians in the Pirin region and Macedonians in the western part of present-day North Macedonia had the custom of making a canvas in one night (Bulg. and Maced. *чумино платно* ‘plague canvas’), in order to protect themselves from the plague. All villagers were supposed to crawl under this canvas (Verković 1985: 96; Popov 1994: 388; Tolstaia 2004). Belarusians considered the “one-day towel” to be an effective remedy against the epidemic. All the villagers walked under this towel, after which the towel was burnt (Tolstaia 2004).

There is a report about making such a shirt for the Serbian prince Miloš Obrenović, dated 1874:

In the year 1837, a plague appeared in Jagodina. Prince Miloš immediately issued the strictest orders to limit the spread. However, in Požarevac, where he was at the time, he ordered nine old women to secretly sew and weave a shirt by the light of the hearth, without a candle, naked as the day they were born, in one night [only]; Prince Miloš, all his family and all the soldiers in the barracks crawled through it. Heard from an eyewitness in Požarevac in 1874. (Milićević 1894: 324)

The making of the “one-day shirt” (Serb. *једноданка кошуља*) among the Serbs of the Danube region was meant to protect against the cholera epidemic (Radovanović-Zatonjac 1984: 67–68). The making of a small “one-day shirt,” similar to the “plague shirt” used among the Vlachs in the village of Bukovče, is also characteristic of the Serbs (it was mentioned, in particular, in the village of Beli Potok near Belgrade) (Antić 2001).

The joint making of the “plague shirt” by several namesake women, which was recorded in the village of Gradskovo (Zaječar municipality), is found among Romanians in the territory of Romania. For example, in the Făgăraș region, such a shirt was made by seven women named Maria (Arapu 2021a: 150). In addition, in the village of Gradskovo, custom dictated that these women should be widows. A similar condition existed in some areas of Romania, in particular in Țara Lăpușului (Maramureș) (Bradea 2018).

As previously stated, according to the information recorded in Šipikovo, Mali Jasenovac and Halovo, the “plague shirt” was not meant to fight the epidemic, but to ward danger away from a person leaving for the army or a war.

There is an assumption that this contamination of meanings was originally due to the fact that, in the past, wars and epidemics were closely connected, and most soldiers who died in wars died not from wounds but from infectious diseases. Tihomir Đorđević wrote about this in connection with the previously mentioned plague epidemic, which began in 1836. He also mentioned the ritual of making a “plague shirt”, which was carried out in Požarevac by order of Prince Miloš Obrenović, and the passage of all soldiers in the town through this shirt (Đorđević 1921).

The making of a “plague shirt” in order to ward off dangers which threaten a person in war is common among both the Vlachs and the Serbs. Serbs living in the vicinity of Pirot (in eastern Serbia) made a “one-day shirt” when it was obvious that war was approaching. All men leaving for the front crawled through this shirt to save them from death and injury (Tolstaia 2004). In addition, among the Serbs, a “one-day shirt,” or a shred of, or a thread from it was sewn into the belt of a young man leaving for the army. This custom was mentioned, in particular, in the vicinity of Belgrade (the village of Beli Potok), in the Knjaževac municipality of Zaječar district (the village of Koželj), etc. (Antić 2001).

Conclusions

In the studied villages of the Ponoarele commune, in Oltenia, the custom of making “plague shirts” among the Romanians has disappeared, primarily because the plague epidemics now belong to the distant past. However, there is a custom celebrating the memory of this past with a feast and reception of guests during a certain calendric time of the year. Among the Romanians (Vlachs) of the Timok Valley – at least in the villages of the Negotin and Zaječar municipalities in eastern Serbia – an artefact called the “plague shirt” is still preserved in some families, although no one is currently making such shirts. Despite its name, the “plague shirt” among the Romanians (Vlachs) of the Timok Valley is today not directly related to the corresponding disease. It is instead used to treat other diseases or conditions (such as infertility, as in the village of Bukovče) or to ward danger away from a person about to go to war (as in the villages of Šipikovo, Mali Jasenovac, and Halovo). However, the expansion of the apotropaic functions attributed to the “plague shirt” appeared long before

recent days. One may recall the list of functions that the “plague shirt” could perform, according to the inhabitants of the same village of Bukovče, recorded by M. Dragić in the late 1960s: protection against epidemic diseases; protection of newborns from diseases and other dangers that threaten death; protection of soldiers against bullets, etc. (Dragić 1969).

The wide spread of the last purpose attributed to the “plague shirt” is probably associated with the specifics of the recent history of Serbia (and the military operations that accompanied the disintegration of former Yugoslavia). In addition, the emergence of such a purpose might have been facilitated by the influence of the customs of the neighboring Serbian population from Pirot, whose “one-day shirt” has long been used precisely to ward off dangers that a person can expect in a war. However, the custom recorded among the Vlachs in the Zaječar district, in eastern Serbia, also resembles the custom described by Tudor Pamfile in connection with the making of *cămașa de izbândă* ‘victory shirt’ among Romanians of Oltenia (Pamfile 1916). The revival of magical practices associated with the “plague shirt” during the hostilities that accompanied the collapse of former Yugoslavia can be compared to a similar phenomenon that occurred during the Balkan Wars, the First and Second World Wars (Dragić 1969).

The people from eastern Serbia who were interviewed for this study did not understand the connection between wars and past epidemics (that was evident for contemporaries of Miloš Obrenović). This may be explained by a general increase of medical and healthcare knowledge throughout Europe.

The author assumed, when she started to collect field materials on this topic, in 2021, in the Timok Valley (in the villages of the Negotin and Zaječar municipalities in eastern Serbia), that she would hear about the use of the “plague shirt” to fight the coronavirus pandemic, but until now, such information has not been found. One might conclude that the belief in the healing function of “the plague shirt” no longer exists.

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Notes

¹ The idea that the plague came with the Turks was widespread in the territories inhabited by Romanians since the Middle Ages until modern times. It was believed that the plague came with Ottoman ships arriving in the Danube ports. There also were accusations of outbreaks of the plague due to the arrival of other foreigners: Tatars, Jews, and Armenians (Arapu 2021b: 5–6).

² Miroslav Dubrić is the son of Dobrila, and he performed the ritual with her help.

³ This policeman was from another Romanian village in eastern Serbia, in the Negotin municipality.

⁴ A.-M. del Chiaro was the secretary of the Prince of Wallachia, Constantin Brâncoveanu (Stahl 1983: 211).

⁵ This pond is considered symbolically unclean by the locals. According to them, ghosts were seen several times near it. One of the informers, Jovanka Gacović, recalled that during her youth (in the 1960s–1970s) an old man went to the pond with the special purpose of teasing the “Plagues”, considering the pond to be their habitat.

⁶ It should be noted that Lenten food is discussed in this case, as in the case of Plague Fridays in Ponoarele (Mehedinți district, Romania) and of the plague commemoration in Šipikovo (Zaječar district, Serbia).

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“Plague Shirt” and Plague Commemoration Among the Romanians

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MEETING UNDER THE PLANE TREE: VIOLATION OR UPHOLDING OF TRADITION? THE RITUAL YEAR AMONG THE HIMARA GREEKS

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Abstract: This study is dedicated to analysing the Himariot tradition of villagers meeting for coffee in the main square for the celebration of important feasts or family occasions. The cultural code of the population of Himara, which consists mostly of Orthodox Greeks and Orthodox and Muslim Albanians, has undergone major transformation in the twentieth century due to social and political reasons, including the persecution of religious institutions which reached its peak in the 1960s. Churches, formerly the main place for celebrating main feasts and family ceremonies as well as exchanging local news, were closed or destroyed. Instead, the *café/kafenio/lokal* in the center of the village (usually near the closed-down church) became the sacred meeting place for the villagers, while the barman/waiter/cook became the gatekeeper (according to the gatekeeping theory supported by the author), who allowed or refused to grant community members entrance to the inner circle (those who make the decision for the entire community). The transformations in the 1990s and 2000s gave a start to new or forgotten ritual practices and pastimes, as well as an entirely new organization of community life. The change of ritual practices was considerably influenced by: 1) the factor of prestige of the sacred locus in the people's mind; 2) the

revitalization of tradition starting in case of an intrusion in the people's ritual sphere; 3) a conscious or unconscious wish of many of the communities to museify the past, in spite of the challenges of the present.

Keywords: Albania, gatekeeping, Greek identity, Himariot tradition, meeting for coffee, museification, revitalization, ritual event

Introduction

The twenty-first century is marked by innovative processes in the sphere of politics, economics, social relations, traditional culture, etc. in the Western Balkans. We can observe huge transformations of ritual code and popular beliefs throughout the recent decades (Ceribašić 2005: 9–38; Tirta 2004; 2006; Stublla 2007; Sedakova 2008; Anastasova 2011; Doja & Abazi 2021).

The Greeks and Albanians of Himara have a longstanding ritual of visiting the café of the village or the quarter to meet with friends and relations. As a rule, such meetings are only attended by men. Their meeting place is usually the nearest café (Greek *kafenio*, Alb. *lokal*, *-i*) in the quarter. They go there after breakfast, formally for coffee and informally – to discuss the latest news, exchange opinions, and solve the relevant problems of the local community (Novik 2015a; 2017b; 2019a).

The established order is broken on the days that formerly (before the suppression of religion started by the atheist Albanian government in the 1940–1950s) called for going to the Orthodox church. When all religious buildings were closed in 1967 (they remained closed until the early 1990s), people began to gather in the main square, but in the café instead of the church (the cafés were never closed by the government).¹ The ban on celebrating religious feasts led to the transformation of such feasts into meetings for coffee. Just like in the case of festive church services, women can take part in these events as well. Plane tree became the symbol of such ceremonies: traditionally, every Greek village on the Ionian Coast has a plane tree planted in its center, so it is viewed there as a specific marker of a Greek-speaking locality (such trees can be encountered in the Albanian-speaking villages of the region as well, but there they are not considered a necessary element of the public space) (cf. Billa 2020).

Plane trees are our Greek trees. Where a plane tree grows, it means there are Greeks living there. You can see it in every Greek village. Next to the

church, and where the church is there's also the kafenio. We can't do without it. We celebrate all our important occasions under the plane tree.
(Informant – a Greek man from Palasa, 85, recorded in 2019)

With the advance of democracy in Albania in the early 1990s, this tradition did not change but rather got even stronger. No engagement or marriage settlement is considered legally binding if it has not been announced before the villagers “under the plane tree” (Novik 2019b: 53).

This study is based on the field work I carried out in the Western Balkans in 1992–2021, as well as on the analysis of ethnographic, folklore, and historic records housed in the archives of the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Art Studies and the Institute of Linguistics and Literature of the Academy of Sciences of Albania.

As for the theoretical aspect, I rely on the gatekeeping theory, using it to analyze the anthropological data (Erickson & Shultz 1982; Coltrane 1996; Roberts & Sayers 1998; Gold 1999; Johnston 2007; Menezes et al. 2016). Interactional sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology have a rich literature on institutional gatekeeping.² In the field of sociolinguistics, institutional gatekeeping has come to mean “any situation in which an institutional member is empowered to make decisions affecting others” (Scollon 1981: 4; Johnston 2007: 166). Celia Robert and Pete Sayers refer to gatekeepers as to “people who hold certain resources, facilities or opportunities, and who decide, within the constraints of the organization they represent, who should have them – who should be allowed through the ‘gate’” (Roberts & Sayers 1998: 25).

I also made use of the theoretical works of cultural and social anthropologists who have researched Greek, Bulgarian, Italian, and other cultures’ ritual events (Bauman 1992; Kapchan & Turner Strong 1999; Todorova 2006 [1993]; Kaser 2008; Duranti 2018; Nail 2019; Salazar 2022). The main methodological principles underlying the study are the descriptive, typological, and comparative approaches. Looking at the meeting under the plane tree as at a ritual event in a particular sociohistorical setting in the Western Balkans, I treated the collective actions of actors involved in the traditional practice as a phenomenon of cultural memory and result of society transformation.

The principal methods employed were structural and functional analysis. A historical approach allowed me to reveal the main routes of the genesis of the ritual events and the evolution of folk beliefs and representations.

Historical overview

The Ionian Coast of Albania is a narrow strap of coastal lowland, broken by rocky ledges, about 50 km long and 10 km wide (Billa 2020; INSTAT 2022). It is separated from the neighboring *krahinas* of the country (Alb. *krahin/ë*, -a ‘historical and ethnographic district’) by mountain ridges. The sea separates the territory from the Ionian Islands of Greece and from the region of Puglia in Southern Italy. In Albania, the territory is traditionally called *krahina e Himarës* ‘the krahina of Himara’ (by its main town, Himara) or simply *Himara*, or likewise *Bregu i Detit* (Alb. ‘seacoast’) (Elsie 2015). Colloquially the region is often dubbed *Deti Jon* (Alb. ‘the Ionian Sea’).

According to the Institute of Statistics of Albania, which provides data on the official administrative structure of the country, there are nine villages in the region, besides its administrative center, the town Himara: Palasë, Gjileka, Dhërmi (Fig. 1), Vuno, Qeparo Fushë, Qeparo Fshat, Kudhës, Pilur, Iliaz (Censusi i popullsisë dhe banesave 2011; INSTAT 2022).

Since Albania declared its independence in 1912, the territory has belonged to the Albanian state. The population is highly diverse ethnically: among the residents of Himara, there are Orthodox Albanians and Greeks and Muslim Albanians (Sunni and Bektashi). In addition, in recent years there have appeared groups of Romani population who practice Islam (Nasi et al. 2004; Novik & Sobolev 2018; Novik 2019b: 30).



Figure 1. Dhërmi. September 2017. Photograph by Alexander Novik. Personal archive.

For the Greeks of the region, it has always been important to underline their family's Greek ancestry and the fact that they spoke their native language (Novik 2019a). However, the Greeks of Himara have had to study Albanian, so code-switching is characteristic of them in daily life (Joseph et al. 2019). Meanwhile, some of the Albanians have studied Greek due to living side by side with Greeks for such a long time.

Of course, the level of Greek proficiency is currently different among the region's population. For example, there had previously been Greek schools in the villages, teaching Greek children, who therefore used the Greek language outside their family circle from a very young age. Furthermore, the villages were not completely open to the outsiders. For example, if somebody sold their house, the rest of the villagers discussed the potential buyer and could forbid one to buy a house in their village (such a situation has been and still is common to most of Albania's *krahinas*) (Novik & Oleksiuk 2020). After World War II, the lessons at school were mostly taught in Albanian. It led to a very difficult sociolinguistic and ethnocultural situation when the majority of the Himariots identify themselves as having multiple native languages and cultural codes (which complement rather than cancel out each other).

Café/*kafenio*/*lokal* in the hierarchy of common values

In Himara, like in the rest of Albania, there are many food service businesses. The most common type of a village coffee house on the Ionian Coast of Albania is the *lokal*, combining the functions of the bar, the café, and the minimarket, the main place to spend one's free time and exchange news. It should be noted that such functions are characteristic to practically all the food service facilities in rural Albania (Novik 2015a; 2019a).

Usually, before the establishment of the regime of monism in 1944, the *lokal* was opened in the neighborhood of the village or town church (Fig. 2). If there were several catering establishments in the locality, the most important one was the one located at the side of the main church (frequently, a village could have multiple religious buildings). The church services, festive events, wedding ceremonies etc. ensured an influx of visitors for the *lokal* – both the believers who attended the church and those who were simply curious about the goings-on in the village.



Figure 2. Orthodox church. Palasa. September 2017. Photograph by Alexander Novik. Personal archive.

The changes in the society structure and political regime did not affect the strategy of choosing the main place for collective meetings. The new government realized it would be practical to keep the *lokal* in its former locus, though as nationalized property this time. The same method was used by the Ottoman conquerors of the Balkans, who saw the prospects of the economy which remained from the Byzantine Empire and did not destroy the established professional institutions, the source of income for the sultans' treasury (Shkodra 1973: 58–61).

Socialism brought along an important innovation, namely the change of the key figure in the *lokal* – instead of the owner, the manager was now a hired employee, and now it was not unusual for the latter to be a woman. His/her role can be interpreted as gatekeeper, in accordance with the gatekeeping theory (cf. Johnston 2007). For the village community, the bartender/salesman became

the person who allowed or blocked the access to necessary services, rare goods, connections/networks, and, most importantly, the chance to rise in the village hierarchy (since the community's verdict on one's abilities, reputation, and authority depended in no small part on one's role and position in the *lokal*).

The advent of democracy in Albania in the early 1990s led to cardinal transformations of the political, economic, religious, and cultural life in the country. The established structure of life underwent drastic changes. Planned economy, with its strict instructions and total ban on private businesses was replaced by market relations (Smirnova 2003: 381–390). The sales and catering facilities that had been controlled by respective government departments were closed, and the premises handed over to the former owners or their heirs (the Albanian legal system allows for restitution) or sold to new businessmen. However, with all the changes in property rights and interactions with the government, the *lokal* stayed the main meeting place for the villagers in their values hierarchy and therefore had a great influence on the collective plans and decisions of the community.

