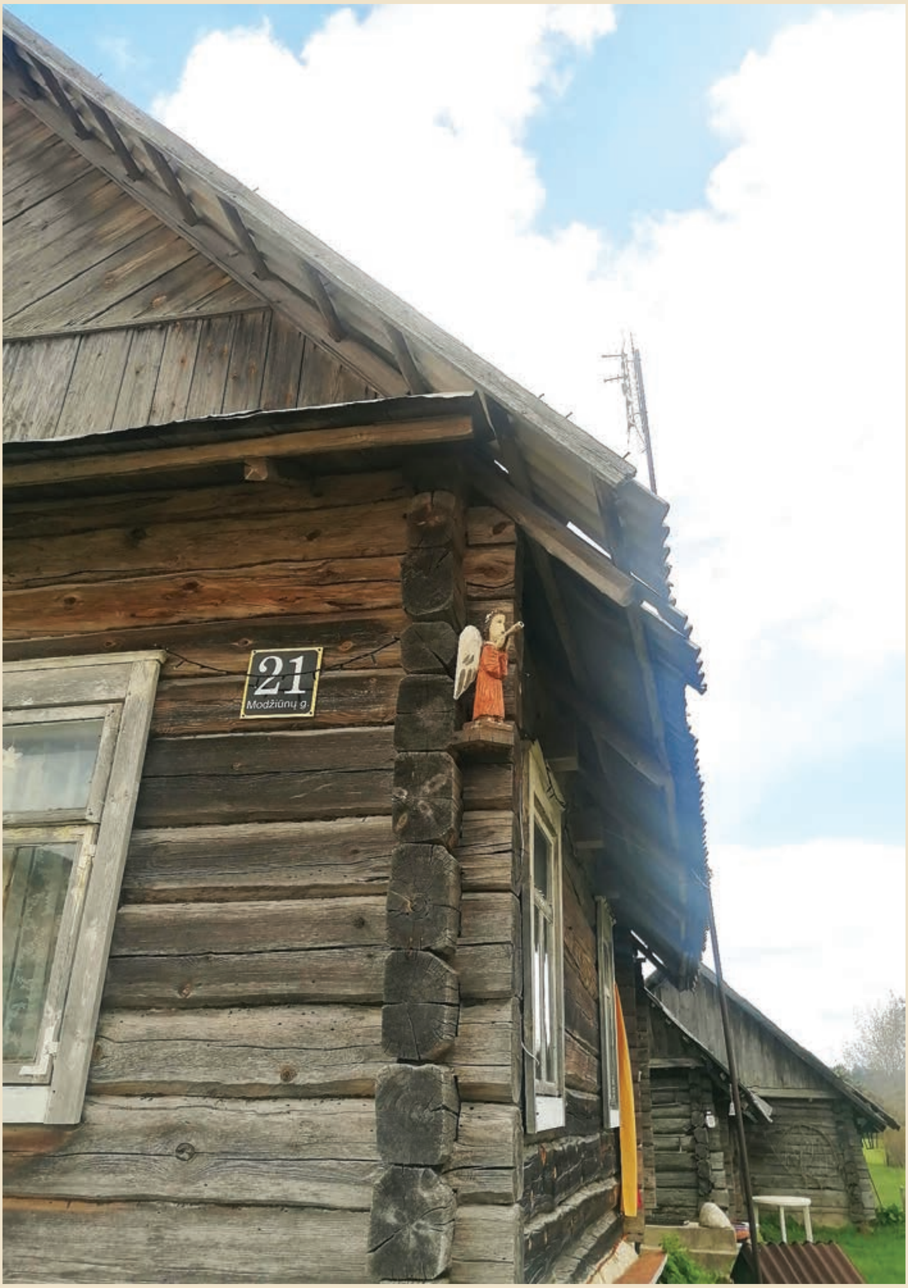

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Uncertain Rituals

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Introduction: Uncertain Rituals

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'Living Uncertainty' as the focus of discussion and interpretation in 2023 was a significant mark of the global predicaments and disruptions of the early 21st century. These new challenges – the COVID19 pandemic, extraordinary waves of migration, unexpected wars – give a strong feeling of uncertainty and risk. Other conditions, such as the climate crisis, gender questions, mental health issues, AI ethics all heightened the sense of precarity and unpredictability. The 16th SIEF Congress in Brno, Czech Republic in June 2023 opened the inquiry on uncertainty "both in terms of the uncertainty of everyday life and of epistemological uncertainty".

The SIEF Ritual Year Working Group organized two panels for the 2023 Congress. Rituals themselves, as human responses to historical conditions, are both certain and uncertain. Certainty arises from the sense of predictability and control that the rituals offer, but uncertainty comes from the changes in the rituals themselves. As we stated when preparing for the conference, the traditional knowledge concerning rituals is disappearing with the elder generations and there is often a lack of foundation for the younger generations. Due to this situation, a lot of rituals have become uncertain, as scholars have already noted since the beginning of the 19th century. However, there has been an increase in creativity and thus a growth of improvisation in the holidays.

And yet there is a sort of constancy, solidity of the tradition, which is still present. How do these aspects coexist in concrete rituals? What sorts of changes have been experimented on, accepted or discussed among the traditional communities? The RYWG panel in Brno, "Uncertainty, Improvisation and Constancy in the Ritual Year", called for case studies addressing both continuities and changes in calendric or life-cycle rituals at the beginning of the 21st century. In a more self-reflexive way, the panel sought to better understand the role of the researcher in the observed changes. Is the researcher called to participate in the changes and the new improvisations? What are the differences of perception of the uncertainties according to the age or the gender of the researcher? The panel on "Rituals of Faith and Religion during Uncertain Times" explored the religious ritual responses to uncertainty that provided a channel for people to cope with distress and danger. These symbolic actions, from a functionalist view, reduce tensions, provide assurance (Malinowski 1948) as well as reaffirm social connections and collective identity (Durkheim 1912).

Comparing older archival notes with contemporary fieldwork studies may enable a better understanding of the improvisation and the constancy in the ritual year itself. This volume extends, but is not limited to, some of the reflections that were initiated in Brno as part of the panels organized by the RYWG. It aims to take stock of the uncertainties affecting rituals in a world where traditional regularities are fading, due to the widespread mobility of people and the vagaries of current events. It invites a general reflection on the life and death of rituals and offers a series of case studies.

LIFE AND DEATH OF RITUALS

Working on the uncertainty of rituals requires keeping in mind the conceptions of the great French researcher Arnold Van Gennep (1909) regarding "rites of passage". Van Gennep reminds us that rituals are "living facts", which evolve according to the societies that organize them. This definition allows Van Gennep to link the study of rituals to ethnology and folklore, as opposed to history, which primarily deals with past facts. As it is possible to speak of "life cycle rituals", it also seems possible to speak of "the life cycle of rituals". For each historical period, the researcher must interpret popular creativity and the birth and death of the different rituals. The theory proposed by Van Gennep is therefore a dynamic theory that encompasses the various factors that control the birth and death of ritual behaviors.

The empirical study of rituals confronts us with "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), since all rituals were created at one time or another. In our investigations, we discovered rituals that were only a decade or two old but were considered "traditional" by their practitioners. However, there is an important debate here. For some researchers, the invention and revitalization of rituals in the contemporary world is linked to tourism (Boissevain 1992). New rituals are then resources that serve communities for economic reasons. For others, the invention of rituals is a reaction to modernity. It is then a question of finding ways to resource themselves on the scale of small communities, which is more reassuring than the globalized world in which we live (Bravo 1984).

Coming back to Van Gennep, the great French folklorist used to oppose history and folklore. He postulated that history was only descriptive, whereas folklore proposed explanations of social facts, and therefore was far more interpretative. Ethnography, he suggested, relies on oral culture and memory. It works on five or six generations maximum, which is the maximal length for oral remembrance of past facts among people who don't use written records. In other works, Van Gennep differentiates history and folklore even more, assuming that history only studies dead facts, while folklore studies living phenomena. From there, he suggests that folklore follows a better method, because it can study past facts as living phenomena, replacing them carefully in their context, while history focuses only on the past and on dead facts.

In the beginning of the 20th century, Van Gennep wrote that the 19th century had put a great emphasis on historical sciences, but that the future would need ethnographical sciences to understand culture as a living phenomenon. According to this perspective, history would only be able to study cultural forms, whereas folklore and ethnography can study factors and mechanisms and give more solid explanations. Some other French folklorists criticized Van Gennep, arguing that history is, however, necessary if we want to study past traditions and understand social changes and processes. This debate is just as important as it prepares the theory of social and cultural anthropologists in the 20th century, namely, functionalism and structuralism. Indeed, according to the functionalist perspective, society is conceived as a living organism (Malinowski), and according to structuralist theory, structures are opposed to historical events (Lévi-Strauss). Of course, one century later, the dissemination of historical anthropology and cultural history has profoundly changed our perspective, but it is still interesting to think of social facts as living facts. This brief reminder of the history of theories concerning social facts leads us to question the factors which lead to the birth or, on the contrary, to the death of rituals.

SOME HYPOTHESES

Here, several hypotheses could be considered. A first hypothesis would state that rituals appear when older rituals are no longer adapted to the audience. New audiences encourage creativity among the communities organizing the rituals. In some cases, the models of sports and mass media competitions are imported into the local culture to make the rituals more understandable by tourists (Fournier 2005). Another hypothesis states that rituals appear when a part of the community struggles for better recognition. In many cases the manly traditional rituals are today complemented by female performances in order to make the rituals understandable to the new generations and to women. A third hypothesis states that a ritual can change in a diaspora situation, when the connection to the original culture loosens (Fournier 2015). A fourth hypothesis can consider that rituals disappear when beliefs change. Christian traditional festivals have often been replaced by lay rituals, in Revolutionary France or in Soviet Russia, for instance. A fifth hypothesis would make a correlation between the life and death of rituals on the one hand, and health and security issues on the other hand. A sixth hypothesis would consider that when body culture changes, ritual games can be abandoned and replaced by ritualized modern sports.

Of course, numerous other hypotheses could be imagined in connection with other different cases of study. However, "life" and "death" are far from being the only modes of existence of rituals. Indeed, rituals can transform and adapt in more complex ways. Beyond the study of the life and death of ritual forms, it would be interesting to look how rituals can change, hybridize, cross-fertilize and eventually adapt to new cultural settings. This volume eventually invites us to look at rituals as living processes more than just as social "forms" or "facts".

CHALLENGING UNCERTAINTIES IN CASE STUDIES

This volume is composed of six articles connected partly (but not only) with the notions of crisis and uncertainty. The first article, by Skaidrė Urbonienė, is devoted to the ways of coping with uncertainty and crises in traditional societies. It concerns traditional modes of crisis management, using Lithuanian examples. The aim is to understand how rituals made it possible to cope with different types of uncertainty. Rituals were then used to protect against climatic or social disasters, for example, diseases or fires. References to popular religion were then extremely widespread as an accompaniment to protective rituals.

The next three articles concentrate on the analysis of changes in traditional rituals due to the COVID19 pandemic. Vito Carrassi studies the worship of the dead in southern Italy, Archna a traditional Japanese Shinto community confronted with the crisis, and Judith Balatonyi the changes in weddings in Hungary. These three articles allow us to cross-examine an exceptional situation, paying attention not only to the rituals of the life cycle (marriages, cult of the dead) but also to ordinary life in the ritualized framework of a Shinto temple.

The last two articles open up a more general reflection in terms of changes or continuity of ritual practices in the longer term. Anastasia Shevchenko's article considers a traditional festival in Monaco when it is confronted with hypermodernity. Last, Giovanni Kezich and Antonella Mott propose a research note on gaps and intermittencies in European carnivals, taking into consideration the extended length of their transformation.

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Times of Uncertainty: Rituals of Protection Against Natural and Social Disasters in Lithuania

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Abstract: Many factors in human life, such as illness, natural disasters, economic, social and political instability, and war and occupation, cause a feeling of uncertainty, both on an individual and on a communal level. In coping with various uncertainties that are present in everyday life, individuals and communities use various strategies. Faced with danger or a crisis, people traditionally looked to divine grace for protection and security. The article focuses on ways to cope with uncertainty by means of faith and religion, namely, making and fulfilling a promise, making votive offerings, building a cross and visiting sacred places. These practices formed a symbolic ritual of protection that created a sense of comfort and security. In addition, the role of religious imagery in protection rituals is highlighted. The question whether traditional forms of ritual still exist today, or whether people cope with danger or distress in other ways, is also highlighted.

Keywords: crosses, divine intercession, patron saints, religious imagery, votive offerings

Many factors in today's life, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and other serious illnesses, climate change, economic crises, social and political instability, and wars and occupations cause a feeling of uncertainty on an individual and a communal level. Individuals and communities use various strategies to cope with the uncertainties present in their everyday lives.

The aim of this paper is to highlight ways of coping with the uncertainty caused by natural and social disasters (disease, epidemics, fire, war, occupation, etc.) on both individual and communal levels. I will discuss ways of coping with uncertainty by means of faith and religion mostly used in the early 20th century. The research object is the material expression of faith; in the case of Lithuania, it is the erection of crosses and the choice of certain religious images. I will also discuss whether traditional forms of ritual still exist today, or whether people cope with danger in other ways.

This article is based on fieldwork carried out in Lithuania since 2010, as well as an analysis of archival data and publications. During my fieldwork on the cross-crafting tradition, informants often told stories about God's grace and divine help in extreme situations, such as illness, fire, war or the Soviet occupation. When providing facts about crosses and shrines, informants consistently emphasised the specific reason for their construction – recovery from an illness, protection of the harvest or escape from a fire – and pointed to God's grace. While these narratives mostly cover the period from the first half of the 20th century, recent accounts from informants, especially those about recovering from serious illnesses, show that traditional methods for coping with uncertainty and distress are still used today, as narratives about divine grace continue to circulate.

The material was collected through semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Some of the data collected can be found in my monograph and articles on the cross-crafting tradition (Urbonienė 2011, 2014, 2015, 2016).

In Lithuanian historiography, the problem of coping with uncertainty can mostly be traced in articles that discuss the purpose and intention of erecting crosses and shrines (Milius 1992, 1995, 1997; Počiulpaitė 2001). They provide data on reasons connected with illness, epidemics or natural disasters. In aiming to discuss the topic from the point of view of uncertainty, I also look at the intentions behind building crosses, as well as at making individual or communal promises, and making offerings seeking divine intercession.

Some facts about erecting religious monuments, placing votive offerings at sacred sites and intentions of asking for divine grace in the face of serious illness or other disasters were presented in a publication of work by researchers from Poland, Hungary and Slovakia (Bedyński & Mazur-Hanaj 2011). The role of religious imagery in everyday life, in seeking security in the face of danger or a fundamental change in life (rite of passage), is discussed in the work of David Morgan (1998). Some aspects of using religious artefacts for seeking divine help are analysed by Colleen McDannell (1995).

FACING ILLNESS AND EPIDEMICS

Uncertainty is commonly experienced by many people during epidemics or when facing a serious illness. Such situations inflict a significant level of distress on an individual or a community (in the case of epidemics and pandemics). The recent Covid-19 pandemic caused great psychological distress to many people globally.

Nowadays, people cope with the distress caused by serious illness by using modern means of recovery: they go to medical institutions, search for information on the internet and use medicines. Some choose traditional ways, such as healing by natural means (herbs, poultices, heat). In cases where medicine and natural healing do not help, or in the case of prolonged illness, some people turn to their faith, and make vows or offerings when praying for divine help.

These practices of making vows and votive offerings were widespread in Lithuania in the first half of the 20th century; examples can also be traced during the Soviet era and even today. One way to fulfil a vow was to build a cross or a miniature shrine at a particular place, or to make votive offerings in vow-making sites or in places regarded as miraculous. Religious people believed that making such an offering would help them to obtain God's grace to recover from an illness and prevent other misfortunes.

In fulfilling vows to heal, people erected crosses before or after their recovery. This is evidenced by the case of a man with a wound in his leg that would not heal who, in the 1920s, erected a shrine with a statuette of St Roch, the patron saint of the sick and invalids and asked for the saint's help. As the story goes, after awhile the wound healed (Končius 1933: 47). Another example from the beginning of the 20th century shows that in the village of Kulūpėnai (Kretinga district) a father vowed to build a shrine and a cross if his daughter, who was seriously ill with scarlet fever, recovered. After the girl recovered, the father built a shrine and a cross at a crossroads in 1914 (LNM, Eneg 17966). Another example from the Soviet period, when it was not safe to build new religious monuments, shows that people fulfilling their vows usually repaired or rebuilt old crosses or shrines instead of building new ones. Such was the case of a villager from Zorūbai (Telšiai district), who in 1953 made a promise that if she recovered from a serious illness, she would rebuild the old shrine that stood at a crossroads near the village. When she received divine grace and recovered, she fulfilled her promise and rebuilt the shrine (Elena, personal communication, July 24, 2013).

In the first half of the 20th century, it was common to choose specific locations to erect a religious monument depending on the intention. In cases of vows for recovering from an illness, people used to site the cross or the shrine by the roadside, believing that the prayers of passers-by would reinforce their supplications and help them to seek God's intercession for a faster recovery (Antalkis-Mikalauskas 1991: 15). It was also believed that in asking God's help to cure a serious illness, a person should erect a new cross in an old cemetery or in a holy place. According to ethnographic material, in the early 20th century parents who had lost babies or children would build a cross or a shrine in an old cemetery, hoping for God's grace in raising their surviving children (LNMMB RKR, F 165-13: 59, 78). This practice can be found on rare occasions in our day, too. I recorded several such cases during fieldwork. For example, one interviewee showed me a small shrine with sculptures of the Virgin Mary of Grace and an angel standing in the old cemetery in the village of Nevočiai (Šilalė district). It was built around 1990 by a father whose baby died shortly after birth, with the intention of seeking God's grace for the other children to grow up to be healthy (Jadvyga, personal communication, August 13, 2003).

Figure 1. A cross built in 2004 at a homestead in the village of Guostagalis.

Photograph by Skaidrė Urbonienė, 2012.

Today, when building a cross or a miniature shrine for their health, people do not attach much importance to the place where the cross should be erected. They usually build it near their home or on their own land, so that they can visit it often and look after it. This was the case with an informant in the village of Guostagalis (Pakruojis district). In 2004, she erected a cross on her homestead seeking divine help for her husband who was seriously ill at the time (Figure 1). According to the informant, the cross now reminds her of divine help and presence during the difficult and stressful time of her husband's illness (Elena, personal communication, May 26, 2012).

Another way of seeking God's protection in the event of an illness was to go to a place that was famous for miracles and perform certain rituals there. It was believed that visiting such places could cure various diseases and wounds. Sick people often went to a specific spring or tree known for its miraculous healing power, or to a church or a local chapel with a miraculous image of a particular patron saint believed to cure certain illnesses. The images were usually of the Virgin Mary, or a patron saint of the sick, such as St Roch.

In the countryside, these miraculous images, mostly statues, were dressed in clothes and had all sorts of offerings placed near them, such as candles, mirrors, religious pictures, paper flowers, ribbons, scarves, beads, rings, needles, rosaries and other things. These objects were votive offerings made for a specific intention (usually a recovery), or in gratitude for grace received. In an ecclesiastical environment, people usually made votive offerings in the shape of the afflicted part of the body (such as silver plates in the shape of a leg, an arm, etc.) for the miraculous image. In rural culture, offerings were simpler, but made in a targeted way, according to the nature of the illness. For example, mirrors were offered to keep the eyes healthy, scarves and necklaces to prevent sore throats. Needles were offered against colic, and rings to ease pain in fingers. Ribbons were left to heal headaches and various wounds. Other offerings, like religious pictures, flowers and candles, were given for various intentions or as a sign of gratitude (Urbonienė 2011: 187–188). It was believed that making such an offering would help a person receive God's grace and be cured of an illness.

In order to be healed, people also tied ribbons or pieces of fabric to sculptures of Christ, the Virgin Mary and saints who were believed to be guardians against certain diseases. A ribbon or a strip of fabric was usually tied to the same part of the statue that was affected, for example, a leg, a hand, the neck, the head, etc. Moreover, in order to be healed, a sick person had to tie the ribbon around the sore spot and pray by walking three times around the shrine or church on his or her knees, and then leave the ribbon by the miraculous image (Almonaitis 1994: 34; Rūkštelė 1941: 3). There are many examples in ethnographic literature of people being cured after performing such rituals. These cases show elements of sympathetic magic, based on the principle of similarity: actions on one object can have a similar effect on another.

Figure 2. The spring near Lake Vištytis.

Photograph by Skaidrė Urbonienė, 2021.

Furthermore, some trees, stones and springs were revered as sacred places, imbued with miraculous healing power. Most often, this power was linked to local legends of miraculous recovery after using a spring's water or to the apparitions of the Virgin Mary on a stone or a tree, after which it gained the power of healing. These places became sites where various offerings were made in order to obtain divine intercession. It was believed that a sore spot had to be washed with water from a miraculous spring. Or a sick person had to touch a holy stone or tree, and rub the sore spot with the bark of the tree, or break a small piece from a stone and rub it on the sore spot. Today their power is still associated with the ability to restore health. This can be seen in places famous for miracles (by springs, trees and stones) where up until the present day, offerings like candles, rosaries and religious pictures are left. Also, crosses are erected near them as offerings, and small shrines and crucifixes are placed on nearby trees. For example, a spring near Lake Vištytis (Vilkaviškis district) is known to have healing powers, so people go there and erect crosses, or leave small crosses, coins and pictures, hoping to be healed (Figure 2). A stone in the village of Zigmantiškiai (Pakruojis district) is associated with an apparition of the Virgin Mary. According to a local legend, the Virgin Mary appeared to shepherds on this stone, and her footprint is still visible. Informants say that even today locals pray by this stone, walk around it on their knees, and break pieces off and take them home to rub on aching parts of the body (Figure 3).

Figure 3. The stone in the village of Zigmantiškiai.

Photograph by Skaidrė Urbonienė, 2020.

Respondents who made votive offerings at miraculous sites confirmed that they felt the close presence of God in their lives.

Places famous for miracles are known in various Christian countries. They are mostly located near springs, trees and stones, and similar customs and rituals are performed there (Bedyński & Mazur-Hanaj 2011: 73–75, 83, 155, 200; Rancane 2015: 251–252).

If illness causes fear, distress and insecurity in the life of an individual, then epidemics are a particular adversity, a great threat to both the individual and the community. In the case of epidemics, it was the community, not the individual, that took measures to prevent the epidemic. In Lithuania, the common way of averting an impending disaster was for the whole community to build a double cross, known as a plague cross or a Caravaca cross.[1]

Figure 4. A Caravaca cross with a miniature shrine and a statuette of St Roch in it, built in 1968 (renovated in 2001), in the churchyard of Sutkai church.

Photograph by Aloyzas Petrašiūnas, 2004. Photograph archive of the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute.

Rural people believed that a contagious disease (such as the plague) was brought by individuals arriving from elsewhere, or that the plague itself walked in the form of a man; therefore, Caravaca crosses were placed on high ground or at crossroads, so that the plague would see this protective sign from afar and would stay away from villages and towns when travelling (Milius 1995: 298). To increase protection, a statue of St Roch, the saviour from infectious diseases, was sometimes placed in a miniature shrine on the trunk of a Caravaca cross (Urbonienė 2015: 155, 268). In the early 20th century, when an epidemic of dysentery swept across Lithuania (in 1913, 1917 and 1919), a number of Caravaca crosses were erected, but the tradition of building Caravaca crosses to ward off epidemics began to wane from the 1920s (Surdokaitė 2008: 40). The decline in the demand for the construction of Caravaca crosses was determined by the improvement of living and sanitary conditions, and the development of medical science and education. Only isolated cases of erecting such crosses are known in the second half of the 20th century (Surdokaitė 2008: 40), and their intentions moved away from protection from contagious diseases towards protection from all kinds of illnesses. An example is the Caravaca cross in the churchyard of the church at Sutkai (Šakiai district), built in 1968 (Figure 4). A statuette of St Roch has been placed in a miniature shrine attached to the trunk of the cross, and an inscription appeals to the saint to protect patients and help them in sickness (Smilingytė-Žeimienė 2007: 488).

Although these crosses were traditionally built to protect people from the plague and other epidemics, their function was expanded to protect against natural disasters (storms and hail) that could destroy crops and cause famine, as well as various other major disasters, such as war and the misfortunes it brings. Ethnographic material and fieldwork show that at the beginning of the 20th century the idea that the Caravaca cross protected against three great catastrophes, plague, war and famine, was still prevalent (LNMMB RKR, F 165-13: 33–34).

The protective power of the Caravaca cross is still remembered today when people seek protection against diseases such as AIDS or Covid. A Caravaca cross erected in 1990 in the churchyard of the church at Plungė is dedicated to the protection of people from the disease of AIDS, as well as from war, plague and famine (it bears the dedication "From war, famine and plague, and the disease of AIDS, save us, Lord").

During the Coronavirus pandemic, the well-known Lithuanian folk sculptor Adolfas Teresius made a Caravaca cross and erected it at the Šiluva-Tytuvėnai road junction (Raseiniai district) in 2020 (Figure 5), thanking God for protection and asking for blessing during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. To reinforce the notion of the cross as protection from pandemics, the craftsman depicted St Roch, a saint who safeguarded people from infectious diseases, and the Eye of Providence, symbolising the all-seeing, all-protecting, omnipresent God. Moreover, following the additional concept of the Caravaca cross as protection against war and famine, Teresius incorporated these two notions in the inscription carved on the cross, and added a request for help against fire.

Figure 5. A Caravaca cross carved by Adolfas Teresius in 2020, at the Šiluva-Tytuvėnai crossroads.

Photograph by Adolfas Teresius, 2020.

FACING FIRE AND OTHER NATURAL DISASTERS

In a rural community, natural disasters, such as fire (mainly from lightning), which destroyed people's homes and possessions, as well as drought, hail and storms, which were a great threat to harvests, caused a state of uncertainty, insecurity and distress.

In the first half of the 20th century, wooden buildings dominated Lithuanian villages and small towns, so the risk of fire was great, as flames from one building could spread quickly to other buildings, and even to the whole village. Fire was a major threat not only to individual families but also to a whole community.

Figure 6. The monument to St Florian built in 1894 (renovated in 1990) in Plungė.

Photograph by Skaidrė Urbonienė, 2021.

In order to avoid this disaster, and to extinguish the fire as quickly as possible, people turned to God and to saints that protected against fire, such as St Florian and St Agatha. A community would raise money and erect a monument with a statue of St Florian. It was believed that if a fire occurred several times in the same place, a monument with a statue of St Florian should be erected in the village, town or homestead. According to this belief, after several fires damaged many settlements at the end of the 19th and in the early 20th century, monuments to St Florian were erected in the towns of Plungė (Figure 6), Tirkšliai, Plateliai, Alsėdžiai, Varniai, Švėkšna, Kvėdarna, Utena and Tauragnai, and in the villages of Milgaudžiai, Balsiai, Būdviečiai, et cetera (Urbonienė 2015: 265). Monuments to St Florian were also erected by individual families to thank God that the fire had passed their house by.

Thus, until the first half of the 20th century, the main way of protecting against fire in villages and towns was faith in a form of prayer and the erection of a monument with a statue of a saint. Indeed, a monument with a statue of St Florian or St Agatha was an offering in expectation of protection or in thanksgiving for grace that was to come or that had already come. This way of protecting from fire was also practised in other countries, such as Poland (Mironiuk-Nikolska 2010: 59), Slovakia (Kovačevičová & Schreiber 1971: 27), Austria (Wieninger 1976: 8, 10, 22) and Hungary (Bedyński & Mazur-Hanaj 2011: 116), etc.

In Lithuania, monuments to St Florian were usually tall, and stood in the village or town square, as it was believed that St Florian had to see all the buildings. If a monument with a statue of St Florian stood on the edge of a village, the statue faced the village or the town, so that the saint could see the whole settlement (LNMMB RKR, F 168-39: 22; Vyšniauskaitė 1993: 78–79).

St Agatha was also considered to be a guardian against fire. She was believed to have the power to banish fire from a village or a town. For this reason, monuments to her were usually erected on the outskirts of a settlement, and her statue was placed so that it faced the opposite side of the village or town, because it was believed that in the event of a fire, the saint would drive the fire out of the settlement (Počiulpaitė 2001: 650). One such monument with a statue of St Agatha still stands at a crossroads on the outskirts of the town of Raguva.

Bread was (and still is) blessed in churches on St Agatha’s Day, and it was believed that so-called Agatha’s bread could extinguish a fire, heal people or animals, safeguard a person during travel, save people in war, et cetera (Vyšniauskaitė 1993: 25). Similar beliefs are found throughout Europe (Jöckle 1997: 14–15).

Two ways of extinguishing a fire with St Agatha’s bread are recorded in ethnographic material (Balys 1998: 19). One way is to run around a burning building with the bread and throw it into the middle of the fire. The bread will then draw the fire into the centre of the burning house, and it will not spread sideways. This method was used when there were other buildings in close proximity around the burning building. The second method is to run around the building with the bread, and then to run to the side with no buildings, so that the fire follows and goes away. This method was advisable if there was an empty field on at least one side of the burning building. The second method testifies to the concept of St Agatha's power to drive fire out of a village or a town.

Today, many communities in villages and small towns have renewed or restored their old St Florian monuments. They now serve as a decoration of the town or the village, a testimony to a vanishing religious tradition, but no longer as a place to seek God's help from fire. In the modern world, this disaster is managed and controlled by modern means. The monuments and their surroundings also serve as a place where firefighters celebrate the day of their profession, which is 4 May, the feast day of St Florian, the patron saint of firemen.

Farmers used similar methods to ensure the protection of crops against drought, hail and storms as in the case of fire. They erected monuments to certain saints, such as St Isidore, the patron saint of ploughmen. He was believed to protect crops from natural disasters (drought, hail, heavy rain) and pests, and to promote the germination of grain (Končius 1965: 58; Vyšniauskaitė 1993: 49). According to this concept, monuments with a statue of St Isidore were erected near cultivated fields.

To protect livestock, especially horses, farmers turned to another saint, St George. Monuments with a statue of St George were usually erected in pastures where the saint could watch over cattle. In folk piety, St George was assumed to be not only the patron saint of cattle but also of crops.

Some rituals performed in the 19th and early 20th century on the feast of St George (23 April) are mentioned in ethnographic literature, such as praying and singing at crosses with an image of St George (Buračas 1939: 378), driving animals around crosses standing in cultivated fields (Balys 1993: 160), or walking around the fields in prayer (Jucevičius 1959: 199). These rituals had the aim of protecting the crop and the livestock from danger. In addition, eggs, butter, meat products and money were offered in churches on St George's Day to ask St George to protect farmers' main assets, their livestock and crops (Vyšnauskaitė 1993: 73). Similar customs can be found across a wide section of eastern and northern, and part of western, Europe (Hiiemäe 1996).

The tradition in Lithuania to protect fields, crops and cattle from danger by planting religious monuments has not survived to our days. It is evidenced by the memories of local people and by records in ethnographic literature and archival material, and is shown in photographs.

FACING SOCIAL DISASTERS (WARS, OCCUPATIONS)

War is one of the greatest disasters affecting individuals, families, communities and societies. Therefore, when war was imminent or already under way, people sought protection in their faith: praying, making offerings and building crosses. We can still find crosses in Lithuania erected in the first half of the 20th century by soldiers returning from the First World War. They often have inscriptions explaining why the cross was erected. The reasons were mostly promises made by young men leaving for the war, who vowed to build a cross if God helped them to return home safely.

One of several examples recorded during fieldwork in northern Lithuania is the story of a cross standing in the fields of the village of Barvainiai (Pakruojis district) on the site of a former homestead (Figure 7). It was built in 1934 by a man who fulfilled a vow he had made in 1915. The man promised to build a cross on his homestead as an offering if God helped him to return home safely from the war. He returned safely and kept his promise in 1934. Later, during the Soviet occupation, this man and his family were exiled to Siberia, and when they returned from exile, they found the cross still standing on their homestead. The family members believed it was a sign that God had protected them in exile in Siberia, just as God had protected the head of the family during the First World War (PRVB, Materials III: 119).

Similar cases of crosses being built in the 1950s and 1960s to thank God for His protection during the Second World War have been recorded as well. Figure 8 shows a wooden cross built in 1947 to thank God that all the men of the family returned safely from the Second World War.

There were also some utilitarian intentions and requests, such as the protection of buildings during wars. One such promise was made by a resident of the village of Vozbutai (Jurbarkas district), who promised to put up a cross if his house was not destroyed during the Second World War. The house remained intact, and the man put up a cross in 1946 (LII BR, F 73, neg. 37339).

War is a fearful time for the whole family, faced with family members leaving for the war. To cope with this danger, people often tried to reinforce the hope for safety by giving gifts to those who were leaving home. These gifts were usually religious images of the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ, or a particular patron saint. In many cases, it was also a piece of St Agatha’s bread, as it was believed that holy bread provided divine protection not only from fire, but from many great disasters, including war (Vyšniauskaitė 1993: 25). Leaving home for war has the meaning of a parting ritual, a rite of passage. As David Morgan put it,

> *in essence all rites of passage are designed to safeguard the individual during the critical period of transformation. The purpose of the gift given on the occasion of leave-taking or any other fundamental change in the familiar patterns of life is to preserve the sense of divine presence that is manifested in the rite of passage itself* (Morgan 1998: 175).

Figure 7. A cross built in 1934 in the village of Barvainiai.

Photograph by Oksana Stegvilaitė, 2019. Juozas Paukštelis Public Library of the Pakruojis District.

Figure 8. A cross built in 1947 in the village of Kareiviškis (Pakruojis district).

Photograph by Romas Čepulionis, 2019. Juozas Paukštelis Public Library of the Pakruojis District.

The Soviet occupation was also a major disaster in Lithuania, adding to the difficulties of the Second World War. The first postwar decade and the Soviet occupation were a particularly difficult and dangerous time for most of the population, bringing fear of the present and uncertainty about the future. During this difficult period, a number of crosses were erected as offerings to God, praying for protection from repression and exile to Siberia. An example is a still-standing cross with an inscription in the village of Mančiagirė (Varėna district), erected in 1948 by the village community in the hope of divine protection in the face of the hardships of the postwar period and Soviet repressions (Figure 9).

Figure 9. A cross built in 1948 (renovated in 2009) in the village of Mančiagirė.

Photograph by Skaidrė Urbonienė, 2021.

RELIGIOUS IMAGERY IN RITUALS OF PROTECTION

As was witnessed by many respondents, religious imagery plays an important role in the Catholic faith and rituals. Respondents recalled miraculous experiences with a particular image of the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ, or particular saints. Some were healed after fulfilling a vow to build a cross or a shrine to a certain saint, or received a favour after praying before a particular image; others were saved from fire or protected during the war by a picture of a saint or a symbolic object (such as a piece of St Agatha's bread). Small pictures of saints and objects such as St Agatha's bread had the character of talismans, as they were believed to have a protective power. In the words of Colleen McDannell, "people need objects to help establish and maintain relationships with supernatural characters, family and friends" (McDannell 1995: 272).

Even today, people choose a symbolic sign of protection, such as sculptures of the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ, particular saints, and especially angels, and place them inside or outside buildings (Figure 10). One wood carver said that in 2022, when Russia invaded Ukraine and the war began, statuettes of angels were in great demand at St Casimir's Fair in Vilnius. He sold almost all his angels in the first two days of the fair. In his opinion, with the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, people began to look more intensely for signs of symbolic security, so a sculpture of an angel seemed to be a very relevant object, both as an interior decoration and as a symbol of protection. According to the craftsman, an angel is associated with goodness and spirituality, so it is natural that people want to have an image of an angel in their home. At the 2023 fair, he noticed almost the same demand for sculptures of angels as in the previous year, because the war in Ukraine was still going on, and, being close to Russia, Lithuanians felt insecure (personal communication, March 6, 2022; March 4, 2023).

From the cases described in this article, it is evident that in rituals of protection, many objects, regardless of their size, weight and shape, were used as votive offerings. It could be a large outdoor cross or a small crucifix, a statue of a saint, a religious picture, a rosary, beads, ribbons, flowers, candles, money, etc. The practice of making votive offerings is found in all religions. As stated by Ittai Weinryb, "votive offerings are made to signify through matter the hopes, dreams, desires, and anxieties of a devotee within the structures of any religion" (Weinryb 2017: 102). Making vows and votive offerings were designed to solve a particular, mostly very practical, problem. As David Morgan pointed out, "votive practice is very practical in its efforts, focusing on pledging devotion in return for assistance with a difficult situation or thanking the saint for his help at a dire moment" (Morgan 2017: 110).

Figure 10. A sculpture of an angel on the wall of a house in the village of Modžiūnai.

