

Introduction

The second issue of The Yearbook of Balkan and Baltic Studies is dedicated to ritual and festive culture (*Rituals, Feasts, and Practices*). It is one of the most dynamic fields of modern culture. On the other hand, it tends to be the most conservative and nationally (ethnically) coloured one. Both calendar and family ritualism are the main subject of these papers. Lina Petrošienė covers the issues of carnival ritualism presented in Lithuanian mass media in the 1920s. Calendar feasts in mixed (both in ethnic and religious terms) families are discussed by Akvilė Motuzaitė, who sees them as a manifestation of transnationalism on the one hand and an important cultural strategy on the other. Irina Stahl and Barry L. Jackson consider the memorials erected in memoriam of the people who died unexpectedly, and their role and function within the city space (Bucharest, Romania). Rasa Paukštytė-Šaknienė discusses family feasts in Lithuania and Bulgaria, paying special attention to the cultural, ethnic, and religious features of both traditions. The last two articles in this chapter deal with the traditional skills and practices of the material culture (Nijolė Pliuraitė Andrejevienė, Anete Karlsonė). This topic is becoming increasingly sensitive in the context of cultural (material and intangible) heritage, ethnic specifications, and national identity.

The second part in the volume is dedicated to ethnicity and its manifestations in the context of modern identification processes (*Ethnicity and Its Manifestations: Identities*). Numerous ethnic markers that form ethnic boundaries (cf. Fredrik Barth) continue to develop, acquiring new attractive shapes, going along with the new times, tastes, needs, and, of course, market demands. The problems pertaining to the historical memory of the communities of the Tatars in different historical and cultural environments are described in Veneta Yankova's article. The articles by Nadezhda Rychkova, Galina Miškinienė, and Sergey Rychkov discuss food, etiquette, and ethnic cuisine in

the context of cultural heritage, ethnic and religious culture as a manifestation and commercialisation of food as ethnic and national heritage. The last article in this edition is by Ana Pascu, and it is dedicated to the classical narrative structures of identity of two communities dealing with different types of households, i.e., shepherding and ore mining, in one of the areas of Romania.

The article by Svetlana Ryzhakova is dedicated to the interesting and topical issue of the interpretation and adaptation of exotic cultures in Europe, using the reception and perceptions related to the mystical India in the Baltic States as an example.

Thus the present edition of *The Yearbook of Balkan and Baltic Studies* is a collection of diverse studies carried out by both young and well-established scientists, who study the areas of the Balkans, the Baltic States, and, on a wider scale, Europe and Russia. This collection of different topics, methodologies, and approaches represents the current state and urgent issues of European science. We hope that this edition will be interesting and useful for a wider audience.

The articles are based on the presentations of the third conference on Balkan and Baltic Studies in Vilnius in 2017, which was organised by the Institute of History and the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. There were some new participants from Russia, Romania, Croatia, and other countries, who, alongside the traditional partners from Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, managed to define some new areas of emphasis, topics, and approaches.

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