Ritual event vs. gender

Women in Himara have always enjoyed a larger degree of freedom than their compatriots from the neighboring *krahinas*, primarily Laberia. It is evidenced both by the sources available to the reader (Nasi et al. 2004; Elsie 2015; Joseph et al. 2019) and by my own field materials gathered in 1994–2021. The freedom was defined by my interlocutors as participation in making decisions related to the family budget, inclusion in social and professional life, and a special part in preparing the cultural events in the community as well as the festive and household rituals (Novik 2015a; 2019a).

Among the causes of such a situation, besides the religious factor (the majority of Laberia Albanians are Muslim, while the Greeks and part of the Albanians of Himara are Orthodox Christians), are the social, economic and cultural traditions and paradigms of the region. For example, the Greek-speaking residents of Himara have never given their daughters in marriage to the Albanians from Laberia – they believe that such a misalliance would hurt the family's reputation, adding that their daughters “might end up leading a very uncomfortable life, and they are used to welfare and freedom” (Novik 2017a: 14).

At the same time, it was very rare for Himariot men to marry women from Laberia. The Himariots viewed such marriages as non-prestigious. There was no official ban on such unions (the way it was with arranging marriages “beyond the mountain” for the daughters), but the community’s opinion defined their own status as higher than that of their neighbors. The situation began to change during the socialistic regime in Albania (1944–1991), when the equality of all citizens regardless of their regional and ethnic origins was not only declared by the government but actively enforced as a social practice, while the religious barriers were removed due to “a drastic solution for the entire question” (Smirnova 2003: 280–281).

In the localities of Himara, women frequently had the last word in household matters, while their husbands took care of the family business or, being merchants or fishermen, left on lengthy voyages. The break with tradition concerning the division of labor and the economic system itself occurred after World War II. The building of socialism brought to a complete transformation of the paradigm of the social order. Private businesses became nationalized, the ownership of farmlands, pastures etc. was transferred to the community; men began working for collective farming enterprises (cooperatives) or at state-owned factories, and women started to work on par with men – the government of Albania declared full equality when it came to labor activity (cf. Corbett 1991).

If working at the local café or restaurant used to be a purely male occupation before that, after the socialist transformations it was not rare to have a woman behind the counter of the village bar or shop. This situation caused no protest, since people connected it to the mood of the times dictated from the center rather than to a degradation of a many-century tradition (cf. Coltrane 1996; Kaser 2008).

Himara is one of the country’s regions whose residents migrated abroad (mainly to Greece) in large numbers in the early 1990s. For a while, only the elderly women, tasked with watching over the property, were left in the coastal zone. At that time, many localities had no working *lokal* since there was nobody to visit them. A while later, the local residents began to come back from their labor migration, and life gradually began to come back to normal. Catering facilities started to open in practically every locality. They were often controlled by women whose husbands and sons had other jobs or continued to live and work abroad (Novik & Oleksiuk 2020).

For a long time, as it was mentioned before, visiting the *lokal* was an event purely for the men. As a rule, it has stayed this way. Men spending time together at the village café remains one of the signature types of leisure. At the same moment, there has lately been a change in this pattern. In case of important family events (engagement, wedding, jubilee, etc.) or celebrations (the main ones among these are Easter, Christmas, St. George's Day, St. Demetrios' Day etc.), when a man goes "under the plane tree", he can take his wife with him (Novik 2019b). A woman would almost never go to such an establishment – this taboo is controlled by public opinion. However, a female owner of the catering facility can serve a fully male company of visitors. Nowadays, a group of young female friends (but never one girl by herself!) can go for a coffee to the *lokal*. Married women usually meet at their houses and would not go to the public place which the community has reserved for men. In this aspect, Himara is different from the rest of Albania – in other regions, women of any age almost never visit food establishments unaccompanied by men. The Himariots explain it by saying "Our women have always been freer than the wives and daughters of our neighbors" (ibid.).

Café owner = gatekeeper?

As the localities started to revive after the shocks of the late twentieth – early twenty-first century, the *lokal* began to play the same part it played in the period of the republic, the kingdom, the Italian and German occupation, and, to some extent, the period of monism (Elsie 2004). As opposed to the latter, today's functioning of catering establishments is characterized by the fact that the *kafenio's* owner is not a hired employee at all. He does not depend on the government of the region and the village, the party leaders, or the headquarters of the farming cooperative. The owner has a much larger authority and therefore the rights of admitting or forbidding a client's entrance to the sacred locus for the inner circle. Compared to the situation of the first half of the twentieth century, the owner has a higher standing in the community, since he is not rivaled by the clergy. After the renewal of religious life in the *krahina*, the churches have not returned to the level of activity that used to be there before the atheistic campaign of Enver Hoxha (1944–1985).³ In the majority of Himara's restored churches services are conducted by priests who arrive

from the town on major feast days. For the rest of the time the *lokal* remains the main center of ritual events.

For example, in the village of Palasa, where I have conducted my studies for many years, according to the informants, an engagement or marriage is not considered valid if people have not been informed of it during their gathering at the *lokal* near the church in the village's main square.

We have had it like this for ages. If two families agreed on their children marrying, they always announced it after the service right in the church and then went to the kafenio nearby. Earlier, people used to go to church on Sundays. And after the church they went to sit at the neighboring kafenio. The men could drink rakia. Some drank coffee. In the years of socialism, the church was closed. But the entire village still came to the café under the plane tree every Sunday. When I decided to get married, I announced it to the locals at that same place. You can't neglect to do it! Otherwise, they won't accept it. I went and announced it. It's still like this. If you want acceptance, do what the ancestors have done. (Informant – a Greek man from Palasa, 85, recorded in 2019)

The return of the food establishment as the main place to meet and celebrate ritual events is viewed by the locals as a positive development, in many ways an innovational one, made possible by the radical transformations of the Albanian society. Other informants have told me that they see it as the return of a tradition that had existed for many years but was broken due to political and other reasons. For the ritual year that defines the Himariots' life, the place under the plane tree (Fig. 3) remains a sacred locus which marks the continuity of tradition and respect for the ancestral heritage (Novik 2019).



Figure 3. Plane tree. Palasa. September 2017. Photograph by Alexander Novik. Personal archive.

As we can see, over the course of the twentieth century the role of the place under the plane tree in the ritual life of Himara villages transformed four times. Before the establishment of monism in 1944, the *lokal* was a secondary locus, where only the community news that was usually previously announced in church was discussed. The Church held the highest authority, and the ritual year was planned according to the calendar offered by the priests and the order fixed by tradition (cf. Litsios 2008). The revolutionary events and the flow of changes in the social, political, and economic life in Albania weakened the institution of the Church, and after 1967 it was brought down almost completely (Smirnova 2003; Billa 2020). During that period the announcements that used to be made at church (of engagements, wedding, celebrations of important events, etc.) began to occur at the place that had been a secondary one before – namely, the *lokal*. The food establishment gradually became the sacred locus that assumed the function of the village church, coordinating the ritual events. In this period, the role of the *lokal's* bartender in the community begins to strengthen as he becomes a sort of gatekeeper. The collapse of socialism in

Albania leads to the prestige of the place under the plane tree diminishing for a short while: first, the institution of the Church gets restored, second, catering establishments are now being opened, according to the mechanics of the market, almost in every quarter of any locality. However, as time has shown, neither the Church as an institution nor private businesses with their different products and service varieties could compete with the authority of the “village club”, the *kafenio*, already established in the mind of the community. In most of the villages of Himara church services are conducted very rarely, according to a preset timetable, by priests who come from the city, while in their absence informing the villagers about the upcoming feasts and ceremonies is done by the owner or the employee of the *kafenio* (Novik 2015a; 2019a). As for the various cafés, bars etc. that have opened massively in recent years, they cannot compete with the historical places under the plane tree: the mind of the local community, aiming to museify the past, views only the *kafenio* near the main church as the traditional and true one. Any ritual act is considered important and sanctified by tradition no sooner than it undergoes initiation at the place which is sacred to the community.

Memory and museification of ritual space

Among the markers of museification (cf. Ceribašić 2005; Duranti 2018), one can name the desire to keep the looks and furnishings of the place under the plane tree precisely the same as it used to be, according to the current owners and their key clients, “in the good old times”. This can mean a thoroughly unattractive design from the times of Enver Hoxha, old furniture, odd decorations such as the photos of celebrities of the past, boomboxes, and other artefacts to impress the memory and mind of the regulars. Such socialistic romanticism, of course, has nothing to do with the interior of the *kafenio* in the first half of the twentieth century – the time often referred to by a part of our informants who long for the olden days. But it definitely shows that the local population feels nostalgia for the period of socialism, which is sharply criticized by the government and by most of the mass media.

It ends up in a paradoxical situation: a period of militant atheism which succeeded the time of religious freedom and liberalism becomes an example

for people and is connected, in their minds, with the better times (cf. Forry 1986; Zebec 2002).

To conclude, nowadays, to get the approval of the community for important family ceremonies or festive events, one needs to be supported by the village café's regulars rather than by the village priest or head of the village administration. Although it is not a rare occasion for the place under the plane tree to belong to the village head, which makes the distinction between the head of the administration and the village bartender irrelevant (Novik 2019b).

The place under the plane tree vs. tourism

On the Ionian Coast of Albania, most of the food establishments that opened after the 2000s are aimed at the tourists who come to the seaside. Most of these tourists are Albanians from other parts of the country, Kosovo, North Macedonia, to a lesser extent from Montenegro, as well as representatives of the Albanian diaspora residing (according to the statistics, in descending order) in Greece, Italy, Germany, France, etc. (INSTAT 2022). Every year, there is an increased flow of foreign tourists from Poland, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Russia, and other countries. However, like in the rest of Southern and South-eastern Europe, the tourism season has dwindled to two months or even one (July–August) rather than lasting from May till September as it used to just two decades ago (as commented on by hotel and restaurant managers in Croatia, Montenegro, and Greece) (Novik 2016a; 2019a; 2021a). To survive in the new conditions, the owners of cafés and restaurants have to use various tricks to attract clients (cf. Franklin 2001: 211–232). However, the majority of cafés, restaurants, hotels and bed-and-breakfasts have to close to avoid losing money on wages for the staff, the electricity bills etc. The only establishments remaining open are those aimed at the locals themselves, namely the traditional *kafenios* under the plane tree. They do not usually attract tourists' attention, since their location is unappealing from a visitor's point of view: they are situated not on the seashore or at some venue with a beautiful view of the mountains but in the center of the village, historically marked by the church (which is relatively rarely visited by the average tourist due to its poor condition, a result of the lack of money).

In the cases when the historical *kafenio* is located in a beautiful place, for example, in the villages of Dhërmi or Qeparo, the tourists, as a rule, still prefer the more attractive establishments – in the tourist zone, there are usually many restaurants and cafés. Meanwhile, a historical *kafenio* does not always strive for renovation, change of furnishings, new designs etc.

For the tourist, an additional important factor in choosing the place to go for a coffee or a snack is related to the patrons of the establishment. The *kafenio* under the plane tree is always frequented by its regulars, who, as a rule, are elderly men engaged in lively discussions and often heated arguments. (The phenomenon of the loud conversations and the passionate nature of the discussions led at the table is commented upon by practically everyone who visits the Balkans; this topic merits a separate commentary which is not among the aims of this study.) Often their looks scare away the foreign tourists – they are afraid to become the focus of attentive glances and the topic of discussion in a language or languages they do not understand, so they prefer to pick a calmer establishment (cf. Duranti 1997).

Another factor is the choice of the suitable staff. In the numerous cafés opened in recent years, the bartenders, waiters, and cooks are young men who generally arrive from other regions of Albania where it is hard to find a job. The local youth rarely apply for such jobs, since their families often own businesses or have other sources of income – as for the Greek-speaking residents of Himara, their business is connected, to one degree or another, with Greece. The young people who come from other regions look fashionable – the bartenders and others are often flamboyantly dressed, have hippie-like haircuts and multiple tattoos. It serves as an additional motivation for the tourists to visit such establishment, since most of the foreigners who come to the south of Albania are young men, students, freelancers etc. rather than right-minded retired people, families with children etc. who make up the majority of tourists in other regions of Europe (it is first of all due to the country's established image as a “dangerous”, “Muslim” and “Communist” one). As a result, it is visited by those who are willing to risk going to the unknown Balkan regions which haven't yet been actively promoted by tourism agencies.

As for the locals, they generally avoid the establishments for tourists – they do not like the patrons (“Look how horrid those people are, and how they behave!”, “They are dressed so terribly, and the girls are just shameless!”), they are scared off by the prices (“The prices are so awfully high”, “Everything's for

the tourists”), or they are put off by the lack of conversation partners (“What’s there to do? One can’t even talk to anyone, just a waste of time”). As a result, they conclude: “The best is to go under the plane tree! There are our own people, and we can learn the news, and we won’t have to empty our pockets” (Novik 2015a; 2019a; 2021a).

The owners of the *kafenios* do not earn as much as the owners of tourist-oriented establishments. Often the former barely make a profit, but they have a job that they view as extremely important socially for the community all year round. As for the owners of the food establishments for tourists, after opening up by the end of May they already have to close, with rare exceptions, early in September. The “ritual year” is very short for them, and it is followed by a long pause caused by objective reasons, namely the world tourism strategies (in many countries of the region, employees have vacations in no month other than August; Italy and Kosovo have long provided vacations in August only).

Gatekeeper vs. leader & businessman/businesswoman

It is very difficult to make any changes in this system: it is not enough, to put it metaphorically, to plant a plane tree near the entrance of your establishment to ensure the locals would regularly visit it. They can come to you out of curiosity and have a look around, but then people would go on to visit the *kafenio* that they are used to and that had been attended by their fathers and grandfathers. It makes no difference if the new café’s owner is a local resident. For example, in the village of Palasa a local woman, after working in Greece for many years and earning the necessary startup budget, turned her house into a boarding-house, which is highly modernized, up to and including solar batteries. She offers rooms for rent and food all year round (Novik 2017a). A large marketing campaign on the Internet, helped by the children and grandchildren of the village businesswoman, has ensured her boarding-house became a huge success among foreign and Albanian tourists. However, her *kafenio* has not become a meeting place for the residents of Palasa – many of them have not even come for a single visit. Aunt Leta (as she calls herself) had no chances of becoming a gatekeeper – first of all, because she had been absent from the village for many years, so many social connections had been broken, she had missed many events important for the village life, and she did not know all the news, hence her

inability to see all the nuances of the relationships within the village and with the neighboring villages (cf. Scollon 1998; Tannen & Kendall & Gordon 2007). At the same time, Aunt Leta herself blames the Palasiots' narrow-mindedness and unnecessarily extreme adherence to the traditions.

In the same village, there is a hotel likewise called Palasa, built in the 2000s, with a wonderful view of the sea and the mountains, at the side of the road leading from Tirana south to Saranda (Fig. 4). Travelers happily stay there overnight.



Figure 4. Hotel "Palasa." Palasa. June 2015. Photograph by Alexander Novik. Personal archive.

The hotel has an excellent restaurant – both inside and on the terrace, with palms and blossoming oleanders planted around. The business is owned by Mihalis Laluci, and the hotel is currently managed by his son. The establishment had every chance to become a new meeting place to attract the local residents, since Mr. Laluci is one of the most respected villagers – in the period of socialism,

he was chairman of the village cooperative as well as head of the Party cell, which made him one of the government of the entire region of Himara (Novik 2015a; 2019a). With the arrival of democracy, his role in the village was not diminished – he managed to build a hotel with a restaurant in one of the best places, open rooms for rent in his own house etc. With his help, one can solve various questions related to purchasing land in the coastal region, getting a job, getting a lucrative contract (not just in the village), etc. For his compatriots, he has remained a man on whose decision many current issues and even fates of many people in general depend – a shining example of a gatekeeper, for the gatekeeping theory's point of view (Erickson & Shultz 1982; Johnston 2007). Moreover, he views himself as such, even though he is not aware of the foreign term thought up by the linguists and anthropologists. However, in spite of everything, his establishment has not become a meeting place for the villagers – even though the presence of a strong leader is obvious, and the palms can theoretically be taken for the traditional plane trees.

Mr. Laluci himself, who possesses the charisma and consequently the ambitions of a village head, does not wish his establishment to become the main place for making collective decisions and for developing the community strategy. The *kafenio* near the plane tree should remain such a place, the one close to the main village church, “because this is what our ancestors willed for us”.

This is why the new hotel is for the tourists, and the restaurant, in the last few years, has served only the workers who are building a resort center with apartments and villas on the coast. The plane tree, meanwhile, remains the main center of gathering of the locals, being the symbol of the Greeks' identity and the declared autochtony on this territory. “Business is business. And tradition is tradition” (Novik 2019b).