Photograph by Skaidrė Urbonienė, 2023.

CONCLUSION

Uncertainty is a universal human experience, whether it is caused by the unpredictability of natural forces, economic, social or political conditions, or incomplete knowledge of how to deal with these factors. As this study has shown, during times of crisis in Lithuania, such as epidemics, fires, war and occupation, individuals and communities have historically found consolation in faith. The tradition of erecting crosses and shrines, and making votive offerings, is an act of devotion. It is also a material expression of hope, and a ritual of protection, providing stability and comfort to individuals and communities in times of crisis or danger.

Although people today deal with danger in different ways, mostly using modern technology, advanced medicine and scientific knowledge, this research demonstrates that traditional coping methods have not disappeared. Instead, they have adapted. The contemporary erection of Caravaca crosses to ward off diseases such as AIDS and Covid-19, and the increased demand for angel sculptures during the war in Ukraine show that people continue to seek a sense of symbolic security through tangible, faith-based acts. These practices are living traditions that evolve to address new anxieties, whether arising from a new virus or a geopolitical crisis. The persistence of these practices in an increasingly secular world also suggests that modern anxieties about illness, war and instability can drive people back to familiar, time-tested religious rituals that provide comfort and a sense of security.

This analysis reveals that religious rituals, both old and new, and their material expressions are adaptive strategies for managing uncertainty. They testify to the human need to find security through faith, and that tradition continues to play a significant role in the modern world.

NOTE

1 The name 'Caravaca cross' is derived from the town of Caravaca de la Cruz in Spain, where, according to a legend, in 1231 a double cross carried by two angels appeared miraculously on the altar of a church. As news of this miraculous crucifix spread, many people travelled to see it, and a multitude of miracles were attributed to it. It gained a reputation for healing and being powerful protection against danger (Galitzin n.d.). When an epidemic of plague spread in 1546 in Trent city (Italy), the miraculous cross from Caravaca de la Cruz was recalled. People turned to the cross to seek divine help. The cross safeguarded Trent city, and the news spread across Europe. As epidemics of plague raged in Europe, by the 17th century the concept of the Caravaca cross as protection against the plague gained widespread recognition throughout Catholic Europe, and people began to build Caravaca crosses in the open air (Surdokaitė 2008: 31). From then on, this form of cross was believed to be protection not only against the plague but against other epidemics (cholera, typhus, dysentery) as well.

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LNMMB RKR – Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts of the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania

LNM – National Museum of Lithuania

PRVB, Materials III – Juozas Paukštelis Public Library of the Pakruojis District, Materials of the local history expedition III, 2019: 1–565.

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Praying for the Dead in Uncertain Years: *The Rosary of 100 Requiem* in Castellaneta (Puglia, Italy)

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Abstract: The worship of the dead is a deep-rooted Catholic tradition. A significant display of it is a ritual practice known as the *Rosary of 100 Requiem*, consisting in the recitation for one hundred times of *Requiem aeternam*, a short prayer expressly addressed to the eternal repose of the faithful departed. Usually carried out as an individual practice, at home or in a church, this pious ritual can also be performed in a collective and public form, as demonstrated in this research. Actually, the Rosary of 100 Requiem, organised by a lay confraternity in Castellaneta, a little town in southern Italy, has given this ritual a processional form, with the participants walking through the cemetery while reciting the prescribed prayers. The pandemic, however, dramatically changed the situation, forcing the organisers to find an alternative form for the ritual to survive. Thus, between 2020 and 2021, the Rosary of 100 Requiem was mostly performed at a (safe) distance, by means of a Whatsapp group. In May 2021, the participants were allowed to gather again in the cemetery, but since then the ritual had lost its main peculiarity and has been reshaped as a static prayer performed in a church inside the cemetery.

Keywords: Catholicism, cemetery, dead, pandemic, performance, prayer, Purgatory, rituality

INTRODUCTION

Now more than ever, we are "living uncertainty". Both the world and our own lives are daily undermined and challenged by a variety of issues, predicaments, threats. It appears more and more difficult to understand – and let alone predict – what happens around us, so that we feel more and more bewildered, frustrated, distressed, frightened, shocked and so on. Tragic and global events like the recent Covid-19 pandemic, the weather disasters due to climate change as well as the countless wars fought all around the world – think of the Ukrainian and Middle Eastern conflicts, just to mention the most mediatised ones – have contributed to make the picture even more sinister and alarming.

Nonetheless, since the dawn of time, humans must face and try to manage an inherent and unavoidable source of uncertainty, probably the primary source of uncertainty and anxiety for any one of us: death. From a secular point of view, death is just the end of life, therefore it could also be seen as the end of the uncertainty itself, simply because an individual stops existing and feeling. However, from a religious point of view, death implies another form of uncertainty regarding the afterlife, a different kind of life after the end of the earthly life. In this sense, religion(s) can be regarded as a major source of certainty, providing the faithful with a quite clear picture of the afterlife[1] together with the necessary beliefs and practices for a righteous life, so as they can attain a good afterlife – in heaven or elsewhere, depending on one's religion – and, consequently, escape everlasting punishment or suffering. Notably, by means of some specific prayers and rituals, religions, in particular Catholicism, allow the faithful to create and keep a spiritual connection between the living and the dead, which provides a mutual benefit: if you pray for the dead, the dead will intercede for you with God (see De Matteis & Niola 1993).

Recovering and preserving such a spiritual link with the souls of the dead ascended in the afterlife is precisely the main function and purpose of a local ritual carried out for the first time in March 2017 in my hometown, Castellaneta (Puglia, southern Italy), that I started to follow occasionally some months later and that, since August 2018, became the subject of a research still in progress,[2] conducted until August 2022 in the form of participant observation. Such a ritual, known as the *Rosary of 100 Requiem*, underwent a variety of incidents and changes in the period covered by this article – from 2018 to 2023 – due in particular to such a global and dramatic event as the Covid-19 pandemic. What I am going to present and discuss are the outcomes of my five-year participant observation and the examination of the different arrangements the ritual took on in order to face the encountered issues and to comply with new contexts and emerging needs and demands.

The Setting

Castellaneta, the place where the ritual here considered is set, has a double relevance for my subject. First, it is the only place, as far as I know, at least in Italy, in which the *Rosary of 100 Requiem* is performed in the peculiar form that will be described in the following paragraph. Second, I was born in Castellaneta and lived there until August 2022, and this is an essential reason to explain why this ritual became my subject of research, also because I would hardly have learned about its existence if my residence had been elsewhere. In other words, both the specificity of the ritual and the way it has been researched are closely related with its setting.

Castellaneta is a little Apulian town of about 16.000 inhabitants approximately located halfway between the two main regional cities, Taranto and Bari. The built-up area is situated on the top of the hill Archinto at an altitude of almost 250 metres, while its territory extends from the southern end of the Murge upland to the Ionian Sea. The most distinctive geographic feature is its several ravines, similar to canyons, known as *gravine*, with a maximum depth of 145 metres. The old town centre has a medieval framework, yet its main religious and civic buildings, in their current appearance, date back to the period from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. As an episcopal see since 1087, Castellaneta houses a number of significant churches, first of all the cathedral devoted to Santa Maria Assunta (Our Lady of the Assumption), which, along with the adjacent bishop's residence and baronial palace, constitute the historical and cultural centre of the community. Also noteworthy are the parochial churches of San Domenico and San Michele, as well as the Franciscan convent of San Francesco and the little medieval church of Santa Maria del Pesco.

The local economy is chiefly based upon agriculture and the related industrial and commercial activities, with tourism greatly developing in the last decades, especially thanks to the growing number of visitors hosted in the seaside resort of Castellaneta Marina. A contribution to the town's renown is given by its being the birthplace of Rodolfo Valentino, an icon of the silent movies, to whom a museum and some cultural initiatives are devoted. As the seat of a great and well-equipped hospital, Castellaneta fulfils a crucial function in the province as a healthcare centre.

Following a previous decade of economic increase and social and cultural vibrancy, in the last twenty years, also due to political and administrative troubles, Castellaneta underwent a certain stagnation, as reflected by a slow but relentless demographic decline and by the loss of leadership compared to the neighbouring towns of the district as a place of social and cultural activities. Nonetheless, more recently, thanks to a mobilization from below and to an evolution of the political context, the town's community is offering signs of recovery, especially based, as nearly everywhere nowadays (see, for instance, Panzera 2022), on the rediscovery of the local identity and the promotion and exploitation of the local cultural heritage.

In this light, a prominent role has always been carried out in Castellaneta by the religious component, which can be properly seen as the cornerstone of the local identity. Despite the flowering of secular events and associations in the last years, the Catholic[3] traditions and sodalities are still regarded and lived by people as the essence of their being *Castellanetani*. Cults of saints and the related ritual practices mark nearly every month of the year, with a participation of the faithful that usually is not limited to the parishioners of the church where the saint's simulacrum is enshrined. Clearly, the greatest and most attended festivity is that devoted to the two patron saints, Saint Nicholas and Saint Francis of Paola, whose simulacra, enshrined in the cathedral, are carried in procession in the first half of May. However, it is in the rituality of the Holy Week that people recognize, in effect, their common identity and rediscover their belonging to the community, regardless of the individual degree of faith or devotion. The solemn processions of Good Friday and Holy Saturday can therefore be considered the core of the town's ritual year, as well as the moment of maximum commitment and involvement by its inhabitants. The organisation and realisation of these processions is mostly committed to four secular confraternities, each of them gathering women and men around a common object of worship – the Holy Sacrament, Our Lady of Sorrows, Our Lady of the Rosary and Saint Francis of Paola (see Ladiana & Fumarola 2004) – so as to create a group of people united by a faith resulting in concrete acts and initiatives. Secular confraternities are further evidence of how religion still shapes the local identity, but they are also a key factor of aggregation and social cohesiveness, as significantly illustrated by the growing participation of young people. A fifth confraternity, dedicated to the Holy Crucifix (see Miccoli 2025), re-established in 2016 after disappearing in the 1960s, stands out instead for giving rise to a very different kind of ritual, the *Rosary of 100 Requiem*, exactly the subject of the following paragraphs.

A Renovated Traditional Ritual

The *Rosary of 100 Requiem* or *Resurrecturis*[4] can be basically regarded as a ritual practice turning a usually individual and private prayer – just like the common Rosary, based on the individual recitation of five sets of ten *Ave Maria*, one *Pater Noster* and one *Gloria* each, at home or in a church – into a collective and public ritual,[5] aimed at commemorating and strengthening a shared religious belief concerning our destiny after we die. More particularly, this ritual is conceived to remind the Catholic faithful of the existence of an intermediate and hybrid otherworldly realm, Purgatory – the "third place" of the afterlife geography (Le Goff 1981) – as well as of the painful condition of its inhabitants. In other words, by attending the ritual of the *Rosary of 100 Requiem*, the participants are called both to solemnly confirm the existence of Purgatory, and to (re)connect themselves with their parents, relatives and friends departed, as well as – if not above all – with the abandoned souls, namely the unknown crowd of dead lacking people to pray for them (Niola 2022: 36–51). This latter purpose is closely related to the organising confraternity and its mission. By recovering the worship of Jesus Christ crucified, the Brothers of the Holy Crucifix wanted at the same time to highlight the Christian virtue of mercy and the related duty to accomplish merciful deeds, in particular to pray for the faithful departed with no people praying for them.

Such a purpose seems quite clear in the minds of some participants whom I have interviewed during my fieldwork. The most significant answer came from Roberto (60), head of the confraternity and veritable cornerstone of the ritual (personal communication, July 9, 2021): "Personally I'm sure that the prayer for the dead must be always kept alive, also because we release, through our prayers, many souls from Purgatory to Heaven, where they will pray and intercede for us."[6] Isa (59), one of the most regular participants, believes as well that the goal of the ritual is "to pray for our dearly departed in order to let them go to Heaven" (personal communication, August 1, 2021), while Maria Luigia (61), another regular participant, simply expressed a hope that her prayers would contribute "to reduce the number of the souls in the Purgatory" (personal communication, August 1, 2021). Nonetheless, other participants justified their attendance by more personal reasons, first of all the need to commemorate their own dead, especially if recently or prematurely passed away.

The *Rosary of 100 Requiem*, introduced by the secular confraternity of the Holy Crucifix since March 2017, takes place on the first Sunday of each month in the cemetery of Castellaneta – lying at the northern edge of the town, overlooking a deep ravine. In so doing, the worship of the dead is extended to the whole year, instead of being limited to only the month of November, traditionally devoted to the faithful departed. It starts at 9:30 am, so as to facilitate, in the intention of the confraternity, the attendance of the common faithful: it is a non-working day, and the time allows the participants to attend the Sunday Mass afterwards. The average duration is approximately thirty minutes.

The ritual was structured, until March 2020, in the form of *Via Crucis*, that is, as a walking itinerary consisting of ten stations (ten *Requiem aeternam* for each station), which started and finished in front of the cemetery church, thus covering the cemetery in most of its extension (see Figure 1). However, owing to the unfavourable weather conditions – rainy or cold days in winter and sultry days in summer – the ritual was sometimes performed in a static form within a more recent chapel inside the cemetery, or in a mixed form (i.e. two stations – the first and the last – performed in processional form, the remaining eight with people standing within the cemetery church).[7] Little leaflets of four pages, containing the texts to be read during the procession, were handed out every time by the Brothers of the Holy Crucifix to the participants before the procession.

When the procession stopped in front of the stations, one of the common faithful would read from their leaflet a pious commentary associating a moment of the *Passio Christi* with the deliverance of the holy souls in Purgatory. Along the path separating one station from another, all the participants – walking in line at a normal pace – prompted by the reader of the current station, said ten *Requiem aeternam*. The Brothers of the Holy Crucifix, wearing their traditional clothing of a white surplice and a red *mozzetta* – a sort of cloak – walked ahead of the procession, one of them carrying a huge Cross. At the beginning and at the end of the ritual the canonical Catholic prayers were recited: *Pater*, *Ave* and *Gloria*.

Figure 1. The ritual procession. Brothers and common faithful walking through the cemetery. October 7, 2018.

Photograph by Elettra Carrassi.

The following table provides an overview of the period when the *Rosary of 100 Requiem* was carried out as a ritual procession in the cemetery of Castellaneta. Actually, the data refer to the timespan of my participant observation, that is from August 2018 to March 2020. I have indicated the date of the event, the number of participants (by distinguishing between Brothers and common faithful) for each monthly event, how the ritual has been carried out, and the average attendance of the period.

Table 1

Pre-pandemic period (August 2018–March 2020)	
August 5, 2018:	13 (3 Brothers + 10 common faithful, the minimum attendance of the period), procession
September 2, 2018:	14 (3 + 11), procession
October 7, 2018:	20 (6 + 14), procession
November 4, 2018:	30 (6 + 24), procession
December 2, 2018:	19 (3 + 16), inside the cemetery chapel
January 13, 2019 (second Sunday of the month because the first one fell on Epiphany):	21 (8 + 13), mixed form (stations 1 and 10 in procession, from 2 to 9 inside the chapel)
February 3, 2019:	23 (6 + 17); inside the chapel
March 3, 2019:	22 (6 + 16); mixed form (as above)
April 7, 2019:	25 (4 + 21), procession
May 5, 2019:	17 (4 + 13), procession
August 4, 2019:	15 (2 + 13); inside the chapel
September 1, 2019:	24 (5 + 19); inside the chapel
October 6, 2019:	20 (5 + 15), procession
December 1, 2019:	31 (5 + 26), procession
February 2, 2020:	27 (7 + 20), procession
March 1, 2020:	33 (9 + 24, the maximum attendance of the period), procession
Average attendance:	**22.12**

This is the picture of what I have directly observed for one year and a half, but that can also be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the earlier 17-month period from March 2017 to July 2018). Overall, we have exactly three years during which this relatively new form of rituality[8] has become an ordinary, even routinary event in the religious and social life of a small group of Catholic faithful. It was composed of a minimum of 13 to a maximum of 33 participants, with an average attendance of about 22 people. They have made the cemetery of Castellaneta something more than a place to go just to pray for the dead and remember our own mortality, or else "a way to confirm the link between life and death [...] the living and the dead" (Colombo & Vlach 2021: 218).

The Ritual during and after the Pandemic

However, as for any of us and everywhere in the world, the outbreak of Covid-19, at the dawn of 2020, with all the measures and restrictions it imposed, strongly affected the *Rosary of 100 Requiem* and the people related to it. Due to the strict confinement imposed during the first lockdown by the Italian government on March 11, 2020, any kind of gathering – just like a religious procession – was forbidden, social proximity was banned and attendance at public places – such as a cemetery – was severely limited. In other words, the organisers and the participants of our ritual were deprived of two basic elements: meeting each other to gather and pray together, and the physical space where to perform their monthly collective prayer; without them it became impossible to carry out the *Rosary of 100 Requiem*. Exactly three years after its inception, this local ritual was running the risk of vanishing or at least breaking its continuity. All of us remember the prevalent feelings of that period: shock, distress, anguish, fear, grief, but also disappointment, frustration, helplessness for the huge restrictions it was imposing on our lives, in particular on our sociability. In addition, we were uncertain about our future itself.

Nevertheless, we also know that, as human beings, we are able to respond to any kind of critical or traumatic events; thanks to our resilience we are able to absorb the shocks, then to seek and, usually, find the way and the means to adapt to the new state of things generated by the crisis. We can rely on our creativity, too, in order to arrange something different but functional to go on and fulfil our needs (see, for instance, Fedele & Magliocco 2014). This is precisely what happened for a myriad of religious rituals all around the world, above all by means of technological devices and of the virtual spaces or realities provided by social networks (Imber-Black 2020; Cherblanc et al. 2022). Original and more or less unexpected ritual forms have thus emerged, allowing millions of people to preserve and keep alive their religious and social identities.

As for the *Rosary of 100 Requiem*, just one month before the first lockdown a member of the confraternity had created a Whatsapp group comprehending all the participants in the ritual, myself included. Conceived as a channel of mutual information and organisation – it is still used, for instance, by Roberto to invite, one day earlier, the members to attend the monthly event – one month later it suddenly turned into an invaluable resource, because it enabled about thirty people, who till then used to meet each other one day a month, to stay connected and continue to share their worship for the holy souls in Purgatory. The pandemic had forced a return to an individual and private form of prayer, but this was made virtually collective by the interplay granted by a social network.

In fact, it was an extremely virtual form of the ritual. On Saturday Roberto, as earlier, invited the group members to unite in a common prayer for the dead the next day; on Sunday the Brothers would publish at 9:30 a written message with an opening prayer and, at about 10:00, two vocal messages with the closing prayers of the ritual. In other words, the time framework of the *real* performance was virtually reproduced, as well as a sort of "emotional synchrony" (Zlobina & Dávila 2022: 1334), with all the group members supposed to recite, each on their own but simultaneously, one hundred *Requiem aeternam* and the ten prayers related to the ten stations of the Rosary. During and after this virtual performance some participants would post messages, usually consisting of an emoji (mostly joint hands), so as to make their participation more concrete and to express their feelings.

Generally speaking, this form of rituality can be considered a "continuity ritual", because it must keep "the connection between past and present and ensure a link with the future" (Gugg 2020: 4–5). Specifically, it was a "virtual ritual", or else a continuity ritual "made possible by the current technological devices" (Gugg 2020: 5). Furthermore, this was the outcome of a compromise and a negotiation between a local tradition emerging from below – no matter how recently – and the limits imposed from above due to a critical or traumatic event; consequently, these "tampered rituals" are carried out according to substitutive ways, or they remain the same but in reduced and impoverished form (Mennella 2021: 264). Still, according to Mennella (2021: 265, translation mine):

> *Subjective and intersubjective priorities, deficiencies and necessities are precisely the reasons that have pushed the faithful* […] *during the pandemic, to elaborate different solutions, useful to preserve a liturgical, theological, devotional continuity, to partially satisfy these needs and thus to provide compensatory patterns avoiding communication breaking down between the social, the individual and the divine.*

The following table provides an overview of the *Rosary of 100 Requiem* during the pandemic, a period marked by two different lockdowns separated by a four-month limited return to normality.

Table 2

First lockdown (March 2020–September 2020)	
March 29, 2020 (not the first Sunday of April because Palm Sunday):	in a virtual form via Whatsapp
May 3, 2020:	idem
June 2, 2020:	idem
July 5, 2020:	idem
August 2, 2020:	none, but the day earlier Roberto invited the group via Whatsapp to stay united and pray for all the departed
September 6, 2020:	none at all (for the first and only time the continuity of the ritual was broken)
Between lockdowns (October 2020–January 2021)	
October 4, 2020:	25 (6 Brothers + 19 common faithful; the maximum attendance of the period), in a static form inside the cemetery chapel (processions were forbidden by the anti-Covid norms) with social distancing and sanitary measures (see Figure 2)
November 1, 2020:	22 (7 + 15), idem
December 6, 2020:	21 (6 + 15), idem
January 10, 2021:	20 (6 + 14; the minimum attendance of the period), idem
Average attendance:	**22**
Second lockdown (February 2021–April 2021)	
February 7, 2021:	in a virtual form as above
March 3, 2021:	idem
April 11, 2021 (second Sunday because the first one was Easter):	idem

Following the attenuation of the second wave of Covid-19, in May 2021 the ritual recovered its real, physical space – the cemetery – and its human, social proximity – the gathering of Brothers and common faithful – but not its dynamic, moving nature as a procession throughout the cemetery.[9] Actually, for many months civil and ecclesiastical authorities forbade religious processions as implying a dangerous gathering of people. In all public spaces, indeed, there were strict health norms to observe, such as a minimum distance between individuals, the use of face masks and an accurate cleaning of hands.

Figure 2. Pandemic restrictions. A bench in the cemetery chapel with stickers warning "You can sit here," so as to keep the social distancing between the participants in the ritual. October 4, 2020.
Photograph by Vito Carrassi.

Once these restrictions were dismissed, in April 2022, the *Rosary of 100 Requiem* had the possibility to recover its original and ordinary form of ritual procession performed through the streets of the cemetery. And yet, the procession carried out in March 2020 has been, thus far (June 2023), the last one. In other words, the ritual emerged from the pandemic as a different event compared to what it was before the pandemic. Though keeping its original location, the ritual radically reduced its outreach, limiting itself to a single place inside the cemetery: a chapel and its adjacent space.

In the following table the data concerning the period from May 2021 to June 2023 are reported. Based on the weather, the *Rosary of 100 Requiem* has been performed either inside or outside the cemetery chapel.

Table 3

Post-pandemic period (May 2021–June 2023)	
May 9, 2021:	20 (4 Brothers + 16 common faithful), in static form outside the chapel
June 6, 2021:	32 (5 + 27), in static form outside the cemetery church because of a coffin in the chapel
July 4, 2021:	12 (1 + 11; the minimum attendance of the period), in static form outside the chapel
August 1, 2021:	16 (3 + 13), idem
September 5, 2021:	17 (1 + 16), in static form inside the chapel
October 3, 2021:	32 (6 + 26), in static form, outside the chapel
November 7, 2021:	33 (8 + 25; the maximum attendance of the period), idem
December 5, 2021:	21 (6 + 15), idem
January 2, 2022:	22 (6 + 16), idem
February 6, 2022:	31 (6 + 25), idem
March 6, 2022:	24 (5 + 19), in static form, in the centre of a cemetery atrium, placed around a wooden crucifix, in order to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the ritual; Roberto announces the possible return to the processional form the next month, but at the same time is worried about one of the faithful with walking problems (see Figure 3)
April 3, 2022:	24 (7 + 17), in static form, outside the chapel; Roberto announces again the possible return to the processional form, but now there is the reluctance of some women fearing the risk of falls along the route
May 1, 2022:	26 (3 + 23), in static form, outside the cemetery church, around a temporary altar arranged by Roberto
June 5, 2022:	22 (2 + 20), in static form, outside the chapel
July 2, 2022:	18 (2 + 16), idem
August 7, 2022:	20 (2 + 18), idem
September 4, 2022:	14 (2 + 12), idem
October 2, 2022:	20 (5 + 15), in static form, inside the chapel
November 6, 2022:	24 (5 + 19), idem; rain has impeded the return to the processional form previously announced by Roberto via Whatsapp; November being the month specifically devoted to the cult of the dead, the confraternity has decided on the reiteration of the ritual in all the November Sundays

Post-pandemic period (May 2021–June 2023)	
November 13, 2022:	16 (6 + 10), idem, again because of the rain
November 20, 2022:	25 (7 + 18), idem, because of the night rain which has made the cemetery paths impassable
November 27, 2022:	21 (7 + 14), idem, because of the cold weather
December 4, 2022:	20 (6 + 14), idem, this time without providing a reason not to return to the processional form
January 8, 2023 (second Sunday because the first was New Year's Day):	23 (5 + 18), idem
February 5, 2023:	22 (3 + 19), idem
March 5, 2023:	21 (5 + 16), idem (see Figure 4)
March 26, 2023 (instead of April 2 because Palm Sunday):	29 (6 + 23), idem; Roberto tells me that he has not been able yet to plan a suitable itinerary for the procession, above all because of a number of obstacles that make it difficult to cover
May 7, 2023:	22 (4 + 18); idem
June 4, 2023:	23 (3 + 20); idem
Average attendance:	**22.40**

It is remarkable to note that the average attendance of this last period, with a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 33 participants, has remained nearly the same as in the pre-pandemic period. After more than six years since its inception, therefore, the *Rosary of 100 Requiem* seems to have reached the status of an established ritual with a small but regular number of participants. Nonetheless, it underwent, like so many other social and cultural practices in the last years, significant accidents that have modified part of its original features. As noted in the table above, a possible return to the processional form has been announced more than once since March 2022; however, after fifteen months nothing has changed and it seems quite probable that the fixed, static form of the ritual could succeed and become permanent. In fact, from a strictly religious and devotional point of view, what really matters has been preserved: the collective prayer, the sacred location, the monthly recurrence, the piety for the holy souls in Purgatory. Everything else, indeed, has a limited or minor importance:[10] perhaps the ritual performance becomes less interesting and attractive, but it keeps its religious and deepest meaning.

Figure 3. Celebrating the fifth anniversary. Faithful wearing face masks perform the ritual outdoors around a wooden Crucifix. March 4, 2022.

Photograph by Vito Carrassi.

Figure 4. The current form of the ritual. Brothers and common faithful praying for the Purgatory souls in the cemetery chapel. March 26, 2023.

Photograph by Vito Carrassi.

On the other hand, though making the ritual less fascinating, especially for an external observer – and, as a consequence, also in terms of heritagisation of a local religious practice (Isnart 2020) – and rather distant from its deep and functional relationship with the cemetery as a whole, the fixed, static form makes the ritual easier to organise and manage, less demanding for older people (the majority of participants), and safer, given the length and the roughness of the route to cover. Worth considering, in my view, is also the death of the originator of the ritual procession in the cemetery, Egidio (not by chance a former theatre director and opera enthusiast). After all, he was the only witness of the *Rosary of 100 Requiem* carried out until the 1960s in the cathedral – hence the only link between the past and the present of the ritual – and he was also the only member of the confraternity who was acquainted with the existence and meaning of that kind of ritual. Above all, he has been the reinventor of this tradition, which has become more visible and engaging thanks to his idea of turning it into a procession through the cemetery, conceived at the same time as a tribute to the dead and an imitation of *Via Crucis*.

CONCLUSION

With its relatively short but eventful history, the *Rosary of 100 Requiem* performed in the cemetery of Castellaneta can undoubtedly be regarded as a paradigmatic case of a rituality affected by the uncertainty brought about by such a traumatic event as the Covid-19 pandemic. Born as an original rearrangement of an obsolete pious practice, this collective form of prayer for the dead has been able – and forced – to change and reinvent itself, in order to survive in a threatening global context. As a consequence, the *Rosary of 100 Requiem*, willingly or not, turned out to be a metamorphic ritual, passing through three different main forms – dynamic, virtual, static – which, in case of need, have also been mixed, as we have seen.

Nonetheless, the question is: what kind of ritual has arisen from the pandemic? Once recovered and reactivated in its essential features, the ritual has undergone a process of reduction, both in a spatial and dynamic sense, thus losing its original configuration, which made it something special in the field of the rituals for the souls in Purgatory. As we can experience in many other areas, this is probably a long-lasting consequence of the pandemic trauma, a sort of necessary rearrangement, in an age of uncertainty and precariousness, meant to safeguard single traditions and, in general, a cultural heritage. On the other hand, innovations, adaptations and losses, too, have always been inherent in cultural and ritual practices; as argued by Frog (2012: 134): "Any tradition is characterized by tensions between inherited models and their adaptation to current valuations, interests and ideologies." In addition, Mennella (2021: 274), echoing somehow the concept of the "preventive censorship of the community" theorised by Bogatyrëv and Jakobson (1980: 1–21), points out that the innovations introduced in rituals during an extraordinary period – such as the pandemic one – can become permanent, if considered more suitable or advantageous than the previous features.

Therefore, both as a researcher and as part of the entire study, the questions I am posing about the current, innovative and reduced form of the ritual are: will the loss of the dynamic, moving ingredient turn out to be a temporary adjustment or a permanent change? Has this been totally caused by the pandemic or was it physiologically latent among the participants, as suggested by the occasional resort to the fixed form during the *processional era*? Finally, have we to consider this simplified way of performing the ritual instrumental in making it more resilient and adaptable to changing situations? Or must it rather be seen as a detriment to the safeguarding of its deeper and most authentic meaning? This is all the more so if we take into account that the procession in the form of *Via Crucis* supplies a theological and devotional bond between the worship of the dead and the sacrifice of Jesus crucified, which is the specific subject of devotion of the organising confraternity. These are open questions, indeed, which need time and further observation to be answered. After all, while a ritual tradition can modify its forms, locations, participants, functions and purposes, what we firstly need to observe and examine, in an uncertain age like this, is the continuity of that tradition itself and its ability to keep significance and value for those who perpetuate it. And I think this is *a fortiori* valid for a tradition that has arisen not before but in the midst of this same uncertain age.

NOTES

1 As argued by Linda Dégh (2001: 399): "Humans project their immortality in diverse religious contexts, imagining diverse deities, hierarchies, and structures that their own cultural experience can fill with meaning to make their future in 'life after life' palpable."

2 This research was presented for the first time during the "Ritual Year Working Group 13th Biennial Conference" held in Bucharest in November 2018. The results of five years of research, here discussed, were the subject of a paper I presented in June 2023 at the 16th SIEF Congress "Living Uncertainty" held in Brno.

3 Beside the Catholic churches, the only other places of worship are those devoted to the religious minorities of Jehovah's witnesses and the Evangelical Church.

4 The Latin word *Resurrecturis*, meaning "to those who will resurrect", often placed at the entrance of the Catholic cemeteries, was used by the organisers as a heading in the posters advertising the ritual, undoubtedly in order to highlight the close connection between the ritual itself and the Catholic doctrine of the soul's resurrection after the earthly death.

5 According to Roberto, head of the organising confraternity and my main informant, "we know well that the collective prayer is stronger than the individual one, therefore I expected more participation" (personal communication, July 9, 2021).

6 Significantly, at the end of each set of 10 *Requiem aeternam* the participants recite the following prayer: "Holy souls, Purgatory souls, pray God for us, since I will pray for you so that [God] gives you the glory of Heaven."

7 Egidio (75), the oldest Brother and the main advocate of the *Rosary of 100 Requiem* as a ritual procession in the cemetery, disagreed with these alternative ways of performance. In his view, it keeps all its sense and value only in the processional form (personal communication, September 3, 2018).

8 As testified by Egidio, the original form of the ritual, carried out until the 1960s, was already a collective prayer, but it took place on the first or second Friday of the month in the closed space of a cathedral room.

9 According to Roberto (personal communication, July 9, 2021): "The ritual is more fascinating if performed as a procession through the cemetery. The prayer efficacy is the same, but the processional form gives us more visibility, as well as the confraternity dressing and the itinerant Crucifix. […] Many visitors in the cemetery were attracted by that and stopped to look at us." Andrea (67), one of the most regular participants, told me (personal communication, August 1, 2021): "We should come back to the procession, however, because we began with the procession, it is very beautiful, the procession through the cemetery." I have been myself part of this debate, trying every time to support a return to the procession which, as a researcher but also as a member of the performing group, is the most interesting and significant feature of the ritual.

10 In fact, there has been another loss compared to the original ritual: the Brothers stopped wearing their confraternal surplice, thus undermining, at least visually, the distinction between them and the common faithful.

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From Kinship to Heterogeneous Networks: Navigating Ritual Life and Crisis at a Shinto Shrine in Japan

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Abstract: This paper elucidates how uncertainties and crises have affected the social and ritual life of a Shinto shrine in Japan. While many shrines have declined due to urbanisation and the weakening of traditional local communities, the HKN shrine, situated in Ibaraki prefecture's rural periphery, remains prosperous and continues to attract worshippers and tourists. To address the crisis of a weakening local community, the shrine has replaced its traditional social foundations by creating a substitute network based on kinship and relatedness (Carsten 1995). Nevertheless, when this network became unstable during the COVID-19 pandemic, the shrine again tackled the crisis and established a heterogeneous network through associations with non-human actors. Drawing on ethnographic research, the study examines how ritual organisers maintain the shrine's operations and community cohesion through both human and non-human actors, ranging from sacred objects to ritual spaces, within the framework of actor-network theory (ANT) (Latour 2005). By applying ANT, this paper shows that the shrine's resilience emerged not only from human strategies but also through the cooperation of non-human actors such as sacred objects, technologies and spatial arrangements, which participated in sustaining ritual life during a crisis.

Keywords: Shinto shrine, local community, social network, COVID-19 pandemic, ANT, non-humans, heterogeneous network

INTRODUCTION

"Without a shrine, a place is 'unfit for human habitation', because proper relations with the Kami have not been established" (Hardacre 2017: 1). Shinto has *yaoyorozu no kami*, which means eight million or countless *kami*; the *kami* (deities or spirits) reside in everything, such as animals, stones, trees, mountains, seas and so on. Shinto shrines are ubiquitous in Japan, where humans can dwell or be near them. Not all shrines necessarily have large buildings and mysterious things around them. Some places only have a tiny *kamidana* (a small altar to enshrine a Shinto *kami*) with a small *torii* (a Shinto shrine archway) nearby.

In the Meiji period, to propagate Shinto as a State ideology, all Shinto shrines were pulled together under the control of the State. The state took the land and assets of shrines and temples to gain control over them (Ross 1983; Ono 1972). Establishing the Ise shrine as its center, a ranking system was engendered. Shrines were categorized into three ranks: *kansha* (official shrines), *minsha* (unofficial shrines), and *mukakusha* (unranked shrines). The official shrines were divided into *kanpeisha* (imperial), *kokuheisha* (national), and *bekkakusha* (special shrines). The central government administered official shrines, whereas prefectural and local governments administered unofficial shrines (Hardacre 2017; Ono 1972).

While the government attempted to support shrines financially, it was not feasible to support all of them. It primarily supported the highly-ranked shrines, leaving the responsibility of maintaining small village shrines to local villagers. It was not the priests but the parishioners who were responsible for looking after their *ujigami* (local tutelary deity). Shrines depended on local parishioners for financial and voluntary oblations. They managed to secure their income through parishioners attending the yearly rites and coming for individual prayers.

Bestor (1989) notes that shrines were a core of its community activities. Since they were the place where community gatherings and festivals were held, they were therefore strongly connected to local communities, and people in the communities, in turn, supported their activities, forming associations of their local *ujiko* (parishioners) by neighbourhood or hamlet. These associations supported shrines and temples financially and labour-wise (Shimazono 1988). The representatives of the associations (*ujiko soudai*) were involved in the administration of shrines (Robertson 1991).

However, urbanisation and modernisation weakened the connections between shrines and their communities. Many people migrated to urban areas, and others lost interest in community activities. Losing local parishioners and followers, numerous shrines fell out of favour (Morioka & Hanashima 1968; Ishii 1998). In contrast, while other rural shrines were demolished due to urbanisation and modernisation, a small village shrine in a depopulated, poor farming area called the HKN shrine[1] was expanded and attracted not only local people but also worshippers from a wide range of the Kanto[2] region. It transformed from a small village shrine to a famous shrine.

The administrators of the HKN shrine were aware of the declining support from the local community and foresaw how the social changes could affect the shrine's future. Therefore, the former *guuji* (head priest) sought to attract worshippers from more distant areas for financial support to ensure its survival. Moreover, they crossed communal boundaries for labour-wise support and tried to use personal ties to gather staff to work during events and festivals. Succeeding the former *guuji*, the current *guuji* introduced a business-corporation-like structure to the shrine, employing *kannushi* (Shinto priests), *miko* (Shrine maidens),[3] and other workers instead of relying on temporary helpers from *ujiko*. These strategies proved successful. The HKN shrine transformed from the inside out and expanded. Fifty years ago, it was mostly open for just one day: its annual autumn festival. Now, it operates daily and attracts worshippers and tourists throughout the year.

This transformation was possible because a social network was created based on personal ties and marketing to sustain the shrine. However, this network was partially disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the shrine had to face uncertainties again. This paper examines how the ritual organisers of the shrine (defined here as the head priest's family, who serve the shrine from generation to generation) responded to uncertainties brought about by social changes and what strategies they employed to address them. Further, it explores how the ritual organisation evolved to manage modern problems in the contemporary world. Prior to the pandemic, the focus was primarily on human participants in the social network of the shrine. However, when this network became partially disconnected because of COVID-19, the ritual organisers adapted a heterogeneous network of human and non-human actors to overcome the crisis.

While earlier research on shrines has focused on social organisation and community relationships, this alone cannot explain how the HKN shrine managed to sustain ritual life when human relations were weakened. Therefore, to analyse the shrine not only as a social institution but also as an assemblage of relationships between humans, objects and spiritual entities, I employ Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which was developed by Bruno Latour, Michel Callon and John Law in the early 1980s, within the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS). ANT proposes the idea of a generalized symmetry, which means that humans and non-humans should be treated equally in analytical frameworks (Bennett 2010, cited in Kim 2018: 43). Whereas traditional social sciences often consider only humans as active agents, ANT argues that agency is distributed; non-humans such as objects, architecture, texts, animals, or sacred spaces also exert influence and participate in the construction of social worlds (Latour 1999, 2005; Law 1992). When these actors form associations, they create a heterogeneous network, and their agencies diffuse in that network and become inseparable, which creates a hybrid actor (Callon & Latour 1981, cited in Kim 2018: 36).

Through this lens, the HKN shrine is viewed as a living network shaped by interactions among both human and non-human participants. While the pandemic is not the central focus of this study, it serves as a moment of crisis that illuminates the resilience and adaptability of the shrine's network.

To elucidate how ritual organisers of the HKN shrine manage rituals in uncertain times, I will first provide an ethnographic overview of the shrine and its local community; second, I will discuss how the pandemic affected it and disconnected its human network; I will then examine how, with the help of non-human actors, the shrine could connect to a heterogeneous network to sustain itself.

METHODOLOGY

This research examines the HKN shrine from an anthropological perspective. I conducted fieldwork at the shrine from 2018 to 2022, working there as a part-time *miko*. Participant observation was the primary method of my fieldwork. Besides, informal, semi-structured and formal interviews were conducted with the shrine's staff and individuals on its *keidai* (precincts), including *rotenshou* (stall vendors), local people and worshippers. Contrary to previous research that has focused primarily on institutional structures or theological interpretations, this study applies insiders' perspectives based on long-term intensive fieldwork. It highlights the lived, relational aspects of shrine life, including both human and non-human actors, as seen through the daily routines and crisis responses of those who maintain the shrine's rituals and community.

Since I will explore the relationships between human and non-human actors, besides ethnographic methods I will use ANT as an analytical tool. I emphasise that ANT is useful in this context because it allows us to examine how agency is shared among human and non-human actors, and how a network reorganises itself in times of crisis.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE SHRINE

The HKN shrine was an unofficial village shrine, built in 809 AD in a town situated on the periphery of the Ibaraki prefecture. It is known as a shrine where any wish in one word comes true. According to the shrine's priests, there is a legend that a mysterious light appeared near the current shrine, and a bamboo shoot appeared from the snow, which split into three shoots. Villagers were surprised to see it and decided to purify it. When they attempted to purify it with hot water, *kami* HKN[4] appeared and instructed the villagers to revere the bamboo, enshrine it, and worship him eternally. In return, he promised to protect them from disease and misfortune. Therefore, many people visit the shrine to pray for recovery from illness or critical medical conditions.

The shrine was situated in a poor farming area. As Yokoshima (1978: I–II) notes,

> *From the olden times, it is said that there are two good things in this town: the HKN* kami *and* karakuri tsunabi *(puppet fireworks). There were about two hundred small farmhouses scattered around the village, and it was a poor village that could only produce tea as its specialty, and with this, it could barely maintain its face. It indeed felt inferior to the surrounding villages. Undoubtedly, such a remote cold village became widely known throughout the Kanto region, certainly because of HKN kami and the fireworks festival, which is conducted on its annual autumn festival. Nevertheless, the town was not established as a* monzen machi *(temple town),*[5] *which gathers worshippers like Narita and Kasama*[6]*. Only once a year, at the time of the fireworks festival, worshippers come to the shrine from dawn to the end of the* karakuri tsunabi *performance. The total number of worshippers is close to 100,000 people. After the festival, they disappear as if a fire has been extinguished. Of course, there are usual visits of worshippers, but the numbers are incomparable (translated by the author from Japanese to English).*

Since a large population venerates the shrine, its annual autumn festival used to attract extremely large crowds. Its *karakuri tsunabi* (puppet fireworks) was exceptionally famous. As per the shrine's staff, *karakuri tsunabi* was so popular that thousands of people would come to see it, and the shrine could secure its annual income from that one day.

As mentioned earlier, the shrine was located in a poor farming area, and the previous *guuji* (head priest), the father of the current *guuji*, worked in the city office and did not open the shrine daily. The shrine would only open for its annual autumn festival, the New Year festival, and occasionally for personal prayers from local parishioners. Even during the Meiji period, it was difficult for unofficial shrine priests to survive solely through this profession. They had to do other work to earn their livelihood and work as *a kannushi* as a side job. Some usually return to their shrines to perform their duties only for festivals (Ross 1983). Still, at present, many people get qualifications for *kannushi* through intensive courses and pursue different occupations simultaneously. They have their regular jobs, and only in the New Year do they perform *gokitou* (purification prayers) in their respective shrines.

Since the HKN shrine was mainly active for one day, there was no full-time *kannushi*. The previous *guuji*'s eldest son, the current *guuji*, also had a different occupation. He ran a printing company. When he succeeded in the shrine, he eventually quit the business and dedicated himself entirely to the shrine. He had an aptitude for management, and with his farsightedness, he soon realized that relying solely on the one-day festival would not be enough to sustain the shrine. Thus, he implemented several management changes to make this shrine function as it does today.

For example, instead of depending on the one-day festival, the shrine started to open every day without any holidays. Permanent *kannushi*, part-time *miko*, and cleaning staff were recruited. Efforts were made to clean the shrine's compound and advertise it on FM radio. Posters and signboards were put up throughout the town and train stations in the city. The current *guuji* fixed the time and price for *gokitou* (purification prayers) and *ofuda* (wooden amulets) (Koga 2018). As per the current *guuji*, when he first started working at the shrine, he had to perform all the tasks alone. Therefore, he decided to streamline processes so that everything could be carried out smoothly. Currently, *kannushi* perform all kinds of twenty-three *gokitou*[7] and even go for *gaisai* (purification ceremonies conducted outside the shrine).

To make the shrine a livelier place, he allowed *rotenshou* to set up their shops on the shrine grounds during festivals and throughout the year. The *rotenshou* who set up shop at the shrine are members of *Mitsukaido rotenshou kumiai* (Mitsukaidou Stall Vendors Association). Many of them are residents of Joso City and the surrounding areas. They mainly operate their stalls during main festivals such as the annual autumn festival and the New Year. However, in the shrine precinct, a flower shop opens every day, and an *obanyaki*[8] stall opens every weekend.

The above-mentioned management changes made the shrine open daily, yet the question emerged: How did it deal with the challenge of depopulation?

Dealing with Crisis and Uncertainty: Transformation of the Shrine

Over the past fifty years, several things have changed at the shrine. This shrine expanded at a time when scholars of Shinto studies were predicting that many rural shrines would be gradually demolished (Ishii 2010). It has evolved alongside the changing times, from a small shrine that was occasionally active to a major, daily active site. It now hosts a variety of events and historically significant festivals[9]. It is approximately 7.5 km from the nearest station (Mitsukaido station), and there is no bus service to the shrine. Visitors must arrive by private vehicle or taxi; therefore, it is slightly inconvenient in terms of public transportation, yet it welcomes a wide range of worshippers.

The shrine was in a depopulated area; therefore, it struggled with the shortage of staff and supporters. Nevertheless, not only this shrine but also other Shinto shrines struggled with fewer people. Due to urbanisation, many people from rural areas have migrated to cities, weakening the shrine's connection with its local community. Many *kou* (followers' associations) have disbanded. Even in cities, shrines have been trying to strengthen their relationship with newcomers as they become more involved with them (Robertson 1991; Hardacre 2017).

As Yokoshima (1978) mentioned, it was a poor farming area, and villagers could not support the shrine financially. Therefore, the previous *guuji* used to travel to Chiba, Saitama and Tokyo by bicycle or boat to promote the shrine. His efforts were successful, and several people formed a *kou* (followers' association), which venerated the HKN shrine. People have had faith in this shrine for generations, and one of its *kou* comes from Hokkaido. Uda et al. (2014: 145) note that after the Second World War, many *kou* were formed in various places, and *kou*'s shrine visits increased. At the HKN shrine, especially around the second half of the 1960s, more than five hundred buses used to come for its annual autumn festival on the 13th of September. In the mid-1970s, *kou* visits were at their peak at the shrine.

However, *kou*'s visits could not contribute to the town's development, though they did play a significant role in expanding the shrine. Table 1 contains the record sheet of the construction and renovation of the shrine's facilities from 1970 to 1992, which was provided by the shrine. The same document is also cited in Uda et al. 2014: 147; Koga 2018: 33.

Table 1. List of construction and renovation of shrine's facilities (1970–1992)

Year	Facilities Construction and Renovation
1970	Main hall expansion and renovation (roof copper plate re-roofing)
1973	New construction of the assembly hall (steel frame, two-story)
1975	New construction of the east *ofuda* reception New construction of *chouzu* (a place to purify hands and before paying a visit to *kami*)
1977	New construction of the photography room
1978	New construction of a wedding hall (wooden and steel frame, two-story) New construction of the shrine inside the wedding ceremony hall
1979	Corridor extension and renovation (partial)
1980	Corridor renovation (steel frame construction) Parking lot pavement construction New construction of the west *ofuda* reception
1981	The shrine's main hall's new outer wall (steel frame) New construction of the first *Shinmei*-type Big *torii*
1982	New construction of precinct guard hut (two-story)
1983	New construction of subordinate shrine (thirteen shrines) (reinforcing iron rod) New construction of subordinate shrine (thirteen shrines) (wooden) Restoration of paving stone on *sandou* (road approaching the shrine)
1984	New construction of a public toilet for worshippers.

Year	Facilities Construction and Renovation
1985	New construction of festival equipment storehouse (34.71074m) Renovation of *haiden* (hall of worship) beach edge New construction of the outer hall of worship New construction of the bamboo spirit hall *Heiden* (hall of offerings) paving stone construction (replacement)
1987	New construction of office (wooden copper roof)
1989	Construction of the private retaining wall
1990	New construction of a place to keep old *ofuda* and amulets Office entrance new construction
1991	Shrine front gate parking lot construction
1992	New construction of antechamber (steel frame, two-story)

Source: Created from the repair record sheet provided by the shrine office.

As the *kou* expanded, the shrine also expanded and renovated its facilities. The HKN shrine remained small until 1970 (Figure 1), but with the expansion of *kou*, the shrine itself grew and underwent renovations (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Shrine's old picture.

Source: This picture is taken from an old book of the HKN shrine.

Figure 2. Current picture of the shrine.

Source: taken by the author.

Along with the expansion of its building and area, people were required to manage them. To place people in the required areas and spaces, the shrine needed to pay them. Further, to pay them, it should have enough funds to do so. *Kou* solved the shrine's financial issues, while local people and relatives supported the shrine through their labour during events. However, when people's occupations changed from agriculture to salaried labour, the local community could not help, and *kou* started to dissolve. However, when I worked at the shrine for the first time, I witnessed that the shrine's staff was so close and friendly, like a community (I will briefly describe the shrine's relation with the community in the next section). Nevertheless, I was later bewildered to discover that this shrine does not have a strong relationship with its local community. How did organisers manage to gather such close-knit staff? How did they navigate the social changes and successfully organise the shrine rituals and events? To explore these questions, I will first describe the shrine's relations with the local community and then explain how an interpersonal network substituted for the previous one.

THE LOCAL COMMUNITY OF THE SHRINE

In December 2018, I worked at the Shrine's New Year festival for the first time. It was very lively inside and outside. The staff were very friendly with each other, chatting and laughing together. When I was selling *goshuinchou* (notebooks for collecting shrines or temples' stamps) with Mr. Yamamoto, he told me he had known the *guuji* for over thirty years. After he retired from the City Hall, the *guuji* asked him to work at the shrine during the New Year festival and *akireitaisai* (annual autumn festival)[10]. Since then, he and his wife have worked at the shrine during both festivals for seven years. Many people were approached in this way to work during festivals; they already knew each other in some way. Because of that, the atmosphere among the staff was very friendly, with people making jokes and laughing during breaks. Some older men were speaking in the Ibaraki dialect and laughing loudly. When I commented on the closeness of the people at the shrine, Mr. Yamamoto told me, "Here, everyone knows everyone. We are like a family. It is fun to work here."

I saw this friendly atmosphere extending outside the shrine. The precincts were full of *rotenshou*. Among the more than one hundred fifty stalls, approximately ten were those that also set up their stalls during the monthly *tsukinamisai*[11]. *Manjuu*'s stall is always positioned just in front of the shrine. The shrine's staff at the amulet's reception and the staff of the *manjuu* stall often exchanged friendly words during their free time.

My observation of the New Year festival and Mr. Yamamoto's words evoked a sense of community as a group of people who share a common identity and have something in common (Rouner 1991). However, curiously, when I told a *kannushi* that I wanted to research the shrine's community, he looked surprised and said, "What! But this shrine has no community. *Guuji*-san[12] used to run a company and runs this shrine in the same way. The local community is not much involved with the shrine's management. *Ujiko soudai* (representatives of the local parishioners) neither give money to the shrine nor say anything about its matters. *Guuji*-san made this shrine self-sufficient. *Negi*-san[13] always says that this shrine has a weak community." Contrary to my expectations, it was clear that Mr. Kobayashi and the shrine staff had regarded "community" as a local community consisting of the *ujiko* who live near the shrine.

While a local community is generally imagined as a spatially proximate, homogeneous group, it would be common in Japanese to use the term '*en*'[14] when discussing community, such as *ketsuen* (blood-related) and *chien* (geographically-related). However, curiously enough, while a community suggests a bounded region consisting of people living in mutual interaction, *en* as a network of persons is, in principle, open-ended. For the HKN shrine, people who live in the same town, called Oozaki[15] were part of its local community.

In previous literature, scholars have emphasised that shrines rely on their communities for support, especially in rural areas. Both financial and labour contributions from *ujiko* have historically been crucial for maintaining a shrine. In some shrines, different forms of support from the local community remain. Local people come to clean shrines and participate in their festivals. In the New Year festival, they set up stalls in their shrine's precincts, and the *ujiko seinenkai* (youth group of the parishioners) prepares *omochi* (rice cakes) and throws them at the crowd. However, such things do not happen in the HKN shrine. Just a few volunteers come to help. If the traditional community is no longer participating, who are the people who support the shrine's activities? Further, why do they appear so close-knit, even though they do not belong to the "community" in the traditional sense? To explore this, let us examine the staff members who perform the work at the shrine.

The Staff Members of the Shrine

During my fieldwork, twenty-three people worked regularly at the shrine; however, only six were permanent employees, five *kannushi* and Mr. Kumano, who was the person in charge of repairing and groundwork. Among the five *kannushi*, three were kin: the *guuji*, the *negi*, and the *gon negi*[16]. Others were Mr. Yamada and Mr. Kobayashi. Mr. Yamada came from a shrine family, and his father was an acquaintance of the *guuji*. Mr. Kobayashi was the only *kannushi* at the shrine who was not from a shrine family; he studied Shinto at the university and decided to become a *kannushi*.

At the shrine, there was still no permanent *miko*. *Miko* were paid daily with some exceptions, such as Mrs. Toshiba and Mrs. Murakami. *Miko* often brought their friends to work with them. For example, Mrs. Murakami brought her friend Mrs. Miyazaki, who lived in Joso City, but not in Oozaki town. Ms. Sakamoto also brought one of her school friends, Ms. Furuuchi, who lived in Tsukuba. Ms. Sakamoto was a high school student when she joined the shrine. She was from another city but said she had a long relationship with this shrine. Her mother longed for a daughter and conceived her soon after she prayed at the shrine. Therefore, since childhood, Ms. Sakamoto had visited the shrine regularly with her family to thank the HKN *kami*. One year, she applied to be a *miko* during the New Year festival, then continued working as a part-time *miko* afterwards. Among the young *miko*, only Ms. Murata lived in a neighbouring city and joined the shrine without being introduced by anyone. In addition to them, Ms. Michiko, the *gon-negi*'s wife, also worked and was listed alongside the *miko* in the shift chart.

There were two regular *goshuin* (*Goshuin* is a stamp that worshippers or visitors collect at a shrine or temple) writers, Mr. and Mrs. Hirota, a couple in their early eighties, who lived in a nearby city. After Mrs. Hirota retired from work, she was asked to help during the New Year festival and *akireitaisai*. Nevertheless, because *goshuin* became exceedingly popular, the couple was requested to work regularly on weekends, holidays and special events. For four or five years, they have taken turns working on weekends: Mrs. Hirota on Saturdays and

Mr. Hirota on Sundays. Mrs. Yamamoto also wrote *goshuin* for special events. She was the wife of Mr. Yamamoto, and the couple lived in Oozaki.

Three older women worked as cleaners. Mrs. Yoshida, Mrs. Honda, and Mrs. Uchida were all in their late sixties. Mrs. Yoshida was the *guuji*'s cousin, and before marriage, she lived just next to the shrine premises as a member of a *bunke* (branch family) of the *guuji* family. Then, she moved to a nearby city. After retiring from a company job, she began working at the shrine. Mrs. Honda was Mrs. Yoshida's cousin (mother's sister's daughter) and was introduced by her. They both worked twice a week. Mrs. Uchida was not related to the *guuji* family. She was recruited through the Silver Center[17]. She cleaned the garden and the surroundings of the shrine and also worked twice a week. Besides them, Mr. and Mrs. Nakayama also helped clean the shrine's grounds.

I have described the staff members of the shrine to this point. It is evident from the above that most of them were related to the *guuji* family or acquaintances of those who had worked at the shrine before. Merely two were from Oozaki, where the parishioners live, and the rest came from outside. In any case, most of them had a long-term relationship with the shrine. In this sense, they had some interpersonal connections and, as Ms. Sakamoto's story impressively suggests, felt connected to the shrine. I categorised them into three groups based on their relationships with the shrine.

Categorisation of Regular Staff

I categorise the staff members working in 2019 into three categories. (1) kin and relatives, (2) local community, and (3) acquaintances & others. Among the regular staff, 26% are kin and relatives, 9% are from the local community, and 65% are acquaintances & others (Figure 3).

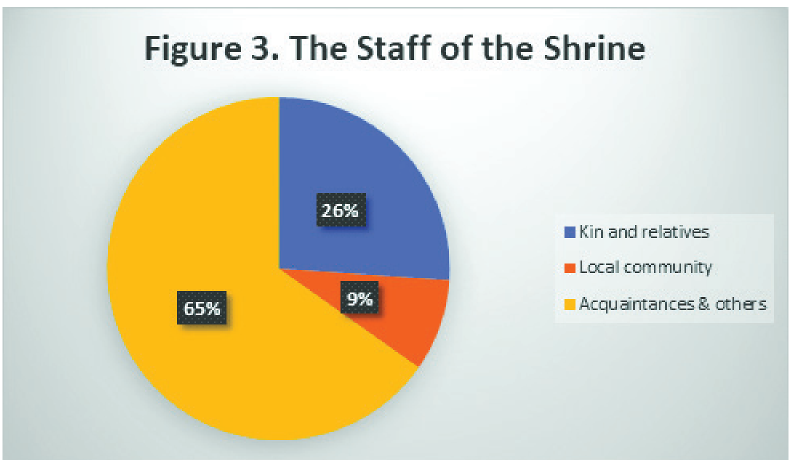

Figure 3. The staff of the shrine.

Source: created by the author.

(1) Kin and Relatives

As I wrote above, three of five *kannushi* are blood-related (the *guuji*, the *negi*, and the *gon negi*). *Gon negi*-san's wife Ms. Michiko, also works at the shrine. Mrs. Yoshida is the *guuji*'s cousin, and Mrs. Honda is her cousin. In the shrine, 26% (6 of 23) of the regular staff members are relatives. In addition, the *guuji*'s second son, his wife, their two daughters, and people from the branch of the *guuji* family come to help in the festivals. Further, people related to the *guuji*'s wife, such as her brother and his son, also come to help. In the past, the *guuji*'s younger sister and her husband came to help, but now they do not come any more due to their age.

(2) Local Community

As I explained, the HKN shrine is in Oozaki town of Joso City, so the people who live in Oozaki are the shrine's parishioners and are considered its local community. According to this definition, most of the staff members, including the relatives of the *guuji* are not from the local community. Among the staff members, only Mrs. Yamamoto and Mr. Yamamoto can be counted as part of the community. Only 9% (2 of 23) of the regular staff members are from the local community.

(3) Acquaintances & Others

Those who started working at the shrine through someone's introduction, such as people from the *guuji*'s previous company and friends of *kannushi* and *miko*, and people who come for work by seeing an advertisement or through the Silver Center, come into this category.

This categorisation indicates that while just a few regular staff members are from Oozaki community, two-thirds of the staff members do not have *ketsuen* or *chien* with the shrine. Obviously, this seems to support the statement "no community". However, as I explained in Figure 3, 15 of 23 members had known another staff member before they joined the shrine. In other words, most of the regular staff members have a relation (or *en*) with each other. They do not have just economic interests but feel they are helping their friends and the shrine since they were recruited through personal ties.

Recruitment Through Personal Ties

Kondo (1990) mentions that family-based companies in Shitamachi recruit staff through personal ties. A similar pattern can be observed at the shrine. As previously noted, many of the current staff members of the HKN shrine were recruited through personal ties. Even for the New Year Festival, the shrine's most crowded event, most of the temporary staff members were recruited in the same way. For instance, in 2019, other than two student *kannushi* from Kokugakuin University, the remaining *kannushi* who worked temporarily were acquaintances of the *guuji* or another permanent *kannushi*. One of them even brought his wife to work as a *miko*. Only a few of the *miko* came after seeing the advertisement. Most of them were introduced by someone already working at the shrine.

While working with them, I asked the regular *miko* how they were recruited and how long they had been working there. Two of them were sisters, and their father was a friend of the *negi*. They had been working there for three years and had also brought one of their distant cousins to work with them. Another *miko*, Ms. Haruka, was a granddaughter of the *guuji,* and had brought two friends of hers to work as *miko*. Another one, who looked older than the others, said she was a *shakaijin* (a person who finished school and is working). She was a friend of the *negi* and had been invited to help. Some other *miko* also came through similar connections.

I also asked *hojuunin* (people who restore the empty boxes of amulets) the same questions. These workers assisted in the *ofudaba* and helped set up and clean up the festival. Some were classmates of Mr. Kobayashi, while others were friends of the *negi*. Three people supervised the work in both the west and the east *ofudaba*. One of them was Mr. Hasegawa, who was from Oozaki; Mr. Kikuchi was the *guuji*'s wife's brother's son; and Mr. Nohara belonged to one of *guuji*'s *bunke* (branch families). These supervisors also tried to find more people to work as *hojuunin*. *Goshuin* writers were also recruited through personal connections. One of the four *goshuin* writers was from Oozaki, and she brought an acquaintance of hers to write *goshuin* with her. Additionally, Mrs. Yoshida and Mrs. Honda also called some friends to serve tea and lunch.

In this way, we can see that people who worked during the New Year festival came through personal ties. The same happens in events such as *akireitaisai* and *nagosai*[18]. This suggests that a temporary, heterogeneous group, consisting of kin, relatives, friends and friends' friends, seemed to substitute for the local community in supporting the shrine. Management changes resolved the shrine's financial crisis, while local community substitution through personal ties addressed the labour shortage.

The shrine could sustain itself in the modern world through long-term perseverance and continuous effects. However, the COVID-19 pandemic disturbed its social network and again threw its future into uncertainty. The following section will discuss how the pandemic created uncertainties and how, this time, a heterogeneous network of human and non-human actors helped sustain the shrine.

DISCONNECTION OF INTERPERSONAL NETWORK DUE TO THE PANDEMIC

As described above, the *guuji* family had long relied on their interpersonal network to sustain the shrine during events. On the first three days of the New Year, from the 1st to the 3rd of January, the shrine would typically be crowded with over 150,000 worshippers. To manage such a large crowd, the shrine administration needs additional staff. However, due to the pandemic, the shrine faced the challenge of gathering staff. Kin and the local community members could not come to help. They had to arrange staff through personal connections and advertisements. If we categorise the staff who worked during the New Year festival in 2019, 2020 and 2021 (as shown in Figure 4), we can see that in 2019, fifty-seven people worked during the New Year. Of these, forty-five people's names were listed on the shift roster. In addition to them, four or five women were there to prepare tea and lunch. Besides, *ujiko soudai* from each block also came to help on the 1st of January; therefore, I included them too. Among those forty-five people, there were three permanent and four part-time *kannushi*, six regular and fifteen short-term *miko*, and three regular and two short-term *goshuin* writers. Five people worked at the reception, seven were *hojuunin*, and three carried *dempyou* (application forms of *gokitou*) from reception to the *ofuda* assembling area. When broken down by category, kin and relatives made up 17%, the local community made up 17%, and acquaintances & others accounted for 66%.

In 2020, there were approximately sixty people. Twenty-four *miko* (seven regular *miko* and seventeen non-regular *miko*); eight *kannushi* (among them four were permanent *kannushi*); four *goshuin* writers (one short-term and three regulars). Other than them, five worked at the reception, and three carried application forms of *gokitou*. In 2020, kin and relatives made up 14%, the local community made up 19%, and acquaintances & others accounted for 67%.

In 2021, the older staff members were not called to avoid the risk of infection because of the pandemic. Only forty-six people worked, with thirty being *miko*. The breakdown was: kin and relatives 11%, local community 9%, acquaintances & others 80% (Figure 4).

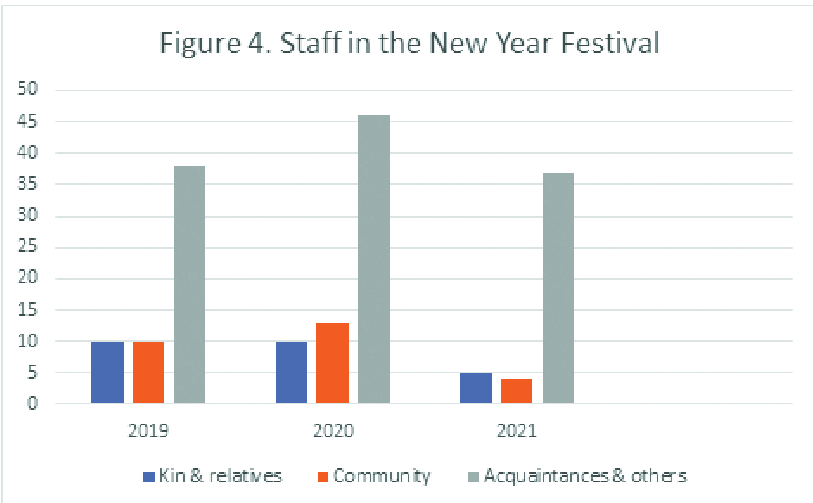

Figure 4. Number of staff members per category in the New Year festivals of 2019, 2020, and 2021.

Source: created by the author based on documents provided by the shrine.

As shown in Figure 4, more than 'kin and relatives' and 'local community', staff members in the 'acquaintances & others' category came to work at the shrine. They were arranged through personal ties (approximately 90%) and have been known by at least one of the staff members who has already worked at the shrine. A few people saw an advertisement and applied for work. Looking at staff numbers from 2019 to 2021, we will notice that the number of staff members has decreased due to the pandemic. Further, in 2019, 66%, in 2020, 67%, and in 2021, 80% of those who worked were 'acquaintances & others'. The older staff members were advised not to work; therefore, young amateur staff were in charge.

Not only the staff but *also the kou* group prayers decreased (Figure 5).

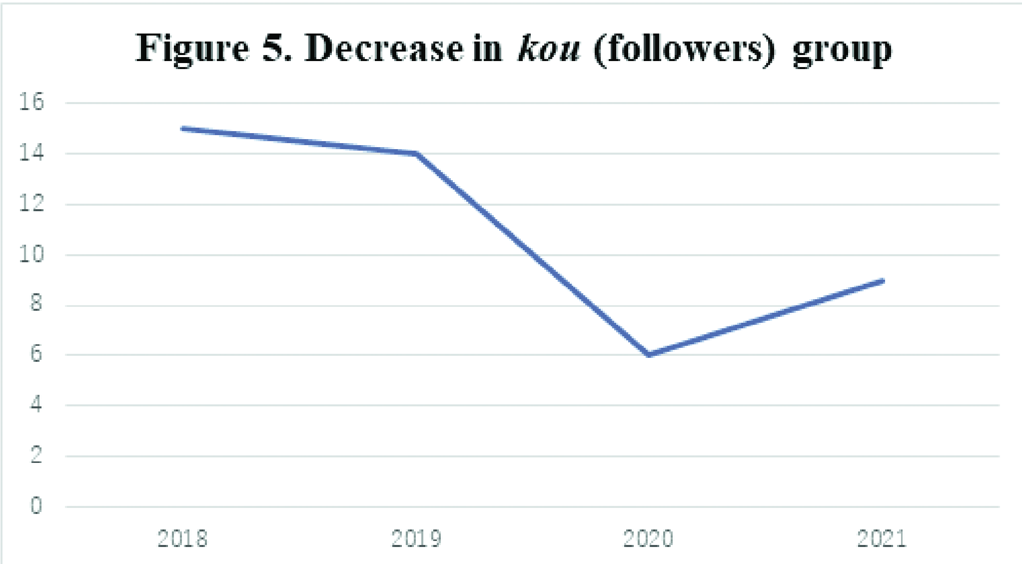

Figure 5. *Kou* groups from 2018 to 2021.

Source: based on data provided by the shrine.

Figure 5 shows that the number of *kou* groups also decreased. The pandemic not only disrupted the network inside but also outside. There were fewer *rotenshou* in the shrine precincts because they could not work during the COVID period. Many had to quit their jobs and had to seek alternative employment. Due to the fear of infection, elderly worshippers avoided going to shrines and temples to buy *omamori* and *ofuda*. When the pandemic disrupted the human network of the shrine, the organisers sought the cooperation of non-humans.

COOPERATION OF NON-HUMANS

To deal with the pandemic, the shrine tried to function with minimal human contact. In order to sustain ritual continuity and organisational stability, the shrine did not rely solely on human actors. Instead, it redistributed agency to non-human actors: objects, technologies and spatial arrangements. This shift from a primarily human network to a heterogeneous network of human and non-human reflects what Latour (2005) calls the reassembling of the social.

First, to reduce direct contact, some ritual practices were delegated to material and technological mediators. The shrine began to send amulets and *ofuda* by post and allowed worshippers to book *gokitou*'s appointments online. The amulets were displayed in cases outside the amulet reception area to avoid crowding near the reception. Electronic tablets were introduced so that *miko* could receive requests without directly speaking to worshippers. In this way, digital devices and postal services reduced face-to-face interactions, and they became active participants in keeping the shrine connected to worshippers. ANT argues that agency is distributed across both humans and non-humans, and here we can see clearly that objects and technologies acted on behalf of humans to sustain shrine operations during the crisis.

Furthermore, non-human actors shaped the behaviour and movement of worshippers, replacing human instruction. As shown in Figure 6, signboards and chains led the worshippers in a specific direction in the shrine precincts and controlled the flow of movement. Notices such as '*kannkeisha igai tachiirikinchi* (No entry except for authorised personnel)' prevented visitors from entering restricted areas.

Figure 6. Signboards and chains were leading the worshippers in the specified direction.

Source: taken by the author.

Inside the *haiden* (hall of worship), attendees sat in the assigned seat number, which they received when they applied for *gokitou*. Those slips made them sit in the assigned chair (Figure 7), without human supervision. These material objects ensured order and replaced the need for human guidance.

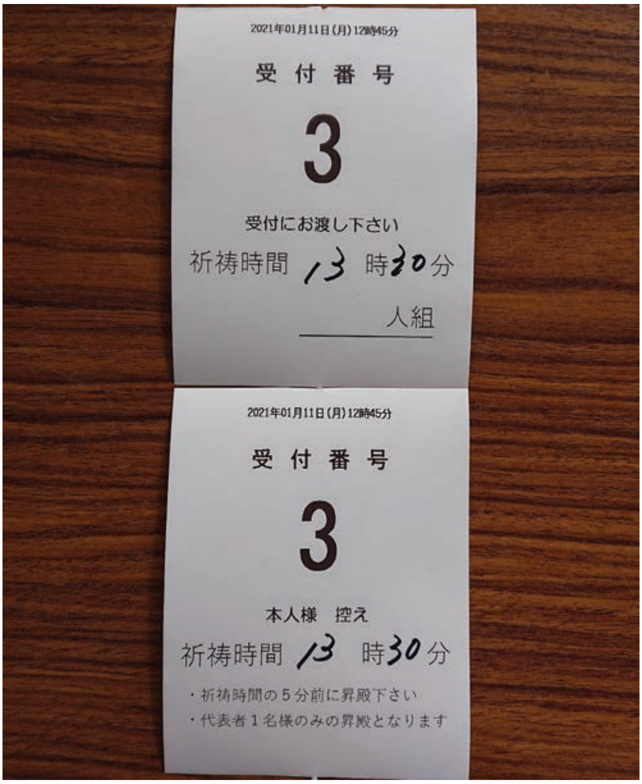

Figure 7. Paper slips[19].

Source: taken by the author.

The *kami*, a supernatural non-human being, acts in this network. According to the shrine's legends, he appeared before the villagers and asked them to enshrine him. In return, he will protect them from disease and misfortune. Even today, worshippers believe that the *kami* protects them from illness and misfortune. During my fieldwork, I have encountered several worshippers who visited the shrine to thank the *kami* after their wishes came true. During the pandemic, many prayed for protection, bought *omamori*, or requested *gokitou* because they believed the *kami* acted for them. In this sense, the *kami* continues to participate in shaping the lives of the shrine's human actors.

Furthermore, many visitors purchased *omamori* not only for protection but also for emotional reassurance. They act as mediators between the worshippers and the *kami*. *Omamori* make humans and non-humans act. With *omamori* people's cars also act properly, avoid accidents, and do not break easily. Sometimes, these *omamori* make humans act.

Figure 8. *Gakugyouseijyu omamori*.

Source: taken by the author.

A fellow Japanese researcher once told me that they do not buy *omamari* because of superstition. However, when they see *gakugyou jyoujyu omamori* (amulet for academic success) (Figure 8), it reminds them to study, and they study. It makes them act.

As this anecdote highlights, non-human actors can "make" humans act. They are not passive objects but active participants in daily life and religious practice. Thus, during the pandemic, when human interaction became limited, non-human actors emerged from the background and took on visible roles. Objects, devices, signs and sacred beings participated in maintaining the shrine's ritual practices. This association between human and non-human actors shows that the shrine did not function as a purely social organisation but as a heterogeneous network, as ANT suggests.

CONCLUSION

The HKN shrine has shown a remarkable degree of adaptability throughout its history. When its relationship with the local community weakened due to depopulation and urbanisation, the shrine organisers (the head priest's family) turned to interpersonal networks built on *en* (social ties) and created a substitute human network. When financial pressures mounted, they introduced managerial strategies to ensure self-sufficiency. They reached beyond their geographic area through marketing and broadened their base of worshippers. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic limited human interaction, even this interpersonal network became unstable. Elderly workers were no longer invited. Group worship and physical interaction were limited. Yet, the shrine found ways to continue its activities, this time by forming a heterogeneous network of human and non-human actors.

By applying Actor-Network Theory, this paper has demonstrated that the survival of the shrine was not maintained by humans alone. Instead, agency was shared among humans and non-humans. Signboards and chains guided worshippers in place of the staff. Tapes on the grounds were making them follow social distancing. Tablets and postal services reduced face-to-face communication. *Omamori* continued to connect worshippers to the shrine and the *kami*. The *kami* himself continued to act for worshippers, as they believed he would protect them during the crisis. In short, ritual continuity was achieved through a heterogeneous network.