Sacred place = gatekeeping's place?

In Palasa, the main place to announce upcoming events (such as engagements, weddings, funerals or wakes) is still the old café under the plane tree, near the church. It is also used for making the most important decisions concerning community life. In this *kafenio*, the villagers gather on the main and secondary feast days of the calendar year: Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, St. Elijah's Day etc. The turbulent events of the twentieth century, accompanied by persecutions

of the Church, led to a considerable reduction of the religious aspect of the Palasiots' life. The Orthodox church, shut down during the years of monism, was restored with the beginning of the democratic transformations in the country in the early 1990s. However, the village still does not have its own priest. A priest living in the town of Himara comes to perform the services on the main feasts, in accordance with his agreement with the villagers. The local residents nostalgically remember the days when members of a priests' dynasty Billa served in the village and one could ask them at any moment, to help or to perform a special service – one of commemoration, of thankfulness etc.

Some of the powers associated with the role of the coordinator of the village's ritual year, belonging almost solely to the priest before the 1960s, have been, by an unspoken agreement, transferred to the worker at the *kafenio*, who, during different periods, performed the functions of the director, the bartender, the waiter and, if necessary, the cook at the same time. There was also a break of the gender stereotypes which used to be exclusively conservative: the customers could now be served by women, who previously were strictly discouraged, if not outright banned, from entering the men's space of spending their free time and making decisions (cf. Corbett 1991; Coltrane 1996; Kaser 2008).

The transfer to a market economy has simplified business in the food establishment system: it no longer depends on centralized import of products (including sugar, coffee, alcohol and other drinks), agreements on hiring the staff, getting the ever-rare building materials for restoration through the clumsy supply system etc. The new owners of the business are able to choose the assortment and the menu by themselves, set the prices, and make decisions on renovations or delay thereof. They have even become able to determine the business's working hours – they no longer need to get the government's permit for that or to conform it to the labor laws. Now the owners' main priority is correspondence to the villagers' needs, which are based on the villagers' agricultural work schedule, established customs, and need for communication.

The *kafenio* under the plane tree in Palasa opens its doors in the morning, around 9:00, and is opened until dinnertime (around 14:00). Then it resumes admitting visitors after 16:00 till early in the evening (18:00). The schedule can be shortened if the owners – an elderly couple – have other business to see to, or it can be extended if the local regulars want to gather and discuss urgent problems or simply wish to meet “at the old place”. For that to happen, one can call the owners on their mobile number, which can be found on the *kafenio*'s door.

Usually the patrons order Turkish coffee, which is called Greek here (the establishment does not even have a coffee machine for preparing espresso, cappuccino or macchiato), homemade *rakia* (usually made from grapes), and soft drinks. Wine or beer are not popular here. As for the snacks, the patrons can order bryndza, bread, olives, vegetable salad, or garden fruits. This completely “non-touristic” kit is the base of an average order at the *kafenio*. Moreover, the visitors can find all these drinks and food at home. Their goal in coming here is to talk and make decisions. If someone needs to hire builders or to find an assistant for the preparation of homemade *rakia* (a fairly difficult process for a single person), to invite people to the harvesting of the crops or to announce an upcoming wedding, “coming under the plane tree” is a necessity and an honorable duty.

By the way, during my own (or with my colleagues) field work in Himara a gathering under the plane tree was a necessary ritual for gathering the data: the owners of the café not only gave me advice on which villagers to invite as experts on the question blocks from the linguistic and ethnological questionnaires, but coordinated such meetings themselves, personally calling or inviting such people (Novik 2015b; 2016b). This way, they both introduced the researchers to the Palasiots, admitting the former to the inner circle (which is exceptionally important in a region with diverse ethnic groups and a ripening conflict situation), and opened the channels for gathering information from the respected and knowledgeable people, the search for whom could have been fruitless without their help.

I can clearly see the gatekeepers’ role that this couple plays in the village community. Within their union, one can also discern the leader. Though the business belongs to the man (approx. 70 years), most of the decisions are made by his wife (approx. 65 years). The husband frequently sits down at the table with the guests and takes part in discussing the latest problems, while the wife is serving drinks, carries the dirty dishes away etc., only fragmentally participating in the conversation. However, she can order her husband to make coffee for one of the guests or to pour the *rakia*, and it is she who takes the payment from the patrons. In this family business, she is the gatekeeper. Likewise, it is she who gives advice on the organization of various events and is responsible for spreading the news (about an announced engagement, the nearest upcoming church service, or the plans on building an old people’s home for Swedish pensioners) (Novik 2017a; 2017b). She is able to spread the information or, on

the contrary, to block the unwelcome recipients from it. As a result, the villagers are interested in keeping up their friendships with her, to make sure they would get cordially invited to a family celebration, would not miss an important service on a church feast day, or would receive a lucrative order at their job.

In the nearby village of Kondraq, the *kafenio* for the inner circle works the same way. The owners – husband and wife – actively participate in the social life of the village, directing the actions of the members of the community via their advice, introduction of potential workers to the necessary people etc. Among the regulars at their establishment, there is the keeper of the keys of the local church (the man who can give comprehensive information on the upcoming service and open the religious building if necessary). At this *kafenio*, they can tell you – or refuse to tell – of the village's history as well as of the lives of its residents.

Discussion

The author has set a goal of analyzing ritual practices among the population of Himara, as illustrated by the meeting for coffee. These practices are viewed as patriarchal and unaffected by major transformations by most of the researchers. Among my study's questions were the following: what influences the preservation of the tradition of meeting under the plane tree; who coordinates ritual events in the absence of church leaders and in the situation of the local and central government's obviously dwindling authority; what causes the transformations in the hierarchy of community opinions and decisions; whose authority it is to admit other members of the community to the inner circle.

The study's results show that, despite the deep changes of the economic and ideological components of the life of Himara's population, the traditional ways and adhering to the ritual practices continue to be characteristic of the region's village community. However, despite the expectations I had before starting the field work, the people who make decisions about the important events and actions – the gatekeepers – are not the most successful, rich, active and well-connected members of society, but those who possess the keys to information and therefore can influence the community opinion. In the localities of Himara I have studied, such gatekeepers are the historical cafés' owners (or, much more rarely, their long-time employees). This is accepted by successful businessmen,

members of the administrations and others who “rule the fates” of their hired workers, staff etc. From this I can conclude that the community needs a legalized broadcaster of news, ideas, traditions, and social acceptance or reproach.

I have not confirmed the widespread opinion of the patriarchal nature of the Himariot society and the exceptional stability of its gender roles. Women, who not only got equal rights with men during the period of socialism but also had to perform many of their functions (such as serving in the army, taking part in reserve training and in “voluntary” building actions etc.), had quickly managed to fill the niche of the directors of village cafés, shops etc., something that used to be the prerogative of men. This way they could transform into gatekeepers in the recent times, the period of privatization and capitalist economy. No attempts of revitalization or museification of the old traditions could push them off this pedestal. Women became the coordinators of the ritual year in the majority of Himara’s villages.

Conclusions

In this study, I have analyzed the transformations of ritual practices among the population of Himara, mainly the Orthodox Greeks, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The sociopolitical upheavals of the second half of the twentieth century, accompanied by persecution of religious institutions and destruction of churches, directed by the government, have brought to life the phenomenon of the place under the plane tree – the sacred locus of the village communities where, all year round, the villagers exchange news, announce important events in family lives, celebrate feasts and make decisions on the collective self-government and the economic activities. The change in ritual practices was heavily influenced by:

- 1) The factor of the sacred locus’s prestige in the mind of the community. The *kafenio* in the center of the village or the quarter, traditionally situated next to the church, automatically transferred many of the religious establishment’s functions to itself during the period of the militant atheism: in the *kafenio*, the locals began to announce engagements, weddings, wakes etc. Furthermore, in the difficult situation of ethnic tension (which often leads to conflicts, sometimes causing fatalities), the plane tree, which, according to the tradition, is planted in the main square, serves as a bright marker and symbol of Greek identity;

2) The mechanism of the revitalization of tradition, which is used in case of artificial intrusion in the people's ritual sphere. The Albanian government's attempts to close the churches, cancel the religious feasts, expropriate private property, and introduce their ideological foundation led to a fiasco after half a century of experimenting – the local communities continued, for example, to consider an engagement official only if it was announced under the plane tree;

3) The conscious or unconscious wish by various communities to museify their past, in spite of the challenges of the present. Thus, the cardinal change of the paradigm of the political, economic, social, religious, and cultural customs of the population of Himara over the course of two generations has not led to a cancellation of the value of the traditional, as one could expect according to the data from other regions of Albania, mainly the urban areas. The Himariots have remained dedicated to upholding the locally established customs and traditions and attempt to preserve – museify, to use the anthropological term – the heritage of their ancestors.

Notes

¹ See more: Bartl 1995; Smirnova 2003; Billa 2020.

² The use of the term “gatekeeping” within academic research has a literary antecedent in a 1914 short story by Franz Kafka, original in German “Vor dem Gesetz” (“Before the Law”). In the story, Kafka (1993 [1914]) exaggerates the literal images evoked by the gatekeeping metaphor to create a parable about social relationships and individual experience (see: Johnston 2007: 166).

³ Enver Hoxha (1908–1985) was the first communist chief of the state of Albania.

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“WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY CALENDAR HOLIDAYS?” — TOWARDS THE NOMENCLATURE, POPULARITY, AND RESEARCH HISTORY OF ANNUAL FESTIVITIES IN LITHUANIAN ETHNOLOGY

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Abstract: The historiographical paper focuses on the history of popular and academic research of calendar year holiday celebrations in Lithuania as well as on the classification and terminology used for defining them. Changes in relevant popular and academic interest, certain circumstances of the popularity of examining holidays and their customs are discussed, and scientific discourse is contrasted with public discourse. The cultural, social, and ideological circumstances of the development and dissemination of terminology related to the topic are explored. In addition, the influence of certain personalities and institutions that formed the terminology of calendar year celebrations will be reviewed. The paper is based on the analysis of academic and popular science literature, internet resources, as well as the public discourse of annual holidays.

Keywords: calendar customs, calendar holidays, history of ethnographic terminology, Lithuanian ethnology, Lithuanian holidays, ritual year

Introduction

The title of the article starts with the question, “What do you mean by *calendar holidays*?” which ethnologists speaking about traditional annual celebrations in public often receive from people.

Ethnologists, while studying holidays (as well as other cultural phenomena), try to categorise them. In the classifications of Lithuanian ethnological sources prepared for placement in the digital space, calendar holidays are designated as one of the specific areas of culture (Aruodai; Paukštytė-Šaknienė et al. 2005; The Ethnological Manuscript Fund and Electronic Data Archive at Vytautas Magnus University).

Various holidays that occur at or around the same time each year are commonly referred to as *calendar holidays* by contemporary ethnologists (Blockytė 2015; Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2016; Savoniakaitė 2011; Šaknys 2009; Šaknys 2014, etc.). Besides the calendar holidays, there are work (e.g., beginning and ending of various jobs), family (e.g., birthdays, name days, etc.), and national holidays (e.g., holidays related to important dates for the state). Additionally, in scientific works, the *calendar holidays* are often named *annual holidays* or *traditional customs*. Appropriate naming of the subject and explaining the concept that describes it is an important part of every discourse. Terms are constantly changing and depend on a range of factors, and they relate to the history of ethnographic and ethnological research of phenomena.

The history of ethnographic research of calendar celebrations in Lithuania in general has been analysed by a few scholars. Bibliographical research of celebrations was compiled by Vacys Milius (2001; 2005). Studies of calendar celebrations written during the Soviet period were analysed by Žilvytis Bernardas Šaknys (2014).

The main aim of this article is to present a summary of the history of popular and academic interest in Lithuanian traditional festivities and their investigations. The following questions are also discussed: calendar holiday terms, the popularity of different calendar holidays in the studies, and the reasons for the change in popularity. The analysis is based on a study of publications about calendar celebrations. Additionally, the analysis of the discourse about celebrations compared with their popularity in the press and the Internet (by using internet search engines and online databases) is provided.

It is important to note here that the translation of the Lithuanian ethnological term *kalendorinės šventės* to other languages (including English) is challenging. If the first word of this compound is possible to translate with the international term *calendar*, the translation of the second one poses complications. Lithuanian word *šventė* is possible to translate to English as ‘holiday’ (because etymologically it is related to the word meaning ‘holy’ in Lithuanian), but it is also related to and possible to be translated as ‘celebration,’ ‘festivity,’ and (partly) as ‘feast.’

The earliest historiography of Lithuanian calendar holidays

Lithuanian calendar holidays have been mentioned in historical sources since the fifteenth century, when an interest in Lithuanian pre-Christian traditions and local customs appeared. The written historical sources (*Historia Polonica* (the fifteenth century) by Jan Długosz (Vėlius 1996: 542–585), *Der Vnglaubigen Sudauen Ihrer Bockheiligung Mit Sambt Andren Ceremonien, So Sie Tzu Brauchen Gepflegeth* (~1520–1530) by anonymous author (Vėlius 2001: 127–153), *De Sacrificiis et Idolatria Veterum Borussorum, Livonum, Aliarumque Vicinarum Gentium* (1551) (Vėlius 2001: 202–212) and others) inform us that the most important Lithuanian feasts happened in spring (before main agricultural work had to start) and in autumn (after the main agricultural activities were completed and the crop was harvested).

More consistent descriptions and interpretations of the traditional Lithuanian holidays appeared in the late seventeenth century. It was the time when the Prussian historian and ethnographer Matthäus Prätorius wrote in German the most important work *Deliciae Prussicae, oder Preussische Schau-bühne*. In the fifth part of it, he described the particularities of Lithuanian holidays (of the part of Lithuania, which at that time was part of Prussia) connected with the main agricultural activities. The main festivities, according to this author, were related to the start and end of seasonal farm work (Pretorijus 2006: 451–537).

Despite the mentions of Lithuanian holidays in historical sources, it is important to say that all historical sources about Lithuania until the nineteenth century were written in different languages (Latin, German, and others), but not in Lithuanian. This partially led to the fact that specific Lithuanian names

for the holidays were not introduced (with the exception of *Pergubrinės* (a holiday associated with the name of the deity *Pergrubrius*) (Vėlius 2001: 145, 208, 493, etc.) and *Ilgės* (a day for the commemoration of spirits of the ancestors) (Vėlius 2001: 596)). *Pergubrinės* was traditionally celebrated in spring, before the main seasonal farm work began (at the same time as Catholic St. George's Day). *Ilgės* people celebrated in autumn, after completion of all major seasonal farm work (the next day after the Catholic All Saints' Day).

The specific romantic interest of authors towards the Lithuanian traditional calendar holidays appeared in the nineteenth century due to the influence of romanticism in general. The Lithuanian-Polish historian Teodor Narbut, in the first volume of his book *History of Lithuania* (published in 1832 and written in Polish), connected the described holidays with the schedule of specific farm work. He also tried to connect the described old Lithuanian holidays with pre-Christian Lithuanian gods (Narbutas 1992). T. Narbut spoke about specific Lithuanian holidays such as *Sutiktuves* (*Sutinkus*) (celebrated in spring in honour of the deity *Pergrubrius*). He assumed that it was the same celebration as the *Pergubrinės* mentioned previously (ibid.: 258). He also wrote about the traditions of Pentecost (he described this day as a celebration held by shepherds) (ibid.: 260). He also introduced the holiday called *Rasa* (celebrated on the eve of Catholic St. John's Day) (ibid.: 261). Also, T. Narbut spoke about the important rye harvest celebration and the celebration kept after the rye harvesting is finished as well as other festivities to which he tried to align pre-Christian mythological content (ibid.: 253–269).

So, the earliest attempts to present and describe Lithuanian holidays were based on their relation to the sequence of farm work. In all cases, the authors summarize the celebrations under the general category of *Lithuanian holidays*.

The first author who wrote about Lithuanian holidays in the Lithuanian language in the nineteenth century was the Lithuanian historian Simonas Daukantas (1793–1864) (Daukantas 1976). He wrote about the holidays: *Vainikai* (local celebrations of the Feast of Corpus Christi), *Apjavai* (celebration held in connection with rye harvesting), *Ilgės* (All Souls' Day), *Kalėdos* (Christmas). Along with calendar holidays, he described the other types of customs, such as *Įkures* ('housewarming party') and *Budynė* ('keeping vigil over a sick person'). In describing all Lithuanian holidays in general, he used two specific terms – *viešės* ('visitation') and *šventės* ('holidays') – as synonyms.

Later, the Lithuanian linguist Kazimieras Būga (1879–1924), one of the founders of the standard Lithuanian language, used two words as synonyms – *šventės* ('holidays') and *iškilmės* ('celebrations,' 'holidays,' 'festivities') in his writings to name the respective phenomena (Būga 1958). In later times, the word *šventė* came into force in the Lithuanian common language to describe a solemn day which marked a specific event.

The first printed calendars in Lithuanian (edited by Laurynas Ivinskis, later by others), which appeared in Lithuania in the nineteenth century, as well as the first newspapers in Lithuanian, used the term *šventės* as a general name to describe all calendric celebrations and popularised it.

In the first printed calendars in the nineteenth century, holidays connected with the Christian liturgical year were presented. The festive grid of that time in Lithuania was based on the Catholic tradition. In addition, the calendars used the specific Lithuanian names for liturgical Christian holidays – *Kalėdos* (Christmas), *Velykos* (Easter), *Sekminės* (Pentecost) and others. The annual holiday that had vital importance was Easter. The movable holidays connected to Easter also had great significance and were distinguished from the daily round in the calendars: *Užgavėnės* (Shrovetide), which marked the day before the beginning of Lent, *Šeštinės* (i.e., Ascension Day, often called *kryžiaus dienomis* ('the Days of the Cross')), *Sekminės* (Pentecost) and *Devintinės* (commonly known as the Feast of Corpus Christi) (Senvaitytė 2013a; 2013b). Newspapers of the time written in Lithuanian also mentioned various holidays, though they paid most attention to the New Year Day celebration and Christmas as the most important festivities of the year (ibid.).

The beginning of ethnographic and ethnological research of Lithuanian traditional holidays and their nomenclature

Ethnological academic interest in Lithuanian traditional holidays arose quite late. Consistent research on Lithuanian holidays appeared only in the interwar period (1918–1940) with the development of interest in ethnographic research and ethnological science in general. In articles written by researchers of that time (Balys Buračas (1933; 1936; 1937), Jonas Balys (1930; 1939), Stepas Zobarskas (1931), Jurgis Dovydaitis (1935), and others), calendar holidays were

simply named, and their typical customs described (for example, Christmas customs, Easter customs, St. John's Day customs, etc.), but a deep analysis of the holidays was not carried out.

The leading scientific institution that published ethnographic materials and researched ethnic culture in the interwar period was Vytautas Magnus University, which also had a Department of Ethnography (Anglickienė 2008: 13). In the articles published by the university scholars, a considerable amount of attention was paid to the local calendar customs. The most notable of these studies is Jonas Balys's compilation of holiday descriptions of Christmas Eve, Christmas, New Year, and the Three Kings (Balys 1930).

During the interwar period, the *Aušra* (Dawn) museum was established in Šiauliai. This organisation as well as the Local History Society were particularly important institutions for the study of annual holidays (Anglickienė 2008: 29). In the journal *Gimtasai kraštas* (Homeland), in addition to other areas related to the traditional Lithuanian culture, Lithuanian annual celebrations were analysed. Balys Buračas (1934), Vladas Trinkas (1935), Jurgis Dovydas (1935a; 1935b) and other authors published in this journal their articles describing various traditional annual customs.

The studies of all holidays conducted during the interwar period were summarised later by the ethnologist Vacys Milius (2001). He considered those descriptions and studies of holidays to be researches on *calendar holidays* and classified them according to which celebration they were dedicated to. Calendar holidays in this bibliography were classified as follows:

- 1) Advent, Christmas Eve, Christmas
- 2) New Year
- 3) The Three Kings
- 4) Shrovetide, Lent
- 5) Palm Sunday, Easter, Week after Easter
- 6) St. George's Day
- 7) Mother's Day
- 8) Pentecost
- 9) St. John's Day
- 10) All Saints' Day, All Souls' Day

- 11) Parish Celebrations
- 12) Lutheran worship at home
- 13) Others (i.e., other celebrations).

According to this bibliography, the most researchers focused on Christmas (25 publications), Easter (17), St. John's Day (10) and Pentecost (6) during the interwar period (Milius 2001).

Discussions in periodicals about holidays during the interwar period became more widespread and especially multifaceted. The holidays described in the press at the time mirrored the holidays celebrated by people. If one were to compare scientific research and publications in the periodicals of that time, one could conclude that the most mentioned festivities were the three main holidays: Easter, Christmas, and New Year (Senvaitytė 2013a; 2013b).

Ethnographic research of Lithuanian traditional holidays and their nomenclature during the Soviet period

Ethnographic research and ethnological studies were interrupted by the Second World War and later by the Soviet occupation and totalitarian regime. There were no publications dedicated to the Lithuanian traditional festivities in 1945–1956.¹ In addition, during the Soviet years, the public celebration of traditional Catholic holidays in Lithuania was also severely restricted, and it was not possible to speak publicly about these holidays. Only the New Year's Day celebration was neutral and officially treated as corresponding to the Soviet ideology.

Scientific interest in traditional festivities gradually started to recover in the 1960s, during the Soviet "thaw," when the Soviet ideology tried to show the world that ethnographic science was continuing to develop in the republics of the USSR. Though, when writing about the holidays, it was still not possible to point out their links to the Catholic tradition, so interest was directed towards folk customs related to the celebrations only. Ethnologists had to construct new ideological content for the festivals that was relevant to the Soviet ideology and unrelated to religion. Due to the strong atheistic propaganda of the period, all traditional Lithuanian celebrations were analysed from a secular perspective without mentioning their relation to the Christian liturgical year (even though some used names connected those holidays with Christian tradition).

During the Soviet era, one of the most important scientific institutions studying folk culture in Lithuania was the Institute of Ethnography, set up in Vilnius in 1941.² The Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (LSSR), the Historical-Ethnographic Museum of the LSSR, the LSSR Society of Regional Studies, founded in 1961, and other institutions also collected local history materials during this period. The folklore collecting expeditions organised at that time focused on recording agrarian calendar customs. Regional materials were published in the book series *Kraštotyra* (Local history) (25 titles) (Anglickienė 2008).

A significant role in studying and popularising the calendar customs in general was played by Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republican House of Folk Creativity, which not only popularised new Soviet festivals but also recreated (and sometimes renamed) traditional folk celebrations according to Soviet ideology. For example, Easter was transformed into the Spring Festival, *Užgavėnės* (Shrovetide) into the Festival of the Banishment of Winter, Pentecost into the Festival of Shepherds. The cultural centres followed the scripts supplied and recommended by this institution's staff, and therefore The House of Folk Creativity had a significant impact on new traditions of celebrating Lithuanian annual holidays (Senvaitytė 2014).

From the 1960s on, the number of studies gradually increased. The need to classify collected ethnographic materials in one or another way has appeared. Terms *calendar ceremonies*, *calendar celebrations* were introduced to the academic discourse. They appear in the article by Lithuanian philologist Ambraziejus Jonynas entitled *Songs of Calendar Rites* (Jonynas 1963) and in the chapter of the ethnographic book *Lietuvių etnografijos bruožai* (Features of Lithuanian Ethnography) entitled *Folk Calendar. Holidays* (written by the ethnologist Angelė Vyšniauskaitė, 1964). Soon afterwards, terms *calendar rites and customs* appeared in the works of folklorists (e.g., Skrodenis 1967). The compounds *customs and traditions*, *rites and customs* also possible to find at the same time. First, it was related to the need to define the cultural phenomenon and to put it into the classification as well.

However, as Žilvytis Šaknys noted, after the 1960s, there were only a few scientific studies on traditional calendar customs (except encyclopaedias) until the end of 1985 (with exceptions in 1965–1971) (Šaknys 2009: 66–67). After the 1980s, bans on analysing traditional calendar customs, including traditional holidays, weakened, and more relevant studies appeared. On the other hand,

the emphasis on connections with agriculture in the holidays remained. Additionally, the conditional tolerance of the period for interest in paganism (as an alternative to Christianity) gave researchers and enthusiasts of ethnography the opportunity to be interested in Lithuania's oldest past as well as to study it, take part in local history expeditions, study folklore, folk customs, and be engaged in respective activities.

The People's Household Museum in Rumšiškės, which opened in 1974, played a significant role in recording and preserving the traditions during that period too. The museum made a great contribution to the organisation, modification, and popularisation of various modified annual holidays. Of course, during the Soviet era, the events organised at the museum had to reflect (and did reflect) the official Soviet ideology, so traditional holidays were presented as agrarian folk customs with no religious significance. The festivals, such as the feast of the *Margučiai* (decorated Easter eggs), the First Ploughing of the Furrow, the Feast of the Shepherds, and others, were organised. The removal of the religious dimension from the organised traditional holidays eventually had a profound effect on the understanding of real Lithuanian holiday traditions, which remained (and partly in specific ways were reinforced) even after Lithuania regained its independence (Anglickienė 2008).

The term *calendar customs* was used more intensively in the Lithuanian academic space in the late 1980s when more academic publications on holiday studies appeared. Ethnologist Pranė Dundulienė used the term *calendar and agrarian customs* (Dundulienė 1979) in her book with the same title. During the same period, the term *calendar holidays* appeared in the book of Jonas Balys (1978) and in Jonas Stoskeliūnas's article (Stoskeliūnas 1979).³ P. Dundulienė's textbook *Lietuvių etnografija* (Lithuanian Ethnography, 1982) had a significant impact on introducing calendar holidays into research and popularisation of their folk elements. It also affected the prevalence of the term *calendar holidays*. While presenting a general look at traditional Lithuanian ethnic culture, P. Dundulienė spoke about the customs of Lithuanian calendar holidays and rites and divided those holidays into separate groups according to their seasonality or format (Dundulienė 1982):

- 1) the rites of the shortest days and the return of the sun
- 2) winter banishment
- 3) spring holidays

- 4) the holidays of the longest day
- 5) rites of remembrance of the dead
- 6) customs and rites of the Soviet period
- 7) work customs and rites
- 8) harvest rites
- 9) threshing customs and rites

Summarising separate ethnographic studies of the Soviet period dedicated to the specific traditional Lithuanian holidays makes it possible to say that scientific interest was focused only on Shrovetide (7 publications), though it is important to notice that it was called *žiemos išvaymo* (‘winter banishment’), and to St. John’s Day (3 publications).

Research and classification of Lithuanian annual holidays after the 1990s

After the 1990s, when Lithuania regained its independence, changes took place in all areas of life. Studies of ethnology were no exception (including research on traditional annual celebrations). The number of publications dedicated to Lithuanian calendar holidays increased significantly. Books on Lithuanian calendar holidays in general were published. The first of them was a book edited by the ethnologist Birutė Imbrasienė (1990) (with the majority of articles written by A. Vyšniauskaitė). Further followed the publications by Juozas Kudirka (1991b), P. Dundulienė (1991; this work was repeatedly published later, in 2009 and in 2020), A. Vyšniauskaitė (Vyšniauskaitė 1993), Sonata Kisilienė (1997). The book on Lithuanian calendar holidays published by J. Balys in Unites States in 1978 was published and presented in Lithuania (Balys 1993; 2013).

In the book edited by B. Imbrasienė (1990), traditional calendar holidays were divided into two categories: 1) permanent and mobile holidays; 2) holidays associated with the year’s solstices and equinoxes. All calendar holidays in the book were grouped by seasons:

- 1) Christmas and Christmas period customs
- 2) winter banishment (Shrovetide)

- 3) Spring holidays (Easter, St. George's Day, Šeštinės (Ascension), Pentecost)
- 4) Summer holidays (St. John's Day)
- 5) Autumn (All Souls' Day)

P. Dundulienė (1991) grouped calendar holidays into four main categories (similarly as she did in her earlier book published in 1982):

- 1) the rites of the shortest days and the return of the sun
- 2) winter banishment holidays
- 3) the longest day holidays
- 4) rites of remembrance of the dead

Books and articles describing particular traditional calendar festivals were published intensively during this period too (e.g., Juozas Kudirka's *Velykų šventės* (Easter Holidays) (Kudirka 1990), *Joninės* (St. John's Day) (Kudirka 1991a), *Užgavėnės* (Shrovetide) (Kudirka 1992) and others).

Few authors – J. Balys, B. Imbrasienė, S. Kisilienė – used the terms *calendar festivals*, *holidays*, and *Lithuanian holidays*. Others used the terms *Lithuanian customs* while describing the object.

Around the 1990s, the term *wheel of the year*, designating a ritual annual cycle, began to spread. It was popularised in Lithuania by the amateur ethnologist Aleksandras Žarskus.⁴ His active public lectures and the book *Rėdos ratas: lietuvių kalendorinės šventės* (Rėda's Wheel: Lithuanian Calendar Holidays) (Žarskus 1990) (later it had the second edition *Rėdos knyga: Baltų kalendorinės šventės* (Rėda's Book: Baltic Calendar Holidays), Žarskus 2009) based on his lectures both contributed to this. Moreover, he invented and popularised the new original terms *metų virsmas* ('turn of the year') and *rėdos ratas* ('the wheel of the order'), which he used as alternatives of the wheel of the year.⁵

The Lithuanian press also did not depend on the propaganda of the official Communist Party ideology anymore, and a wide variety of publications were launched. The presentation of holidays has partly returned to a comparable situation prior the Soviet period.

Research and classification of Lithuanian holidays after the 2000s

After the Millennium, interest in traditional Lithuanian calendar holidays arose even more significantly in comparison with previous times. According to the bibliographic list of books and serials compiled by the Lithuanian Integral Information System of Libraries (LIBIS), researchers paid the most attention to the following holidays:

- 1) Christmas (147 items)
- 2) Easter (47 items)
- 3) Shrovetide (27 items)
- 4) St. John's Day / Midsummer (25 items)
- 5) New Year (19 items)

This reflects the real popularity of the holidays. On the other hand, proper scientific interest in certain holidays contributes to the popularisation of these holidays in society.

Respectively, according to the international scientific database *Lituanistica* (2022) majority of the academic texts about calendar celebrations were dedicated to:

- 1) Christmas (138)
- 2) holidays (in general) (140)
- 3) Pentecost (125)
- 4) Easter (120)
- 5) St John's Day (118)
- 6) Midsummer (107)
- 7) Lent (101)

Keywords related to publications on Lithuanian calendar holidays in general in the international scientific database *Lituanistica* (publications of 2000–2020) may be arranged as follows:

- 1) annual celebrations – 183 publications

- 2) calendar holidays – 118 publications
- 3) year cycle – 95 publications
- 4) calendar customs – 44 publications
- 5) wheel of the year – 38 publications
- 6) ritual year – 4 publications

Evidently, the majority of the research was devoted to the most popular Lithuanian annual holidays in society. The most popular Lithuanian annual holidays among people of all ages at the beginning of the twenty-first century in Lithuania are Christmas Eve, Christmas and Easter, then follows St. John's Day (Senvaitytė 2014). Proportionately less attention scientists pay to Christmas than to its actual popularity, and more attention is given to Midsummer (St. John's Day), All Souls' Day, and especially Pentecost.

As the author noted above, academic research on the holidays of the year can also have a significant impact on the popularisation of the holidays in the public sphere.

Lithuanian holidays in the public discourse after the 2000s

In this period, the whole public discourse has changed dramatically, including the annual Lithuanian holidays. It has become remarkably diverse and depended on sources of information, objectives, and other factors. With the increasing use of the Internet, a wide variety of online media appeared with a specific language and presentation of news, influencing public opinion in a distinctive and significant way.

Since the various media sources and other information available in the public sphere during this period are rich, in this work, analysing the annual holidays of the period, the author relied on data from the Current Lithuanian Language Database of the Center for Computational Linguistics of the Vytautas Magnus University (tekstynas.vdu.lt). It was used to find out the frequency of annual holidays mentioned in Lithuanian texts, as well as the most popular contextual noun phrases for the respective holidays in journalistic texts. According to the database, the most commemorated holidays are:

- 1) Easter – 617 positions
- 2) Christmas – 387 positions
- 3) Shrovetide – 122 positions
- 4) Pentecost – 133 positions
- 5) All Souls’ Day – 161 positions
- 6) St. John’s Day – 121 positions
- 7) Žolinė (Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary) – 105 positions

According to the google.lt system (in Lithuanian, accessed on 13 November 2021), the most popular keywords related to calendar holidays are:

- 1) *Metų ratas* (‘wheel of the year’) – approx. 2,500,000 positions; *lietuvių metų ratas* (‘Lithuanian wheel of the year’) – 1,240,000 positions. Entries include not only texts about calendric customs but also about change of nature during seasons.
- 2) *Metinės šventės* (‘annual holidays’) – approx. 1,460,000 positions; *lietuvių metinės šventės* (‘Lithuanian annual holidays’) – 481,000 positions. Entries also include national days.
- 3) *Ritualiniai metai* (‘ritual year’) – approx. 562,000 positions; *lietuvių ritualiniai metai* (‘Lithuanian ritual year’) – 317,000 positions. Entries also include texts about funerals, beauty rituals, magical rituals.
- 4) *Metų virsmas* (‘turn of the year’) – approx. 1,870,000 positions; *lietuvių metų virsmas* (‘Lithuanian turn of the year’) – 88,800 positions. Entries include different topics (like change of the cities with years, presentation of various cultural events).
- 5) *Kalendorinės šventės* (‘calendar holidays’) – approx. 126,000 positions; *lietuvių kalendorinės šventės* (‘Lithuanian calendar holidays’) – 19,100 positions.
- 6) *Kalendoriniai papročiai* (‘calendar customs’) – approx. 32,400 positions; *lietuvių kalendoriniai papročiai* (‘Lithuanian calendar customs’) – 24,500 positions.
- 7) *Rėdos ratas* (‘Rėda’s wheel’) – 74,300 positions; *lietuvių rėdos ratas* (‘Lithuanian Rėda’s wheel’) – 19,900 positions.