The case of the HKN shrine shows that religious practice is not only maintained by the community or tradition. It is sustained by relationships between humans, objects, technologies and spiritual beings. ANT helps us to understand that the social life of the shrine is not constructed by humans alone but by a heterogeneous network in which both human and non-human agencies are diffused. Rather than collapsing in crisis, the shrine reorganised itself by forming new alliances and redistributing agency among available actors.

Ultimately, this case demonstrates that the future of rural shrines may not depend solely on the revival of local communities but on their ability to form flexible networks which include both human and non-human participants. In this sense, the HKN shrine shows that tradition is not static but continues through adaptation, negotiation and cooperation through a constantly shifting network.

NOTES

1 From 2019 to 2022, I conducted my fieldwork at this shrine. To protect its identity, I refer to it as the HKN shrine. Further, to protect the identities of my interlocutors, I have used pseudonyms for all of them.

2 The northern region of Japan.

3 Shrine maidens, young girls or women, assist the priest at shrines. In some shrines, *miko* perform *kagura* dance in rituals.

4 To protect the identity of the shrine, I refer to the enshrined deity as the HKN *kami*.

5 A *monzen machi* (temple town) is a town that flourishes around a temple. Since tourists and worshippers come to famous temples, many inns, restaurants and souvenir shops are built around them.

6 Narita Temple and Kasama Shrine are prominent pilgrimage destinations in northern Japan.

7 There are twenty-three types of *gokitou*, such as for traffic safety, household safety, bad luck removal, favourable directions, passing examinations, health and so on, related to daily life. The

price ranges from 3000 yen to 30000 yen. The content of the *gokitou* does not change based on the price.

8 A popular Japanese sweet resembles a pancake stuffed with red bean paste or custard.

9 The shrine hosts various events and festivals rooted in both the Shinto ritual calendar and its own traditions. Major events include:
(1) *Tsukinamisai*, held on the 13th of each month, is a morning prayer for the imperial family, country, parishioners and the region.
(2) *Gantansai* (New Year Festival), from December 31st to January 3rd, receives around 3,000 annual prayer applications (*gokitou*) and 150,000 worshippers.
(3) *Shunkisai* (Spring Festival), held on April 13th, featuring plant stalls and Japanese drum (*taiko*) performances dedicated to the *kami*.
(4) *Nagosai* (Summer Grand Purification), on June 30th, a mid-year cleansing of sins.
(5) *Kodomo Omikoshi* (Children's Portable Shrine), held on the fourth Sunday of July since 1993, involves children parading with an *omikoshi* to strengthen community ties.
(6) *Akireitaisai* (Annual Autumn Festival), on September 13th, is the shrine's most important festival, featuring offerings such as *karakuri tsunabi*, *shishimai*, and *karakasa mandou* performed by the preservation association (*Hozonkai*).
(7) *Kikkasai* (Chrysanthemum Flower Festival), from late October to late November, features floral displays arranged by the shrine's Chrysanthemum Association.
(8) *Kottoichi* (Antique Market), held on the third Sunday of each month, is the largest in Ibaraki Prefecture, featuring over ninety stalls in the shrine grounds.
All major shrine festivals, including *niiname-no-sai* (December 13th), are aligned with the 13th of the month, commemorating the *kami*'s appearance on the 13th of the lunar November (Uda et al. 2014: 147; Koga 2018: 29).

10 *Gantansai* (New Year Festival) and *akireitaisai* (Annual Autumn Festival) are the most significant festivals of the shrine. Both attract large crowds and require additional staffing.

11 *Tsukinamisai* has been held on the 13th of every month from 9 am to 9:30 am. This festival is to pray for the prosperity and well-being of the imperial family, country, parishioners and the region.

12 -san is an honorific suffix in Japanese, similar to "Mr." or "Ms." in English. It can be used for both males and females.

13 Negi is a position one rank below *guuji* (head priest). At the HKN shrine, the head priest's eldest son serves as a *negi*. The staff address him as *negi*-san.

14 *En* is originally a Buddhist term referring to indirect causal relationships or fateful bonds that cannot be altered by personal will. *Shaen* (company-related en) was coined at a time when lifetime employment was the norm in Japan. Ueno (2008) introduced the term *jyoen* (women's community), suggesting that women can choose their *en* (*erabu en*).

15 To protect the shrine's identity, I have also used a pseudonym for the town.

16 *Gon-negi* is a position one rank below *negi*. At the HKN shrine, the head priest's third son serves as a *gon-negi*. The staff address him as *gon-negi* san.

17 A municipality-run facility that introduces older people to work opportunities.

18 *Nagosai*, held on the 30th of June, is also known as *Nagosai no oharae*, *Nagoshi*, and *Minazuki no harae*. It is an important Shinto purification ritual. In ancient times, it was held in June and December at the imperial palace. It later became popular among the general public and is now practiced at shrines across Japan.

19 At the *gokitou* reception, this kind of paper slip was given to those worshippers who were supposed to enter the *haiden*.

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Uncertainty, Restrictions and Reinvented Weddings in Pandemic Hungary

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Abstract: Based on digital anthropological research this paper explores both the wedding planning process as experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, with its concomitant uncertainty and myriad restrictions, and the interpretations of tradition that accompanied it through the medium of specific examples. The discussion looks at how couples, in a period of liminality, attempted to organise weddings amidst changeable, unpredictable circumstances; how they used, interpreted and reinvented their own wedding traditions; and to what extent their plans and reinventions were characterised by free choice versus necessity. In conducting this research, I witnessed not mere people defined by restrictions and uncertainty, but agents who worked actively to mould their culture. Under quarantine, legislators strove primarily to ensure that weddings (without services) could proceed seamlessly in the legal, official sense and that everyone could, one might say, 'get their papers'. This legal-political will found itself in direct conflict with the very different interpretations of wedding and reception held by the people themselves and their various service providers, whose expectations went far beyond the issue of mere paperwork.

Keywords: interpreting and reinterpreting culture, tradition, ritual, commitment ceremony, marriage

INTRODUCTION: REGULATIONS AND UNCERTAIN PROSPECTS IN THE TIME OF PANDEMIC

This paper explores both the wedding planning process as experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, with its concomitant uncertainty and myriad restrictions, and the interpretations of tradition that accompanied it through the medium of specific examples. I will discuss how couples, in a period of liminality, attempted to organise weddings amidst changeable, unpredictable circumstances; how they used, interpreted and reinvented their own wedding traditions; and to what extent their plans and reinventions were characterised by free choice versus necessity. Although this issue is not the main focus of my study, it is essential for understanding the broader social context and my ethnography that, while marriage rates declined significantly in most countries during the pandemic (see Reynolds 2020; Wagner & Choi & Cohen 2020), in Hungary, despite these challenges, the number of marriages not only remained stable but actually increased. In Hungary, strong economic motivations (such as new loans for married people at a favourable interest rate) led couples to actively adapt and reinvent both the rituals and the meanings of the wedding, all with the clear aim of ensuring that their weddings could still take place despite the restrictions. This writing is based on anthropological research I conducted between 2020 and 2022: *Wedding Questionnaire* (N:1083)[1] published in February of 2020; *COVID Questionnaire* (N:490)[2] published in April of the same year; forty in-depth interviews conducted with brides in 2020 and the first half of 2021,[3] and online ethnographic investigation of Facebook wedding planning groups.[4]

In Hungary, as in other affected countries, the spring of 2020 – and later 2021 as well – witnessed the introduction of legal-political and various health measures and restrictions in response to the global pandemic. Starting on 11 March of that year, the first government decree was introduced, which restricted major events, including weddings (Government Decree 41/2020 (III.11)). Effective 16 March, a new government decree then prohibited such events altogether (Government Decree 46/2020 (III.16)). "Section 3: Participation in regular events involving music and dancing as defined under Government Decree 23/2011 (III.8) on the safety of music/dance events held in closed or open spaces (hereinafter: regular organised events involving music and dance) shall be prohibited. Section 4 (2): community religious services, civil weddings, and funerals shall not be regarded as organised events." Since family events, including weddings, did not fall under the definition of organised events, it was still possible to hold weddings both at church and as civil unions. Beginning on 28 March 2020, the next decree restricted leaving homes and limited the number of attendees permitted at civil weddings (Government Decree 71/2020 (III.27). Until 1 June, civil and church weddings could include only two witnesses and a minimal number of participants, regulated differently by different local governments.

Pandemic regulations found themselves in the crossfire of daily public discourse not only for their usual restrictive, prescriptive, prohibitive nature, but also for their volatility and changeability. My conversation partners and respondents to the second and third COVID-questionnaires, too, made frequent reference both to the instability they brought, and doubts as to their validity:

> *I still don't know exactly… in theory we can have the wedding, but not the reception, but the decree doesn't spell it out clearly.*[5]

> *Everything changed. Again, and again. First it was that me, my fiancé, and the witnesses would go to the town hall for a civil wedding – no processional, no candle-lighting, no family – followed by a small dinner with parents and siblings, which we first planned for a restaurant, then switched to having at home instead. So, we reorganised for that. Then, the new leniency came, so my fiancé and the (recently permitted) immediate family could opt for a civil wedding (without siblings, which would have made eleven of us, exceeding the ten-person maximum). Then came the option of a church wedding outdoors… and by the time we had organised that (invited the relatives, bought everything we needed to give us something at least as close to our dream wedding as we could come), that week, permission for indoor church weddings was granted. So, we had to organise all over again.* […] *Every week we had to organise differently, adjusting as we went, trying to get the best we could out of it.*[6]

Worse than the concrete regulations themselves was the uncertainty that accompanied them, and often, this would even put a temporary hold on organising efforts. Its effect was frequently to push those involved to suspend all decision-making that the planning and replanning of the event entailed. It was this vague, liminal, transient situation that brides amidst planning their weddings found most worrying. In my COVID questionnaire, to the question as to what caused them the greatest discomfort, 337 respondent brides indicated that it was the uncertainty in some form: "The uncertainty, which robbed the planning of its excitement and joy – we couldn't get into the wedding mood." "The uncertainty!! It was the worst." "The uncertainty. We don't know how much longer this situation will last. We don't know whether there will be a second wave. We don't know whether it will be better next year." "There's still no vaccine, and until there is, nothing is known for sure. So if we switch dates, when should we switch to? In short, we don't want a new date that we just have to cancel again. But the uncertainty is killing us."[7] At the same time, uncertainty left some room for hope. Both in online discourse, and in the responses to my second COVID questionnaire, it was expressed more than once that couples-to-be preferred to wait, hoping that the restrictions would sooner or later be relaxed or abandoned:

> *We still don't know what they will do or how they will do it. #DontSweatIt.*[8]

> *By mutual agreement, we are waiting until early June. At that point, we'll make a few calls to the required people in charge of local government / ecclesiastical ceremonies and ask if we can hold a wedding, and if so, whether there are any restrictions still in place. Perhaps the hardest thing is that everything is still so uncertain. We really hope that we can have our wedding according to our original plan. What's worse, though, is that a lot of our Italian friends won't be able to come, for understandable reasons – financial and otherwise. They're practically family to us!*[9]

As a bride-to-be living abroad put it shortly after the cancellation of the wedding she had planned to hold in Hungary in September, hope, doubt and uncertainty had gone hand-in-hand during the process; sometimes it was one, sometimes the other, and in the end, the event was postponed for a year:

> *What unfolds inside you is frustration, defiance (better a year later but at least what we wanted – I am not willing to give up on my ideas in an effort to adjust) and, finally, hope, though hand-in-hand with the doubts you now take for granted.*[10]

Wedding planners, beyond noticing and recognising circumstances and uncertainties arising during the pandemic that might potentially affect their weddings, were not merely passive observers – "sufferers" – of the events that unfolded. Rather, they actively sought information, interpreting and reinterpreting news items as they emerged and, at the same time, the meanings of the traditional and modern wedding, as well. As a result, the rituals and screenplays by which wedding receptions were conducted were also rethought and, occasionally, reinvented.

According to the classic approach of economic anthropology, one has the greatest need for intensive information-fielding where coming to a decision among alternative scenarios proves problematic, producing conflict (see Howard & Ortiz 1971; or the earlier Carter & Meredith & Shackle 1954), and/or where those involved are placed in entirely novel decision-making situations vis-à-vis their original plans and choices (again, see Howard & Ortiz 1971). In the present situation, such eventualities were rendered still more confounding by the uncertainty related to temporary loss of ontological validity on the part of some practices, traditions and understandings. Those facing decisions found their mental toolkits lacking alternatives that were appealing, comfortable and secure, but strove to plan well and make good choices all the same. Many observers described the altered, temporary situations experienced during the pandemic in terms of the concept of "liminality" as put forward by Victor Turner or even Arnold van Gennep, a state of being characterised by the qualities of ambiguity, uncertainty, isolation and social distance (see Bell 2021; see also Assadourian 2020). Thus, the pandemic period could in retrospect be viewed either as a fleeting socio-cultural "liminal" or "liminoid" state marked by alternative structures and rules, or alternately, as a collective transition in which participants at once honed and called into doubt structures that once featured prominently in their lives. Then, after the pandemic, people either returned to their (former or changed/altered) worlds, or, in some cases, sought to radically transform them (see Turner 1969). As we saw above, the people, too, both precisely sensed and clearly understood the liminality and uncertainty the pandemic entailed.

Clear from both online discourses and actively solicited information was that people planning their weddings during this period did not have the benefit of a consensus built on stable foundations. One novel observation was that fundamentally, modern wedding traditions are, irrespective of the pandemic, many and various; they are themselves uncertain rituals with uncertain meanings. Within this contemporary, non-singular understanding, an element frequently reflected upon was that, ultimately, even individual traditions can bear multiple interpretations. "Your wedding is when you hold a ceremony where everyone you want comes and then celebrates together afterward. Because this means different things to different people, all sorts of things are possible."[11] "The custom is different in every region, village, and family. It's the customs and traditions of the given place or family that dominate."[12] The idea that contemporary communities sometimes imbue traditions with multiple meanings was not an entirely new one. Social scientists had previously noted how individuals, as they became cognizant of convictions outside the domain of their own knowledge, beliefs and worldview, could be prompted to reflect on the traditions with which they are familiar, holding the process to constitute a product of modernisation and/or accessory to social change (see Thompson 1995: 93, 131).

Identifiable alongside plurality and the active use of relativist narrative strategies/ideologies, however, were various attempts at absolutism, primarily in cases where, in relation to some specific question (the "first dance", the Hungarian bridal dance, the white dress, the identities of witnesses, the "old, new, blue" tradition), my partners in conversation/debate proved curious regarding the validity of "tradition" and its central, "true" meaning and consequently argued in favour of some particular, overriding interpretation. British sociologists Julia Carter and Simon Duncan, in their examination of contemporary British weddings, stress precisely the nature of the wedding tradition – a "highly significant concept" – as an "organising system" toward the regulation and determination of individual behaviour that can at times include a governing set of contested meanings. First and foremost, they emphasized that systems, structures, relationships and regulatory traditions that directly regulate marriages and marriage ceremonies have, over time, been pushed into the background, and the institution of marriage and the ritual have never been so free and devoid of constraints. However, there are also different, "non-declining" traditions, partly inherited from the previous generation, known as "meaning-constitutive traditions",[13] which are still active. Carter and Duncan, in accordance with Bourdieu's concept of the "habitus", suggest that even in contemporary societies, individuals possess values and interpretive templates that act to shape their practices (Carter & Duncan 2017). The pair go on to describe the ways in which traditions are interpreted and adapted in terms of Claude Lévi-Strauss's concept of 'bricolage', a process by which norms and values are adapted toward new purposes and new rules are essentially validated via the ones inherited from previous generations (Carter & Duncan 2017, 2018: 180–195). Based on this concept, the authors then demonstrate that despite their individualised, individualistic intentions – their attempts to construct otherness – British weddings had, by virtue of their normative nature, reinvented the same old conformist, normative, traditional event (Carter & Duncan 2018). The same conclusion was reached by Katrina Kimport, who claimed that the LGBTQ weddings of 2000s Los Angeles, despite their actual otherness, had also reinvented the symbolism of the traditional, heteronormative wedding ceremony. At the same time, Kimport also noticed that the subjective opinions of those involved differed significantly from her own interpretation as an external researcher (Kimport 2012: 894). In fact, we know from others that, frequently, activists are precisely "fighting" at both the individual and societal levels for a conception of the modern wedding that is radically different from traditional social practices (and the outsider interpretations of them), and for the alternative norms and values this requires (e.g. equal rights, recognition, see Cleuziou & McBrien 2021).

COLLECTING AND PRODUCING INFORMATION DURING A PANDEMIC

The government's announcement of 14 May 2020 (starting 1 June, weddings would again be permitted, subject to appropriate precautions, including 1.5–metre distancing) was preceded by a great deal of social activity and resistance. The membership of Facebook wedding planning groups – chiefly brides-to-be and professional wedding planners – monitored and sought to understand centrally and locally issued pandemic measures, government edicts, press releases, parliamentary broadcasts, local rules and restrictions put out by city governments, and the reflections on all of the above on the part of the media such as affected wedding planning in general on a continuous basis. Among the groups' moderators, professional planners created 'one-stop posts' of continuously updated content, regularly communicating the latest information – including, typically, the general and special rules issued by local governments – and deleting expired regulations and other items that no longer applied. Also expressed each day were several dozen individual questions and dilemmas. Beginning in the first weeks of March, there began to surface a series of worried – sometimes almost panicked – voices reflecting on the international situation. This was followed by the appearance of the virus itself and its reverberations through the Hungarian media: "What about people's weddings, what will we do if there are restrictions"; "what will happen with the receptions people have been planning for years"; "what about my childhood dreams?" people asked over and over again, as did various wedding service providers. Then, when the Hungarian government, effective 11 March, limited the number of participants at weddings and other events to one hundred, the general agitation, accompanied by much discussion and guesswork regarding the rethinking of wedding sizes, grew palpable. Most of the weddings planned for the 2020s were not yet affected by these initial restrictions. Though of those responding to my April/May 2020 COVID questionnaire, 65% had been expecting fewer than 100 guests anyway, a smaller group did find their plans in jeopardy: 33.3% of respondents had been planning events with between 100 and 200 guests and something under 2%, big weddings with more than 200 attendees.[14] It was apparent from the responses that people's fears went beyond mere worry at the hundred-guest restriction. "Will weddings limited to a hundred people even work at their original locations"; "what are the venues saying about this", or "what's the situation with church weddings?" (for a long time, during the first wave, there was no official stance on this subject). These were the first and most important questions on the minds of brides-to-be and wedding service providers alike.

Some wedding-related companies, including especially the *Federation of Wedding Service Providers*, consulted decision-makers and enforcers (specifically, the government-instituted *Operational Corps Responsible for the Containment of the Coronavirus Epidemic*) on a continuous basis, publishing up-to-date information in online groups and blogs and on various sites. When in March of 2020, at the time the central government restricted weddings to one hundred participants, local governments, too, began limiting the size of civil weddings, chat groups were flooded with news items in this regard: "in Nyíregyháza [*Eastern Hungary*] that's what the ordinance says [...] Because the prohibition affects events involving the Registrar, including marriages, the Mayor's Office has contacted all couples applying for weddings to be held within the next fifteen days. Couples have been asked to say their "I dos" in the presence of at most twelve immediate family members or, alternately, to postpone their events to a later date [...]";[15] "I don't know if anyone's affected by Galgamácsa

[*Northern Hungary*]. Here, people usually hold their events at the Community Centre, but that has closed its doors definitively for the unforeseeable future; no minimum party size; nothing". "I spoke with the registrar of Óbuda, Third District of Budapest [capital of Hungary], and for the time being, all is as usual with no official restrictions. […]"[16] etc.

In one online wedding planning group at the outbreak of the pandemic, the Prime Minister's 16 March 2020 proclamation of a state of emergency, the news of press organs called upon to issue public information, and decrees that put all of the above in writing (excerpts from Hungarian Bulletin ['Magyar Közlöny'] with official infographics) were published and republished innumerable times. "Section 3: Participation in regular events involving music and dancing as defined under Government Decree 23/2011 (III.8) on the safety of music/dance events held in closed or open spaces (hereinafter: regular organised events involving music and dance) shall be prohibited." "Section 4 (2): community religious services, civil weddings, and funerals shall not be regarded as organised events." Group members strove to interpret, whether as lay people or with the involvement of lawyers, both the ambiguously worded decrees, and the concepts (like 'event') that featured in them. Most relevant to the present study was the variously discussed question of the meanings of words like *házasságkötés* (literally 'wedding/tying/binding in marriage'): was it limited in scope to the civil procedure or did it pertain to the reception as well? What was it exactly that COVID-19 was forcing people to give up?

> Bride-to-be: *Since section 4d of the previous Government Decree is no longer valid, it makes no difference how many people I will / would like to have at my wedding. For me, it's hard to interpret the part of the new rule that doesn't classify a civil wedding as an event. Should I understand a civil wedding to include only the ceremony or can I have the reception afterwards as well?*
> Wedding service provider: *A civil wedding is a civil wedding. I dos, signatures, and that's it. It is not a party. You can't have a party.*
> Bride-to-be: *Thank you for the response! I'll have to wait until this is repealed, then, because to me, a wedding isn't just signing papers, but a whole lot more!*[17]

Other aspects of the event placed under the microscope as a result of the pandemic included both the relevant concepts in national law and public life, and their "imaginative" and "evocative" dimensions – the various influences on mood, emotion and mentality that evoke the notion of a wedding on the part of those involved (see Meyer & Girke et al. 2016). One example of this occurred in April of 2020, when a group of wedding photographers and video service providers were excluded from wedding work under ever-tightening restrictions (e.g. weekend quarantines). Though no specific regulation barring the participation of such figures had been issued, the matter emerged regardless in relation to a slate of concrete questions submitted by service provider legislative and enforcement representatives at various levels (local governments, the *Operational Corps*, doctors' offices, etc.). In this specific instance, wedding service providers (wedding planners, the *Federation of Wedding Service Providers,* photographers, video service providers) crafted an open letter to ask about restrictions on video and photographic work and whether these applied to participation in civil ceremonies. The letter also aimed to discover whether, under quarantine, such participants were permitted to engage in creative photography in out-of-doors locations outside the mayor's office. The response to both questions was negative: under quarantine, permission to leave one's private home/domicile was granted only in extraordinary circumstances. According to the relevant paragraph of Section 4 of the applicable government decree, such extraordinary circumstances included weddings, but only concerning the immediate family (see Government Decree 71/2020 (III.27)). Photographers could not participate in the ceremony, a restriction that applied equally to caterers, and wedding planners. This meant a loss of income for providers, while also threatening consumers with a loss of opportunity for capturing those precious moments.

Thus, the everyday legal/official and personal/emotional meanings stood in visible confrontation with each other, rendering the differences and tensions between them all too obvious. While it turned out, for example, that a legally valid marriage required the presence of only a registrar, the couple-to-be and two witnesses, from an emotional perspective, this barebones formality of a ceremony could not always be regarded as an actual wedding. While legal commentators held that "there [was] no reason, to quote the Operational Corps, that a wedding should be photographed or filmed",[18] the happy couples themselves regarded such documentation – *visual memories* (as an instructor for the *Bridal Academy* referred to the practice) – as an integral part of the ceremony: "It preserves one of the most important days of your life, one I'd like to look back on and show to others. Why should I have to give that up?!"[19] Another concept to be called into question was that of the immediate family, as the definition did not necessarily apply to household members only. Who, then, did it cover? Who could be chosen as a witness? Did it have to be an immediate relative? And so on.

Also subjects of active discourse were the government's press conferences of 29 and 30 April 2020, the latter held in clarification of the former, as well as the issue of the 96th edition of Hungarian Bulletin with all its latest rules: some more, some less restrictive (see Hungarian Bulletin 2020). The first of the press conferences featured the announcement by government spokespersons of a nationwide prohibition on gatherings of over 500 people and of the continued applicability of "the previous restrictions on funerals, weddings, and religious services". The announcement was followed by public guesswork regarding the permissibility of weddings of fewer than 500 participants and continued epistemological discussion of the concept of the wedding itself. What the public was attempting to comprehend was whether legislators and enforcement bodies understood the restrictions to apply to civil or church weddings and whether they extended beyond the ceremonies themselves to receptions and post-wedding festivities. Later, in April of 2020, the Operational Corps clarified their intent, indicating that until repealed, the measure would prohibit any event of any kind involving more than 500 people: civil and church weddings would be permitted, but receptions would not. “So, I mean, these concepts are chaotic, you know. Civil ceremony, wedding, wedding festivities. Of these, only the first two are named in the decree, both being permitted in rural areas. So what’s the deal?”[20] “Yesterday we were all happy; today I’m back to being upset.”[21] “I was as disappointed as others. We have no way of knowing what’s coming down the line. Our date is set for 28 August. So we’ll have to wait until the week of 18 August to find out whether we can have the whole event or not. In other words, we’ll be in stitches until then as to whether we can have it two weeks after the fact or not, making our guests wait to find out.” “If a restaurant can open and have sixty people in its outdoor section, that’s ok, but a wedding with sixty guests can’t occupy that same space?”[22]

When, starting in May of 2020, it became possible to plan and hold weddings and wedding festivities again, the word in the Hungarian Bulletin was that, with the exception of Budapest, family events of less than 200 participants – including weddings with receptions – would be permitted everywhere in Hungary from 1 June onward. These temporary liberties were rendered uncertain again in September of 2020, during the upsurge of the second wave of the pandemic, as restrictions on entering and leaving the country (and an 11:00 p.m. curfew on event participation) were reintroduced. For the most part, this new situation jeopardised the time frames and screenplays of “traditional” weddings, those affected seeking primarily to discover what could (be) fit into such narrow time constraints and how previous plans could be changed or shortened to centre on what was truly essential in order to accommodate. Also of interest to both brides-to-be and service providers was the issue of how flexibly the various wedding venues and hotels would be handling the time limitations that the new rules prescribed. As successive waves of the pandemic unfolded, people again and again found themselves faced with new problems and dilemmas, including the closing of facilities aimed at slowing the disease’s spread, various periods of quarantine and rules applicable to social distancing.

TRADITION AS A FRAMEWORK FOR INTERPRETATION: WEDDING TRADITIONS IN THE TIME OF THE PANDEMIC

In the following, the concepts and notions of old-new, traditional, or modern themes will be relevant to us primarily in the light of internal, emic interpretations, norms and ideologies. I interpret the distinction between modern and traditional as discursive constructions, understanding tradition not as an externally limiting, coercive force, but rather as an internally enabling meaning-constitutive framework. As early as the 1980s, Eugenia Shanklin showed by examples how people native to a given culture recalculate, rework and reinterpret the cultural elements they use, for the purpose of achieving their economic and political rights and privileges (Shanklin 1981). According to Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin, tradition, as a model of the past, determines the interpretations of present traditions, a common interpretive practice: "doing something only because it is traditional means reinterpreting and thus changing tradition" (see Handler & Linnekin 1984: 281). Indeed, change, appropriation is an interpretive process that creates a rhetorical construction between the past, tradition, and the present, indicating the active, political processes of creating historical meaning (Antonnen 2005: 106).

During the period under study, intended brides not only actively sought information regarding restrictive rules and limits, but also strove to plumb the depths of contemporary wedding fashion and tradition. The users of pandemic-time websites frequently inquired as to contemporary practices in relation to marriage, weddings, civil ceremonies and wedding festivities (rural, urban, traditional and modern) and their various meanings. In the meantime, there also repeatedly arose issues of general and special wedding-related norms, regulations, traditions, fashions and expectations, and of whether and how these were manifested over the course of the pandemic. Brides-to-be were particularly interested in what rules, guidelines, traditions and ideas (e.g., church weddings, white dresses, lengthy guest lists, catered festivities, etc.) there were out there to choose from, who upheld them to what extent, and – most of all – why and in virtue of what this was done.

> Bride-to-be 1: *First, I'd like to ask who is supposed to be whose witness? What's the tradition, who respects it, and how much? I'm not really clear on what the custom is.* [...]
> Bride-to-be 2: *For the bride, it's her godfather. For the groom it can be either his godmother, or godfather!* ☺
> Bride-to-be 3: *The tradition says your godparents. My fiancé will be having his godfather. For me it'll be my cousin.*

> Bride-to-be 4: *I think you can ask whoever you like. We're not having our godparents as witnesses either. I'm going to be having my younger brother play the part and my fiancé is having his uncle. Choose someone you're close to.* [...]
> Bride-to-be 5: *Our parents made a fuss about making the traditional choice, too, until it turned out that the custom was different on the two opposite sides of the country. In the end, we gave in to pressure, but when we asked our chosen witnesses, neither of them was jumping for joy. It was just our parents who made such a big deal about it. In retrospect, we probably should have been pushier about what we wanted.*[23]

The individual plural and normative-regulative definitions and redefinitions of marriage – pre-or during-COVID vs. post-COVID, old vs. new, modern vs. traditional – proved one of the most relevant and important areas of inquiry examined by my project. Accordingly, a thorough evaluation of the meaning and validity of tradition formed an essential part of both the individual wedding planning and replanning processes. Other important parts included the transformation of wedding services and legislation aimed at regulating and, in part, restricting weddings and wedding festivities.

As new restrictions continued to emerge, partners-to-be and, in part, their families and friends, in concert with various wedding industry actors, all strove to adjust traditional and modern wedding practices to meet the changing rules, while also satisfying the wants and needs of their own society. They began picking and choosing from a variety of customs and rituals – old and new, traditional and modern, Hungarian and foreign – whose new internal meanings, traditional and modern, merit examination here.

One activity of particular importance to the planning and replanning process, it turns out, was the identification and consideration of the ceremony's various traditional and modern elements. As my first (February/March 2020) Wedding Questionnaire revealed, both a person's attitude toward traditional and/or modern wedding customs, and the value preferences he/she assigned to each were important factors during the planning process. 80% of respondents were considering a traditional wedding and 41.8% a modern one (29.2% a mixture of the two, 12.9% an exclusively modern, and 41.8% an exclusively traditional one).[24]

At the individual, everyday level, people's understandings of tradition and modernity were found to be infused with individual experiences, knowledge gleaned from sources of greater than regional or local reach, such as the media and online forums, and the musings of family members, relatives and friends (cf. Bourdieu's concept of the habitus, Bourdieu 1977; or the nature of contemporary meaning-constitutive tradition, Gross 2005: 296). The question is: what do tradition and modernity actually mean in the context of a wedding?

One common denominator within the broad range of interpretations arose in the tendency to see a contrast between urban and rural weddings, a phenomenon that included the distinction between modern and traditional; though there were some who regarded both rural and urban as traditional enough, seeing the difference rather in the puritan simplicity of the urban ceremony versus the *big fat* character of the traditional country wedding, dominated and supervised by immediate and extended family. "No folk customs, but nothing crazy either: a short, urban ceremony + dinner (NO country wedding music and WITHOUT the folksy bridal dance)" (16 February 2020, Budapest).

Placed into the category of traditional were primarily customs – old-fashioned or held to be – that were/are present in both rural and urban weddings: the best man's visit to the bride's parents, the bride's farewell, the bridal dance, the candlelight waltz, the coin toss, the kidnapping of the bride, the best man's speech, the street dancing, the escorting of guests, live music (brass bands and wind ensembles, traditional wedding and folk music), the groom's black suit and bride's white dress, etc. Among traditional wedding customs, 'folk costumes' were mentioned by Wedding Questionnaire respondents only six times out of 749. Church and urban civil ceremonies were both associated with the traditional wedding, their simplicity and puritan quality being held as the true essence of the wedding itself. "A simple church wedding, then a cheerful lunch/dinner with the immediate family. The ceremony should be a symbol without pretensions: a rite, and not some swanky, superficial show of pomp and circumstance."[25]

Traditional customs were sometimes regarded as negative, that is, as either backward, wasteful, unnecessary, or distant from respondents' own tastes and expectations – "What comes to mind when I think of a traditional Hungarian wedding today are things like the best man getting drunk and embarrassing himself, and the bride's being forced to do that dance with everyone"[26] – or as positive, that is, as normal, ideal, expected, customary, or perfectly fine: "The best man should escort me from my parents' place to the church accompanied by a band. This should be followed by a church wedding, with the civil ceremony afterwards on the same day. My father should escort me to the altar with my godfather as witness. There should be flower girls, traditional food, and a coin-tossing ceremony, and I should wear something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue. BAND + best man. No master of ceremonies."[27]

The following interview excerpt provides an example of how customs and traditions (as old, obsolete things) were rejected by a couple-to-be who found them fundamentally distasteful, and though they believed their guests expected to see them (in particular, the more comedic, playful elements), they stuck firmly to their decision not to have them:

> *Like for other people, for us the problem with tradition and the all-traditional wedding was that we just don't like the customs that come with them.* [...] *And so we agreed that, fine, we'd have a wedding, but we'd have it without them. Obviously, anyone who's bothered by this simply won't come.* [...][28]

The category of modern also included a variety of things: elements that have entered the repertoire only recently (after-the-fact repetitions of vows, MCs, sundry new services, new ceremony types, themed weddings), new titles, new service providers (e.g. DJs, wedding directors), new foods, new catering solutions, and new locations (outdoor weddings, forest weddings, barn weddings, etc.)). At the same time, the concept of modern also meant the obsolescence or abandonment of elements seen as traditional. To my mind, an important common thread where modern weddings were contrasted with traditional ones was the phenomenon of individualisation: the manifestation of a couple's own ideas and wishes. Here, as a counterpoint to the traditional wedding's rigid structure, which is set out and overseen by family, community and society, respondents emphasised the injection of freedom and flexibility: "What defines the modern wedding] is that the whole thing goes the way I planned it, and no outsider, family member, etc. has any say in it."[29] Other defining marks of the modern wedding/reception, ones that come up with equal frequency, include the shorter guest list, in which friends are overrepresented and distant relatives play an increasingly minor role, and the replacement of the traditional Hungarian wedding feast or other large, ostentatious reception with eating and dancing in favour of a smaller dinner with family and friends: "A small family dinner with a few friends. [...] No banquet, and no traditional bridal dance at midnight".[30] "A civil ceremony, the immediate family, and a dinner in place of the traditional feast. These days it's unusual not to have a huge reception."[31]

SCRIPTS OF RITUALISATION: ORIGINAL AND REPLANNED

During the pandemic, both couples-to-be and wedding service providers created new types of ceremonies featuring new rituals in place of the ones public health restrictions had placed temporarily out of reach. People in the process of planning their weddings – with particular reference to women – described weddings and wedding receptions prior to and during the pandemic in terms of traditions, customs, practices and norms (old and new) on the one hand; and sameness vs. differentness, individuality, exceptionality, etc. on the other. These expressions can easily be sorted into the ethical and scientific analytical categories of old normal, old abnormal, new COVID normal, not wholly new normal, new abnormal, and not wholly new abnormal. Respondents tried to "hammer together" or reforge their own ideas to suit the new legal and economic structures and contexts by using wedding elements (rites, norms, ideologies, events) known, identified, or recognised as modern or traditional as either models, or "anti-models" in an emic register. What I will examine here is how those in question, in planning their weddings, strove to "make them distinct" – traditional, modern, local, regional, urban, rural, individual – or, alternately, "indistinct" – to construct sameness by discursive means.[32] In crafting their events, people, reflecting on both the critical discourse surrounding the contemporary wedding and the popularity of the wedding in general, were primarily cognizant, individually and as a community, of the plurality of rites, practices and related ideologies – in other words, that there was not one local, regional, religious, ethnic, national, urban, or rural wedding tradition, but many, none of which were mandatory.

Of those responding to my COVID questionnaire during the COVID crisis, a 57% majority of individuals planning their weddings already had some sort of coherent idea of what the event would look like – of their *dream wedding* – prior to meeting the person they were engaged to marry. At the same time, 33.8% admitted to having no idea at all. Amply represented among these dreams and preferences were both traditional and modern ideas, including big, ostentatious weddings, traditional banquets with friends and family, conventional urban and rural weddings with receptions, weddings held outdoors close to nature, and weddings with immediate family or even no guests at all: "A huge, traditional wedding with family, a real Hungarian wedding feast"; "A folk wedding"; "Traditional with an outdoor ceremony"; "A traditional wedding with all the extended family"; "It shouldn't be traditional". For 67.3% of respondents, these prior preferences – "A wedding for two"; "an enormous wedding ☺"; "a big wedding with a white dress and escort from my parents' house"; "a gorgeous/long / snow-white/etc. wedding dress" – would make their way into the first iteration of their wedding plans. For 32.4%, prior conceptions took backstage and defined neither the planning and organisational processes, nor the actual wedding.

A majority of people planning their weddings during COVID did so in possession of prior plans and concrete event librettos. A smaller percentage of COVID weddings were originally planned as two-day events. 8.4% had planned for a small civil ceremony on one day, with a church wedding and reception/feast to be held the day after; 4.1% a separate civil wedding, followed the next day by a larger ceremony and reception/feast led by a wedding director; 2.7% a separate civil service and feast, the latter including both a church wedding and a ceremony led by a wedding director; and 1% a small, separate civil ceremony and next-day wedding feast without marriage rites. Most people originally hoped to celebrate on one day only: 40.3% planned to hold their civil wedding, church wedding, and reception/feast; 34.2% their civil wedding and reception/feast; and 6.5% their civil wedding and intimate dinner on the same day.

Of respondents to my COVID questionnaire, 38.4% (187 out of 487 respondents) had already worked out an order of events – a screenplay or libretto – for their wedding (its first, pre-COVID version), while 39.5% (175 respondents) had their order of events partially worked out. For 13.6% (66 respondents), no order of events had yet been developed, while 11.9% (58 individuals) had not even conceived of creating one – they had not been planning on any complex schedule of rites. When asked to do so, several brides-to-be even provided me with their original wedding plans, i.e. the ones that reflected the legal, social and economic order prior to the COVID restrictions and prohibitions, including both rural and urban events:

> Example 1. *In the morning, preparations; at 1:00, greet guests on site without the bride; at 2:00, best man fetches the bride from her parents' house, followed by a lunch, the farewell to the parents, and procession to the site of the wedding; at 5:00, civil ceremony, followed by photography and procession back to the wedding site; standing receptions, then the married couple's opening dance, dance with the in-laws, then a party. At 9:00 or 10:00, dinner; at 1:00 a.m. cake cutting and new wife's dance (red dress); food all night and party until dawn; in the morning, cleanup and left-overs party with close friends and family.*[33]

> Example 2. *At 4:30, church ceremony, followed by savoury snacks; in the evening, dinner; in one section of the hall there would have been folk music for our friends with dance instruction; otherwise, the guests would have had recorded music to dance to. We didn't want the usual procession from my parents' house or anything like that, nor did I want the traditional bridal dance. Neither of us was interested in a traditional wedding cake, or more than just a few party games. The idea was just to party until dawn.*[34]

Though at first glance, these wedding programmes might all appear quite similar in that they all feature a more-or-less predictable number of elements that are varied and repeated, under the surface one finds numerous differences. If we look closer, we see that the similar elements that appear in them often play out in different orders. Additionally, the wedding elements in question are sometimes interpreted in plural-individual ways. The post-ceremony red dress, for example, can be and is frequently regarded as a modern or a traditional custom, the candlelight waltz as a local or a national ritual, etc. The biggest differences arise with individual preferences related to the wedding ceremony itself. Civil weddings, repetitions of vows, and church weddings can be held as public or private rites; they can form part of the entire event or be held separately. There are also differences in the sequence of customs, events and rituals, as in whether the civil or the church wedding takes place first, the time for photography, creative or otherwise, and the number of days festivities last. One also finds various regional, social, cultural and economic differences. Regional differences include, for example, those between country and city: the bridal farewell and escort, the coin toss, the bridal dance, or the absence of these. Economic differences are most visible in relation to the choice of foods (fine dining, barbecue, hamburgers, multiple courses, traditional meals, stuffed cabbage, etc.) and the decision to include a church wedding or not. A good many of the wedding programmes included genuine, individual, personal touches or personal performances to colour the fixed or semi-fixed order of events (films, photo exhibitions, guest books, personal memorabilia, memorials to deceased relatives). Though fundamentally, the order of events of the rural, village wedding is seen as *more traditional* and the urban ones more modern, elements labelled as traditional, modern, local, or Western cropped up in the celebratory librettos of urban and rural weddings alike.

How did weddings and wedding programmes change during the COVID period? For the duration of the crisis, wedding planners either sought out new and innovative ways of conducting festivities or identified and leveraged such unusual practices as had been in use before the pandemic hit. Under quarantine, where future partners did not immediately choose to postpone or wait it out – as was, in fact, the strategy of most – individual rites (the civil wedding, the church wedding, and the reception/feast) were held separately (25.6% had their civil wedding on its original date and 5.8% at a prior time). So that a wedding feast held separately from the civil wedding would feel like a "real" celebration, a true rite, 18.1% asked a *wedding celebrant* to conduct a repeat civil ceremony (celebrated with a *commitment ceremony*), 13.4% postponed the church wedding along with the feast, and 2.5% added a church wedding to the original plan. A commitment ceremony is a non-legally binding ceremony. Following contemporary wedding fashion, this new ceremony tries to present biographical, personal aspects of the couple's relationship, but also, according to traditional norms, tries to perform and mime the official civil wedding. During the COVID period, I observed two different strategies employed in replanning: one was a rejection of tradition, along with related innovations; the other was replanning motivated precisely with reference to norms and traditions. In such cases, traditions that were lifted up, reinterpreted and adapted tended to be seen as positive, i.e., as preferences, norms and adapted models. Sometimes both strategies might be applied to a single wedding, making an unusual mixture of innovation and tradition the practice most frequently seen during the time of the pandemic.

CONCLUSION

So, what do we see? How did engaged couples use, shape and interpret their own wedding traditions during the time of the pandemic? How did they react to uncertainty, perpetually changing circumstances, new regulations and new restrictions? The answer, as we have seen, is very actively and very constructively. In conducting this project, I witnessed not mere people defined by rules and restrictions, but agents who worked actively to mould their culture. Under quarantine, legislators strove primarily to ensure that weddings (without services) could proceed seamlessly in the legal, official sense and that everyone could, one might say, "get their papers". This legal-political will found itself in direct conflict with the very different interpretations of wedding and reception held by the people themselves and their various service providers, whose expectations went far beyond the issue of mere paperwork. What the above has shown is that despite – or perhaps, in the face of – their changed circumstances, the vast majority of the people in question stuck to their original, habitual (see Bourdieu 1977) ideas and dreams, while only a small percentage gave up more expensive, frivolous, unnecessary services in favour of cheaper, more strictly necessary ones. This latter group opted for safer, good, or adequate-seeming solutions because their initial preferences, expectations and ideas ran into economic and legal barriers, or because circumstances beyond their control prevented them from bringing them to fruition. As they sought out new possibilities, new adaptable models, they simultaneously recognised and worked to interpret the rules that could potentially influence their outcomes, navigating between them, overstepping them, avoiding them altogether, or at other times, striving to create new opportunities through individual and community practices. Another finding was that emergency decisions made during the crisis period were only partly shaped by societal and legal pressures. In other words, many of these decisions were actually quite rational, cognizant, carefully planned, or rooted in emotion – or alternately, were reflective of other factors that had arisen during the planning and decision-making process, such as free choice, public discourse and the new ideas it presented.

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NOTES

1 Of respondents, 92.2% were women. A total of 43.9% were aged between 20 and 30 years, 45.4% between 31 and 50, 7.3% between 51 and 80, 3.3% between 14 and 19, and 0.02% over 81. Regarding levels of education, 66.7% had graduated from university/college; 28.9% had obtained at most a secondary school diploma, and 5.4% had received only an elementary school education. A total of 12.5% indicated residence in Budapest, 38.6% in a county seat or other large city, 24.7% in a small town or village, and 0.6% on a rural farm. In terms of household type, 49% lived in two-generation households, 39.4% in nuclear families (one couple, married or otherwise), 6.8% in three-generation households, and 0.2% lived alone.

2 Of respondents, 92.2% were women; 72.7% were aged between 20 and 30 years, and 27.1% ranged from 31 to 50. The overwhelming majority declared themselves to be of Hungarian nationality (3 were Swabian or German, and one was Romanian); 60.2% had graduated from university/college, 2% had obtained a PhD, 30.6% had at most a high school diploma, 7.7% had graduated from vocational or technical high school, 1% had received a post-secondary certificate, and 1% had an associate's degree; 25.5% lived in Budapest, 29.4% in a county seat or major city, 25.5% in a small town, 19% in villages, and 3% on farms.

3 Each interview lasted two or three hours. Most of the brides lived either in Budapest, or one of Hungary's larger rural towns, had advanced degrees, and were between twenty and thirty-five years of age. Five of them worked abroad. Having first filled out the online questionnaires, these women then volunteered participation in the follow-up discussions. The invitation to do so had been contained in the questionnaire's concluding item. The interviews were conducted online and were recorded.

4 I was present in twelve groups, but paid most attention to the four most active, monitoring them daily (the number of members varied between 2,500 and 29,000). I also monitored debates and conversations related to the organisation and reorganisation of weddings, as well as to the individual and collective dilemmas their participants faced.

5 4 April 2020, Budapest.

6 Responses to one of the questions from my online questionnaire: "What changes, great or small, did you have to make? Was your original wedding programme subject to alterations?" 19 May 2020; Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County.

7 Responses to a question from my COVID 2 Questionnaire, 2020.

8 Responses to the following question from the online questionnaire: "How did the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and related measures affect the organisation of your wedding and wedding reception?"; 30 March 2020, Baranya County.

9 Responses to the following question from the online questionnaire: "How did the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and related measures affect the organisation of your wedding and wedding reception?"; 29 March 2020, Zala County.

10 Excerpt from an e-mail from a woman of Hungarian nationality, approx. thirty years of age, Vienna (Austria); date of exchange: 5 September 2020.

11 18 February 2020, Budapest.

12 18 February 2020, Baranya.

13 Niel Gross's concept. Gross also specifically highlights the different functions of "regulatory" and "meaning-constitutive" traditions: while he believes the former externally restrict and compel, the latter internally authorize and enable various actions and practices (Gross 2005: 296).

14 These were the typical group sizes in previous years, as well (according to my questionnaire of February-March 2020): among those getting married in previous years, 38.8% planned to invite less than 50 people, 40.5% between 50 and 100 people, 17.8% between 100 and 200 people, and 2.8% more than 200 people to their weddings.

15 Facebook wedding planning group, 15 March 2020.

16 Facebook wedding planning group, 16 March 2020.

17 16 March 2020, Facebook wedding planning group.

18 Facebook wedding planning group, reception services, 18 April 2020.

19 Facebook wedding planning group, bride, 18 April 2020.

20 Facebook wedding planning group, 29 April 2020.

21 Facebook wedding planning group, 30 April 2020.

22 Facebook wedding planning group, 1 May 2020.

23 14 March 2017, Facebook wedding planning group.

24 More than one answer could be selected. Since respondents were allowed to select more than one wedding type (e.g., both traditional and modern), the percentages reflect overlapping categories and therefore do not sum to 100%.

25 20 February 2020, Baranya County, Pécs.

26 13 February 2020, Budapest.

27 13 February 2020, Baranya County.

28 Interview excerpt, female, 23 years old, Somogy County, 7 May 2020.

29 13 February 2020, Baranya County.

30 13 February 2020, Tolna County.

31 13 February 2020, Budapest.

32 See Goldstein-Gidoni's concepts of "distinction" and "indistinction". In her view, social actors tend to create ritual practices and wedding ideologies that are either very different or very conventional. In other words, people strive for distinction or indistinction according to their intentions and objectives through the medium of their weddings. In forming these concepts, Goldstein-Gidoni is building here on the theory of Appadurai (Goldstein-Gidoni 2001: 22; see also Appadurai 1990: 5).

33 30 April 2020, non-religious, Budapest.

34 1 May 2020, Methodist, Komárom-Esztergom County.

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The Festival of Saint Devota: Tradition, Identity and Modernity in Monaco

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Abstract: This ethnographic study explores the transformation and cultural significance of Monaco's Saint Devota festival over 150 years, using historical document analysis, participant observation and qualitative interviews. Variations in the festival's portrayal in the Journal de Monaco reflect changing princely interests and societal evolutions, with Prince Louis II playing a key role in reviving the celebration. The ritual of burning the boat and Louis Notari's poetic legend have been crucial in maintaining and institutionalizing the tradition.

Findings confirm that the nail-searching ritual, symbolizing personal faith and collective identity, is central to the festival. However, recent security measures limiting access to this ritual pose challenges to its traditional and educational roles, potentially weakening its impact on national identity construction.

Interviews with Monegasques highlight the festival's significance in cultural heritage appreciation, connection to Monaco and identity formation. Despite modernization challenges, the festival remains a cornerstone of Monegasque culture, fostering a sense of belonging. The public ritual of nail-searching has evolved into a personal practice, strengthening attachment to the tradition and ensuring cultural continuity.

Keywords: Saint Devota, cultural identity, religious festival, sense of belonging, territorial valorization

INTRODUCTION

Saint Devota, the patron saint of Monaco, is celebrated annually over two days, on January 26th and 27th. This festival is deeply rooted in Monaco's cultural and religious traditions, commemorating the arrival of Saint Devota's relics to Monaco and her role in the principality's Christian heritage.

Saint Devota, a Christian from Corsica, was martyred around 303 or 304 AD; her body was secreted away by devotees and *placed on a boat* that miraculously reached Monaco.

According to legend, 700 years later, Monegasques thwarted thieves trying to steal her relics by *setting their boat on fire*, a practice now reenacted annually during the celebration.

The celebration begins with a traditional Mass in Monegasque and culminates in the burning of the boat on the evening of January 26th, followed by a Pontifical Mass and a ceremonial procession on January 27th that blesses the city and the sea.

The ritual origins have been examined academically. Fernand Benoit suggested in 1935 that these might derive from ancient pagan rites, similarly to other European traditions involving boats or doves (Benoit 1935). This view was challenged in 1941 by an article in Monaco's *Official Journal*, which argued the boat burning was not documented before 1841 (Journal de Monaco 1941).

Claude Passet critically examined various historical accounts of Saint Devota in the "*Annales monégasques*" (Passet 1977). His research, based on an unpublished manuscript from the 12th century found in the National Library of France, provides insights into the early narratives surrounding the saint. His comprehensive 2005 book extensively discusses the evolution of Saint Devota's cult (Passet 2005).

Christian Charlet's 2003 study on the saint's depiction on Monaco's 1640 currency highlights how her image was used to reinforce her cult (Charlet 2003). An archaeological analysis by Elena Rossoni-Notter and Émilie Perez provides further understanding of the saint's relics (Diocèse de Monaco TV 2022).

These scholarly efforts – historical, numismatic, literary and archaeological – provide a broad perspective on Saint Devota's significance in Monaco, fostering an anthropological exploration of communal engagement with this tradition, its symbolic meanings and the motivations behind the rituals.

This case also opens broader questions that speak to the theme of crises and uncertainties. How does the festival reveal the difficulties faced by a traditional local community when confronted with modernity and security constraints? Conversely, does the festival act as a means of restoring an idealised vision of community cohesion? These questions guide our analysis and are addressed through the ethnographic material presented below.

In 2023, we conducted an ethnographic research study focusing on the celebrations of Saint Devota in Monaco, from which we developed three principal hypotheses.

Our first hypothesis suggested that the celebration, originally rooted in religious tradition, has incorporated a dimension of cultural heritage, altering its public perception and significance. This transition parallels insights from Laurent Fournier's analysis (Fournier 2004) on the valorization of heritage in Provençal festivals, which highlights how heritage acts as a "cultural treasure", enhancing regional identities by preserving traditions and encouraging new expressions.

According to Durkheim (2011), the significance of collective rituals lies in their ability to unite individuals in a shared experience, reinforcing a sense of belonging to something greater than oneself, "*savoring the idea of eternity*" (Warner 1941). Thus, our second hypothesis considers the transformation of the boat-burning ceremony from a secular collective ritual into a personal act of faith, enhancing its significance for individual participants. This public ritual influences communal belonging through both the collective search for a lucky nail and the personal ritual of preserving it.

Lastly, we propose that the creative decision to burn the boat has positively influenced the development of national identity and a sense of community belonging, which could ensure the tradition's continuity.

Our research question probes whether the ritual's importance to Monegasque identity might be more discursive, serving as a metaphor rather than a concrete reality.

To test these hypotheses and address our research question, we undertook participatory observations during the two-day festivities. This method allowed us to develop initial hypotheses that informed our subsequent research methodology. We analyzed a corpus of 146 years of articles from the *Journal de Monaco*, starting from its first issue in 1858. We specifically reviewed editions following the celebration dates of January 26 and 27 each year. This comprehensive analysis involved noting key themes, recurrent narratives and notable variations across different periods. Our methodology also included qualitative interviews with over 50 participants, which helped confront the Monegasques with their perceptions of the rituals. By synthesizing our results, we have deepened our understanding of the celebration's role within Monegasque society and its evolving significance across different eras.

Magical Rituals and Exclusive Participation

On the morning of January 26, 2023, the Church of Saint Devota held the "Messe des Traditions" at 10:30 AM, delivered in the Monegasque language and orchestrated by the Committee of Monegasque Traditions. At the beginning of the service, the chapel was 90% occupied. The officiant emphasized Saint Devota's role as Monaco's patron saint in his sermon, stating, "Saint

Devota was chosen as patroness when Saint Nicholas was the patron of fishermen. God gave Devota to Monaco." Post-ceremony, there was noticeable social engagement among attendees, who formed small discussion groups on the church forecourt, predominantly with an average age of around 65.

The morning mass was publicly accessible, yet parts of the evening events seemed to be more controlled. In preparation, we submitted multiple requests for an invitation for these segments, which were declined. This underscores the methodological challenges, the boundaries encountered and the limitations during this ethnographic research.

At 6:30 PM, at Port Hercule along the Route de la Piscine, the evening's festival began with a procession starting from the Prince's Car Collection Museum. By 6:40 PM, the boat arrived at Quai Jarland – Vallon des Gaumates where the relics were blessed. The procession continued to Saint Devota Square. At 7:00 PM, a blessing of the Most Holy Sacrament took place at Saint Devota Church, presided over by His Excellency Archbishop Dominique-Marie David of Monaco and Monsignor Guillaume Paris.

Access restrictions prevented direct observation of the atmosphere and emotions during the procession, affecting the depth of empirical data. Recognizing the impossibility of following the procession with Monegasques directly involved in the process, we opted to observe the events broadcast live on a liquid crystal display screen located near the chapel, albeit without sound.

Saint Devota Square was arranged to allow a wide corridor for the procession, with space for spectators occupying about a third of the square. This area was primarily occupied by residents of the Principality, among whom conversations in English, Italian and French could be heard. We also observed a mixed group of young adults who identified themselves as Monegasques.

The evening events were structured in precise sequences, including the arrival of the relics, the release of a dove, the blessing of the relics, salutes of artillery, and the movement of the procession towards the church. Upon the procession's arrival at the church, they were greeted by members of the penitent brotherhood and sisters. A group of invited individuals, who were not part of the procession, were already gathered inside.

The procession passed by a group behind barriers (which included us), composed of people filming the event on their phones, as seen in Figure 1, before entering the church with the relics. Subsequently, Her Serene Highness Princess Charlene arrived with Their Highnesses Princess Gabriella and Prince Jacques. They entered the chapel to commence the service.

This sequence of events shows the highly organized and ritualized nature of the feast, as well as the participation of various groups of participants and spectators. The event location was divided into two sections by a barrier. A distinction was observed between spectators and actors, illustrating specific challenges related to security and the management of people flows.

Figure 1. A group of spectators behind barriers, many filming the procession with their phones. The event is taking place in front of Saint Devota Church, with a large screen displaying a close-up of the proceedings. Children on shoulders and a crowd gathered to witness the event are visible.

Photograph by Anastasia V. Shevchenko.

At 7:45 PM, Quai Albert Ier became the focal point for the ceremonial burning of the symbolic boat by the princely family. Following the service, in a protocolar order starting with the ecclesiastics, followed by the Princess with her children, and finally the guests from the first to the last row, the attendees exited the church and crossed the street, heading towards the port where the boat burning was to take place. For those who observed the first part of the ceremony behind a barrier, at a distance, a space behind the fence had been provided.

To access the boat burning site, those who had attended the first part as distant spectators followed the path by which they had entered. The police released people in groups. They had to cross Boulevard Albert Ier to approach the boat-burning site on Quai Albert Ier. Meanwhile, when no more than 10% of people remained near the chapel in Saint Devota Square (including us), the fence opened, and they were allowed to cross the roundabout directly towards the place where the boat burning was being prepared. From a certain moment, a large part of the flow that initially followed the proposed route found itself blocked on the other side of Boulevard Albert Ier. They were refused passage across the road and access to the ritual site with the explanation that the event was planned for 600 people and that the quota had been reached.

Having already reached the boat-burning site, we tried to position ourselves at the roadside to get a good view, but the police insisted that everyone stay behind the fence. The Princess, with the hereditary Prince and Princess, lit the fire, and the boat was set ablaze as seen in Figure 2. As it burned, a light show using drones that narrated the story of Saint Devota was presented to the spectators. Once the boat had finished burning, the Princess and her children left the celebration. Firefighters then intervened and began to extinguish the embers. The children of the actors with invitations and the children without such, prepared to search for remaining nails from the boat in the ashes.

The first to rush were the children who were positioned without barriers and who attended the ceremony as invited participants. The children who were among the observers desperately wanted to jump over the barrier and the fence, but their parents held them back, assuring them that "they should open it for us". That never happened. The children were not deterred and began to infiltrate the corner where there was a gap of 30 to 50 centimeters between the fence and the barrier. The adults immediately followed them.

Figure 2. This image captures the ceremonial burning of a boat. Princess Charlene, along with the hereditary Prince and Princess, are seen igniting the fire. The boat is ablaze.

Photograph by Anastasia V. Shevchenko.

Figure 3. Children and adults are digging through the ashes of the burned boat. The participants are actively searching for lucky nails.

Photograph by Anastasia V. Shevchenko.

Thus began the entertainment part of the evening. The children enjoyed digging through the ashes, the clay (the boat had been placed on a clay podium, which had been eroded by the water used by the firefighters), and the remains of oak and laurel branches. The adults encouraged them, and some participated in the process themselves, as seen in Figure 3.

The celebration ended, leaving behind a suddenly quieter atmosphere. As the evening progressed, the square began to empty, with the last groups of people slowly leaving the area. In the end, only the ashes of the boat and a few persistent children still searching for the precious nails remained.

Religious Observation and Territorial Valorization

On Friday, January 27, 2023, an event occurred that was not announced in the official program available on the government's website. At the entrance of the chapel, it was indicated that the relics would be transported in procession from Saint Devota Chapel to the Cathedral, where they were to be received. At 9:10 AM, approximately twenty parishioners and faithful gathered at the Chapel. The priest recited a prayer, blessed the assembled crowd, and led them towards the Rocher. With January 27 being a public holiday in Monaco, the streets were quiet.

Along the way, the priest blessed the police department building, the Principality as viewed from the Rocher, as seen in Figure 4, and the princely palace. Upon arrival at the Cathedral, penitents and representatives from the Order of Saint Lazarus, the Order of Barry and the Order of the Marine were already aligned.

Those who had come for the service were already inside the Cathedral. At the start, the Cathedral was about 80% full, rising to approximately 98% capacity as the service commenced. After the service concluded, the procession exited in a protocolar order and headed towards the Palace.

At 11:15 AM, a solemn procession of the relics took place, attended by several members of the clergy, the Cathedral Choir, the penitents of the Venerable Archconfraternity of Mercy, as well as delegations from the Municipal Council of Lucciana and the Municipal Band.

The route began on the forecourt of the Cathedral, proceeded along Rue Colonel Bellando de Castro, through Palace Square, where the Sovereign House was blessed, and along the Ramparts, where the City received its blessing. The procession then returned to the Cathedral via Rue Colonel Bellando de Castro, where a blessing of the Sea took place on the Cathedral's forecourt as seen in Figure 5.

Figure 4. A priest is holding a relic and blessing the city from the Rocher, with a scenic view of the Monaco harbor in the background.

Photograph by Anastasia V. Shevchenko.

Figure 5. This image features a large gathering on the steps of a cathedral. The scene includes clergy in red robes, nuns, and other participants lined up and watching the blessing on the cathedral's forecourt.

Photograph by Anastasia V. Shevchenko.

From the palace window, the Prince and his family watched the procession. Two days before the festival, the Prince had tested positive for Covid-19 for the third time and thus wore an FFP3 mask. Accompanied by an orchestra, the procession moved with solemnity, and a sense of unity was palpable, thanks to efforts by a protocol service member working in the Cathedral who encouraged people to gather around the relics, to approach without hesitation.

Tourists took photos and seemed pleased with what they witnessed. Some quietly joined the procession. There were no barriers to participation for those who wished to join. After returning to the Cathedral and placing the relics inside, the priest thanked all attendees, congratulated them on the festival, and wished for the assistance of the patron saint. The gathered crowd burst into applause. Despite the low temperature in Monaco, at 8°C, people seemed happy to stay longer and socialize.

Symbolic Dualism and Ritual Complexity

Field observations reveal that the festival maintains the tradition of distinguishing between the sacred and the profane, thereby reinforcing this dualism.

Symbolic divisions are apparent: the first day ends with a secular celebration, mainly involving locals engaged in traditional activities, while the second day features religious festivities that overlay a spiritual dimension onto the urban landscape, allowing broad participation yet preserving a sense of intimacy.

The interplay of symbolism is noteworthy. At dusk, when the fire is lit, a contrast dance of shadows and lights begins. The representation of the four elements – fire (the boat's flame), water (the boat's arrival), air (the dove flying skyward), and earth (the ashes from which children eagerly gather nails) – enhances the ritual's thematic richness, emphasizing its deep cultural and spiritual significance.

Through participatory observation on January 26, we noted the participants' enthusiasm and eagerness, particularly during the nail-searching ritual. According to Durkheim, the festival is defined by two fundamental elements: the ceremonial and the entertainment aspects. The shift from the solemnity of the mass to the energetic search for nails by children encapsulates the spirit of the Saint Devota festival.

After participating in the ritual and noting a reluctance to allow non-participants to observe the nail collection, we consulted an active participant about potential new regulations. We inquired about the quantity of nails placed in the boat, to which a former municipal representative responded that he previously included a considerable amount, though the current quantity is reduced. He noted,

> *Even if there are fewer nails now, it's not too significant, unfortunately, because people are no longer allowed to approach the site. Previously, as soon as the fire died down, people would gather nails; now, for safety reasons, this is prohibited.*

He distinguished between genuine and imitation nails, explaining, "The real ones are slightly bent and copper-colored, while the fake ones look new and straight. These are not just relics; they are considered lucky." He also shared that he carries a nail in his wallet, a sentiment echoed by multiple other participants in interviews who also keep a nail for protection.

Anthropological examination must confront a peculiar aspect of the Saint Devota celebration: specifically, which boat do the Monegasques burn? According to local legend, there are two narratives involving two different boats – one that carried the Saint herself, and the other associated with the theft of her relics. The ritual burning typically features a boat painted in Monaco's national colors of red and white, which ostensibly represents the thieves' vessel. This presents a semiotic contradiction: how can the boat, symbolically adorned with national colors, represent something nefarious?

We propose that the ritual symbolically merges the burning of both boats. This interpretation allows for the coexistence of both narratives within the same symbolic act. The ritual of burning, a tradition of regeneration noted by Fernand Benoit in his studies of Mediterranean fishermen, symbolizes the destruction of the old to rejuvenate anew. Thus, even though the boat bears national colors, its burning does not celebrate the theft but rather the community's overcoming of past adversities. The painted colors likely serve to embed the ritual deeper within the national psyche, aligning a narrative of theft and redemption with the principality's identity. This dual representation within a single ritual act reflects the complex layering of history, mythology and national pride. It is noteworthy that at the initiation of this tradition in 1880, two boats were set aflame: "According to custom, after the liturgical prayers recited in the presence of a large crowd of the faithful, two boats were burned at Saint Devota Square, in front of the sanctuary" (Journal de Monaco 1880).

Ritual Establishment and Local Engagement

The comprehensive analysis of articles published in the *Journal de Monaco* reveals a significant evolution of the rituals and symbols associated with the celebration of Saint Devota over time.

During the first ten years under the reign of Charles III (20 June 1856 – 10 September 1889), there is a gradual evolution in creative research and the establishment of a ritual. Initially, the event was viewed as just another part of Monaco's entertainment calendar, highlighting its charm, elegance and grace. "We are not lacking in events this week. Three days of celebration, a ball, a concert, a dramatic evening; […] finally, the touching spectacle of a religious ceremony" (Journal de Monaco 1860). However, the articles also emphasized the local dimension of the celebration. "All these boats were decorated with the national colors, as were the buildings stationed in the harbor" (Journal de Monaco 1862).

Over the years, there has been an increase in the participation of the princely family, thus enhancing the significance of the festival and giving it an official dimension. Bonfires lit on the eve of the festival are mentioned repeatedly.

In the second decade of Charles III's reign, creative elements such as the burning of the boat were introduced. "[…] a huge bonfire in which the legendary boat burned had attracted a large crowd" (Journal de Monaco 1875). Articles began to cater more towards the local public, thus emphasizing the national aspect of the celebration. "Along the avenue leading to the sanctuary, masts topped with banners in the colors of our Princes and bearing their coats of arms as well as their religious motto: Deo Juvante" Journal de Monaco 1877).

In the third decade of Charles III's reign, the articles aimed to inform and raise awareness among the population about the importance of the celebration. The news provided detailed information on the proceedings of the celebrations, the personalities present and the elements such as the burning of a boat or a bonfire.

In summary, during the reign of Charles III, an evolution in the ritual of the celebration is observed, a constant search for an ideal ritual scenario, with variations in traditional elements such as the burning of the boat or a bonfire.

Shift in Priorities and Decline of Coverage

During the reign of Albert I (10 September 1889 – 26 June 1922), the press devoted significant attention to the Prince's scientific activities, highlighting his passion for science and maritime exploration. Reports on the Prince's research in the polar seas and his presentations to the Academy of Sciences were often given precedence.

The portrayal of Saint Devota's celebration varied annually. Some years provided detailed reports, outlining the sequence of events, notable attendees, and protocol aspects. In other instances, the news was succinct, relegated to a secondary position:

> *The feast of Saint Devota was celebrated on Tuesday evening and Wednesday, with the usual solemnity. On the 27th, Monsignor Theuret officiated pontifically at the Cathedral. The afternoon procession was led by Monsignor Chapon, bishop of Nice. Cool, yet fair weather favored these various ceremonies* (de Lorraine 1897).

Specific details of the celebration, such as the burning of the boat, were less frequently mentioned, creating some uncertainty regarding their consistent observance.

There was also a tendency to incorporate the celebration of Saint Devota into other high-profile events. Reports often referenced concurrent activities such as automobile races, international exhibitions and artistic events.

During the second decade of Albert I's reign, a continued reduction in the amount of space dedicated to the celebration in the newspaper was observed. In terms of language, there was a gradual increase in the complexity of the journal's style during this period. "[...] the feast of Sainte Dévote, [...] began on Tuesday with the auto-da-fé of the boat in front of the parish church [...]" (Journal de Monaco 1909). Longer and more complex sentences were utilized.

Finally, from 1918 onwards, official news and activities of the Sovereign House began to occupy more space in the journal, pushing the news of the Patron saint's celebration into the background. In the last three years, the celebration was not mentioned at all.

Revival of Tradition and Identity Promotion

From the very beginning of the reign of Louis II (26 June 1922 – 9 May 1949), in 1923, the Prince sought to *"revive a very ancient custom"* (Journal de Monaco 1923) by personally participating in the traditional burning of the boat. This marked the beginning of a new phase in the promotion of the event.

In the early years, there was a growing focus on the celebration, with detailed articles describing the events attended by the Prince and his family. Articles became more extensive, detailed, and consistently listed all the important figures present at the ceremony. The descriptions became more precise, with frequent mentions of the Monegasque Anthem and processions, "The ringing of bells and the performance of the Monegasque Anthem by the Municipal Music announced the arrival of the Princes [...]" (Journal de Monaco 1927).

In 1928, a trend was cemented with the publication of an article on *"A Monegasque Poem"* written in the Monegasque dialect by Louis Notari. The work was dedicated to Prince Louis II, who thus showed his support for this initiative (Journal de Monaco 1928).

In the following years, the celebration of Saint Devota continued to be mentioned in the journal, albeit in a more standardized and less detailed manner. The articles adopted a more formal, bureaucratic and protocol-oriented tone, with increased attention paid to the official personalities present, emphasizing the festivity and its events but without providing as much detail as before. The information was primarily aimed at the local population, placing more emphasis on the personalities present and the official protocols.

A notable trend was the introduction of new attractions and visual elements in the festivities. For example, the appearance of a dove during the 1937 celebrations:

> *Between the jetties, a symbolic boat with a dove at the prow made its appearance under a dome of fire and escorted by numerous boats adorned with Venetian lanterns, crossed the harbor accompanied by the light of a spotlight* (Journal de Monaco 1937).

In the time of WWII for three years, there is no mention of the feast, but since 1946, the celebrations have continued anew.

In conclusion, under the reign of Louis II, the tradition was faithfully maintained. The publication of a poem in the Monegasque dialect institutionalized the tradition and demonstrated the importance given to promoting tradition and Monegasque identity.

Institutional Recognition and Social Emphasis

During the reign of Rainier III (9 May 1949 – 6 April 2005), the celebration maintained the significance of the religious traditions of Monaco. Yearly festivities were conducted with splendor:

> *On the occasion of Saint Devota, artistic events were organized, among them at the Salle des Variétés, a concert performed by La Paladienne and a recorded audition of 'Sur un beau lys du sang' text by Monsieur l'abbé Henri Baudoin, music by Marc-César Scotto, featuring the National Orchestra and the Choirs of the Monte-Carlo Opera and the Studio of Monaco* (Journal de Monaco 1955).

The participation of ecclesiastical dignitaries underscored the religious significance of the event. The Feast was regarded as a momentous occasion, and its religious dimension was further highlighted by the constitutional recognition of Catholicism as the state religion of Monaco in 1962.

The consistent presence of the princely family was a recurring element of the celebrations, thus reinforcing the event's significance and official status. However, in some years, such as 1956, the Prince did not participate in the event, which could influence how news was presented.

Coverage of the event was often published in two different sections of the Journal de Monaco (Maison Souverain and Information Diverses), and descriptions of the festivities would overlap and mutually reinforce, thus emphasizing the event's importance.

> *It was H.S.H. the Prince who, after the Salute, lit the pyre on which a boat painted in the Monegasque colors had been placed. Thus, the old tradition of burning was renewed. And it was with a very beautiful fireworks display from the jetties of the Port that this first day was to end* (Journal de Monaco 1966).

From 1972 onwards, mentions of the festivities primarily focused on luncheons at the princely palace, suggesting a shift in how news was presented. Descriptions of the celebrations became less detailed and may be considered more as social news than news about religious festivals.

> *On January 27, the day of the celebration of the Feast of Saint Devota, Their Serene Highnesses the Prince and Princess, accompanied by H.S.H. Prince Albert, hosted a luncheon at the princely palace. Attending this luncheon were* […] (Journal de Monaco 1975).

From 1997 onwards, mentions of the Feast of Saint Devota celebrations disappeared from the social news of the Official Journal, indicating a change in editorial direction.

Perseverance and Stability of Ritual Practices

During the reign of S.A.S. Prince Albert II, the execution of the ritual of burning the boat was never questioned, and the boat was burned each year. Even in 2021, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, the traditional ritual was maintained, albeit without public attendance.

However, the search for new solutions and formats continued to evolve. During the reign of Prince Rainier III, members of the Marine service were responsible for transporting the relics on foot from the chapel to the cathedral. This practice was later modified; it was decided to transport the relics by car. In 2013, a new parish priest at Saint Devota chapel expressed a desire to return to the old practice of carrying the relics on foot. To avoid security issues, this was presented as a "walk with the relics", requiring some police oversight. This modification restored part of the historical tradition, illustrating a commitment to maintaining a connection with the past.

An innovation was the introduction of drones in 2020 to replace traditional fireworks, largely due to environmental concerns of Prince Albert II. However, by 2023, Monaco returned to the traditional salute of honor.

A current issue for organizers is sourcing boats for burning. Historically, these boats, often in disrepair, were sourced locally, managed by the Marine service, and stored in a type of "boat pound". However, implementing this method has become increasingly challenging. One major difficulty is finding suitable boats without compromising maritime heritage. Additionally, many boats that appear wooden are actually lined with plastic, rendering them unsuitable for burning. If this scarcity continues, using props might become necessary, a solution considered regrettable by those involved. The search for suitable boats is an ongoing effort, particularly focused on Italy and Corsica. Once located, these boats are stored in a dry place for at least a year to ensure they are properly dried before use.

Comparative analysis reveals a mix of transformation and permanence. It is observed that variations in how the celebration was treated in the *Journal de Monaco* are linked to different reigns. These variations reflect the changing interests of the princes and societal evolutions of the time, allowing us to conclude that the tradition has managed to maintain and transmit itself across generations, partly due to Prince Louis II's interest, who aimed to revive the patron saint's celebration from his first year of reign. Louis Notari's text played a role in institutionalizing this tradition.