8) *Kalendorinės apeigos* ('calendar rites') – approx. 29,500 positions;
lietuvių kalendorinės apeigos ('Lithuanian calendar rites') – 10,500
positions.

Conclusions

Interest in Lithuanian traditional annual holidays have a few centuries of continuity. The earliest descriptions of Lithuanian holidays appeared in the fifteenth century. The oldest historical sources that mentioned Lithuanian holidays usually referred to holidays related to agricultural work. Later, Lithuanian holidays were considered as closely intertwined with Christian traditions and the Catholic liturgical year.

The ethnographic and amateur studies of Lithuanian annual holidays started in the nineteenth century with the emergence of national and romantic ideas, but scientific ethnological research of the phenomenon began in the twentieth century and became especially widespread after the 1990s and later. The most studied traditional Lithuanian holidays during the interwar period by ethnologists were Christmas, Shrovetide, and Easter; during Soviet times – Shrovetide. In the twenty-first century, researchers gave the most attention to Shrovetide, Christmas, Easter, and St. John's Day.

Mentions of annual holidays in Lithuanian media appeared in the nineteenth century, though in the twenty-first century, the presentation of Lithuanian annual holidays in the media increased significantly. New Year, Christmas and Easter are the most mentioned celebrations (which reflect the real popularity of the holidays in society).

Along with the research of traditional annual holidays, the need to classify and name the types of holidays appeared in the second part of the twentieth century. Even though the general term defining traditional annual holidays in Lithuania is not fully established and they vary, the terms *calendar holidays* (*calendar festivals*) or *calendar customs* are the most common and cover the celebrations of Easter, Christmas, All Souls' Day, Shrovetide, and others, which have cyclical recurrence in the year and relate to the traditional Lithuanian agricultural cycle and/or Christian liturgical year. The use of terms depends on researchers and the popularisation of terms they use in the public sphere.

The names of specific calendar holidays in the Lithuanian language are sufficiently well established. More complications occur when translating them into other languages.

Notes

¹ But outside Lithuania, the study of Jonas Balys was published at that time. His monograph, *Lietuvių tautosakos skaitymai*, had a chapter dedicated to annual holidays (Balys 1948: 99–138).

² After the Second World War, the Institute of Ethnography was transformed into the Archaeology-Ethnography Sector at the Institute of History, and later it was reorganised and renamed several times.

³ It should be noted that these two works were published outside the Lithuanian Soviet Republic, in the USA and Poland.

⁴ Aleksandras Žarskus has been involved in self-published activities since 1977, and since 1982 he has given lectures on national culture, religion, and psychology underground. In 1988, since the beginning of *Sąjūdis* (Movement, initially known as the Reform Movement of Lithuania), the Sunday *Sąjūdis* Lithuanian Culture School was set up in Kaunas, and he took part in its activities and gave lectures on Lithuanian ethical culture and moral topics. In 1995 in Kaunas, the Sunday School became the center of national culture. He gave lectures on national, religious, psychological, and moral topics there further on.

⁵ According to contemporary Lithuanian linguists the term *rėda* is a barbarism; its meaning is ‘world order; system’ (Mikulėnienė & Dvilytė 2013).

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ESTONIAN TEACHERS' DAY – OCTOBER 5. FROM 1960S TO NOWADAYS

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*School time and spring
are still beautiful.*

*Spring will come again,
school time never will.*

(lines of poetry in the album under the picture)

40 years since graduation of the eighth grade at Elva Secondary School.

Class teacher Helga Hinno

11 June 1981

Abstract: Teachers' Day is celebrated globally on various days of the year. The official celebration began either in 1965 or earlier. UNESCO established World Teachers' Day in 1994 to focus on the work and achievements of

teachers. Teachers' Day has been celebrated at schools in Estonia since the 1960s. At that time, the best students became teachers, and lessons were given primarily to younger classes and at basic school. The newer rules in the 1990s became much more exciting, according to which teachers really changed roles with students (embodied as students), disguised themselves, and chose a certain style. Behavioural patterns and norms also become free. Teachers live out by teasing: scattering paper planes, disturbing lessons, talking and being naughty, and not bothering to answer. But students may also be shown what their teachers are like outside school: talented musicians, performers, experimenters, and so on. At the end of the day, they can return to the original rules: a coffee table made by students and flowers for teachers; a visit from the rural municipality, city government, or education department; and congratulations. In addition, and above all, this is a day when teachers are excited because they are just great. We see many rapid role changes, changes in norms, parody and ridicule, black humor along with the implementation of various scripts.

Keywords: celebrations, Estonia, role play, student calendar, Teachers' Day

Introduction

The photo caption commemorates an elementary school teacher about whom her students spoke during their studies at Elva Secondary School in the 1970s and even afterwards. Relationships between teachers and students are an intriguing question. It is known that the teacher's role in supporting and encouraging students is important.

This article examines Estonian data, with comparisons made only in certain cases. In 2020, the population of Estonia was estimated at 1,326,535 million people, with 68% of the population living in urban areas. The Estonian language is spoken by roughly 70% of the population, with approximately 28% of the population being Russian speakers. Historically, most of the Russian-speaking population has been settled in the capital, Tallinn, or the north-eastern region of the country (Ida-Viru County) (Population Census 2021). In Estonia, most children study at publicly funded free schools. A minority of students attends private schools, some of which have a distinct pedagogical orientation, such as Waldorf schools¹ and some schools that follow the heritage of Johannes Käis.² There are also a few Catholic, Lutheran, and other religious schools, the traditions of which began in the 1990s or which have been established in the last

few years. Public schools often provide specialised instruction in a particular field (natural sciences, mathematics or physics, language study, music). Depending on the school, intensive study may begin in the first grade, but very frequently, this starts at the beginning of high school; this tradition dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century.

The majority of schools operate fully in Estonian, although in Ida-Viru County and Tallinn, including the areas of former military industries, there are also so-called language immersion schools (where the majority of instruction is in Estonian and the minority in Russian), as well as Russian-language elementary schools and secondary schools. Different school types and language environments have been highlighted since, after the Second World War, Estonian and Russian schools studied according to different educational programmes, and the school programme has not been harmonised to this day. In connection with the Russo-Ukrainian War (2022) and the large number of refugees, the first Ukrainian-language schools have been established.

In conclusion, we have different models for communication between teachers and students: open and democratic and schools that follow a more conservative distribution of roles. Many holidays have been introduced into schools by the media and the teaching staff. We investigate what kind of structure Teachers' Day has and how customs have changed over time. How are the carnivalesque and folkloresque effects integrated into Teachers' Day? The tradition of using robust and angry theatrical techniques has become widespread in schools. Is it typical on Teachers' Day?

Data and methodology

Our data was gathered in the context of a multi-method ethnography. The goal of establishing a grand collection of children's lore, attempted in 1992, was to get as diverse an overview of children's lore and customs as possible at that time and to find the causes, directions, and areas of the rapid change (about the results, see Kõiva 1995; Hiimäe 2002; Kalmre 1995). It implied interviewing students. In order to get a longitudinal overview, the survey was repeated in 2007 (cf. the survey by Voolaid 2007; Babič & Voolaid 2022) and later in 2018, encompassing students from the fourth to twelfth grades.³ In 2018, the process of collecting the school and children's lore took place mostly by using

online forms, and only a few schools and a few students sent written answers on paper. The selection of schools also changed to a certain extent: extensive urbanisation was considered, and therefore more schools in Tallinn and Tartu were included in the pool; some rural schools had been closed down or converted from secondary to basic schools.

In 2007, the respective figures were 2,800 students and 15,000 pages (Voolaid 2007). Of those students who responded in 2007, approximately 400 mentioned Teachers' Day. The students gave free form written responses to the thematic block of the calendar.

In 2018, approximately 3,700 students answered mostly online (Hiimäe 2018, cf. statistics and details in Kõiva & Muhi 2020), with 60 of them mentioning Teachers' Day. The majority of responses indicated that it was a fun experience, without going into detail.

In order to obtain an expert evaluation, we also asked grown-ups to recall how Teachers' Day was observed (diffused thematic random questioning), and we chose expert teacher Aili Kiin from Viljandi Gymnasium (an Estonian philologist and literature teacher). We also draw upon articles published in the media (mainly interviews with teachers; data was saved to EFITA).

Inclusion and ecological systems theory

Taking the paradigms of positive psychology and positive education as the point of departure (cf. Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, 1986), we have reason to examine Teachers' Day more closely, not in terms of official recognition ceremonies and campaigns to select the best colleague, but in terms of the concept of inclusion as an important marker of democracy in the school and the question of mutual trust.

Behavioural inclusion invites students to participate in activities during or after school, and emotional inclusion affects students' feelings about teachers and classmates, study, and the school in general. On this basis, Teachers' Day may play a socially significant role that helps the public understand other people and provide recognition; this is consistent with a democratic orientation.

School makes up a significant part of the day for children, teenagers, and young adults (aged 11–19). Apart from study, school encompasses broader areas in which skills are developed, accomplished through activities and workshops

after the school day is over. This means that the student is actively involved with the school through activities like, for example, a choir, an art club, or some other hobby. Those students who are connected to the process of education through these various activities feel emotionally and cognitively connected to their schools (Gorski & Parekh 2020).

It is this connection that imparts skills and attitudes deemed valuable by both students and teachers as they acquire the content of the school's curriculum. The theories of positive psychology reflect its relationship with humanists and philosophers alike, who shared a focus on positive experiences and a life well lived. The scientific study of well-being continues to progress and increasingly broadens its scope of attention to include not only individual character and well-being but also the welfare of others and communities (cf. Waters 2011; 2021; Løhre & Lydersen & Vatten 2010). In Estonian pedagogics, a series of studies on teachers' satisfaction with their work, students, and colleagues have been completed. The students' satisfaction and their ability to assess their own and their family's economic, social, and health situations has been studied over the last ten years. This is also the reason why it is easier to find parallel studies outside of Estonia and Europe. For example, approximately 26,000 students from fourth to twelfth grades in 114 schools participated in research on schools in the USA in 2015. According to the findings, a sense of emotional and physical connection to the school is an important factor in shaping a positive school atmosphere (NASP 2018; for earlier analyses, see Dupper 2010; O'Brien & Blue 2017).

Dagmar Kutsar, a social scientist and researcher on children's well-being and poverty, emphasises that "the 2015 World Happiness Report (Layard and Hagell 2015) included for the first time a separate chapter on children's well-being in its publication. It provides examples of implementing measures in the society that support child well-being. By focusing on children's well-being at school, the idea of schools for well-being is developed, which fits well with the paradigms of positive psychology and positive education (e.g. Noble & McGrath 2015; White 2016)" (Kutsar & Raid & Soo 2018: 21; cf. Soo & Kutsar 2022).

One of the most salient questions in pedagogical theory and practice is discipline, which has been seen as equally important as educational content. To a large extent, students' behaviour at school depends on many factors (cf. Bronfenbrenner 1986), including family, friends, group, media, social influences, and time.

At the same time, views on children, discipline, and children's role in the education process are quite different, not so free-minded and tolerant. According to the traditional view, to discipline children is necessary through adult control and influence, so that children develop self-control. According to the progressive view, children are good by nature, so no action should be taken to discipline them; they will learn self-control on their own, through their development and experience (Cvetkova Dimov & Atanasoska & Andonovska Trajkovska 2019). Indiscipline at school is mainly defined as action from the students' side.⁴

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory views child development as a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment, from the immediate settings of family and school to broad cultural values, laws, and customs (Guy-Evans 2020). He divides the person's environment into five different systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem (Fig. 1). The microsystem is the most influential level of ecological systems theory. This is the child's most immediate environmental setting, which includes family and school. Also, other levels are important. The macrosystem focuses on how cultural elements affect a child's development, such as socioeconomic status, wealth, poverty, and ethnicity. The final level – the chronosystem – consists of all of the environmental changes that occur over the lifetime that influence development, including major life transitions and historical events.

Teachers' Day (and other school calendar dates) is influenced by the micro- and macrosystems. It is an exercise for future roles in life. The previous theory shows many interactions that shape the child's worldview and behaviour. The question of whether these groups, which involve masking, mocking, satirical challenge to authority and the traditional social hierarchy, can be called carnivalesque, remains unanswered. There are only a few examples of satirical behaviour; most of the students reflect on the event as an ordinary ritual (cf. EFITA, F01-022-0003, p. 292).

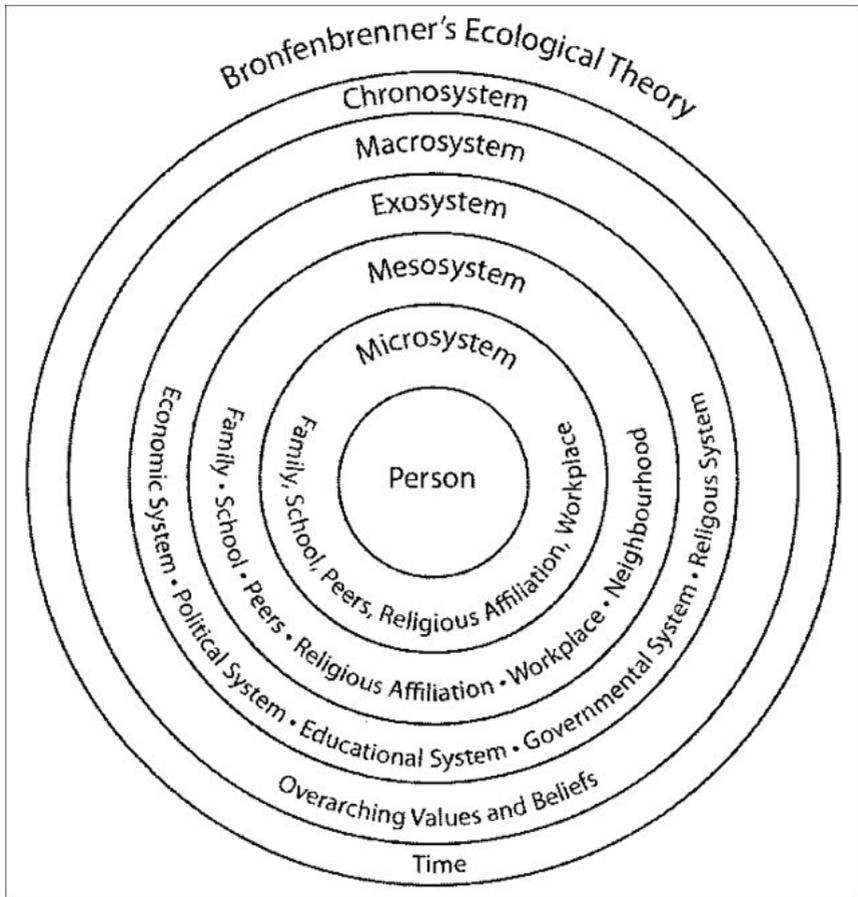


Figure 1. An adapted illustrated model of an Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Stanger 2011).

Children's inclusion in the perpetuation and celebration of school events

The 1960s and beyond

Teachers try to apply discipline in a dignified manner and to direct students' behaviour. The Estonian-style Teachers' Day is placed in a special light in this

framework. One of the central features of this day, besides honouring teachers, has been a reversal of roles. Indeed, switching roles presumes relationships based on equality and mutual trust between the parties. In our view, the core of the day is the forging of contacts that are valued reciprocally and the preservation of friendly ties. We begin with the concept of inclusion – meaning that students are behaviourally and emotionally included in Teachers' Day and that this is accompanied by reciprocal recognition.

In Estonia, the celebration of Teachers' Day began in 1965 (or earlier), when it was formally added to the list of professional days.⁵ Teachers' Day is observed in the majority of the world's regions with the message that the teaching profession should be valued in society. The day is observed at different times, but the common thread is the official recognition of teachers by those in power. Since 1994, at the request of UNESCO, Teachers' Day has been observed on the 5th of October.

In the twentieth century, many schools (the Lender Secondary School for Girls, the Tartu Girls' Secondary School, etc.) created models that were followed throughout the twentieth century, some of which were re-established in the 1990s. This kind of approach helps explain the position of the day in young people's school calendars.

Initially, the special feature of Teachers' Day was that students replaced teachers, gave lessons, and determined grades. The relationship between students and teachers has changed more than these traditions: student councils have a bigger role than before, students' opinions are gathered, and relations are generally more democratic than they were before. However, teachers still have a leadership role in most schools: events to make everyone at school feel more united, such as hikes and meetings with famous people and alumni, depend on their engagement. Although there are very active students who can organise many events and lift everyone's spirit, the overall pattern of dynamics has not changed over the years.

Mare Kõiva describes how she suddenly had the opportunity to stand in front of the class as a teacher when in 1967 she was instructed to substitute for the teacher in one of the lower grades. The order probably came from the Young Pioneers leader. The extraordinary student substitute teacher then had the chance to teach a new section of the lesson and invite younger students to answer; she even wrote grades with her own hand in the class diary. The latter was a completely unusual privilege, because usually teachers only showed students' grades to parents for a moment at parents' meetings. Showing par-

ents the class diary confirmed that things were either going especially well, moderately, or poorly.

Giving the lesson went well: I don't recall that the students in the lower grades exhibited particular disobedience; they came to the front of the class to answer or answered from their desk. We progressed in the subject, which probably meant that I had prepared at home. The assignment was unexpected for me ... Apparently many sixth-grade students were sent to join the younger ones, and older students arrived to teach us, the 12-year-olds. The decisions about all of this were most likely made by the activists of the Young Pioneers' organisation, since it was the 1960s. Perhaps students were chosen along with teachers, for it was unlikely that anyone wanted there to be a lack of discipline, quarrels between the school and the parents, messed up school diaries, etc. (EFITA, F01-022-0003)

Aili Kiin (Viljandi) recalls her experiences:

Every school developed the observance of Teachers' Day from its own standpoint. I was the director of perhaps the first and only LITTLE CHILDREN's school in the Estonian SSR, in Viljandi Valuoja 8 grade school. I must have been in the fifth grade, with the pioneer leader as the initiator. It was wonderful that I taught Estonian language and our lesson summaries were strictly controlled. In the lesson, I was just like a real teacher, and once I asked for riddles. At that time, children knew them by heart. I don't remember what I asked myself; perhaps it was about the ONION: variegated in the middle... Suddenly a boy, one of the twins, jumped up and shouted in a loud voice: "A wolf growling between two hills – what is it?" Fortunately, I had heard this one myself, I recalled that it meant FARTING! Fortunately, no one knew it, and I was so clever that I asked the one who asked the riddle not to give the answer, let everyone mull over it at home. So that was the beginning of my career in Grade 5, in elementary school, where they knew nothing about Teachers' Day.

I graduated from Viljandi High School No. 1 in 1969, where they observed Teachers' Day and had the students in charge. Me, too, and I taught one lesson of literature; it was the specialised literature class. I was in our first specialised literature class.

I spent much effort and even wrote down a list of recommended readings. The students were excited, and afterwards they praised me by calling me You (the formal 'you'). The teachers even used the formal 'you' with students. I wanted to be greeted in an informal way. (EFITA, F01-022-0003)

What did the teachers do on Teachers' Day? Opinions were divided about this. Generally, it was thought that "teachers enjoyed long coffee breaks in the staff room... probably" (female, northern Estonia, 60).

Of course, the students also brought flowers for the teachers – every school had its own traditions... Unfortunately, during my time as a student, our family moved often, so after every three years there was a new school. (Maire Karindi, northern Estonia, EFITA, F01-022-0003)

Aili Kiin remembers:

Things must have changed during my university years, because when I was working as a young teacher at the Viljandi Rural Secondary School in 1977, the students in the highest grade were also teachers. First, the children had to report to me whether they had contacted the real teacher and asked about the topic, etc. We managed, and it was a nice convocation; unfortunately, however, one thing that the children had made up interfered. We discussed how each class could submit the name of one of their favourite teachers, and then we would declare who was the favourite teacher for that year. At any rate, the convocation rang with joy when students read some of their teachers' wittiest sentences out loud. They asked, "Who talks like this?" The whole auditorium was in ecstasy. (EFITA, F01-022-0003)

Indeed, there are more reports, beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, of students' parodying teachers' clothing, behaviours, and ways of speaking. A current teacher, age 45, describes the situation, saying that no one exceeded the limits, and often students would ask the teachers' permission before they parodied them, but there was lots of fun. What happened was also referred to as a costume drama, meaning that students would dress in the manner of a particular teacher, using wigs and high-heeled shoes.

Structure of the day

In general, an anniversary with a simple structure reflects what is happening in society: customs are discrete, intermittent, and non-linear and reflect both

current and more general, longer-term, social change. Structurally, three main stages are distinguished in the celebration:

- 1) students replace teachers in class;
- 2) teachers participate in the celebration in the role of students and in parodies;
- 3) then recognition follows and festive table.

As was mentioned above, Aili Kiin's recollection of 1977 indicates that even then parodies of teachers took place, with imitations of their language and skills. One would think that this was allowed by the fact that in the 1960s and 1970s, schoolchildren grew up in a more casual atmosphere.

In the 1980s, students in the graduating class (ninth or twelfth grade, less often eighth or eleventh grade) replaced teachers. However, if it was a small rural school, then the custom was adapted so that younger fifth or sixth grade students could also have a go at being teachers (Fig. 2 and 3).



Figure 2. Teachers' Day, Järve Gymnasium photo gallery, 2019, EFITA, F01-022-0003.



Figure 3. Teachers' Day, new director, Järve Gymnasium photo gallery, 2019. EFITA, F01-022-0004.

In secondary schools, this task falls on the shoulders of senior students, giving them a chance to prove themselves as teachers with real authority. One student will also get to be the principal for a day, taking over in the morning and relinquishing their power at the end of the day. Sometimes, this temporary administration is solemn and serious, while at other times the students are a playful pack. This is not just about cognitive involvement. It also means strong students mainly taught and teach the younger ones, and the position of director is attributed to a person with leadership qualities. Even with improvisational and superficial teaching, nothing bad happens to the students' overall education in one day. Students' answers in 2007 and 2018 showed that the day itself is enjoyable and easier than usual.

I have not been a teacher on Teachers' Day since I am too young, but I love Teachers' Days because it is always easier, and you can laugh a lot, and sometimes you can have a little argument with substitute teachers.
(Student response 3495: Rõuge Primary School, sixth grade, 2018, EFITA, KP 2018-3495)

The custom has remained that students contact teachers and discuss the way the lesson will be carried out, but the students who are going to act as teachers

decide among themselves as to who will teach where. Students who are very strong in a particular subject mainly teach that subject, although some students try to get by on their own, or the younger students in the class get out of control and play fast and loose during the lesson.

The recognition part of the day is also enjoyable. The student director reads out a proclamation and highlights certain things: some teachers are praised, and the quirks of others are mentioned.

Teachers in the role of students, parodies and free performance

There are opportunities for improvisation when teachers find themselves in the role of students. It is up to the teachers whether the new role is taken seriously, or whether a comical or teasing tone is adopted. Quite often, teachers really get into their role and experiment with boundaries in every way: throwing paper planes, acting up in class, chatting, cheating, fiddling with their mobile phones, kidding around, and not bothering to answer questions. However, in addition to lessons, the Student Council can also give the teachers specific tasks, ask them to stage a play, practice choral singing, or parody other teachers.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, some schools started staging carnivalesque-like Teachers' Day celebrations (teachers made fun of students with rude and careless behaviour and turned everything upside down). It is difficult to understand if the main purpose of such celebrations was to send any messages using parody. Was there a need for such a collective festivity for the teachers themselves? These were known to occur in only a few of the schools, as most wanted to resume their normal role and authority the following school day.

A completely different message is being sent by teachers' concerts and productions, where they show their human abilities (many teachers are already known in the local community as singers, dancers, amateur actors, etc.). At the same time, the answers indicate that the teachers' self-parody is to the liking of students in every way. Such shows can be seen on ETV, but a completely new view is given by the shows of our teachers, one of which could be: we play the game by certain rules, but I do understand that I can be a fool sometimes.

As always, performing these tasks is an opportunity to earn additional social capital. This kind of improvisational dialogue requires more than improvisational skill and theatrical ability. To some extent, this is an opportunity to exchange messages through role changes.

A bit of special flavour is added to the day by the fact that teachers in turn could be school children and also have their own lessons. Teachers have studied fine arts, music, participated in physical education classes, military education, and gathered wisdom in family studies, psychology, and European economic dynamics. They have also imitated first graders, representatives of different nationalities, militaristic home guards, the so-called Black Berets, and characters of the 1960s, both in their clothing and behaviour. This year, they played book characters. Senior students will also prepare a coffee table for the teachers and put on amusing performances. (Põlva Secondary School 2001, EFITA, F01-022-0003)

Those teachers who, as students, break the rules in every way are made to stand in a corner or are given summer homework as a symbolic punishment.

The lessons included intense teaching and learning, during which the senior students became teachers and checked the knowledge of their new student-teachers. As in any ordinary school, results varied: some were told to attend additional classes during the summer; some were only deemed "acceptable" on their report card; some had good grades, and some had poor ones. The bulletin board also featured orders from the principal on punishing misbehaviour and coming to class with cigarettes; only his quick feet saved Sulev Loopalu, who usually teaches art at Kärddla Secondary School, from being put into a corner to repent. (Teachers' Day in Kärddla 2003, EFITA, F01-022-0003)

In 2021, in his opening remarks, the real principal, Ivo Eesmaa, made it quite clear that, "If secondary school students acted as nonsensically as those that were in our class today, we might as well close down the school", which was actually a compliment to the senior students and the day they had organised.



Figure 4. Masquerades. 1–3 – Teachers playing pioneers (Teachers’ Day, Märjamaa Gymnasium, 2002, photograph by Inge Jalakas (Kõiva 2004)) and 4 – Students in disguise (Teachers’ Day, Pärnu Koidula Gymnasium, 2019, source: <https://www.koidulag.edu.ee/et/galeriid/opetajate-paev-2019>).

Some schools create even further room for improvisation by declaring Teachers’ Day to be also Style Day. Strong and cohesive teaching staff do not always fully hand over their power. For example, teachers can still suggest certain activities themselves: an improvisational rock or rap concert, performing sketches to the whole student body, or sometimes performing a living history lesson. For example, it will always be remembered how the students and teachers of Märjamaa Secondary School dressed up as pioneers (Fig. 4), lined up, marched around the stadium with a flag, gave oaths, and so on. This programme was funny but also gave some food for thought as to the way young people lived decades ago. Märjamaa and Pioneers is a nostalgic parody event, such as covering pioneer life, in which characteristic features of the era come to the fore. Can efforts of this nature be called a revitalised and inclusive history lesson? Perhaps. In Estonia, too, we find some schools where there are many bright people, but these are not the usual forms of celebration. In essence, they are closer to student fandoms, i.e., style parties and parodies. At the same school

in Märjamaa, for example, teachers have performed Eurovision, which can sometimes provide brilliant opportunities for parody, mimicry, etc. Märjamaa is famous for its nostalgia and style parties, which are also organised for adult locals. In 2022, the racing of old Soviet-era cars and other events reminiscent of the past were banned due to the war in Ukraine.

Teachers may be given quizzes (Voolaid 2012), are asked to give concerts or sing. The conclusion reached above – they probably drink coffee – came out of quiz answers.

P. Voolaid describes how folklorists took part in the Teachers' Day celebration organised by the twelfth grade, which they photographed and filmed with the kind permission of the teachers. While the high school students held school lessons for the teachers, the teachers were in the role of students in the hall watching the 1995 film *Dangerous Minds* starring Michelle Pfeiffer as a teacher. After a short discussion, the young men of the twelfth grade organised a memory game for the teachers in the format of the ETV programme "Eesti mäng" (Estonian Game), which caused the teachers a lot of excitement and was also a good example of the influence of media and television today on school traditions (Voolaid 2012).

Regarding a small rural school in eastern Estonia, teachers report how aspiring students behave:

Senior students give lessons, while teachers eat cake and drink coffee. Students also organise a variety of amusing games for us; they also sing in the hallway. They prepare carefully for this day, and even the naughtiest children act with great dignity. (Helge Arro, Principal of Tudu Primary School, EFITA, F01-022-0003)

Showing respect for teachers

Recent studies have shown that teachers are motivated to stay in their profession by routine-free, varied work (Ratas 2014: 31), with good relationships with students being one of the most important foundations of teachers' work. This means above all, for the interviewed teachers, that the cooperation between teachers and students in the classroom is smooth (ibid.: 21). The study does talk about a normal study day, but it is all the more important to have free communication and cooperation within the framework of Teachers' Day and to change roles.

There is also the possibility that teachers will instead adopt an extracurricular approach and spend time with each other, experiment with creative activities, visit spas, etc. In addition, the cooperation between the student committee and the local government is quite an important element, although even then, reversal remains a part of Teachers' Day. So-called awards events are quite common, and often these activities are combined with an official reception.

First, there is a festive meeting at school, then the senior students begin to give lessons. Teachers, however, will go to the Sagadi Learning Centre where we will study the wonders of nature. We eat lunch at Altja Tavern and travel back to town shortly afterwards, because at 5 pm the celebration of Teachers' Day begins in Rakvere, where the best teachers will receive awards. (Kadi Kruusmaa, Head Teacher at Rakvere Secondary School, EFITA, F01-022-0003)

Other interesting options, such as a visit to a sculptor's studio where everyone can try their hand at ceramics or sculptures, are mentioned in the responses. Tauno Kangro's Atelier is known for teaching and for experimental events. The sculptor himself represents a vigorous national direction, the monuments of which often have a small spark of humour or a caricatured addition.

First, ninth graders give lessons, making a completely serious effort to teach their subjects, having prepared thoroughly. Teachers also join classes as students. Afterwards, the teachers and I go to the Tauno Kangro sculpture studio in Laitse to try our hands at some pottery. Our teachers have already dabbled a bit with ceramics, for example, making clay mugs for themselves. (Matti Martinson, Principal of Rahumäe Primary School in Tallinn, EFITA, F01-022-0003)

A representative of the city or municipal government can also come to a small school in person to greet and reward teachers. At the Russian school in Tallinn, the celebration takes place over two days, and the director himself gives the awards.

We celebrate for two days. On the day of the 5th of October, students give lessons and also hold a meeting of the Board of Education. But as early as Friday, I will hold a festive reception for teachers at the school, where

our best teachers are thanked and rewarded. (Pae Secondary School in Tallinn, EFITA, F01-022-0003)



Figure 5. Teachers' Day at Jõõpre School, 2019. Source: <https://www.jooprepk.ee/index.php/2066-opetajate-paeev-joopre-koolis>.

This and other data from Russian schools indicate that Teachers' Day is celebrated in the same way there. A good example dates back to 2003 at Keila Russian Secondary School:

On October 3rd, students wished teachers a lovely Teachers' Day. Each grade prepared gifts: poems, songs, dances, scenes, musical performances (piano, violin), posters, cards, hall decorations, bouquets of autumnal flowers. The teachers were happy that day and the children were content. Everyone was enthralled with Katya Stepanov's poem. (EFITA, F01-022-0003)

In general, flowers, cakes, and a festive atmosphere are part of the official congratulations, with retired teachers also remembered (Fig. 5). Many teachers state that they also celebrate the holiday at home because they have many teachers in the family and among relatives.

Conclusions

The pandemic left its mark on school traditions, as schools were open with intermittent success, mainly to younger grades and senior students. Sometimes events were simply postponed:

4th of June 2021: According to the calendar, Teachers' Day may have been several months ago, but we actually celebrated it today. Good things come to those who wait. Now that it is possible, our Primas demonstrated their wisdom in front of full classrooms, and teachers could let their hair down in various activities. Emotions... (EFITA, F01-022-0003)

Estonian Teachers' Day is characterised by the great freedom of schools to do whatever a particular school wants in how it celebrates this day. Active teachers and students determine how great and extraordinary the whole anniversary will be. The celebration is a mixture of performance, positive emotions, joy, competence, engagement, and even gratitude. When people are grateful, they notice and appreciate the good things that happen to them and express thanks to those who are responsible (Emmons 2007).

There are different types of roles. The students' part is easier, as they have experience with how teachers behave in their profession and they have time to prepare. Teachers are usually chosen from among talented students who are experts in their respective fields. Parodying and imitating teachers, preparing the whole day connects them with fellow students and the school and engages them cognitively and emotionally.

The role that teachers play is more complex. These are spontaneous performances where each participant chooses and performs a role within the limits of their skills. Teachers can earn attention, understanding, and popularity among students with their activities and performances.

We have received reports about the celebration of Teachers' Day in October from different regions of Russia, for example, from the Udmurt Republic. There, too, they celebrate in two ways:

- 1) students replace teachers in giving lessons; and
- 2) there are reports from many places that in different regions, in recent decades, the celebration of Teachers' Day has become more free-spirited, involving improvisations.