This documentary study partially confirms our third hypothesis. The introduction and establishment of the secular aspect, represented by the burning of the boat, indeed had an impact on the vitality of the tradition. An ideal scenario was sought and established, and continues over time, but the princely political will remained predominant. Without Prince Louis II's decision to strengthen national identity and the sense of belonging, it is difficult to assert with certainty that the tradition would have endured.

The Heritage Transformation: The Contribution of Literary Representation

In the article "*De Santa Devota a Barma Grande*" (Bon 2019), Dominique Bon explores the decision of Monaco's Local Tradition Committee in 1927 to commission Louis Notari to create a grammar and lexicon for the Monegasque language. Notari, emphasizing the need for pre-existing literature for language preservation, composed a poetic legend honoring Saint Devota, before undertaking his commission. This work was completed within two months from the initial commission.

Eric Hobsbawm, in *The Invention of Tradition* (Hobsbawm & Ranger 2012), discusses how many traditions were "actively constructed", especially in the context of the 19th and early 20th centuries amid rapid social and economic changes due to industrialization, urbanization and the formation of nation-states in Europe. These factors created a need for social cohesion and identity, prompting the creation or reinvention of traditions to unite societies and provide a sense of continuity with a reimagined past.

Using historical context reconstruction, it is evident that during the 1870s, Monaco was undergoing its first economic boom, marked by burgeoning international allure. Concurrently, significant urban development, particularly in the Condamine district, directly impacted local life. In such a scenario, a demand to reinforce local heritage likely emerged, spurred by the need to maintain a connection to one's territory as it underwent transformations by incoming populations.

These processes are conceptualized in the works of intellectuals of the time. In the text by Louis Notari, we read: "We, the people of this country, are like dispersed amidst strangers of all kinds, who often treat us with contempt because we are modest and very far from this noisy world that is fashionable" (Notari 1927).

In *The Sociology of Critical Capacity* (Boltanski & Thévenot 1999), the authors examine how individuals manage to analyze situations and come to an understanding during "critical moments". They assert that this is possible when the criteria for justification coincide. In *La Légende de Sainte Dévote,* Louis Notari explains to the Monegasques the normality and fatalism of accepting new realities of life, thereby justifying their *adherence to this social contract* through their own values and the possibility of maintaining a "natural order" of things through respect for tradition.

Examining certain ideological markers intended to preserve the memory of events for subsequent transmission to future generations, *La Légende de Sainte Dévote* is an educational poem that deeply anchors the understanding of Monaco's cultural identity in the minds of its inhabitants. It addresses the progress of community life, social changes, spirituality that unites the community, the strong tradition of independence, the preference for peace over war, divine protection, faith, the importance of traditions, the preservation of cultural heritage, the importance of collective memory and the transmission of traditions. References to religion, culture and the history of ancestors are present throughout the text, testifying to the Monegasques' attachment to their roots and beliefs. The lyrical and poetic style highlights the beauty and mystery of the events described and invites the reader to ponder the profound meaning of these experiences.

Thus, the first hypothesis, which suggests that the celebration has transformed into a heritage dimension, thus altering its perception, is confirmed by the analysis of Louis Notari's text. Sociocultural changes have significantly influenced the embodiment of tradition, leading to the addition of heritage valorization and subsequently altering the celebration's perception. Since then, the fervent celebration has become a commitment to past generations, a promise to preserve tradition for future generations.

The Role of Individual Faith

Our research is aimed at confirming or challenging the second hypothesis, which posits that the ritual of individual faith plays a significant role in the vitality of the tradition. Despite extensive studies and numerous descriptions of the festival, the ritual of seeking lucky nails seems to be overlooked in the literature, dismissed as an insignificant adjunct to the tradition. We argue, however, that this public ritual significantly influences the sense of belonging through the collective ritual of searching for a lucky nail and the individual ritual of its subsequent preservation.

To understand the impact of the patron saint's celebrations on the construction of identity, we conducted over 50 qualitative interviews with Monegasques. The following section of this article presents an analysis of trends based on selected interviews that synthesize responses from various participants.

A prominent trend is *the appreciation of cultural heritage*. An interviewee, despite not adhering to religious practices, compares the Saint Devota celebration to Saint-Nicolas in Belgium, highlighting its significance as a cultural heritage event rather than a religious one. She states, "For me, it's similar to Saint-Nicolas for the Belgians, a part of our heritage." She has introduced her children to the festivities, particularly appreciating *the proximity to the princely family*. She emphasizes the children's enthusiasm for the nighttime event, especially the boat burning and nail searching, describing it as "quite something". According to her, these traditions instill a profound sense of *pride and uniqueness*, comparable to receiving gifts from the Prince or Princess at the palace during Christmas (Monegasque tradition), thereby reinforcing cultural identity from a young age.

Another notable trend *is the connection to Monaco*. The interviewee stresses the importance of teaching local traditions to children. She recalls moments of confusion among her children about different local celebrations but sees these as teaching opportunities. She recounts bringing her children to the Saint Devota ceremony to collect nails, a practice she believes every resident should experience, noting the beauty of the procession and the Corsican chants, despite the potential cold. This involvement, she argues, is crucial for strengthening the individual's connection to Monaco and underscores the celebration's cultural significance.

A Monegasque man, aged over 60, views the celebration as important for *cultural education* but not essential for repeated annual participation. He regards the celebration as a *rite of passage that introduces young Monegasques to an important tradition*, forming part of their cultural identity. Instantly, he shares a personal memory of accidentally burning his fingers while collecting a nail from the burning boat, a vivid memory that endures through the years. This memory acts like Proust's madeleine, triggering a cascade of reminiscences, reinforcing his cultural belonging.

Another interviewee describes the Saint Devota celebration as a "symptom of Monegasque society", reflecting how Monegasque identity is preserved and transmitted, often under constraint. The celebration is seen as inseparable from Monegasque identity: "St. Devota and the Rock, nothing can be done about it. It's the identity." The participant highlights that despite its symbolic importance, active participation in the festival is not necessarily a priority for all Monegasque families, including his own. He notes a shift in the festival's atmosphere over time, drawing those who wish to demonstrate their closeness to tradition. He describes Saint Devota as becoming increasingly procedural, with a scramble for places due to the inevitable presence of the princely family. He criticizes those who attend mainly to be photographed with the Prince, suggesting a divide between those who participate in the festival for cultural reasons and those more interested in public image and prestige.

One observed trend is *the examination of modernization's impact*. An interviewee offers a nostalgic perspective on Saint Devota, expressing concern about modern changes that "affect the authenticity". She laments the evolution of rituals, particularly the ritual of searching for nails: "It's just my opinion, but I think modern reality spoils this festival." She is disappointed by firefighters extinguishing the fire immediately after the ceremony, and new barriers depriving participants of the chance to search for nails. She refers to the "magic" of the celebration, an element she believes has been lost due to modern changes. For her, maintaining the traditional ritual is crucial for preserving the cultural and spiritual significance of Saint Devota.

One more participant recalls a time when the celebration was much more intimate and family-oriented, with the princely family and the Monaco community participating together in the ceremony. He remembers a time when there was less security and fewer protocols, allowing participants to be closer to each other. According to the interviewee, this closeness reinforced *the sense of belonging to a larger family*. The annual Saint Devota celebration was an opportunity for this "family" to gather and share a moment of spiritual and cultural communion.

Many respondents mention *a personal commitment to tradition*. An interviewee tells the story of the boat that delivers the relics to the port, built in 1956 in Cannes for Princess Grace's arrival in Monaco. This small pilot boat was used to assist with the maneuvering of the Prince Rainier's boat, the *Déo Juvante*, as it entered the port with the future Princess Grace on board. After this historical event, the boat continued to serve Monaco's Maritime Service. The interviewee and two friends purchased this boat when it was sold. Unfortunately, one of the three friends died from COVID-19, but the interviewee and his remaining friend, with assistance from the Yacht Club, continue to maintain the boat and make it available for the annual celebration of Saint Devota.

The same interviewee shares another facet of his personal connection to the tradition. In the 1980s, while working for the Maritime Service, he was tasked with transporting the relics of Saint Devota, a role he took over from his retired predecessor. Since then, he continues to perform this duty each year, demonstrating his personal commitment to this tradition. This anecdote illustrates how the tradition is maintained and strengthened by the personal efforts of those attached to Monaco and its heritage. The boat, having played a role in a significant moment in Monaco's history, continues to serve the community by participating in the feast each year.

We also observe mentions of *invisible cultural bonds*. One participant highlights the significant role of the Saint Devota cult in the cultural and social fabric of Monaco. Even for those who are not necessarily practicing or regular churchgoers, Saint Devota represents an invisible link that unites Monegasques. The interviewee shares personal experiences with his three children, each of whom has a different relationship with religion and the cult of the patron saint. He expresses some frustration regarding his third child, who does not attend mass. However, he acknowledges that "even she", despite her apparent disengagement from religious practice, "would speak passionately about Saint Devota if asked". This illustrates the idea that, although active participation may vary, the cult of Saint Devota is deeply rooted in Monegasque cultural identity.

Symbolism and personal rituals are also noted. A participant refers to his own tattoo of Saint Devota on his arm, an indelible representation of his personal devotion. His choice of this tattoo reflects his belief that his connection with Saint Devota is permanent and unchangeable, unlike other personal relationships that may evolve or change over time. Another aspect of devotion to the Saint mentioned in the interview concerns the carrying of nails. The participant himself carries two, one on his person and another kept in his scooter. These nails seem to have a protective or talismanic significance, especially in connection with potentially dangerous activities like riding a motorcycle. "And it's true that when someone here needs a bit of spirituality, you easily turn to Saint Devota."

There is also mention of *faith and divine protection*. During a conversation with a real estate developer in Monaco, he told us the story of an accident on the construction site. "Thank God it was at night and no one was hurt," our interlocutor said, and he thanked Saint Devota several times and made the sign of the cross several times.

Thus, we have an answer to the question: "Could devotion to the tradition be more of a metaphor, a public discourse, than reality?" The answer is: it is neither a metaphor nor a discourse, but a genuine feeling of belonging. And this feeling is instilled from childhood. Parents, having themselves participated in the ritual during their youth, feel a duty to bring their children to do the same at least once or twice. For them, it's about forming a sense of proximity to the princely family, fostering a sense of kinship, telling the story of the patron saint, and instilling a sense of cultural belonging, cultural identity. The religious aspect of the event often comes after education on the national part.

While the celebration of Saint Devota is deeply rooted in religious traditions, the active participation of the princely family suggests a close connection between religion and the sovereign house. We observe the emergence of an intermingling of politics and religion, an interaction not explicitly highlighted in classical texts of sociology. Indeed, examining the works of Durkheim or the analyses of Mauss, there is a tendency to isolate the religious fact to study its specifics independently. However, our approach limited the perception of interactions between the religious and other spheres of society.

Rediscovering True Wealth: The Symbolic Power of the Saint Devota Nail

The festival of Saint Devota is a cornerstone of Monegasque cultural tradition, instilling a profound sense of identity and belonging among its citizens from an early age. Even those less inclined toward religious observance acknowledge the importance of Saint Devota as a vital component of their cultural heritage. Participation in the festival facilitates a deeper connection to the community, particularly through activities that educate and involve children, reinforcing their cultural ties with the Principality and the princely family.

A notable tension exists between the aspiration to maintain the traditions and the changing dynamics of contemporary society. Some participants criticize adjustments to the festival, made for safety or protocol, while others recognize the necessity of such changes. A sense of nostalgia pervades among some attendees, who mourn the perceived loss of authenticity brought on by modernization.

Our primary finding is that the public ritual of the Saint Devota celebration has evolved to engender a private ritual: carrying nails as personal talismans. This insight supports our third hypothesis that transitioning from a collective to an individual ritual has intensified the attachment to the tradition. Many locals carry a nail with them, believing it offers direct protection from the saint.

The ritual of searching for nails in the charred remnants of the boat remains a vital element of the celebration for several reasons. First, it converts spectators into actors. Second, it sustains intergenerational transmission as parents bring their children. Third, it adds a modest sense of adventure that draws in the young. Fourth, the nails are thought to confer protection or luck, which lends the practice both personal and collective meaning.

However, recent security measures that restrict access to the ritual of nail searching pose a threat to its educational and traditional aspects. The individual retrieval of nails personalizes the experience, enhancing its significance. Alterations to or removal of this ritual could diminish interest and weaken the overall role of the celebration in reinforcing national identity.

The ethnography shows that the celebration of Saint Devota reflects both the crises faced by a traditional community confronted with modernity and the capacity of ritual to restore a sense of cohesion. On the one hand, security measures, new protocols and the difficulty of sourcing boats reveal how modernization generates uncertainty and weakens certain practices, such as the public search for nails. On the other hand, the festival continues to reproduce an image of the community: the princely family at its center, children participating in the ritual, and individuals carrying nails as private talismans of protection. In this way, the festival both exposes the fragility of tradition in modern conditions and reaffirms its ability to generate continuity and belonging.

In the anthropology of magic, three laws of magic are described (Frazer 1990):

1. The Law of Similarity: Like produces like, or an effect resembles its cause;
2. The Law of Contact or Contagion: Things that have been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance even after physical separation; and
3. The Part Represents the Whole: A part of something can represent or affect the whole.

It is this last principle that is particularly evident in the Monegasque ritual: a nail from the boat symbolizes not only the entire boat (painted in red and white) but, by extension, all of Monaco. The part of the boat (the nail, *symbolically reminiscent of the nails from Christ's cross*) stands for the boat, and the boat itself represents the national symbol, embodying Monaco itself. This creates a recursive metaphor where the boat, as a national symbol, encapsulates Monaco itself.

This sequence reveals that Monaco, often associated with myths of wealth and affluence, may find its true value in a simple rusted nail. This nail, under the laws of magic, becomes a microcosm of the cultural and historical wealth of Monaco, offering a renewed perspective on what constitutes true wealth. Ultimately, it may be in a simple nail that Monaco's greatest riches are found.

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The Intermittency of Masquerading Rituals as a Marker of Political Change

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Abstract: Traditional masquerading at carnival time and similar traditional occasions speaks the language of unbroken continuity through time and is generally perceived as a straight line from time immemorial to the present day. At closer quarters, however, it becomes apparent that most, if not all, masquerading traditions are marked by a considerable intermittency with frequent interruptions often lasting whole decades. A comparative outlook at a few masquerades, largely from Italy, will show this intermittency as a precise response to the ongoing stimuli of the larger political context.

Keywords: carnival, masquerading, ritual, intermittency, revolution and reaction

In a number of rural communities in a large area of Europe – from Iberia, across the Italian peninsula and its islands up to the Alps, Austria, part of Germany and Poland, and all the way to Romania and the Balkans – we can detect to the present day the diffusion of a category of masquerading originally meant to celebrate the advent of the New Year, which James Frazer authoritatively recognized[1] as relics of ancient pagan traditions devoted to proclaiming the rejuvenation of time. In hundreds of villages spread across the breadth of "unreformed" Europe i.e. Catholic and Orthodox areas, on a specific day in the heart of winter masked impersonators surge out of nowhere, bells are clanged and a ritual walkabout of the village is performed as if to sanctify it with a renewed blessing whilst simple ceremonies, such as a mock wedding or the pulling of an old plough along the streets take place, and spells of good omen are cast in exchange for small offerings of food, drink and a little money. These are itinerant rituals of exchanging good wishes hinged on the return of ceremonial characters who reappear year after year during wintertime. In Catholic Europe, such rituals are usually specifically linked to the notion of "Carnival".

Woven as they are in a continuous thread of "tradition" that supposedly runs from time immemorial to the present day, these yearly masquerades are instead subject to the frequent occurrence of gaps and interruptions. It is almost as if the same thread was on occasion frayed or altogether severed, only to be reknotted anew upon every resumption of the rituals.

In what follows – resulting from almost 20 years of research carried out within the scope of the *Carnival King of Europe*[2] project – we will undertake the investigation of folk masquerading from the viewpoint of such intermittencies being considered a normal occurrence and indeed far more so than any purported unbroken continuity through time. Within each particular local contest, however, the importance and the relative frequency of such gaps seldom come to the surface because often no data are kept for these unruly village occurrences, and the majority of the people involved seem to acknowledge such suspensions with a measure of embarrassment and some unwillingness to admit the occurrence of these lapses. A similar taboo is also frequently found in the literature, where seldom is there an account of a masquerade interruption nor the reasons thereof.

Given these difficulties in reconstructing the particular history of each masquerade, in this paper – on the basis of a random sample of ritual masquerades from various parts of Europe but specifically from Italy – we will attempt to provide a comparative account of such intermittencies as a characteristic feature of these rituals in order to reveal the larger political context in which the masquerades take place.

INTERMITTENT MASQUERADES IN THE EUROPEAN WINTER

Interruptions in masquerading traditions can be short-lived with delays of just a few years in the established yearly or plurennial pace but may become much longer.

Of these latter, the most extraordinary to our knowledge occurred in Tarrenz, Tyrol. Their *Fasnacht* had been officially stopped in 1797 following a solemn perpetual vow pronounced to spare the town from the pending invasion of Napoleon's army. The vow was left standing for 187 years, only to be repealed in 1984, when the *Fasnacht* was again put on its feet (Pechtl 1998). Notably, 1797 also marked the termination of the celebrated, once-triumphant Carnival of Venice, ruled out by the Austrian government for fear of public disorders, to be then resumed as late as 1979, some 182 years after its enforced demise (Bertrand 2014).

The Carnival of Venice, however, when officially brought back to life in 1979, was a newly designed pantomime and an openly-declared tourist attraction, quite different from what it had been in its glorious heyday. To the contrary, after the vow was formally revoked in Tarrenz, the *Fasnacht* returned unscathed to its old format, thus indicating that a precise notion of what it once was had been kept under ashes for nearly 200 years. At present, the Tarrenz *Fasnacht* is hardly distinguishable from others held elsewhere on a biennial, triennial, or quadrennial basis in the neighbouring villages of Nassereith, Telfs, Imst, and Wald im Piztal in the Upper Inn Valley (Pfaundler 1998).

Albeit on a smaller scale, a similar sudden revival was registered in Wörth in the Salzburger Alps. A grandiose *Perchtenumzug* was resumed in 2010 some 46 years after its demise in 1964, and in a manner that made it very difficult for anyone to detect that such an interruption had ever taken place.

The *Tresterers* or "treshers" of Zell am See offer a similar story of a decades-long interruption followed by a sudden revival. Ruled out in 1944, at the darkest hour in the Austrian mountains under Nazi rule, the itinerant quest of dancers in high uniform and plumed feluccas with their cortege of musicians, devils, *Hanswurst*, a couple of Old folks dubbed *Låpp* and *Lappin*, a giant Fox, a giant Hen laying eggs, and other assorted characters was brought back to life in 1985. Thanks to the efforts of a local writer, Hermann Schmiderer (2006), the parade was revived from its ashes after 41 years, although any living memory of it had seemed to have perished (Zerling 2005; Kezich & Mott 2018).

Besides such lengthy exceptional interruptions, the most frequent intermittency is that of suspensions of twenty or thirty years, short enough for people to remember with some accuracy how the ritual should be performed and yet sufficiently long to make the risk of a complete extinction very probable.

In the one-time German settlement of Agnita, in the *Siebenbürger* in Transylvania, the *fuga lolelor*, namely the "run" of the *lole* – the self-styled Carnival "stutterers" wearing garments of red and black ribbons and a fencing mask of a kind framed in a fox-tail – is well documented in the local museum. Yet, since the XVth century, it appears to have been demised and resumed at least six or seven times: in the recent past alone, the masquerade was ruled out by the Habsburg government in 1878 for fear of public disorder, so that the *lole* still wear a very visible yellow numbered badge to be easily identified. Revived in 1911 for patriotic anti-Habsburg reasons on the verge of the upheaval that brought Transylvania into Romania, it was then ostracized by the communist regime after 1946. The *fuga lolelor* was again made legal after 1968 as part of Ceausescu's new national deal, demised after the 1989 revolution which had evidently brought other priorities to the surface, and revived once more after the year 2000 (Kezich 2015: 127-130).

In most cases the specific reasons for the decline and/or subsequent revival of a masquerade are found to be primarily political in character. In an important study, *Masquerade and Postsocialism: Ritual and Cultural Dispossession in Bulgaria*, anthropologist Gerald Creed (2010) – without indulging in the attractive ethnographical conundrums which underpin masks and masquerading in the Balkans – managed to skilfully outline the primarily social scope of masquerading within the process of reconstruction of community and local identity from 1990 onwards after the communist era.

CARNIVAL MASQUERADING FROM SICILY TO THE ALPS

A sample of largely comparable Italian village masquerades was selected for our present purposes based on reliable information as to their intermittency in the second half of the 20th century.

Performed with unfailing regularity within the canonical Carnival time and most often on Shrove Tuesday, the selected rituals nevertheless seldom bear the name "Carnival". The term "Carnival" only occurred once out of the nine cases studied, namely at Ponte Caffaro. Alternatively, "masquerade" is most commonly used (*màschira*, Cattafi; *mascra*, Castiglione Messer Marino; *mascherèda*, Val di Fassa; *mascherada,* Valfloriana), or the name of one of the main characters, e.g. the *lachèra* after the ubiquitous harlequin character known as *Lachè* in Rocca Grimalda; the *gnaga* at Fornesighe or the *zinghenésta* at Canale d'Agordo.

In a radius spanning from Sicily in the South to Piedmont and the Dolomites in the North of Italy, and thus displaying exceptional regional variety in costumes, language and music, these rituals manifest many common denominators. In each case, the masquerade presents itself as a joyful parade of dancing characters, engaged for the better part of the day in an auspicious itinerary through the village, stopping for a dance in front of every house or hamlet where alms or small offerings of food can be collected in exchange for good wishes. Besides the dancing-cum-jumping squad, armed with a stick or whip, often dressed in white and bearing cumbersome colourful headpieces, other characters are paraded with a certain frequency: first and foremost, a Bride and Groom or a Bride-to-be and a cortege of assorted buffoons as well as the Bear, the Goat, the Old Folks, and so on. However, despite the regional differences, it would appear that the ritual being performed employs the same means, namely the dance, the quest and well-wishing formulas to achieve the same objectives (Kezich 2015).

An ideal tour route of these masquerades could start in Sicily and work its way northwards to the foot of the Dolomite Mountains. At Cattafi, just three or four miles inland along the northern coast of Sicily (Fig. 1), the *màschira* is founded upon the dance troupe of the so-called *scacciuni,* who evidently owe their name to the *chassée* dance which they ceaselessly perform for the duration of the day. At the centre of the dancing circle, a *Fioraia* or flower girl, impersonated by a man in drag as is common carnival practice, throws improvised rhyme tercets and posies of flowers to spectators as if she were a bride-to-be. Despite such an obvious festive nuptial context, the *scacciuni* are locally understood to be impersonating the local militia who chased away ("*scacciare*") the Turks at the time of a purported invasion (1544) of the Sicilian coastline. For this reason, a great deal of martial pride is commonly bestowed upon them: yet despite the high prestige of these *scacciuni* and the circumfusing ideology, in 1966 the *màschira* was apparently abandoned for no specific reason, only to be resumed almost twenty years later (1985).

Figure 1. Cattafi, Sicily, 17th February 2019. The *màschira*: the *Fioraia* ("flower girl") surrounded by the *scacciuni* ("chassée"-dancers). The masquerade was regularly held at carnival times until 1965; then it was revived from 1985 onwards.

Photograph by Antonella Mott.

Castiglione Messer Marino in the Abruzzi (Fig. 2) harbours a magnificent masquerade whose central characters, the *pulgenelle* – locally equivalent to the *scacciuni* in Sicily and the harlequins or *lachè* in Northern Italy – bear a truly monumental headpiece towering almost 1 metre above the head of the dancer. Despite the huge investment that a ritual of such importance entails, the memory of the *mascra* seems to be locally as scanty as the performance itself has been very irregular. In fact, no precise record prior to 1985 has been kept, apart from a single surviving scarf embroidered with "1913", some allusions to performances possibly held in 1954 and 1957, one photograph allegedly taken in 1970 and a few other scanty clues.

Figure 2. The *mascra* of Castiglione Messer Marino, in the Abruzzi, 15th February 2015. *Pulgenelle* dancing in an anti-clockwise circle. The masquerade is believed to have been held intermittently, at odd years: with relative certainty in 1913, 1954, 1957, 1959, 1970, 1980, and then again in 1985, 1987, 1989 and 1990, after which a new gap opened until the year 2000. Since then, it has been held again intermittently, with increasing frequency.

Photograph by Antonella Mott.

The *lachèra* in Rocca Grimalda, Piedmont (Fig. 3), owes its name to the recurrent *lachè* character, the same brand of ritual impersonator called *arlechino* in Northern Italy, *zanni* in the centre, and *pulgenelle* in the South. Well known in the folk masquerading circuit at the time of fascism when it was called upon to be performed in Venice and Rome, the *lachèra* has a long history of successive revivals. Like other masquerades of the same type (Valfloriana, Castello Tesino, Ivrea), it tells the story of a popular upsurge against the *droit du seigneur* – the purported right of the feudal lords over brides – in celebration of the final victory of the newlyweds against the arrogance of their lord. During the time of its long-standing popularity, the *lachèra* has nevertheless undergone successive stages of minute tampering with its performing order and its characters and came to a halt in at least two longish lapses of time, namely ten years from 1964 to 1974 and five from 1987 to 1992 (Barillari 2007).

Figure 3. The *lachèra* of Rocca Grimalda, in Piedmont, 8th February 2015. Dancing Bride and Groom with two *lachè* in high uniform. The masquerade had stopped in 1964; then it was revived in 1974, was halted again in 1987, to be resumed in 1992.

Photograph by Antonella Mott.

Intermittencies in masquerading may also follow a completely irregular pattern and haphazard scheduling. This is what happens in Menarola, a cluster of minuscule hamlets perched on the mountains surrounding Lake Como in upper Lombardy where the local *bagüta* (*baùta* being the old Venetian word meaning "mask") make up a bizarre cortege on the Epiphany (January 6th). Involving dozens of actors impersonating Little Brides, the Ugly Ones, the Madmen, the Wild Man, the Devils, the Priest, the Captain, Carabinieri and a Robber, the Befana, Father Christmas, and the Three Kings to name but a few, this involves a full day's trek up and down to the dispersed hamlets, as a rather secret affair that takes place in a completely unpredictable fashion because it is not announced beforehand. In fact, the *bagüta* appears to have been performed on local whims in completely odd years (1963, 1973, 1979, 1981, 1983, 1995, 2006, 2017, 2024) with no particular certainty as to when it would be held next, or if ever again (Kezich 2015: 96–101).

The pageantry in Ponte Caffaro near Lake Idro, and in the neighbouring mountain village of Bagolino (Brescia) (Fig. 4), is very probably an offshoot of the Venetian Carnival of old since Venice's dominions extended that far to the west. The Venetian character of their Carnival is made apparent by the sheer elegance of the costumes of the *balarí*, and their dancing to a very select repertoire of 23 violin pieces. Regrettably, a sequel of litigations broke out in the village in 1967 bringing the masquerade to a standstill for nearly ten years until, in 1976, it was once again spurred into action by a team of folklorists from Milan (Cappelletto 1995).

Figure 4. *Carnevale* in Ponte Caffaro, in Lombardy, with the dancing *balarì* in full action. Note the minute gold jewellery sewn into the red headpieces. This celebrated Carnival was brought to a halt from 1967 to 1976.

Photograph by Antonella Mott.

In Valfloriana (Fig. 5), the *mascherada*, which for the duration of Carnival Day operates on a rather exhausting quest for alms and foodstuffs from the highest hamlets to the valley floor some 600 metres below, features three completely different squads of *matòci*, *arlechini* and *paiaci*. These very aptly correspond to three subsequent acts of scaring people away, celebrating a mock marriage of some sort, and a sequel of uproarious skits and comedy sketches. Despite its highly structured character and the richness of its costumes, the *mascherada* has ranked rather low in local priority. Unsurprisingly halted after the devastating flood in 1966, it was not resumed until 1978, namely thirteen years later, when previous displaced residents returned from the outskirts of Milan with a heightened desire to put the ritual back on its feet (Kezich & Poppi 2006).

Figure 5. The *mascherada* of Valfloriana in the valley of Fiemme, 10th February 2018. *Arlechini* ("Harlequins") dancing in circle, anticlockwise: this is the second group of characters in the masquerade, preceded by the *matòci*, and followed by the *paiaci*. The masquerade ceased to exist in 1966, and was revived in 1978, albeit not continuously.

Photograph by Antonella Mott.

A short way to the north, we enter the celebrated Ladin *Sprachinsel* in Fassa (Fig. 6), where the local *mascherèda* has its own host of special characters; the *laché*, who loosely correspond to those of Rocca Grimalda and Valfloriana, the *marascóns*, and the *bufón*. The elaborate elegance of their attire, coupled with the great attention locally given to the protection of the Ladin language in all its living contexts, would make one think that this masquerade had always been a must in the local calendar. However, we learn that it was in fact stopped in 1952 only to be resumed in 1975, twenty-three years later following some significant encouragement from the parish provost of Sèn Jan (Chiocchetti 1988).

Figure 6. The *mascherèda* of the valley of Fassa, at the social club in Penia village, 12th February 2013. A pair of *marascóns*, also dubbed *vacies* ("cows"), dancing with the *bufón* ("buffoon"), who specializes in jests and tomfooleries. This renowned masquerade had ceased to exist between 1952 and 1975 for no specific known reason.

Photograph by Antonella Mott.

In other situations, it would appear that the interruption had been far too long for an authentic revival of the ritual. In a village called Fornesighe (Fig. 7) situated in the foothills of the Dolomites, the *gnaga* (i.e. the "*moggie*") masquerade, abandoned in 1953, was revived in 1990 after 37 years. It served as a pretext for the staging of a yearly gathering from all over the Eastern Alps of wood carvers creating folksy masks of a kind which, by all accounts, in former times were never worn. Nevertheless, in spite of the impediment of these thick and rather spurious pine masks, according to tradition the *gnaga* has retained at its core the format of a nuptial cortege embracing every corner of the village to spread their good wishes (Secco 2001).

Figure 7. La *gnaga* of Fornesighe, in the heart of the Dolomite mountains, 5th February 2017. The *Gnaga* i.e. the "Moggie", is here an elderly woman carrying a young girl in a pannier, and is followed by the Newlyweds and a host of other characters. This masquerade had stopped in 1953, and was revived in 1990, which is when the encumbering wooden masks of today first made their appearance.

Photograph by Antonella Mott.

Another singular situation is found in Canale d'Agordo, a little to the north-east in the Dolomites (Fig. 8). The *zinghenésta* masquerade – named after the attractive gypsy *danceuse* who leads the cortege supposedly on the way to her wedding – had been dormant since the outbreak of World War I in 1915, and was only recently revived *verbatim* on the basis of the written account of a local ethnographer (Lazzaris 1931). The *zingenésta* is a rather complex affair of about twenty different characters in costume: beside the *Zinghenesta* herself, these are the *matiéi* and *lachè*, the *Puster* (Wild Man), the Bear, the Goat ("*Caorón Spión*"), the ubiquitous Chimney Sweep, and then strictly local masks such as the *Caràgn*, *Pasqualón*, *Cortina*. All of the characters were painstakingly revived after an interruption of some seventy-five years in two separate attempts, namely from 1990 to 1998 and again from 2013 to the present.

Figure 8. The *zinghenésta*, in Canale d'Agordo in the Dolomite region, 7th February 2016. The *Zinghenesta* is a dancing gypsy girl, accompanied here by two *laché* and musicians. This masquerade, accounted for in the late XIXth century, stopped prior to WWI in 1915, was revived a first time in 1990, and halted again in 1998 until 2013.

Photograph by Antonella Mott.

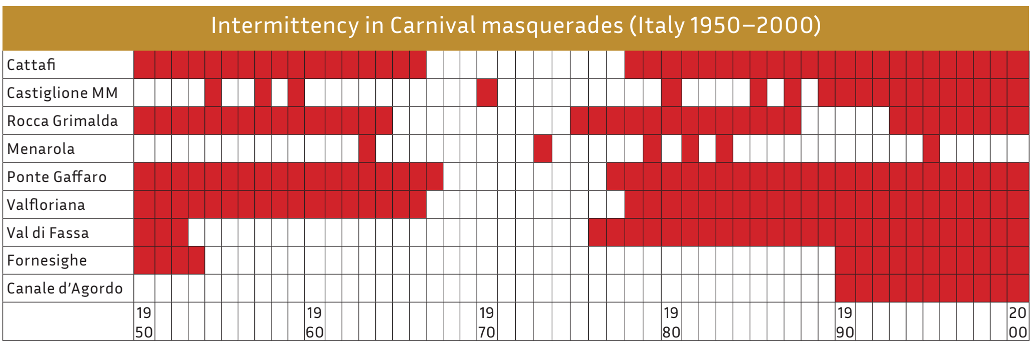
In this aforementioned account, as indeed in most of our examples, the contribution of *literati* from elsewhere, folklorists, emigrés, and clergymen seems to have been significant to the revival of these masquerades after long periods of inactivity. This active interference did in some cases (e.g. Fornesighe) alter the original performance almost beyond recognition, but in the majority of cases it remarkably kept unwavering faith to the ideal template of the masquerade inscribed in the community's mind.

The table below indicates the relative intermittency of the masquerades that have been considered so far.

Extracted from a random sample of unrelated ritual events dispersed at the four corners of Italy, the chart shows a consistent parallel demise of masquerading between the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s, and then an equally simultaneous revival from around 1978 after ten or twelve years of inactivity. A regularity as such calls for some explanation which, with some plausibility, can be drawn from the general political scenario of that age. In the waning of the 1960s, Italy as a whole was facing the social effects of the intervening industrialization with the corresponding shift of large masses of the workforce from South to North and from country to city, with a consequent dramatic depopulation of the rural areas, including many of the villages which hosted carnival masquerading. This anthropological catastrophe (Forni 2010) was soon grafted with the widespread rebellious ideology spurred by the student riots of 1968 resulting in a decade of generalized social unrest. On the one hand, this overtly pre-revolutionary climate progressively accompanied the electoral advance of the Communist Party (a peak of 34% was reached in 1976); on the other, it left room for manoeuver to clandestine terrorist organizations, which acted as if to trigger the great Revolution looming on all sides (Gotor 2022). The abduction and subsequent murder of moderate leader Aldo Moro in the spring of 1978 virtually put a dramatic end to ten years of political confrontation and opened the way for a long season of political reaction still ongoing today.

Alongside the sudden demise in the political scenario of any grand-scale utopia and the beating to retreat of the Political Left, the early 1980s marked the beginning of a new ideology of a necessary "return to the country" and its never-fading traditional values. In many local situations, this new political climate quietly fostered a return to the carnival masquerades that had been abandoned without much regret some ten or twenty years earlier.

Table 1. A random sample of 9 Italian masquerades was chosen, from the south to the north: one in Sicily (Cattafi); one in the central Apennines (Castiglione Messer Marino, Abruzzi); one in Piedmont (Rocca Grimalda); six in the North-Eastern Alps (Menarola, Ponte Caffaro, Valfloriana, Val di Fassa, Fornesighe, Canale d'Agordo). A red square marks the years in which the masquerade was performed



CARNIVAL AND POLITICAL REACTION

Such a distinct association of the revival of masquerading with the onset of conservative, reactionary policies in the national scenario goes against many of the current prejudices in this field. For decades Carnival studies have been dominated by the presumption, mainly drawn from Mikhail Bakhtin's (1968) and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's (1979) classic pronouncements, which envisaged in Carnival the spontaneous expression of an otherwise dormant state of social unrest, encoded in a diffuse culture of disobedience (Burke 1978). This could at times break out, as in the case of Romans in Dauphiné, France (1580), into a sort of popular uprising where carnival celebrations could be used as a springboard for a revolution proper. Very aptly, carnival celebrations would be concluded in many places with the execution, most commonly at the stake but also by hanging or quartering, of a dummy impersonating the epitome of the festivities about to come to a close – a dummy held responsible for all the sins committed in the time of his misrule. This perception of Carnival as an unselfconscious, collective parody of Revolution, one in which social rebellion could rehearse its imminent progress by culminating in the final stages of dethroning and execution of a paramount ruler, has been sustained academically by the notion of Carnival as the enactment of a "world turned upside down" in the writings of Bakhtin (1968); a feast capable of ephemerally subverting the order of society by a temporary elevation of the lower stratum over the ruling classes as was allegedly the case in the midwinter festivities of *Saturnalia* in ancient Rome.