The use of the carnivalesque is also limited by the existence of similar events (the school leaving celebration, the fox party, and other style parties and carnivals), the extreme forms of which are prohibited in most schools. What remains is a celebration confirming mutual relations with minor changes. Folkloresque is used by recreational groups (fans of Japanese and Korean culture), but it requires longer preparation and has not found a wide area of application in schools.

Certainly, the example of Teachers' Day is the best example of inclusive communication that keeps the school climate benevolent and mutually accepting. Whether such lines will continue depends on reforms and, in fact, on fashion trends.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

¹ Waldorf pedagogy is based on the theoretical principles developed by Rudolf Steiner, according to which, schools should foster learning based on children's own experience.

² Johannes Käis (1885–1950) was a famous Estonian pedagogue, innovator of the methodology of primary education. He developed the educational system based on the national history of Estonia, fostered an individual learning and a do-it-yourself method, founded nature teaching methodology, and created the elementary school natural history program.

³ The first questionnaires regarding calendar holidays derive from the first decades of the twentieth century, when Matthias Johann Eisen questioned pupils about the observance of customs associated with major holidays (Christmas, Easter) at home, with the goal of getting a more precise sense of the preservation of older customs and identifying changes in them (Eisen 1931).

⁴ While pedagogy values discipline, indiscipline is perceived as a state of low standards and principles of controlled behaviour, or limited ability for self-control, a threat to educators' authority, dominance, and class work, or an impediment to learning, as well

as a cause of distress (based on the example of English-language learners, cf. Kuloheri 2016: 60).

⁵ According to the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR from 29 September 1965 “On the establishment of the annual holiday ‘Teachers’ Day”, it was celebrated in the first Sunday of October.

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III

News and Reviews

A Bulgarian Conference on the Ethnology of Socialism: Five Senses in Everyday and Festive Life

In the past decades, multidisciplinary investigations of the socialist era have been undertaken by Bulgarian specialists in the fields of history, language, ethnology, anthropology, and folklore. In the same academic direction, the International Online Conference “Socialism Through the Lens of the Five Senses” (“Социализмът през петте сетива”) was organised between the 3rd and the 4th of March 2022 by the Center for Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of St Cyril and St Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo (hereinafter VTU) and the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (hereinafter IEFEM). During the event, twenty five papers were presented by scientists, predominantly from Bulgaria, as well as from North Macedonia, Russia, Germany, and India.

In his opening speech, the Director of IEFEM, **Vladimir Penchev** (Sofia) welcomed the participants to the conference and identified the topic of sensory in the era of socialism as innovative and promising for interdisciplinary and comparative studies. He remarked on the growing role of reflection and personal experience in ethnology, as well as the role of analytical writings of the scientists who had experienced socialism. V. Penchev further underlined the idea that the historical memory is an important domain to be shared with new generations of young researchers, who have to be led through the context of the socialist era.

The reports presented at the conference had different objectives, and the speakers used different methodologies and research data. The common feature, however, was the time-frame, as all speakers were referring to the same period of time – the socialist era – in Bulgaria and other countries. Although the scientific meeting was dedicated to the five senses, speakers only partially followed the assigned theme. Taste, vision, hearing, smell, and touch were often approached indirectly, in the context of a broader topic.

A number of presentations were devoted to the taste code: cuisine, culinary traditions, and food production in Bulgaria. In her report, “The Taste of Vegetables Under Socialism,” **Yana Yancheva** (IEFEM, Sofia) analysed the

ethnological aspects of artisanal and industrial production and the harvesting of tomatoes and green beans. The speaker insisted on the role these productions played in the national and family economy; the various ways in which mutual assistance was built in villages (e.g., exchange of seeds and recipes). Despite the fact that canned food was mainly exported during socialism (mostly to the USSR), homemade preparations were in high demand. They strengthened family life and helped maintain the social ties between members.

Rosen Marinov (VTU, Veliko Turnovo) devoted his paper “The Taste of Socialist Holidays” to the issue of maintenance of family and social ties, with a special focus on festive meals. During the discussion, an exchange of views took place on how much canning is still ongoing today and on how much growing and harvesting vegetables is still a survival strategy.

A different perspective on the study of taste and gastronomy was proposed by **Violeta Kotseva** (Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridsky,” Sofia, hereinafter SU). In “The Taste of Socialism in the Bulgarian Cinema of the 70s and 80s of the Twentieth Century,” she considered the feasts depicted in several classical movies as a clear illustration of the opposition “ours/alien” and “socialist/Western.” Reflecting on the food shortage, typical for those years, foreign, Western products exercised a particular attraction. However, the home products, of local origin, were also given an important value.

The conference topic received an interesting interpretation in the report of **Petya Grueva** (SU, Sofia) “The Taste of Socialism, or Porcelain That Tells Stories.” The scholar considered the dinnerware used during certain festive family gatherings as symbols and as signs of memory, combining several different senses: sight, taste, and touch.

In her article, “I’m Not Sick’: Coffee and Tea Under Socialism,” **Svetlana Antova** (IEFEM, Sofia) developed the widely spread idea in Bulgaria that black tea has healing properties and should therefore only be consumed as a remedy. Indeed, Bulgaria is a country of coffee, and if referring to tea, then one only consumed herbal tea, also considered an effective remedy for colds. When ordering a black tea in a shop, it is necessary to mention the brand desired, otherwise what will be served is mint or camomile tea, commonly associated with tea. Relying on personal memories, the speaker showed how one’s earliest childhood experiences shape the perception of tastes and their symbolic associations, which last for a lifetime.

In the talk entitled “Food in the Pioneer Camp. Sensory Memory and Evaluations,” based on personal memories, **Radina Ilieva** (IEFEM, Sofia) analysed the specifics of taste perception of catering products during the socialist era. The most significant antagonism, highlighted the speaker, should be considered the dichotomy “ours/alien”, where “ours” is the homemade, familiar food, cooked with love. The same opposition was discussed by **Petko Petkov** (VTU, Veliko Turnovo) in his report “The Smell of Wax, the Taste of a Soldier’s *Chorba* and the Melody ‘Back in Black.’ The Barracks Through My Senses,” who also analysed other feelings that fit into the opposition “civil/military” (e.g., Western rock sounds, home smells, etc.).

Lana Petkova’s presentation (Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, Plovdiv), “Hunger and Identity,” recalled the history of the Ukrainian Holodomor and the tribulations of the Second World War in Ukraine, through family memories. The narratives about “tasty” and “edible” foods are an important part of the collective memory and determine the connection between generations.

Memories and their associations were at the base of **Plamena Kirova**’s study (VTU, Veliko Turnovo). In her speech, “Colours of Socialism Through the Prism of Memory,” the speaker shared the results of a survey on colours during the period under study. The people interviewed were Bulgarians who remained in the country during socialism, as well as Bulgarians who emigrated at different times. The expectation of the dominance of red as the main visual symbol of socialism was confirmed by the results. Another interesting finding was the predominance of the colour grey; in the visual perception of emigrants, according to their memories, everything in the public sphere was colourless or grey.

“Cultural Influence of the West: Fashion in Socialist Yugoslavia – An Inside Look”, by **Mirjana Mirčeska** (Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Macedonia), shared her childhood experiences during socialism in terms of visual perception of fashionable clothes as markers of “ours/alien”, “new/traditional”, “foreign/domestic.” The discussion raised the issue of the typical features of the socialist economy – the role of personal connections, the power of the elite, orientation towards the “abroad,” both to the “brotherly” socialist countries and to capitalist ones.

The theme of clothing symbolism was continued by **Veneta Yankova** (Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen). In her report, “Visual Images of Muslims During the Socialist Era (According to the Newspaper *Kolarovgradska Borba*, 1959–1960),” the scholar presented a historical analysis of the eradica-

tion of traditions, especially through women's clothing. With the motto "With an open face towards the future" the socialist propaganda called upon Turkish women in Bulgaria to abandon the veil.

This talk was continued by a presentation by **Sevim Kurtchu** (independent researcher, Kubrat), "Forbidden Traditional Customs of Socialism," which discussed the choice of names for newborns and the ritual circumcision of boys (Turk. *sünnet*) among Turks in Bulgaria during the 1970s and the 1980s. V. Yankova and S. Kurtchu showed how the policy of the so-called "Bulgarian revival" was being prepared by the mass actions of the authorities against the "foreign" and "alien" Muslims. The change of names among the Turkish population of Bulgaria was actively debated during the following discussions. The strategy of choosing similar sounding Turkish and Bulgarian names, as well as the secret preservation of the sacred name given by a *khoja* (an Islamic teacher) or by an elder relative, turned out to be most effective according to the participants at the conference.

Nadezhda Ivanova (SU, Sofia) scrutinised the materials of printed publications of socialist Bulgaria. In her report, "The Idea of the Future in Publications for Young People in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century," the speaker analysed, in detail, the visual illustrations used in the science fiction literature of that time.

Plamen Sabev (VTU, Veliko Turnovo) addressed the audience on the "Veneration of Icons and Party Leaders During the Socialist Era," drawing attention to the similarity between the depictions of saints and the portrayal images of the Bulgarian elite.

Presenting "Souvenirs of the Times of Socialism," **Pavlin Chaushev** (VTU, Veliko Turnovo) turned to the relevant but not enough explored topic of manufacturing products that symbolised socialist Bulgaria. Goods made in the leather and ceramic traditions, and other traditional crafts had both applied and ideological significance. The now almost forgotten badges occupied a special place; collecting them was a common hobby during the years of socialism. **Borislava Petrova** (Ivan Vazov House-Museum, Sopot) made a presentation entitled "Graduation Party in the Period of Socialism Through the Prism of Basic Feelings," in which she showed the dominant role of the visual code (clothes of graduate students) in the preparation and conduct of these significant events. The taste code: the feast foods and drinks mattered only for relatives but not for the students saying farewell to school.

In her investigation, “And the Smell of Socialism Was Felt,” **Margarita Karamikhova** (VTU, Veliko Turnovo) chose to discuss several topics related to the senses simultaneously, starting from the chronicle written by one of the guards of G. Dimitrov’s mausoleum. In his account, the guard describes how after (or even during) the festive demonstrations, the members of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party and other high-rank officials of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria used to descend into the room where the leader’s body was resting and treated themselves with abundant meals, while sitting at richly covered tables. M. Karamikhova outlined several hypotheses meant to explain the choice of organising such feasts in a dark room, with a specific morbid smell, in the proximity of the body of the deceased leader. She used different methods (interviews, email surveys, etc.) and collected representative data to analyse the sensory perception of such a symbolic memorial of the socialist era.

In the study entitled “Collecting Memories. The Role of the Older Generation in Growing Roses,” based on participant observation, **Ilia Iliev** (SU, Sofia) described the specifics of this traditional Bulgarian occupation. For people employed in the production of roses, as the speaker showed, it is not so much the visual (aesthetic) and olfactory (fragrance) characteristics of flowers that are important as the economic parameters of the business. The harvesters of the roses acquired only negative associations. In their narratives, the smell was described as too strong and annoying.

Petya Bankova (IEFEM, Sofia) presented the paper entitled “The Taste of Betrayal in the People’s Republic of Bulgaria.” The speaker acquainted the participants of the conference with the initial stage of her study regarding denunciations and betrayal in Bulgaria at different levels (in friendship, in love, at work, etc.), resorting to the metaphor of feelings (sweetness and bitterness as emotions when committing reprehensible deeds).

Diana Radoinova (Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov University, Burgas) expanded the range of the sensorial in her narrative, “‘My Brother Will Tie Me a Red Tie’: About the Psycho-Emotional and Ideological-Social Aspects of Continuity Between Generations During the Socialist Era,” adding a psycho-emotional scale to the main five senses. A scale which turned out to be very significant to the intergenerational relations.

In her analysis of “The Semantics of Basic Feelings in Boris Pasternak’s Poem ‘August’ (1954): Poetic World vs. Socialist Everyday Life,” **Irina Sedakova**

(Institute of Slavic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia) also appealed to additional feelings, for example, to intuition and knowledge, citing the Bulgarian expression *Имам чувството* (*Imam chuvstvoto*, ‘It seems to me’, ‘Intuition tells me’). Analysing the colouring of the famous poem by B. Pasternak, the scholar showed the obvious and intuitive “non-Soviet” and religious attitude of this work. She also showed the differences between the senses in the original text and in its translation into Bulgarian.

The conference also touched upon topics related to the role of feelings in coping with disasters and misfortunes. **Stamen Kunev** (IEFEM, Sofia) dedicated his report, “Urbanization – A Prerequisite for Devastating Natural Disasters and Human Losses (On the Example of Varna in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century),” to an anthropological analysis of building up one of the residential neighbourhoods in Varna, while **Lilia Uzlova** (Municipal Council, Gera, Germany) and **Eva Tolasch** (Friedrich Schiller University, Jena, Germany) compared the feelings of native Germans and emigrants to Germany in relation to various events that the COVID-19 pandemic brought with it.

The presentation of the Indian scholars **Arkaprava Chattopadhyay** (Central University of Sikkim & University Sikkim, Gangtok, India) and **Manoj Kumar Das** (Central University of Sikkim, Gangtok, India) “The Mediatization of Religion Through Folk Media: A Study of *Purulia Chhau*” stood somewhat apart. However, here, too, links with other reports of the conference were found, since the visual code is one of the main issues in the archaic ritual that the researchers described, and it is significantly modified with the development of media technologies. In addition, the main research method of scientists is semiotics, which served as the basis for the analysis of the symbolic nature of ethnological realities discussed in most of the presentations at the conference.

A proceedings volume, reuniting the contributions to the conference, is planned for 2023.

Irina Sedakova

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Jubilee of Emily Lyle

On December 19, Dr Emily Lyle, Honorary Fellow at the Department of Celtic and Scottish Studies, in the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures, University of Edinburgh, celebrated her ninetieth birthday. Emily is a prominent folklorist, a researcher of ritual calendars, myths, astronomy, and cosmology, a semiotician and a typologist, a connoisseur of Scottish folklore and culture, just to mention a few of her fields of interest.



To honour this outstanding scholar, who founded the SIEF (Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore) Ritual Year Working Group in 2004, the members of this academic community would like to share their reminiscences of Emily, along with a few words of homage and gratitude.

Emily Lyle at the conference of the SIEF Ritual Year Working Group, Gothenburg, Sweden, 2006. Photograph by Andres Kuperjanov. Personal archive.

Irina Sedakova, Moscow, Russia

During the last two decades, Emily Lyle has been one of the most significant people in my academic life and activities. We first met in Edinburgh at a conference of the SIEF Working Group on Folk Religion in 1996, but it was not until 2003, at a conference of the Traditional Cosmological Society (the TCS, earlier founded by Emily Lyle in 1984) at the University of Edinburgh, that we became better acquainted. Emily came up with the idea of establishing a new international working group on the ritual year, which would be affiliated with SIEF. Emily invited several participants of the TCS conference to discuss her ideas for the official establishment of this working group at the 7th SIEF Congress due to take place in April 2004 in Marseilles. The late George Mifsud Chircop presented this idea at the SIEF general meeting, and the group was then officially approved and established. I was invited by Emily to become the

secretary of the group, and I was lucky to hold this position and to frequently communicate with Emily with regard to the working group for the next ten years.

In March 2005, the first conference of the Ritual Year Working Group took place in a very symbolic setting – Malta, a crossroads of various cultures and languages – and this can be said to have set us on course for the exquisite route taken by the working group over the next thirteen conferences: in Gothenburg (2006), Strážnice (2007), Cork (2008), Kaunas (2009), Tallinn (2010), Ljubljana (2011), Plovdiv (2012), Szeged (2013), Innsbruck (2014), Kazan (2015), Findhorn (2016), Bucharest (2018), and Riga (2022). Emily was at the centre of all these meetings. Even when she was not physically able to join the group in the last few years, her positive attitude to the presenters and to the studies of other scholars has permeated the air of the seminars. She set the pole high, always encouraging a lively, friendly, yet demanding level of discussion, her superior sense of humour helping to create an attentive, yet informal atmosphere. Emily encouraged all of us to speak and to write in English (including those of us who came from the post-Soviet countries), something which, at the beginning, may well have been painful for her (and other native speakers). Nonetheless, step by step, conference after conference, publication after publication, our “East European English” language and our comprehension have improved. This was definitely an immense service to us provided by Emily, who patiently listened to our papers and then went on to correct hundreds of poorly written pages for the yearbook issued by the working group.

For many colleagues, and not least for myself, Emily became both a Teacher and a Guide. She has a talent for sensing what might be interesting to you personally and where you have potential. Having defended my PhD thesis which was an ethnolinguistic study of Bulgarian winter folk customs, I had thought that I would not get stuck in the ritual calendar and planned to research another topic (which I went on to do for my second, doctoral degree on childbirth lore). However, thanks to Emily and thanks to my work as the secretary of the Ritual Year Working Group I found myself going back to the calendar, learning about so many new traditions, methodologies, approaches and ideas, combining all of these new acquisitions with my expertise on the Slavic and Balkan languages and folk cultures.

In 2004, the Traditional Cosmological Society (probably on Emily’s recommendation) granted me with a scholarship, which allowed me to stay with Emily

for one month in Edinburgh. It was here that I discovered Emily's hospitality, her attentive guidance and tact, not to mention the fact that this gave me the great opportunity to work in the Scottish archives and libraries which opened up a number of new perspectives for me. Emily then visited Moscow and gave an astounding talk on mythology at the Institute of Slavic Studies, in the Russian Academy of Sciences. Indeed, Emily's academic lectures have become legendary for their structured and vibrant nature; she also came to be seen as a PowerPoint genius at a very early point.

All in all, I feel so indebted to Emily. My gratitude to her is immense, and my birthday wishes both sincere and from the heart.

Mare Kõiva, Tartu, Estonia

Emily arrived in Estonia for the first time at the very beginning of the twenty-first century, at a time when I was hesitating with regard to how I should proceed with my study of mythology and mythical matter. It seemed that, in addition to those approaches based on a highly formalized theoretical construction, there must be other possibilities that would help me understand the adaptability of mythical motifs and the surprising connections that these have with today's culture. I had looked at the approaches of mythological researchers such as Jaan Puhvel and others and the writings by Vladimir Toporov and Vyacheslav Ivanov and had read all kinds of professional literature – literally metres of theory had been written. It was at this moment that Emily Lyle made a sudden visit to Estonia, coming from Finland where she had been at a conference. She gave a lecture at the Estonian Literary Museum which was built on Georges Dumézil's approach but involved Emily's own creative development, a blend of both the general and the abstract, accompanied by some highly proficient computer graphics.

We took a trip to Setomaa, looked at the monument to the Mother of Song and a number of other things on the way. I think for some reason that we had a conversation about nationality, something that would continue to be a hot topic for both the Setos and the Estonians. Emily had a good overview of the problems that existed in the UK, Scotland, and Australia, as well as a number of other perspectives. In the evening, we bravely headed down to the basement restaurant near the library of the University of Tartu to eat. Maybe a year later, thinking back on our trip, continued to wonder with a great deal of admiration

how Emily had managed to rush around with us at the same pace, joining in everything with us, always asking questions. I think we saw Emily as being the same age as us, perhaps because of her eternally young soul.

When I arrived late at the founding conference of the Ritual Year Working Group in 2004 – as a well-known Estonian classic of youth says – “by that time the event had ended” – I encountered nothing other than enthusiastic colleagues. I was still very fond of mythology, and in Edinburgh, we talked about plans for the Ritual Year Working Group, discussing at length with Irina Sedakova what should be done in our science. My travelling soul led to me taking a backpacker trip to see Scotland. We were a motley company: in addition to families, the bus was full of swords and role-players, reproducers of mythology, and at each stop and at each castle, a new battle unfolded, as those present perfected stories with a background in the history of Scotland, tracing the paths of Robin Hood, and more. The community that was housed in the School of Scottish Studies was friendly, and the library held wonderful prints going back many centuries. On one of my final days in Edinburgh, in Holyrood Park, near Arthur’s Seat, the joy of working with people who revel in meeting researchers of rituals from Europe, America, and other parts of the world, practitioners of new religious phenomena really began to sink in. This was not so much about the content of the archives, but rather the analysis that could be carried out based on the experience of the scientist. Collaboration with the Ritual Year Working Group has been an instructive journey – not least because of the contact with living researchers, such as Emily.

Emily’s lecture in the Literary Museum in Tartu, Estonia on 2 April 2007 was received by a full audience. The announcement had invited people to a seminar in the Estonian Centre for Cultural History and Folkloristics (the first Estonian Centre of Excellence in the Humanities), at which Emily Lyle from School of Scottish Studies was going to speak about “Understanding and Portraying the Structure of the Ritual Year”. The presentation in question went on to deal with several ideas about the rituals of the annual cycle that have parallels with the cycle of life, showing the shape of the year was based on three polar oppositions: (a) summer vs. winter; (b) the period between midsummer and midwinter vs. midwinter vs. midsummer; (c) most of the year vs. the short period of destruction. The relationship between different systems, such as the Julian and Gregorian calendars, was also briefly touched upon.

I read from my notes that Emily Lyle, Liisa Vesik, and Andres Kuperjanov then discussed the creation of a database relating to the dynamics of the European calendar tradition.

Emily has always been up to date on current events, and so at one of our meetings, she suggested that why don't we start using cogs as the logo for our scientific publishing house. Archaeologists had just discovered a thirteenth-century watercraft. A boat and a ship have a wide range of meanings as symbols, so the idea of a ship as a logo seemed like a nice one. But the director at the time didn't like it. When he soon left to sail around the world on a modern sailboat, his opposition became more understandable. Likely, the proposed craft had seemed too small and old-fashioned for him. Today, four directors and fifteen years later, there is good reason to return to the idea, and I hope that our publishing house's products carrying the new logo will be in front of you in 2023.

Emily later went on to participate in the Sixth International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year held on June 4–7, 2010, which dealt with “The Inner and the Outer”. This was held in the premises of the EELK Institute of Religious Studies, right in the middle of the medieval city of Tallinn.

I have also met Emily at the regular gatherings of the Society of Comparative Mythology where she has demonstrated that she is still working at a high theoretical level. When COVID struck, we also became used to seeing Emily online, still demonstrating that she is the ideal embodiment of PowerPoint.

Alongside her conference work, Emily has managed to edit *Cosmos* journal and to publish Scottish ballads (in works like *Fairies and Folk: Approaches to the Scottish Ballad Tradition* from 2007) and has kindly given our library a number of publications. Her research on fairy ballads like “Thomas the Rhymer” and “Tam Lin”, especially when considered in the context of traditional beliefs and Scottish culture from the Middle Ages up to the present day are indispensable, and not least when one is dealing with Estonian fairies.

It has been a great pleasure to have experienced Emily's good humour and kind attitude.

Terry Gunnell, Reykjavík, Iceland

I met Emily Lyle for the first time when I took my first sabbatical to the University of Edinburgh in the spring of 2001. Emily was one of the first people I was introduced to, in her book-filled office on the top floor of the School of

Scottish Studies in George Square. She was one of those luckily gifted with a view of Arthur's Seat from her window. The immediate reason for our being introduced was because we had a shared interest in folk drama and disguise traditions, all of which were closely related to the ritual year. Emily had been working on the Scottish Galoshins traditions, and I was interested in guising traditions from Shetland.

We immediately hit it off, and over the course of our regular conversations in Emily's office and in the tea-room in the basement of the building, I gradually became aware of her other numerous skills and abilities. In addition to being a thoroughly wonderful person, Emily was evidently a born teacher, regularly praised by students and fellow teachers and researchers for the way in which she both inspired and encouraged her students at all levels. Far from being limited to her interests in the ritual year, she was also an internationally respected ballad scholar, and like me, interested in ancient religions and cosmology. It was also clear that while Scotland was always close to her heart, she was an internationalist *par excellence*, with a wide range of contacts all round the world that was growing by the year. A gifted lecturer, her performance skills were clearly not limited to personal presence. She was also a genius at PowerPoint before anyone else started using it. I remember joining Gary West and Neill Martin, our mouths agape as we watched her colourful, animated visual presentations that put the rest of us to shame. Perhaps most amazing, though, was Emily's physical agility. Watching the speed at which she would quickly ascend stairs from the tea-room to her top-floor office often made me wonder whether she had an element of mountain goat in her makeup. All in all, here we had a total folklorist in heart and soul... someone we would all wish to emulate.

Our initial contact led to me writing two articles for *Cosmos*, and to Emily writing an article about Galoshins for our *Masks and Mumming in the Nordic Countries* (2007), and to my being taken into the organising committee of the Ritual Year Working Group when it started, as a Treasurer, a slightly odd position to be given since I know almost nothing about book-keeping. This nonetheless reflects another of Emily's innate talents. You would have a conversation with her and leave the room having agreed to become Prime Minister of Scotland and to bake pancakes for a party of 200 foreign visitors – without any memory of exactly where these jobs had been mentioned in the prior conversation. Indeed, as we all know, Emily has some very special charming powers of persuasion.

Our friendship has continued over the years as we have met up at a range of conferences around the world, where I have observed the ever-young Emily constantly quickly adapting to new surroundings. My respect for her has grown consistently, and I always look forward to discussing cosmology with her over a glass of wine. All in all, I am eternally grateful to have had Emily as a friend, colleague, and mentor. As we all know, there can only ever be one Emily, a godsend to all of us, who should rightly be regarded as the “Big Mama” of our ritual year family.

Žilvytis Šaknys, Vilnius, Lithuania

I first met Emily Lyle when she made her first visit to the Institute of Lithuanian History twenty years ago. At that time, foreign ethnologists of Lithuanian origin or foreign ethnologists from neighbouring nations were the only ones to visit the Department of Ethnology (now the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology) of the Lithuanian Institute of History, usually in order to familiarize themselves with ethnographic materials. How surprised we were that a Scottish scholar of non-Lithuanian origin was interested in the cultural heritage of our nation. We were immediately attracted by the attitude of this famous ethnologist and folklorist, who showed no pride in what she had done. This was a simple, modest, friendly woman, who was burning with the desire to learn as much as possible about the calendar customs and mythology of our nation. In congratulating our dear Emily Lyle on her birthday, I would also like to draw attention to another aspect of her value for Lithuanian ethnology. The birth of the SIEF Ritual Year Working Group, the Ritual Year conferences, and the articles published in the Yearbooks of the Ritual Year Working Group have probably had even greater significance for Lithuania, than they have had for many other countries. The relatively limited number of studies of Lithuanian calendar customs in the twentieth century (except for the last decade), was leading to Lithuanian ethnologists paying special attention to this group. The fifth Ritual Year conference in Kaunas, at the Vytautas the Great University (organized by Arūnas Vaicekauskas), which took place in 2009, was very significant for Lithuania and encouraged Lithuanian students to start analyzing the topic of the ritual year, something which resulted in as many as ten Lithuanian ethnologists giving presentations live and online at the 14th SIEF Ritual Year Working Group conference in Riga in 2022. On behalf of all Lithuanian

ethnologists and folklorists, I would thus like to express my sincerely thanks to Emily Lyle for the work she has done for us and to wish her health, energy, and an enduring good mood, looking forward to seeing new great work in the future.

Laurent S. Fournier, Nice, France

When I first met Emily Lyle in 2004, I was barely thirty years old. I had completed my PhD in Cultural Anthropology on the festive rituals of the south of France and had just obtained my first tenured teaching position in a faculty of sports sciences in Nantes, France. Emily asked me if I was familiar with the Kirkwall ba' game, a traditional game I have talked about several times in our seminars, and she said it would be nice if I could investigate the practice. I did not know then that it would keep me busy for more than ten years, and that it would contribute to building my scientific career in depth. To put it simply, she had put me on the path of research that would allow me to reconcile my interest as a researcher on European festive rituals with my obligations as a teacher of sports sciences. She had shown me an ethnographic example that was at the exact crossroads of my two areas of expertise, thereby encouraging me to open up my potential.

Of course, all of this was no coincidence. I learned later that in Delphi in 1992, Emily had taken part in an important conference on European ethnology, in which my thesis supervisor, Professor Jocelyne Bonnet-Carbonell, now eighty years old, was also present, and where the future directions of our field of research had been discussed. The issue of temporality had been central in this symposium, something that was based on research into myths and rituals. The construction of political Europe at the start of the 1990s, as well as the discovery of the folklore of Eastern countries by Western ethnologists, justified the development of comparative research as a means of strengthening scientific cooperation at a European scale. This was indeed a question, in a somewhat utopian way, of supporting the construction of a new European identity and of placing emphasis on the unity of Europe's mythical and symbolic roots. Ethnologists, historians, folklorists, and specialists in comparative mythology would thus be called upon to justify scientifically a political enterprise that was geared towards progress. These scholars, the oldest of whom had experienced World War II and had suffered for decades during the Cold War, all knew the

importance of scientific humanism in strengthening human ties and advancing society.

Today, thirty years after founding conference and twenty years after my first meeting with Emily, the situation in Europe could not be more uncertain. In the West, populism has reactivated divisions between nations and critical discourse has led to the United Kingdom leaving political Europe. In the East, the fratricidal war that is bloodying Ukraine shows that peace is always a fragile and ephemeral thing. Of course, these circumstances are sad, but they should not discourage us. On the contrary, they demonstrate the need to act and reflect together, relentlessly, considering that the mind is stronger than anything else and that the human sciences are of key importance with regard to strengthening solidarity between peoples. Through her various texts, Emily has shown us that it is possible to understand what creates the unity of the human spirit. Her often elaborate analysis has shown us the complex links that, in all cultures, articulate the biography of individuals, the stages of the life cycle, the collective rules of the society, the principles of territorial belonging, and the order of the seasons and the cosmos. Emily is one of the few researchers who manages to hold all of these aspects together, viewing them from a holistic perspective that constantly reminds us of the heuristics of comparison and listening.

In addition to her human qualities, her availability, and her kindness, Emily has surprising capacities for synthesis. She is able to connect very simple things, such as the children's accounts of the Galoshins, with very deep mythological structures and universal aspects of human culture, such as the need to order the world or to recreate it in a game. I really have no idea where or how Emily learned to work like this, but I must say that this mystery adds to her charm, just like the fact that she regularly mobilizes French authors such as Georges Dumézil or Gilbert Durand that hardly anyone in French academia uses today, in spite of their great relevance for human sciences.

Over the course of all these years, Emily has been as strange as she is familiar to me. We have laughed a lot, sometimes while eating a Pizza at Vittoria opposite the National Library of Scotland and talking about everything and nothing over a glass of wine. A few hours later, at the School of Scottish Studies, I would find her pointing out a number of hermetic works that suddenly took me from the profane to the sacred. Emily, your explanations are always

brilliant, and we really hope to take advantage of you for a few more years! Take good care of yourself!

Neill Martin, Edinburgh, Scotland

In 1990, I returned to Scotland after some years of studying in Canada and teaching in France. As well as teaching I had spent the year preparing to begin a DPhil in Jacobean Drama at an English university. To secure the funding offered, I had to do some writing, and I spent my days that summer in the National Library of Scotland. I hadn't been home in years and quickly realised how much I had missed the city. Even the cry of the man selling the evening newspaper was enough to trigger a strong feeling of nostalgia. Still, on I worked, since a good opportunity lay ahead of me. One afternoon, tired of the stuffy reading room, I went for a walk around the University. I found myself in George Square, reading the sign outside for the School of Scottish Studies. A lady approached with keys and asked if she could help me. This was Emily. 'Oh,' I said, 'I'm just wondering what goes on here.' Emily invited me inside and explained the work of the School; fieldwork, archives, the many and varied interests of the staff. She showed me the room I was likely to share, with a fine view over the gardens. I had studied mainly literature, so when Emily talked about ballads I was particularly interested. I thought how marvellous it would be to travel around interviewing people, recording them and writing about traditional cultural forms. Within an hour or so, Emily had convinced me to apply for a PhD at the School. The work of the School seemed so different from academic departments I was familiar with; so engaged with the lives of ordinary folk, so important to the cultural life of the nation. Thus evangelised, I applied for funding and was fortunate enough to receive it. I began that September, studying ballads with Emily and the late Alan Bruford. Emily was the ideal supervisor; encouraging and kindly, but also a robust critic who let me know when my work wasn't up to scratch, which alas was quite often. She was a thorough editor; if Emily thought something could be excised or didn't fit, it was gone – she was always right, of course.

In 1997, I began working at the University of St Andrews. It was largely a management position, although with some teaching too. One ordinary day in 2001, at my desk in my suit and tie, I was surprised to find an email from Emily in my inbox. A lectureship had become available at the School, and

Emily thought I should apply. Which I did. I am now beginning my twenty-first year with the department. It is thus no exaggeration to say that I have Emily to thank for my entire academic career. Had I not bumped into her quite by chance that day, none of this would have happened. Had she not kept me in her thoughts and alerted me to the job at Edinburgh, I would still be up there, in my suit and tie. Over the years, Emily and I have supervised many postgraduate students together. She gives each the same unfailing support and wise counsel I was fortunate to receive. Her dedication to the field is legendary; at a stage in life when many would have settled for a steady slide into dotage, for many years Emily was still attending conferences far and wide, delivering startling, insightful and challenging papers to her peers, still climbing the stairs every day to her eyrie in George Square. I can best illustrate this by a final anecdote. When Emily reached the age of 65, the department organised a retiral party – a trip on a canal barge. We travelled there by bus. I sat a few seats behind. Emily was holding a balloon with ‘I’m retired’ on it. That was a Friday. She was back at her desk on Monday morning.