In the face of the available evidence, this view can now be shown to be by and large ideological. Since its early Italian beginnings in the XIIth century or so, Carnival festivals have consisted of conspicuous liberalities offered by the ruling rich to the common people, an example being the free distribution of food. Especially symbolic are the morsels of the pancake type such as the *gnocchi* in Verona; the *bretzel* in Nassereith, Tyrol; the *krapfen* in Agnita, Transylvania (Kezich 2018) – even the wastage of it with flour being flung away by the handful (Verona; Wald-im-Pinzgau, Tyrol and most significantly Galaxidi in Central Greece), the setting of grandiose scenographies, props and floats, and some impressive and pretentious display of riches. These are still prominent features of Carnival, with the family gold and assorted jewellery painstakingly sewn to the ritual headpieces and waistcoats (Ponte Caffaro, Romeno, Serino). Such uninhibited show of luxury happens to be an integral part of Carnival paraphernalia in its original Italian cradle (Caro Baroja 1989 [1961]) and can be verified in several pristine situations in the early Modern Age (Burke 1978): in Venice, where Carnival floats were made at the expenses of covens of young aristocrats e.g. *Compagnia della Calza* (Bertrand 2014); in Florence, where the main sponsor of the *carnasciale* had originally been no less than Lorenzo "il Magnifico" (Ciappelli 1997); in Verona, where the legacy of an illustrious XVIth century benefactor, Tommaso da Vico, is still publicly acknowledged every year (Centro 2021 [1847]); in Rome, where the introduction of Carnival festivities on a completely new scale in the mid XVth century is owed to Pope Paul II, Pietro Barbo, a Venetian prince, and his successor prince Alessandro Farnese, Pope Paul III (Forcella 1999). From such grandiose beginnings in the affluent, splendid city states of the Italian Renaissance, Carnival was endowed with an allure of luxury which would and did strive for centuries to replicate itself down to the most remote villages around the country where even today some display of glittering mirrors, golden trinkets and paillettes is always the order of the day wherever "King" Carnival is in office.

Yet, with the waning splendour of the Ancient Regime, Carnival, too, had sooner or later to give way to the onset of a new era. In 1788, J.W. Goethe lamented that the celebrated Carnival of Rome had become "*not a feast that is offered to the people but one that the people offer themselves*" (Goethe 1976 [1789]) thus making it clear that in Rome he had been faced with a total shambles. Contrary to current interpretation, Goethe's sentence is not meant to be in praise of the creative spontaneity of the people of Rome but it rather seems to point, not without a hint of irritation, to the faded glories of the Italian Renaissance, with their triumphant, flamboyant, well-ordered pomp which he had been pursuing from as far away as his native Weimar in Central Germany.

Goethe's comment is revealing. By the time of his visits to Rome (1787 and 1788), the active support for Carnival by the ruling aristocracy seems to be faltering or is no longer seen to be there. As a sign of the times, a mere two years after Goethe's first stay in Rome, the French Revolution broke out: an event whose first eminent victim, prior to King Louis XVI (1793), was possibly Carnival itself[3]. Performed in the streets of Paris at the heart of Carnival since very early times (1247), the *Promenade du Bœuf Gras*, a "Fat Ox" on his way to butchery, was abruptly stopped in 1790 until at least 1806, and has been resumed intermittently ever since as a barometer of the political atmosphere in Paris. It was cancelled again after 1820 (the assassination of the Duc de Berry), in 1848, and in 1871 with the Commune, to then be resumed in the height of the Belle Époque, albeit not regularly, from 1891 to 1897 (Faure 1978). Throughout time, it would seem that Revolution and Carnival stand on opposite sides so that when the one wins, the other loses ground, and vice versa. The same seems to be true when new rulers step in from afar, such as the Austrians in Venice (1797) and Transylvania (1878) or the Savoy in Rome (1874), where the new king Vittorio Emanuele hurriedly put a stop to the race of jolted horses along the Via del Corso, which had been the highlight of the Carnival of Rome since 1464 (Ademollo 2009 [1883]).

In this perspective, we can safely say that contrary to what we may think from following Le Roy Ladurie and Bakhtin, when historical events dictate the cruel reasons of innovation and progress, Carnival declines and vice versa. When innovation comes to a standstill and people are prepared instead to sit back and rather enjoy or accept their ephemeral stance in a world that will never change, Carnival is found to resurrect (Kezich 2019).

We believe that a similar pendulum motion that is dependent on the larger ongoing political scenario can also be observed in the intermittency of ritual masquerading with its alternating high and low ebbs even in the most remote local settings.

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PLACE NAMES INDEX

Austria: Imst, Nassereith, Telfs, Tarrenz, Wald im Piztal (Tyrol); Wörth, Zell am See (Salzburger Alps); **France**: Paris, Romans; **Greece**: Galaxidy; **Italy**, Rocca Grimalda, Ivrea (Piedmont); Menarola, Bagolino, Ponte Caffaro (Lombardy); Romeno, Valfloriana, Val di Fassa, Castello Tesino (Trentino); Fornesighe, Canale d'Agordo, Venice, Verona (Veneto); Florence (Tuscany); Roma (Latium), Castiglione Messer Marino (Abruzzi); Serino (Campania); Cattafi (Sicily); **Romania**: Agnita (Transilvania).

NOTES

1 Cfr. J. G. Frazer (ed.) 1959. *Ovid's Fasti*. London, William Heinemann; Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, pp. 402–403.

2 The project *Carnival King of Europe / Carnevale re d'Europa* began in 2007 at the behest of the Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente Trentina of San Michele all'Adige (Italy), and secured the collaboration of important European museums from France, Croatia, Bulgaria and Macedonia in its first phase (2007–2009), and later (2010–2012) from the Basque country in Spain, Slovenia, Romania and Poland. These are the partners which have been involved: Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente Trentina, San Michele all'Adige (Italy) as organizer; Euskal Museoa Bilbao, Museo Vasco of Bilbao (Spain); Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée (MuCem), Marseille (France); Slovenski etnografski muzej, Ljubljana (Slovenia); Complexul Național Muzeal Astra, Sibiu (Romania); Państwowe Muzeum Etnograficzne w Warzawie of Warsaw (Poland); Etnografski muzej, Zagreb (Croatia); Ethnographic Institute and Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia (Bulgaria); Nacionalna Ustanova Muzej na Makedonija, Skopje (Macedonia). Within the project's framework, some additional fieldwork has been carried out in England, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria and Greece, thus totalling fourteen countries directly involved in the survey. For a complete view of the project, check the site www.carnivalkingofeurope.it.

3 The parallel is not far-fetched since the beheading of King Louis XVI is today still celebrated in France, on the 21st of January, with banquets of *Tête de Veau* as a modern metamorphosis of the *Boeuf Gras*. On this "*tête de veau*", Gustave Flaubert writes (translation by Giovanni Kezich): "It's an English import. To parody the ceremony that royalists celebrated on January 30 (the day of the beheading of King Charles I, another victim of democracy), the Independents founded an annual banquet at which ox heads were eaten, red wine was drunk in bull skulls, toasting to the extermination of the Stuarts. After Thermidor, our terrorists organized a whole new fraternity of this kind, which proves that stupidity is fertile" (*L'Éducation sentimentale, histoire d'un jeune homme*, 1869).

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The Universal Model of Being in the Ukrainian Lyro-Epic Folklore: From Immanent to Transcendent

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Abstract: The article analyses the dialectic of the immanent and transcendent in the works of the Ukrainian folklore lyro-epic literature. Often in a folklore work, the adjustment to comprehend a certain idea occurs through certain material forms, to pass through ordinary things that are important in specific circumstances, in a particular life, to timeless entities. At the same time, the folklore image itself in dumas, historical songs, songs-chronicles, ballads, etc. can be considered in the aspect of self-transcendence: the heroes of folklore works are presented in moments of spiritual and aesthetic experience; they give an essential moral assessment of what is happening and go through the stages of self-knowledge and self-affirmation, thus trying to overcome their own ontological imperfection. The article aims to delve into the intricacies of Ukrainian oral non-ceremonial poetry, specifically focusing on dumas, ballads, historical songs and chronicle songs, to understand the universal model of being that intertwines the immanent and transcendent realms. This exploration seeks to highlight the distinctive characteristics of spirituality within the artistic macrosphere of folklore. Analysing the works of non-ceremonial poetry, the authors note that the very essence of the transcendent, which at first seems to be something indistinct, fundamentally unknown, located outside the objective world, is identified only intuitively. The artistic macrosphere of the lyro-epic work is aimed at finding those reflexive facets that will help to comprehend the transcendent, and, in the future, the dialectic of the immanent and transcendent itself. It is emphasised that in some chronicle songs there is an attempt to comprehend the history of the region through magic, which is defined in real existence.

Keywords: non-ceremonial poetry, folklore consciousness, anthropological model, artistic macrosphere, lyro-epic works

INTRODUCTION

In Ukrainian non-ceremonial poetry, the artistic model of personality is identified through the ontological dimension of spirituality, being revealed through the multifaceted interaction of the incomprehensible cosmos and the mysterious essence of the individual himself. This constant relationship between the natural world and the individual world translates the trajectories of folklore consciousness from an immanent perception of being as a world of things, everyday activities, and ritual interaction to a transcendent understanding of the unity of these factors with spiritual factors (Koval 2021; Teleutsia et al. 2022). The recognition of culture itself as the basis of responsibility for the "other", the development of one's own individuality and society as a whole in the collective consciousness becomes the main factor in structuring the universal anthropological model, which is an important stage of personal and natural-cosmic evolution.

Folklore consciousness in the traditional lyro-epic literature is distinguished by various aspects of reality reproduction. Various figures and phenomena are identified according to the established idea of structuring a particular model. The essence of a particular subject or object and the purpose inherent in them become existentially integral. The desire to synthesise the features of man, nature and the cosmos allows us to perceive even abstract concepts as real and important in the course of personal development (Ivanytskyi 2004). The artistic macrosphere of Ukrainian traditional non-ceremonial poetry is distinguished by the appearance of seemingly distant objects in time-spatial comprehension through a certain idea, a spiritual dimension, becoming an important constant of the very moment in which the recipient is located. Often in a folklore work, the adjustment to comprehend a certain idea occurs through appropriate material forms. It is important to move through ordinary things that are dominant in certain circumstances, in a particular life, to the entities of the timeless. At the same time, the folklore image itself in dumas, historical songs, chronicle songs, ballads, etc. can be considered in the aspect of self-transcendence: the heroes of folklore works are represented in moments of spiritual and aesthetic experience (Breslavets 2016; Guliyeva & Kopanitsa 2024). They provide an essential moral assessment of what is happening and go through the stages of self-knowledge and self-affirmation, thus trying to overcome their own ontological imperfection.

In the folklore consciousness, the model of an ideal personality, ideal relationships, and an ideal society appears in a special way. The transcendent in the lyre era is realised primarily in the folklore image, revealing itself through the dialectic of content and form (Miao et al. 2024). The immanent in oral traditional poetry becomes a reflection of significant experience, an acceptance or rejection of human imperfection as irrationality. As one of the forms of the irrational in Ukrainian lyro-epic genres, we can consider war, its demonic essence regarding the destruction of the life circle and vital interests. In many lyro-epic works, as in the folk epic – legends, fairy tales, narrations – the unknown, the mystical is conveyed through aspects of the objective world. This can be seen in the example of a number of works about giant ancestors. After all, through this "objectification" of the unknown, not only is the unknown world comprehended, but even the multiplicity of worlds (Serdyuk & Umanets & Slyusarenko 2002).

The analysis of samples of traditional non-ceremonial poetry gives grounds to speak about the reflection in the artistic macrosphere of a folklore work of a special model of being, which consists of several levels: the real objective world, that is, the empirical, or historically immanent, including the metaphysical, that is, the transcendent, eternal; and, finally, the invisible world, in which the earthly and heavenly, immanent and transcendent are combined into a single whole (Naumovska 2021).

The article aims to delve into the intricacies of Ukrainian oral non-ceremonial poetry, specifically focusing on dumas, ballads, historical songs and chronicle songs, to understand the universal model of being that intertwines the immanent and transcendent realms. This exploration seeks to highlight the distinctive characteristics of spirituality within the artistic macrosphere of folklore. The current state of research on this topic is rich and interdisciplinary, drawing on insights from folklorists, philosophers and linguists. These studies provide a vital context for the article's objectives, contributing to a deeper comprehension of the interaction between the tangible and the intangible, the earthly and the divine, in Ukrainian lyro-epic literature.

CURRENT STATE OF PROBLEM DEVELOPMENT ON THE TOPIC

The 'transcendent' refers to that which goes beyond or exists outside the ordinary limits of physical experience or material existence. It encompasses the spiritual, metaphysical and eternal dimensions, often involving elements of the unknown or mystical, as seen in folklore works through symbolism and metaphorical riddles. The 'immanent', on the other hand, pertains to the physical, empirical, or historically tangible aspects of life. It includes the everyday, the ritualistic and the natural world, reflecting significant human experiences and cultural interactions. These concepts are not just isolated elements; instead, they interact dynamically in folklore, creating a rich tapestry of meaning and understanding. This interaction allows for the exploration of complex ideas such as faith, spirituality and the nature of existence, as they manifest in the artistic and symbolic representations found in traditional Ukrainian non-ceremonial poetry.

The problem of the relationship between immanent and transcendent is, in our opinion, interdisciplinary in nature, so the research involves the works of folklorists, philosophers, linguists, etc. In the work "The transcendental side of life. Aquatic demons in Polish folklore" researcher Urszula Lehr (2013) analyses the magical world of water demons, which appears as the transcendent essence of being. In folk beliefs, demons as supernatural beings were associated with the mythical world of various reservoirs. Such associations were based on the traditional, culturally determined, diverse symbolism of the element of water. In various beliefs, water has become the personification of a kind of primitive matter, including chaos, variability and instability. Water in different myths is distinguished by different semiotic content: it is a symbol of reincarnation, restoration of spiritual and physical strength, purification, baptism. In popular beliefs, water is the boundary between the existing and otherworldly worlds. Everything that emerged from water or had contact with it was attributed magical properties; it was considered supernatural. According to numerous beliefs, demons, monsters, gods and demigods lived in the water (Lehr 2013).

Ukrainian folklorist O. V. Naumovska (2021) in her doctoral dissertation "Mythological triad "Life → death → immortality" in folk prose" explores, among other problems, folklore images of Ukrainian folk fairy tales involved in the structuring of the mythological triad "Life → Death → Immortality". The author analyses the connection of traditional images of cuckoos, frogs, etc. with otherworldly loci. This is confirmed, for example, by the fairy-tale motifs of the three-time transformation of the heroine of the fairy tale "The Frog

Princess": a frog (a representative of the "lower" chthonic world, which has sacred knowledge; according to the Christian faith, frogs are people who died during the Great Flood) → a woman (an earthly being) → a cuckoo (a bird, a representative of the "upper" world, associated with the country of the dead, flying to the faraway kingdom). Thus, the fairy tale presents an image that combines all three spheres of the universe of folk mythological representations: lower, middle and upper (Naumovska 2021).

ANALYSIS OF IMMANENT AND TRANSCENDENT PATTERNS IN THE LYRO-EPIC FOLKLORE

Immanent and transcendent patterns can be traced on the example of people's thoughts, in particular "Dumas about Alexey Popovich and the storm on the Black Sea". There are three special spheres of existence: the storm at sea as a physical, immanent world; confession before God as a spiritual, metaphysical force; and the majestic and incomprehensible essence of faith as a synthesis of the immanent and transcendent:

> *Na litsiu khristiians'komu khresta ia ne skladav,*
> *I ottsovs'koï-matchinoï molitvi ia ne spominav,*
> *A ishche svoïm dobrim konem probigav,*
> *Trista dush malikh ditei konem pobivav.*
> *To molodiï zheni za vorota vibigali*
> *I malikh ditok na ruki khvatali, I mene, Oleksiia Popovicha, kliali-proklinali.*
> *To ne єst' mene Chorne more potopliaє,*
> *Єst' mene ottsovs'ka i matchina molitva*
> *Navsegda karaє...*
> (Shalata 1983)

> [I didn't put a Christian cross on my face,
> And I didn't remember my father's prayer,
> He also ran with his good horse,
> Three hundred souls of small children were beaten by a horse.
> Then the young women ran out of the gate
> And small children were grabbed in their arms,
> They cursed and damned me, Oleksiy Popovich.
> It's not the Black Sea that drowns me,
> It's my father's and mother's prayer
> That forever punishes me...]

Prayer in the people's duma appears as a kind of manifestation of the transcendent: being in the spiritual sphere of being, it affects the real, objective, historical-immanent world. Thus, a certain ideologeme in folklore consciousness manifests itself in the process of interaction between the individual and the world; it is defined and realised as a living entity, acquiring various forms. The storm in the above duma about Alexey Popovich becomes a product of fear, and the hero of the folklore work seeks to ontologically justify exceptional events from the point of view of violating the relationship between a person and his self-transcendent spiritual essence:

> *Koli b mene ottsovs'ka ta matchina molitva*
> *Od smerti oboronila,*
> *Na Chornomu moriu ne vtopila,*
> *To budu ia do ottsia, do matushki,*
> *Do rodu pribuvati*
> *Mig bi ia starshogo brata za ridnogo ottsia pochitati*
> *I bliz'kikh susid za ridnuiu bratiiu*
> *V sebe vzhe i mati*
> (Dmytrenko et al. 2009).

> [If my father's and mother's prayers
> Had shielded me from death,
> Had not drowned me in the Black Sea,
> Then I would return to my father, to my mother,
> To my kin.
> I could revere my elder brother as my own father,
> And close neighbors as my own siblings,
> I would even have a mother in myself.]

The "prayer" frame is detailed through the appearance of pictures of being. The great destructive power of the elements freezes before the almighty power of faith: "the evil-opposing wave" began to subside; the Cossacks were "surprised by a great miracle" of the greatness of prayer, which became transformative in living existence: "We did not even lose a single Cossack from the army" (Dmytrenko & Dovzhenok & Hrytsa 2009).

An important concept in the duma is the discourse- and genre-forming concept of "faith", which reflects the spiritual sphere of a person, represented by the frames "repentance" and "prayer". According to modern researchers, the folklore concept may differ from other discursive variants by the constancy of its content. Thanks to the accumulation of collective knowledge and the axiological constants of a certain ethnic group, it is the folklore concept that appears at the center of the national picture of the world (Ivanytskyi 2004).

The dialectic of the immanent and transcendent can be traced by the example of ballad texts. For example, in the folk ballad "Two brothers mowed the grass", different spheres of life are represented. First, the physical or empirical sphere: "the brothers mowed the grass"; "sister Ganichka carried the dinner"; "three gaydamaks met her", "they gave her a horse to hold", "they let the horses into an open field", "she jumped into the blue sea". Secondly, the metaphysical sphere in the scene of Anna's magical transformation and fusion with the natural world:

> *Bo ta voda – to Gannina sl'oza,*
> *Gde tilo vpalo, tam iavir viris,*
> *Gde lichko vpalo, tam kalinkov stalo.*
> *De ochi vpali, tam ternom stali,*
> *De kosi vpali, tam osokov stali*
> (Dey and Yasenchuk 1987).

> [For that water is Hanna's tear,
> Where the body fell, there a maple grew,
> Where the face fell, there a viburnum stood.
> Where the eyes fell, there they became thorns,
> Where the braids fell, there reeds grew.]

The above lyro-epic text presents the folklore frame "abuse", which is associated with the frames of "deception", "murder" and similar themes. Despite the concise content of the ballad, this frame has a complex structure and consists of several subframes: the panorama of the event, the tragedy of the situation, and the metaphysical consequence of the actions taken. Each of them has its own semiotic and verbal embodiment. As with the people's dumas, sensuality focuses on the cognitive process and contributes to the unfolding of events. Unknown subjects and objects become structurally delineated, motivated at the level of the translator and the recipient.

The dialectic of the immanent and transcendent is presented in the ballad text at the stage of consecutivity: true beauty does not perish, but it passes into other forms; it is eternal. Such statements can be confirmed by significant texts of lyro-epic chronicle songs, which present extraordinary events from the lives of individuals or the whole society. In the process of interaction between the translator and the recipient, it turns out that listeners who were aware of the event, or who were its witnesses or participants, actually perceive what they did as a paradox, since according to the established axiological model, it is unacceptable.

By presenting murder or unnatural death as a violation of harmony, the narrator tries to awaken the audience's sensuality, to evoke sympathy for a person who has fallen into exceptional, often tragic circumstances. The whole complex of poetic means of the work is subordinated to a certain goal: to inform about a certain event, to influence the range of value imperatives, to warn against recklessness, and so on. The concept of chronicle songs is identified through the synthesis of suggestive, visual and emotional factors (Pavlova 2017).

Considering the psychological function of non-ceremonial poetry, it is worth noting that a peculiar combination of ethical, rational and psychological aspects of its perception affects the development of personality, opens the way to awareness of true harmony. As we can see, in a folklore work, the knowledge of the transcendent essence of the world is possible with a systematic representation of the rational and irrational spheres of being (Koçer 2025).

This can be seen in the example of the lyro-epic work "Sister". In the work, the subject, the physical world is presented at the beginning of the song in a rather fragmentary way: As a sister to a brother / From a foreign side / To distant cities / Wrote letters, / Sent bows (Kashyrina 1974), and the metaphysical world is more detailed, since it is presented as filled with an unprecedented force that can overcome space and time:

> *Dobre, bratiku, uchini, –*
> *Cherez visoki lisi iasnim sokolom perelini, –*
> *Cherez veliki gorodi sizen'kim golubchikom pereleti,*
> *Cherez bistri riki bilim lebedikom pereplivi*
> (Kashyrina 1974).

> [Alright, dear brother, do so, –
> Fly through the high forests as a bright falcon, –
> Fly over the great cities as a little grey dove,
> Swim across the swift rivers as a white swan.]

The functional specificity of the lyro-epic literature is inextricably linked with the need for cultural creation and the desire to transform the world, to spiritualise it, trying to give it sensually positive features. In traditional lyro-epic works, we can observe manifestations of self-transcendence, which influenced the preservation of such samples in the memory of the people.

Analysing the works of non-ceremonial poetry, we can note that the very essence of the transcendent, which at first seems to be something indistinct, fundamentally unknown and located outside the objective world, is identified only intuitively. The artistic macrosphere of the lyro-epic work is aimed at finding those reflexive facets that will help to comprehend the transcendent and, in the future, the dialectic of the immanent and transcendent itself. In some chronicle songs, an attempt is made to comprehend the history of the region through the magical, which is defined in the subject being. The dialectic of the immanent and metaphysical can be traced in the example of the chronicle song "About the giant ancestors":

> *Iaki voni todi buli? Visokogo rostu.*
> *Zhili sobi v Chornogorakh taki-tak, poprostu.*
> *Iak buvalo zachinaє kuleshu variti,*
> *To iak zachne na vatertsi okropets' kipiti,*
> *Todi lelet si zbiraє v misto za mukoiu …*
> (Dey and Hrytsa 1972).

> [How were they back then? Tall in stature.
> They lived in the Black Mountains, just like that, plainly.
> When they'd start to make porridge,
> As soon as the water begins to boil,
> Then the lady gathers and goes to town for flour…]

The mystical world of giants stands out from the real world. The step of this huge ancestor is "from Kostrycha to Sinitsa", the next is "from Sinitsa to Bukovets", "from Bukovets to Sokolovsky…mountains", "from Sokolovsky to Pistinsky" (Dey & Hrytsa 1972).

The modern researcher of the Ukrainian traditional epic Olesya V. Naumovska (2021), analysing the folk ideas of anagenesis, gives descriptions of giants in folk legends: "Once there were such great people who used to walk through the forest as if on grass"; "a giant found somewhere our plowman with oxen, plow and driver" and "took everyone in the palm of his hand", calling them "mice" (such ability, even in infancy, once again emphasises the gigantic size of that generation of people); "Here and now our generation has come, and there is no sign of the giants; only somewhere in the church, in Kyiv or in Lviv, there is a foot of the giant and such, they say, a big one, that it reaches to the bathhouse. Such were the people" (Naumovska 2021: 39). The author notes that the giants were even endowed with the gift of prophecy and warned about the further crushing of representatives of the human race.

Traditional carols, typically associated with the celebration of Christmas, are folk songs that have been passed down through generations, often reflecting the customs, history and spirit of the community (Kavun 2021). The sphere of the transcendent is also represented in a peculiar way in traditional carols, which were intended to describe the house, the yard of the owner, who was congratulated, because the farm was considered the most valuable in a person's life. These images are usually filled with idealisation, using the traditional system of poetic means, so-called formulas, and so on. The part of the grandeur of the house and yard was also joined by the part in which the owners were glorified. Researchers consider such components of the ritual song to be formal, highlighting important ways of creating the image of the owner, who is congratulated by carolers. This is the structuring of a formula of greatness based on a stable allegory in the outlined poetic system with its gradual development. We are talking about a metaphorical riddle and its solution in a folklore text.

In the carol "Do you sleep, do you hear, pan-master", the immanent is identified at the beginning of the work through the mention of the attacks of the Tatar Horde and the destruction of the economy: the Horde took your yard, / the Horde took it, the Tatars took it, / the Tatars took it, captured it (Shalata 1983). Elements of the transcendent appear in the final part of the work. The owner, who "caught up with the Horde and scattered it", "turned his courtyard back" and built it better, as it was, with "three sides, and three Peria". On the fourth Peria he built an amazing church:

> *Tserkov zbuduvav z tr'oma vershechki,*
> *Z tr'oma vershechki, z dvoma okontsia.*
> *Єdinim okontsem sonen'ko skhodit'*
> *Drugim okontsem misiats' zakhodit',*
> *Rais'kimi dvertsi gospodar khodit' ...*
> (Shalata 1983).

> [He built a church with three pinnacles,
> With three pinnacles, with two windows.
> Through one window the sun descends,
> Through the other the moon sets,
> By the heavenly doors, the master walks...]

Carols are distinguished by a peculiar representation of the transcendent world, which remains unknown in real life, but is clearly represented in the imagination. Modern folklore researcher Olena Ivanovska (2012) suggests analysing folklore as a specific semiotic apparatus that is designed to structure time, space and social interaction within a particular tradition. This approach views folklore not just as a collection of stories or songs but as a complex system of signs and symbols that serve to structure three key aspects of a culture: time, space and social interaction. By understanding folklore in this way, researchers can gain insight into how a particular tradition organizes and understands its world. In the context of traditional carols and their peculiar representation of the transcendent world, Ivanovska's method becomes particularly relevant. Carols often contain elements that are not directly observable in the real world but have specific meanings and representations in the imagination of the culture from which they originate (Us 2023). This symbolic representation is a critical part of structuring the community's understanding of the world, both seen and unseen.

Symbolism is also used in carols about the paradise tree, which, according to popular beliefs, has three tops. Among those tops there are – "syv sokolonko" – "homeowner", "syva kunonka" – "housewife", "syvi lastovlyata" – "their children". The description of the paradise tree, in our opinion, can be considered from the standpoint of dialectics between immanent and transcendent, although the sphere of the immanent is presented quite sporadically, and, in fact, can also manifest itself on the way to the transcendent, even in the analysed text, when "doliv luzhenki", where "fast rivers" flow (Shalata 1983).

Folklore researchers emphasise that the intellectual component of experience is important in folklore. The very term "intellectual" is interpreted by philosophers as "denoting everything that is comprehended only by the mind and inaccessible to sensory knowledge". This concept is contrasted with "sensitive" (sensory) (Shynkaruk 2002). In idealistic philosophy, interpreting "intelligible", supernatural or supersensible objects and entities is meant. It is the intuitive perception of a complex multi-level cosmos that generates whole semiotic complexes for reproducing the unreal world, which cannot be outlined with the help of familiar concepts, presented on the example of objects and phenomena of everyday life. In the center of such descriptions is a folklore text that is perceived as a narrative or as a taxonomy, that is, a linguistic picture of the world, a code that appears through generations and through centuries. Texts themselves and methods of their verification through sign systems become basic in synchronous description (Kelmendi & Nimani 2024).

The dialectic of the immanent and transcendent can also be traced in the example of some songs about the national liberation struggle of Ukrainians, which present in detail the sphere of the immanent. In one of the songs, following in the footsteps of living facts, an episode of the struggle against the fascist invaders and the death of Gritsk Soyuz, originally from Milush, is presented. The concept of "war" is represented by several frames with expressive detail: "campaign" – "quiet, dead night", "shooting" – "rapid-fire shots fired", "death" – "a shout was heard", "Herman laughed" – "killed fell to the ground" (Lavryshyn 1996). The detail of frames in such lyro-epic songs is not only informative, but also psychological, since it enhances the audience's experience of this event and causes anxiety and sadness. The joy and cheerfulness of the young fighters described at the beginning is overshadowed by the harsh essence of the war. In the end, the use of the diminutive "molodenky" enhances the emotivity of the folklore work, identifying an essential assessment in the process of communicative interaction, even a certain point of view.

We can draw parallels with the reasoning of the outstanding scientist Maryana Lanovyk (2006) that the standpoint does not apply to a written, completed story, but to the events that underlie the work. History as such, according to the researcher, cannot exist until the narrative context is evaluated and viewed. After all, when creating a particular story, only the most important elements are selected from among a huge number of elements to reproduce this event (Lanovyk 2006). It is the moment of the death of a Ukrainian soldier for the sake of the liberation of his native land that becomes the main one in the view of a historical event. At the same time, the transcendent in the analysed song

"The sun has gone beyond the mountains" is identified only at the same time, but it gives an impetus to its future comprehension at the level of consecutivity:

> *Zaginuv vin lish tilom, a dukh iogo iz nami,*
> *I dali ide za voliu z do boiu z vorogami*
> (Lavryshyn 1996).

> [He perished only in body, but his spirit is with us,
> And he continues to fight for freedom against enemies.]

The demon of war is not perceived as an abstraction, because he brings a person closer to death (Hrytsa 1996). And it is this approach to understanding the mystery of death that contributes to immersion in the spiritual depths of earthly existence. Let us agree with the philosopher's constants that war can be considered as irrational, demonic in a person, as the fire that, having flared up, can destroy any vital interests. It is obvious that war can refute the entire rationalistic approach to history itself. The life of a particular person and entire generations, and the war itself, are irrationally incompatible.

CONCLUSIONS

The current research presents a comprehensive exploration of immanent and transcendent patterns within Ukrainian lyro-epic folklore. The analysis of various folk songs and ballads sheds light on how these patterns are intricately woven into the fabric of these narratives, revealing profound insights into the Ukrainian cultural and spiritual experience. The article systematically delves into the concept of immanent and transcendent patterns, emphasizing their significance in folklore. It demonstrates how these patterns manifest across different spheres of existence, with the physical and immanent world symbolized by events like storms at sea, confession before God representing the spiritual and metaphysical dimension, and the essence of faith serving as a synthesis of the immanent and transcendent.

One of the key takeaways from the analysis is the pivotal role of prayer as a bridge between the immanent and transcendent. Through prayer, individuals in these folk narratives seek to influence and justify events in the real, historical-immanent world, highlighting the dynamic interplay between the spiritual and physical realms. The dialectic of immanent and transcendent is vividly illustrated in the analysis of folk ballads, such as "Two Brothers Mowed the Grass" and "Sister". These ballads depict different spheres of life and explore metaphysical transformations, providing a rich tapestry of themes and narratives within the lyro-epic folklore tradition. Furthermore, the article emphasizes the enduring nature of folklore concepts and their central role in shaping the national worldview. Folklore concepts serve as repositories of collective knowledge and axiological constants within the Ukrainian cultural context, underlining their significance in understanding the world.

In summary, the article successfully develops a universal model of being in Ukrainian lyro-epic folklore, illuminating the intricate relationship between the immanent and transcendent. It highlights how these patterns are woven into the narratives, providing profound insights into the cultural and spiritual heritage of Ukraine.

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When the Transnational Rules: Humorous Reactions to the Wagner Group Rebellion in Estonia, Poland and Belarus

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Abstract: At the time of globalisation and digitisation, the news about important events easily and quickly cross national boundaries, and so does the humour that emerges as a reaction to the news. Memes and jokes about conflicts can be found far beyond a country or region where the conflicts occur. In the present article we investigate whether humour on the same conflict differs across different countries. We compare the humour of three countries – Belarus, Estonia and Poland – that comment on the Wagner group rebellion that took place in late June 2023 against the backdrop of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Our analysis of humour genres, its mechanisms and communication styles reveals that although humorous reactions to the Wagner group rebellion have been similar – but not identical – across different countries in many ways, there were also important national differences related to the political climate in the countries in question and their relationship with Russia. The content of humour, general popularity of certain characters and communication styles tended to differ across cultures as well. We conclude that the transnational aspects of humorous communication dominate over the national humour features - not only with regard to the individual humorous items, but on the more abstract levels of genres and humour mechanisms.

Keywords: national, global, humour, conflict, Belarus, Estonia, Poland

1. INTRODUCTION

The global reach of internet humour surfaced as early as 2001 when the cycle of jokes about Bin Laden and the attack on the WTC spread far beyond the US (Kuipers 2002). Nowadays memes and jokes revolving around conflicts and controversies that take place in some country or region often travel far, although the distance between the location where an event takes place and the location where the humour circulates affects humour content (Laineste et al. 2024). The closer the controversy is to the humour creators and sharers, the more nuanced and detailed their humorous representations of the controversy become. The differences between instances of topical humour across countries may also emerge when adaptations and local references are added to "domesticate" issues and bring them closer to local audiences (Yus 2012: 129; Boxman-Shabtai & Shifman 2016; Nissenbaum & Shifman 2020).

This paper zooms in on the topic of national differences in the humorous representation of a conflict known as the Wagner group rebellion by comparing the humour of three countries – Belarus, Estonia, and Poland. The rebellion took place in late June 2023 against the backdrop of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine that had started in February 2022. The Wagner group is a private military company that took an active part in the invasion. In 2023, the tensions between the Wagner group (and, in particular, its then-leader Yevgeny Prigozhin) and the Russian Ministry of Defence became acute as Prigozhin accused the Ministry of Defence of not supplying enough ammunition to his private army, and therefore causing a lot of injuries and deaths among the Wagner group mercenaries. The tensions reached their peak on June 23, 2023 when Prigozhin announced a march towards Moscow. He and his army occupied a part of Russian territory, including the regional centre Rostov-on-Don. Despite the initial upheaval that it caused, the rebellion turned out to be short-lived: already on June 24, 2023 the Wagner group turned back and, supposedly following the negotiations with Belarusian illegitimate president Alyaksandr Lukashenka, withdrew to Belarus. The rebellion was broadly covered in the news in the region, and also caused a lot of humour, mostly due to its unexpectedness and the sharp contrast between Prigozhin's grand plans and the outcome of the rebellion. The humour also ridiculed Putin's and Lukashenka's reactions to it.

The countries from which the humour was collected for the current study have different degrees of involvement in the rebellion. Belarus became an (unforeseen) retreat location for the Wagner group troops, while Estonia and Poland were not directly involved in the conflict. However, as the latter two countries are located close to the war zone, and the war events are regularly covered in their news and social media, it was not surprising that the humour on the Wagner group rebellion was also notable there.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 National and Transnational Features of Humour in the Public Sphere

The digital/online public sphere (for the definition of the term, see Schäfer 2015: 322) has contributed to the transnationalisation of humour topics and formats. Some humour topics such as sex or animals (Shifman 2006: 199) or jokes about general stupidity (for the history and spread of stupidity jokes, see Davies 1990 and later) travel especially well. Using general script oppositions (e.g. smart/dumb) in jokes guarantees their propensity to spread and recycle, often on a large scale. Humour can become a powerful (albeit often invisible) agent of globalisation (Shifman & Levy & Thelwall 2014: 727) as it proliferates stereotypes that can be and are used all around the world.

However, these processes are bi-directional: although the global nature of online public communication makes humour more transnational, the local audiences domesticate the humour to match their tastes, styles and expectations. From the late 2000s onwards, online meme culture has witnessed a rise of localised internet memes (Börzsei 2013). The blending of the national and transnational brings faraway issues closer (e.g. the Occupy Wall Street movement and its local expressions; see Blank 2012: 9–12) and, similarly, allows the local topics to gain a wider international audience and recognition (e.g. the Russian war in Ukraine, see Laineste et al. 2024). Thus, units of digital humour such as memes resemble ecotypes. This term, defined by Hasan-Rokem (2016: 111) as "a variation in an international type […] specific to an area or group", draws from botany to metaphorically refer to processes of adaptation and re-elaboration of alien elements to new environments that can be easily transposed to explain the interaction of national and transnational patterns in memes (cf. Laineste et al. 2024).

The nature of humour travelling transnationally is affected by the particular communication style, defined by linguists as a cluster of discourse features that include formal and pragmatic features, the latter comprising emotionality of expression, politeness, metaphoricity, the use of neologisms as well as the use of humour (Chłopicki 2017a: 1). The general and well-established distinction that is appropriate to use in the studies on internet data is that between direct and indirect communication styles (see e.g. by Hall 1989; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey 1988; Liu 2016). This is especially useful when only individual online humorous items are available, and not a corpus of data produced by identifiable users, which would allow for more fine-grained distinctions. Another reason why using a directness and indirectness scale fits the context of the study of humour was that there are two essential discursive mechanisms that evoke humour: humour can derive either from the presence of the unsaid (the concealed, elusive), also described as understatement (see Dolitsky 1983), or from exaggeration: then it is evoked by "the revealed" (Chłopicki 2017b: 148), i.e. repetition, hyperbole or overstatement. This follows Simpson (2003), who distinguished two opposed strategies of satirical discourse called saturation and attenuation, which correspond to Ermida's (2008) hyperbole (overstatement) and understatement (associated with parody).

In the present article, we attempt to associate various known humour mechanisms with what we dub direct or indirect communication style. And so, exaggeration and related saturation mechanisms would include repetition, grotesque, caricature, sarcasm or stereotyping and would be the province of direct communication style, as they tend to rely on what is explicit in discourse. In contrast, parody, sexual innuendo or other transgressive mechanisms, wordplay, juxtaposition of text and image, ambiguity or nonsense would belong to that of indirect style, since they all require the audience to reach for interpretation clues outside of the discourse. Some other mechanisms that we discuss here can be either direct or indirect, depending on the context, like status challenging mechanisms, recontextualization in the broad sense (see Tsakona 2020) or irony, which can be overt or covert (see Dynel 2018).

2.2 Representations of Conflicts in Humour

An almost global access to the internet is accompanied by an increase in the amount, speed and geographical span in information flows. News about conflicts or other incidents reach audiences worldwide in a matter of minutes, often taking on the form of memes. These range from critical reflections on the triggering event to intertextual, absurdist remixes referring to an insignificant and superficial detail of it.

Humorous reactions to conflicts might have different functions for those who create and those who spread them during the conflict and in the aftermath of it. They help people cope with the situation, bond the group together (often by "othering" the opposite side of the conflict), or, on the contrary, make a conflict more acute, attack, cover up the issue or even deny the problem (Lewis 2006: 7–8; Zelizer 2010). However, they also play an important role when we observe the conflict from a spatial and/or temporal distance – humorous reactions to conflict shape our interpretations of it alongside its serious representations (Holman & Kelly 2001: 249). The humorous representations create a distorted version of the conflict, highlighting certain aspects of it – usually the most incongruous and thus easy to ridicule – and downplaying others. They are not neutral, as they display a certain stance (Shifman 2014; Wiggins 2019) that can be deduced from their content or meta-pragmatic information (Laineste & Fiadotava 2024). Their analysis, thus, requires a detailed study not only of the immediate context of the conflict, but also the broader context of the societies where the humour spreads.

Despite – or maybe precisely due to – their seemingly different nature, humour and conflicts (almost) always go hand-in-hand. Humour may cause a conflict, and conflicts very often are met with humorous reactions. One of the first anti-war comedy plays was Aristophanes's "Lysistrata" that was written already in the 5th century BC at the time of Athens' disastrous losses in the Peloponnesian war. It humorously portrayed women's sex strike that made their husbands halt the war. It could be read both as an anti-war comedy (Morreall 2005: 63) and as an expression of Aristophanes's cynical mindset and dissatisfaction with his city's dysfunctionality (Severini 2010). Humour also accompanied later conflicts, such as, for example, French wars of religion in the 16th century where satirical pamphlets such as Jean Boucher's *Vie et faits notables de Henry de Valois* (1589) and the anonymous *Satyre Menippee* (1594) were used by both sides of the conflict to mock religious and political views of the opponents and dehumanize them (Hayes 2022). Similarly, during the British Civil wars in 1642–1651, both Royalists and Parliamentarians used humour in the form of scatological jokes to denigrate each other, mainly MPs and the Archbishop (McKellar 2011). The French Revolution inspired a lot of graphic satire not only in France itself but also in Britain: for example, James Gillray's satirical print *Petit Souper,* à *la Parisienne* greatly affected its London audience with its exaggeration and cleverly embedded incongruities (Lahikainen 2015). Both World Wars also abounded in humour despite their grim and tragic nature: for example, Kazecki (2012) explores humorous German novels, short stories and other literary works of the time of World War I and shows that humour was employed not only as a weapon against political and military opponents, but also as a way to "punch up" and "punch down" within the rigid military hierarchy. Holman and Kelly (2001) note that humorous expressions became even more numerous and widespread during World War II, and alongside humorous literature, caricatures, songs and other previously known forms of comic expression there appeared new ones – for example, aerial propaganda that was dropped over the occupied territories. War propaganda also took the dramaturgical form to redefine socio-political and racial identities (Zangl 2022).

Highly mediatised conflicts of the 21st century also provoke a significant amount of digital humour. The emergence of web 2.0 technologies and social media has democratised (humorous) content creation and facilitated the access of the broader public to political discussions (cf participatory culture, see Jenkins 2006). New technological affordances allowed users to react to conflicts immediately and stimulated the emergence of new genres that are particular to the internet realm: memes, image macros, reaction videos etc. Digital reactions to events, however, represent the whole continuum of sentiment and it is frequently difficult to distinguish between clearly humorous reactions and what can be named playful ones. Although some researchers claim that humour is essentially play (e.g. McGhee 2018, who tried to answer the thorny question whether apes have a sense of humour or just play), this does not mean that all play must be humorous or at least be received as humorous by audiences. Play tends to aim at entertainment; it uses the human capacity to exercise creative powers but is not necessarily aimed at making the audience laugh. Suffice it to mention the types of playful behaviours, sometimes regarded as activism, which aim at easing tensions or resolving conflicts (e.g. Sørensen 2013; Gil & Moti 2015; Laaksonen & Koivukoski & Porttikivi 2022). Digital humour faces the same dilemma – the recently popular Tik-Tok videos or POV videos or users' comments on these may evoke an incongruity by engaging in playful, teasing or parodying behaviour, but need not aim at humour, unless they resolve the incongruity by offering a form of punchline. Thus, the relationship between play and humour is a continuum and the memes which we are discussing in the section below represent examples of the humorous end of the spectrum, as long as the inherent ambiguity of humour (also discussed in our analysis) can be contextually resolved.

With regard to political or military conflicts, social platforms allow "a convergence of the domestic environment and the battlefield by offering new ways for participation in warfare" (Asmolov 2021: 342). For example, in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict TikTok is used as a form of "playful activism" (Cervi & Divon 2023) or as a tool to mobilise international support (Yarchi & Boxman-Shabtai 2023). One of the most recent conflicts, the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, became a powerful catalyst for humorous expression on both sides of the confrontation already at its initial stages in 2014 (Wiggins 2016). It has continued to be so as the conflict became a full-scale war in 2022 (see, for example, Brzozowska & Chłopicki 2023; Brassett & Browning 2024; Laineste & Fiadotava 2023, 2024; Laineste et al. 2024). Nowadays humour even becomes one of the central elements of non-violent confrontations such as political and cultural debates (Nieuwenhuis & Zijp 2022), thus making the study of humorous representations of conflict a timely endeavour.

At a time of conflict, cultural communication and humour styles clearly come into the open, especially when a "humour scandal" breaks out (Kuipers & Zijp 2024, a special issue on humour in the public sphere). Kuipers and Zijp (2024) draw attention to the fact that humour used in the face of conflict tends to differ across cultures and genres, although there are similarities as well: for example, Hungarian protesters against the anti-democratic Orban regime prefer and appreciate indirect nonsense style (Hyttinen 2024), and the Dutch react negatively to a direct, openly satirical "roast" of a right-wing politician, clearly dispreferring direct references to antisemitism and a politician's personal relationships (Nieuwenhuis 2024). The humour communication style is also correlated with political stance: the antidemocratic humour in authoritarian Russia and Belarus may be more direct – sarcastic, offensive or rigid, while a prodemocratic one may be more indirect, the reasons including the need to avoid censorship (see Laineste & Fiadotava 2024); similarly, in polarised Poland conservative humour tends to be more direct and sarcastic, while a liberal one may be more distanced and indirect (see Chłopicki 2023).

As humour comments on and gives meaning to events that matter to the joke-tellers, it has to articulate its relevance to local audiences. Humour has been equally described as transnational and culture-specific both in terms of its topics and its limits (Kuipers 2011: 68), which are in turn related to the communication style predominantly used in a particular culture and language. Transnational cultural references are mixed with national or regional references, especially in the case of political and topical humour (Laineste & Voolaid 2016; Nissenbaum & Shifman 2020) and become instances of vernacular creativity that successfully use humour to articulate meaning locally (Dumitrica 2021).

As is clear from the above discussion, the national and transnational features of humour as well as the relation between humour and conflict have been thoroughly studied. The novelty of the current paper lies in the fact that it pays special attention to the connection of humorous reaction to communication styles, humour mechanisms and genres. To do so, it aims at answering the following **research questions**:

- What are the similarities and differences between the genres, humour mechanisms and communication styles of humour in the three countries?
- What are the transnational vs national trends that characterise the humour of these three countries?

3. METHODS AND DATA

The data consist of 150 humorous items (50 per each of three countries) that were collected within the framework of the CELSA network project "Humour and Conflict in the Public Sphere: An interdisciplinary analysis of humour controversies and contested freedoms in contemporary Europe" (Chłopicki et al. 2024). It derives mostly from the social media of the three countries, namely, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, Telegram, Vk (the latter three were used only for collecting Belarusian data), but also from the Estonian satirical news portal Lugejakiri, Polish humour aggregators Jbzd.com.pl, Kwejk.pl, Obrazkowo.pl, Demotywatory.pl, Joemonster.org, and mainstream media Postimees (Estonia) and Niezależna (Poland).

The data were collected manually by (a) browsing the most popular humorous media outlets and (b) searching by the keywords "Wagner", "Prigozhin", "memes", "jokes", "humour", "caricature", "cartoon" in relevant languages in the mainstream media of the three countries. The differences between the platforms used in the three countries stem from the specificities of their (humorous) media landscape. Estonian and Polish data could be collected from social media platforms, mainstream media, aggregators and satirical newspapers. However, in the case of Belarusian data, the search was restricted to social media. The specificities of national media landscapes also caused some of the topics and genres to be more popular in the initial full dataset and therefore more prominently represented in the final sample: for example, Poland has several meme/humour aggregator websites that collect and showcase humour in Polish, whereas Estonia and Belarus lack such online infrastructure. On the other hand, Estonia has a specific Facebook group dedicated to memes and humour about the Russian war in Ukraine (titled "Ukraina meemid") that was a prolific source of humour also about the Wagner rebellion. Due to the political censorship in Belarus, most humour is confined to (semi-)anonymous social media, with Telegram playing an important role as one of the most popular messengers in Belarus (Auseyushkin 2021). Nevertheless, despite the differences in the sources available and certain restrictions on genres and formats, some common patterns appeared in the humour of the three countries as the analysis below will show.

Most of the data were collected during the two days of the rebellion (June 23 – June 24, 2023) and the next week after it. As the flow of the humorous items gradually decreased towards the end of June 2023, humorous and non-humorous media were occasionally revisited in July and early August, but the search yielded only 3 more items (two of them being a TV comedy and a stand-up routine recording that require more time to be produced). Thus, the initial full dataset consisted of 94 items of Estonian humour, 107 items of Polish humour and 181 items of Belarusian humour. In order to produce samples that would enable systematic comparative analysis within the framework of the CELSA network project (i.e., that would be quantitatively and qualitatively comparable to the datasets produced in other countries within the project), these original figures were cut down to 50 humorous items per each of the countries involved, resulting in the already mentioned figure of 150 items in total.

These 50 items per country were selected from the larger initial datasets, and included in the final dataset, according to several criteria that were devised to ensure sufficient diversity in terms of (a) sources of data, (b) genres, (c) specific topics represented within the broader topic of Wagner rebellion, (d) professional or amateur creators. Each humorous item in the initial full datasets was coded according to these criteria; then all the sources, genres and formats, topics and creators' types (professional/amateur) were listed, and 50 humorous items were selected in such a way that all the listed sources, genres, topics and creators' types would be represented proportionally to their representation in the full dataset. All the criteria were weighted equally, but since some of the criteria were more diverse (topics, genre), first the items were sorted according to these criteria, and then their diversity in terms of sources and creators' type was also taken into account. The fact that all the sources, genres, topics and creators' types that were present in the initial full datasets were also present in the datasets of 50 items per country determined that sufficient diversity was achieved.

The humorous items were coded[1] via the multiple choice Qualtrics survey according to several categories that were jointly developed by the participants of the above-mentioned CELSA network project:

- Genre or combination of genres (video recording of an event, photo, cartoon, internet meme (image only), internet meme (image and text), internet meme (video), text-only joke, humorous comment, satirical news article, blog post, stand-up performance, television comedy, non-humorous comment, or other);
- Presence of verbal, visual, or both verbal and visual elements;
- Humour mechanisms (humorous stereotype, sexual innuendo, status reversal or challenging, transgression, grotesque, juxtaposition of text and image, parody, caricature, ambiguity, exaggeration, irony, recontextualization, word play);
- Communication style of the items that had verbal element(s) (direct and/or based on overstatement, or indirect and/or based on understatement);
- Rhetorical format of the items that had verbal element(s) (statements, questions, commands/imperatives, verbless phrases, expletives, paraverbal comments, longer texts including several of the above).

While analysing the humorous representations of the Wagner group rebellion, we focused specifically on several of these codes, namely, genres, humour mechanisms and communication styles of the humorous items. These particular codes were selected for the current study as they reflect both transnational and culture-specific patterns of online humorous communication – for example, the prevalence of certain genres reflects multimodality, that is one of the typical universal features of new media humour (Dynel & Chovanec 2021), and communication styles are often culture-specific (Fitzgerald 2003; Chłopicki 2017a). Humour mechanisms were selected as the variables for the analysis because they not only allow cross-cultural comparison but also shed light on more general peculiarities of humour revolving around this topic. These peculiarities could be conditioned by various factors, such as the nature of conflict, formal characteristics of humour and the overall cultural context in which the humour emerged and spread. We use quantitative analysis for descriptive purposes, not for predictive ones. In addition to comparing and analysing our data according to these Qualtrics codes, we also conducted in-depth thematic analysis of the Wagner group rebellion humour with the primary aim of identifying the topics within the humour related to the Wagner rebellion that were the most recurrent in all the three countries.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1 Genres

The genre distribution in our data (see Table 1) can be partly explained by the platforms and sources from which the data was collected: for example, as mentioned above, much of the Polish data derives from meme aggregators, while Estonian data come primarily from Facebook, and almost half of the Belarusian data was collected from X (which can explain a large share of text-only jokes typical for this platform). The relative popularity of different genres can also be explained by specific media landscapes of the three countries. For example, the absence of caricatures and the abundance of text-only jokes in Belarusian data is due to the fact that all the print media – that are the primary medium where caricatures are published – are pro-government and therefore also pro-war, which meant that they avoided making fun of this topic.

However, there are also some trends in the genre distribution that all the countries share. One of them is the larger proportion of static (image + text or image only) memes than dynamic (video) memes. The other trend is a relatively low reliance on photo and video recordings of the event itself, even though these recordings were easily available in the media that was covering the events. On the other hand, images that became memetic earlier in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine were used in all datasets. This shows that most of the humour creators preferred to recycle and adapt the previously available memes in order to fit this novel and unexpected event into the audience's pre-existing knowledge (compare with the notion of intertextuality of internet memes, Laineste & Voolaid 2016).

Table 1. Genre distribution per country

Genre/country	Belarus	Estonia	Poland
Cartoon	0%	14%	4%
Internet meme (image and text)	20%	**40%**	**60%**
Internet meme (image only)	12%	10%	0%
Internet meme (video)	2%	16%	4%
Photo and humorous comment	10%	2%	16%
Photo and non-humorous comment	4%	0%	0%
Text-only joke	**44%**	12%	14%
Satirical news article	0%	2%	0%
Video recording of an event	0%	4%	2%
Television comedy	4%	0%	0%
Stand-up performance	2%	0%	0%

4.2 Communication Style

Estonian and Polish humour on the topic of the Wagner group rebellion turned out rather similar with regard to the ratio of direct/indirect communication styles (see Figure 1). This is to a certain extent surprising when compared with earlier research on the communication styles of the two cultures, with Polish being defined as cooperative and expressive, while Estonian being labelled as reserved (Chłopicki & Laineste 2019: 15) – thus one would expect more directness on the Polish side. The finding may perhaps be explained in terms of the inherent ambiguity of humour rather than cultural preference, and also in terms of popularity of certain humour genres and mechanisms that are connected either to direct or to indirect communication style as explained above. In contrast, Belarusian humour was much richer in indirect communication style, although again the explanation seemed more political than cultural. Namely, the reasons might be twofold: firstly, some Belarusians might consider it to be unsafe to refer to the event too explicitly out of the fear of political persecution, and secondly, due to the familiarity with the topic (the Wagner group had already been a prominent target of Belarusians' humour in 2020 when several of its members were detained in Belarus), the humour creators and sharers tended to create fewer explicit jokes.

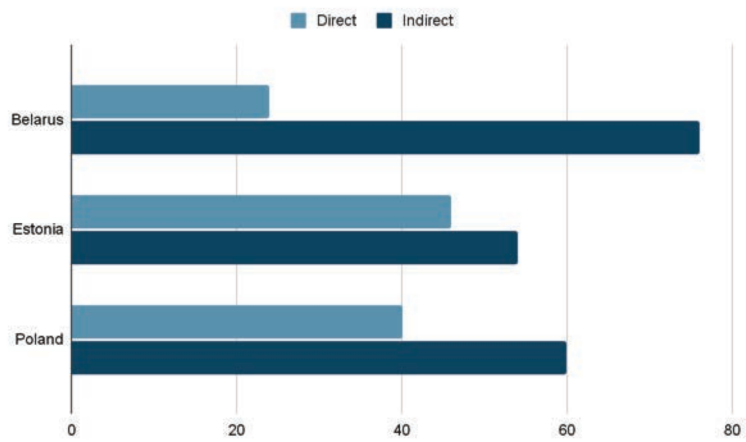

Figure 1. Communication style distribution per country.

4.3 Humour Mechanisms

The distribution of many humour mechanisms (namely, humorous stereotype, irony, sexual innuendo, status reversal or challenging and transgression) was similar across the three countries (see Table 2). Some differences between the popularity of different humour mechanisms can be related to the differences between the genre distribution in our datasets: for example, the juxtaposition of text and image and recontextualisation are typical for internet memes that combine text and image which abound in the Polish dataset (see Table 1). Another difference, namely, the higher share of ambiguity in Belarusian data goes parallel with the indirect communication style and is likely to be explained with the same reasons (see the previous section).

However, there are several curious differences in the popularity of humour mechanisms that have only partial or no relation with the genres and communication style. In the Estonian dataset, for example, there are more humorous items that employ exaggeration (considered a mechanism associated with a direct communication style) than in the Polish and Belarusian datasets. It can partly be explained by the more prominent presence of cartoons in Estonian data (more than half of Estonian cartoons in our dataset employ exaggeration), but it may also be due to the fact that Estonian humour about the Wagner group rebellion tends to employ this mechanism in relation to many different targets: the fear of Putin and his supporters is exaggerated; Prigozhin overestimates his rebellion and its consequences; Zelenskyy and Ukrainians explicitly withdraw from the war now that the Wagner group and Russian ministry of defence are fighting between themselves; Russian generals exaggerate their success in putting an end to the rebellion; Lukashenka is extremely confused; and even insignificant Estonian local events have an exaggeratedly high priority over the rebellion in the regional politics.

Another difference that stands out is the lower number of humorous items that employ grotesque (clearly a mechanism associated with a direct communication style as well) in the Polish dataset as compared to the Belarusian and Estonian datasets. The humorous items employing grotesque in these datasets also differed slightly in terms of their content: while in the Estonian and Belarusian datasets most of the grotesque was related to the improbable courses of events that will happen in Russia in the future if Prigozhin wins or if he loses (see example 1), in the Polish dataset grotesque was rather related to the elements in the rebellion itself that were illogical from the point of view of humour creators, and to Prigozhin in particular. This might stem from the fact that fantasising about the future of Russia is more relevant to Belarus and Estonia than it is to Poland – given that Belarus is dependent on Russia both politically and economically, and Estonia shares much of its border with Russia and has a significant proportion of Russian-speaking population.

> Example 1. Original text in Belarusian.
> *What a twist of history, though. It is quite possible that Lukashenka will have to send his troops to Russia instead of Ukraine.*
> **Source:** https://www.facebook.com/alespilecki/posts/pfbid02J4Q8VEz6LLA2hrsvriVzeRX1WxhPc9HyruHBkYquYJzMWCCLz3uwDqifyS5TE4E6l

Finally, it can be observed that Belarusian humour uses parody (a mechanism of indirect communication style since parody alludes to the unmentioned original that the readers need to know) more often than Estonian and Polish. The Belarusian humorous items on this topic mostly parody either Lukashenka (and Belarusian officials and propaganda more generally) or Putin (and the Russian government). Parodies of both characters have been popular in Belarusian humour long before the Wagner group rebellion, therefore, the outbreak of the rebellion just provided one more topic for those Belarusian humorists who had parodied Lukashenka and Putin before.

Table 2. Humour mechanism distribution per country

Humour mechanism/Country	Belarus	Estonia	Poland
Ambiguity	**30%**	10%	12%
Caricature	0%	16%	4%
Exaggeration	24%	**38%**	24%
Grotesque	52%	50%	**28%**
Humorous stereotype	20%	18%	20%
Irony	16%	22%	26%
Juxtaposition of text and image	26%	28%	**58%**
Parody	**42%**	28%	22%

Humour mechanism/Country	Belarus	Estonia	Poland
Recontextualization	54%	46%	64%
Sexual innuendo	4%	4%	2%
Status reversal or challenging	86%	88%	82%
Transgression	10%	10%	16%
Word play	14%	6%	8%

4.4 Transnational Trends in Humorous Representation of the Rebellion: Thematic Analysis

Although there are no completely identical items in the three national datasets we analyse, there are several recurrent thematic trends that have emerged in the humour of all three countries. Some of the trends involve the appearance of identical or similar visual and/or verbal elements, while other trends only revolve around the same topic but use different ways to approach it.

Firstly, several humorous items in each dataset (Belarusian[2], Estonian[3] and Polish[4]) underscored the surreality (Wiggins 2019) of the event. They compared following the news on the rebellion to watching a film or a TV series, fantasised[5] about a possible Netflix adaptation of the rebellion and made jokes about the need for popcorn and popcorn prices going up and down following the course of the rebellion (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. A meme from the Estonian dataset.

Source: https://www.facebook.com/lauri.talve/posts/pfbid0pTTZWCQYo3JBSk82BEb3sZuWuchyMqHP4TKdQbMpupUZzZfmna1mCEtPJktB1Srzl, accessed on March 19, 2025.

Secondly, there is a thematic trend that suggests that the Russian aggression in Ukraine is turning into a civil war. The Ukrainian army (and in some cases also their allies) are depicted as observers of the fight between the Wagner group and the Russian army. In the Belarusian[6] and Estonian[7] datasets there are even memes with identical visual backgrounds, the only difference being in the captions: in the Belarusian meme, it is not only the Ukrainian army, but also NATO and Anglo-Saxons that are cheering the fighters (Figure 3), while in the Estonian meme all the observers are labelled "Ukrainians". In a Polish[8] cartoon, Ukrainians remark: "Seems like they have started without us".

Figure 3. Labels in Russian (left to right): Anglo-Saxons, NATO, Ukrainian armed forces. A meme from the Belarusian dataset.

Source: https://t.me/belteanews/24875, accessed on March 19, 2025.

The third trend is the mocking of the Russians' initial plan to conduct a "three-day special operation". Belarusian[9] and Estonian[10] humorous items ridicule Russians' intentions to "capture Kyiv in 3 days" (see Figure 4), while Polish humorous items do not mention Kyiv in particular, but also mock the fact that a 3-day military operation turned into a civil war.[11]

Figure 4. Upper caption: Kyiv in 3 days. Lower caption: Kremlin in 3 days (both in Belarusian). A meme from the Belarusian dataset.

Source: https://twitter.com/gypsynkov/status/1672510214887600133, accessed on March 19, 2025.

Fourthly, some humorous items in all three countries targeted Putin for being afraid of the Wagner rebellion. A Belarusian humorous TV show released a mock telephone conversation between a crying Putin and Lukashenka who is trying to comfort him[12]; the Estonian dataset features caricatures that show the extent of Putin's fear[13] and Polish humour draws upon a famous quote by Zelenskyy but recontextualises it to refer to the rebellion[14] (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Upper caption: I need ammunition not a ride. Lower caption: I need a ride not ammunition (both in Polish). A meme from the Polish dataset.

Source: https://img25.demotywatoryfb.pl//uploads/202306/gallery_1687617919_162377.jpg, accessed on March 19, 2025.

Figure 6. A meme from the Polish dataset.

Source: https://jbzd.com.pl/obr/3118559/krotkie-podsumowanie-sytuacji-w-rosji, accessed on March 19, 2025.

Finally, there was a trend to reverse the statuses of Putin and Lukashenka (or Russia and Belarus in general) and show that Russia has now become dependent on Lukashenka's help. Understandably, there were more jokes on this topic in the Belarusian dataset (for example, a stand-up routine[15], a satirical news episode[16], verbal jokes[17] etc.), although this topic also featured in Estonian[18] and Polish[19] humour (see Figure 6). A related trend was drawing the connections between the Wagner group rebellion outcome and potato cultivation, as the latter is a stereotypical activity associated with Belarus. Curiously, only one such joke is present in the Belarusian dataset[20], but several such jokes can be found in the Estonian[21] and Polish[22] datasets.

5. DISCUSSION

Despite memes often travelling freely and even without adaptations from culture to culture, there were no completely identical humorous items in our datasets, and only a few items shared the same visual background (see the discussion of Figure 3). The differences between the three national datasets were mostly related to the political climate in the countries in question, historical and present-day references, the emotional distance from the conflict and their relationship with Russia. Other differences were conditioned by the variety of targets or the previous popularity of certain characters (Prigozhin, Putin, Lukashenka) in the country's humour. National differences in terms of communication styles can also be observed in our data: contrary to the expectations which stem from earlier research, Polish data feature a more indirect style (notably less grotesque), while Estonian data seems more direct (with more exaggeration). Belarusian data feature the indirectness (especially parody and ambiguity) which results more from political circumstances (censorship) rather than cultural ones. There were also the differences that stemmed mainly from the sources of data typical of or more popular in one country but not the others: specific social media platforms determined the popularity of certain genres, which then determined the prevalence of certain humour mechanisms. This indicates that various formal elements of humour such as genres, mechanisms and communication styles cannot and should not be studied in isolation – neither in isolation from one another, nor in isolation from the contextual factors, such as the nature of the conflict and the medium where they spread. The interplay between genres, mechanisms and communication styles helps us understand the evolution of conflict-related humor in digital spaces. Drawing from our examples, conflicts easily trigger humour (though depending on their humour potential, e.g. controversiality and idiosyncratic details), and there is a notable dependency between forms of humour and their humour mechanisms / communication styles, but even more so the nature of the conflict and the humour that evolves as a response to that. Individual humorous items and their thematic compilations such the datasets used in this study reveal people's attitudes toward the conflicts and more general national and transnational patterns in humorous communication at the time of conflicts only when their various formal and contextual elements are taken into account. For further conclusions concerning humour studies and conflict communication, a larger scale comparative study that includes more cases should be conducted.

The analysis also reveals that the humorous reactions to the Wagner group rebellion were similar in many ways across countries. As we have noted elsewhere (Laineste et al. 2024), geographical location where the data is collected hardly affects the genre of the humour (though it does depend on the particular platform). Most of the humour in all our datasets belong to the genre of memes – this seems to be a typical feature of online data. Memes and other forms of multimodal humour are shaped by the patterns of online communication in general and not by the particular cases or controversies (see also the discussion in Denisova 2019: 163–170). In line with these patterns, in our data the proportion of genres containing visual elements is significantly larger than those that feature only verbal elements.

On the whole, the humour themes related to the Wagner rebellion and most of the humour mechanisms are transnational: we can see that there are many similarities in the Estonian, Belarusian and Polish humour about the Wagner group rebellion. Humour mechanisms are also similar across the humour of the three countries (with the exception of the mechanisms that depend on the genre of the data). This shows that they are conditioned by the nature of the conflict rather than the culture wherein they spread. The memes attempted to make sense of the Wagner group rebellion, which indicates that for the people creating and spreading humour, it was an unexpected and dramatic turn of events. This might explain the use of humour mechanisms such as grotesque or exaggeration, representing the direct communication style. Since the story also involved quite a few powerful politicians and military men, a significant amount of humour used the mechanism of status reversal or challenging. The differences in humour mechanisms stem from the previous presence of the same characters in national humour and the more general context of international relations.

Therefore, we can see that the transnational aspects of humorous communication dominate over the national humour features – not only with regard to the individual humorous items, but on the more abstract levels of genres and humour mechanisms. As reacting to conflicts with humour is common, the patterns of these reactions also become common across countries thanks to the quick spread of humour via online social media. Whereas the perspectives of those who take part in the conflict themselves might be different, for most internet audiences – including the ones from which we collected our data – the conflict is mediatised (following it is like watching a film as described above) and fits more into the intertextual paradigm of popular culture than into their real lives. The references to previously known memes and other pop cultural phenomena thus become more recurrent than attempts to embed the humour in the real-life settings (for example, by using photos of the event).

The localisation of humour is a process that is used in some contexts and not in others; when a humorous trigger (e.g. the physical appearances or names of the actors involved in the triggering conflict) seems understandable for people of different cultures, the meme makers might think that adaptations are not worth the effort. Localisation might even have an opposite effect: it may cause alienation, because showing the conflict from an unfamiliar angle departs from the globally-spread memes and thus feels out of place. For example, only two humorous items in the Estonian dataset and only seven humorous items in the Polish dataset referred to local personalities or events of these countries (see Fiadotava & Castañar & Laineste 2024 for the discussion of Estonian items). Such a low level of localisation in this case can be explained by the fact that "these jokes [that add local references to the global topics] do not offer anything new in terms of social reality, they are not cognitively functional and are thus not as frequent" (Laineste 2002: 23), similarly to Estonian jokes on global issues (for example, the 9/11 tragedy in 2001) that rarely blended global and local references.

The present study has its limitations in terms of its scope and generalisability. By restricting our dataset to 50 items per country we have inevitably excluded a great deal of humour on this topic that was circulating online, and thus we describe the trends within the chosen dataset and our conclusions are applicable to the particular data that we used. Moreover, the similarities between the three countries' datasets that we have shown might pertain only to humour on this particular conflict. A possible direction of future research would be to look at humorous representations of other conflicts in different cultures in order to establish whether the transnational trends also dominate over the national peculiarities in them. On a broader level, the study invites further in-depth discussions on how we can define the national aspects of universally popular internet humour, and how the globalisation and mediatisation of humorous representations of conflict determine our perspectives on it.

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NOTES

1 The 100 items of the Belarusian and Estonian dataset were coded by a single coder (Author 1) and the 50 items of the Polish dataset were coded jointly by two authors (Author 1 and Author 4). In the latter case the ambiguous issues of coding were discussed and consensus was found.

2 https://www.facebook.com/hajtaktv/posts/pfbid0MLeNEkGkpmbqJry3VdqKLK7BWoq963S5WZULN3xkGCRBEriQbef7fzmUWfsvJsm8l, last accessed on 17 March 2025.

3 https://www.facebook.com/groups/534314991238265/posts/810427196960375/, last accessed on 17 March 2025, and https://www.facebook.com/lauri.talve/posts/pfbid0pTTZWCQYo3JBSk82BEb3sZuWuchyMqHP4TKdQbMpupUZzZfmna1mCEtPJktB1Srzl (memetic image of Prigozhin pointing at the popcorn prices) , last accessed on 17 March 2025.

4 https://jbzd.com.pl/obr/3117148/juz-wkrotce-w-kinach, last accessed on 17 March 2025, and https://kwejk.pl/obrazek/3986700/za-szybko.html, last accessed on 17 March 2025.

5 The joint fantasising or joint joke constructions is well researched in humour studies, see e.g. McGhee (1979), Norrick (1993), and more recently Chovanec (2012), Tsakona (2018), Haugh and Priego-Valverde (2024).

6 https://t.me/belteanews/24875, last accessed on 17 March 2025.

7 https://www.facebook.com/groups/534314991238265/posts/810446656958429/, last accessed on 17 March, 2025.

8 https://files.niezalezna.tech/storage/images/upload/2023/06/25/Q6qDvppS2iuFKuGKk1ODxgv3rwbBfSsRnv6wSXLy.jpg, last accessed on 17 March 2025.

9 https://twitter.com/gypsynkov/status/1672510214887600133, last accessed on 17 March 2025.

10 https://www.facebook.com/groups/534314991238265/posts/810427786960316/, last accessed on 17 March 2025.

11 https://twitter.com/TygodnikNIE/status/1672368154834530304, last accessed on 17 March 2025, and https://kwejk.pl/obrazek/3986150/wojna-rusko-ruska.html, last accessed on 17 March 2025.

12 https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=227358106915145, last accessed on 17 March 2025.

13 https://arvamus.postimees.ee/7802318/juhtkiri-me-saame-aidata-uksnes-ukrainat-mitte-venemaad, last accessed on 17 March 2025.

14 https://img25.demotywatoryfb.pl//uploads/202306/gallery_1687617919_162377.jpg, last accessed on 17 March 2025.

15 https://www.instagram.com/p/Cvb7aaJrk6S/, last accessed on 17 March 2025.

16 https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2198214387029106, last accessed on 17 March 2025.

17 For example, https://www.facebook.com/alespilecki/posts/pfbid02J4Q8VEz6LLA2hrsvriVzeRX1WxhPc9HyruHBkYquYJzMWCCLz3uwDqifyS5TE4E6l, last accessed on 17 March 2025, and https://twitter.com/gypsynkov/status/1672332643638099968 , last accessed on 17 March 2025.

18 https://www.facebook.com/groups/534314991238265/posts/811324546870640/, last accessed on 17 March 2025.

19 https://jbzd.com.pl/obr/3118559/krotkie-podsumowanie-sytuacji-w-rosji, last accessed on 17 March 2025.

20 https://www.facebook.com/groups/1716227065346657/permalink/3140991202870229, last accessed on 17 March 2025.

21 https://www.facebook.com/groups/534314991238265/posts/812341740102254/, last accessed on 17 March 2025.

22 https://jbzd.com.pl/obr/3117921/negocjacje-edycja-kartoflany-baron, last accessed on 17 March 2025.

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Historicism and Typology of the Musical-Epic Tradition of the Peoples of Central Asia (Based on the Heroic Epic)

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Abstract: The aim of the study is to analyse the time sequence between historical events and the creation of epic works such as “Alpamys,” “Korogly,” and “Kitabi dede Korkud” in order to understand their role and significance in the cultural context of Central Asia. The following research methods have been used in this work: generalisation, systematisation, analytical and historical-typological methods. As a result of this study, it was found that the heroic epic of Central Asia reveals not only artistic aspects but also deep layers of history and cultural memory. The analysis of the epics through the prism of historicism and typology allows for understanding of the evolution of society and the formation of values. The study of the musical epic works of the peoples of Central Asia, considering historical events and characters, allowed understanding and evaluating their historical and cultural significance more deeply. The struggle of heroes against tyrants, the defence of their native land, and the reflection of the socio-cultural peculiarities of the people in epics are references to real historical phenomena and key elements of their content. The importance of the characters, their connection to historical figures and their social significance emphasise the role of these works in preserving and transmitting the cultural and historical heritage of the people.

Keywords: cultural heritage, ethnic character, folklore, Kazakh folklore, legends and tales

INTRODUCTION

The musical epic tradition of the peoples of Central Asia is an integral part of the cultural wealth of this region, reflecting its history, values and traditions. The study of this tradition, considering the principle of historicism, will help to understand how historical events influence the formation of musical epics and how they reflect the peculiarities of the ethnic and cultural development of the peoples of Central Asia. However, certain challenges arise in the analysis, such as the ambiguity of the interpretation of historical data and their influence on musical forms. Understanding these challenges is important for a deeper and more objective study of the musical epic tradition and its role in the cultural heritage of Central Asia. Such an approach contributes to the preservation and understanding of the uniqueness of this cultural heritage and promotes the development of musicological science in general. The problematics of this study concern the question of applying the principle of historicism to artistic works, especially in the context of their treatment as historical sources. One of the key aspects is assessing to what extent epic works can be considered a source of guidance for society or whether they are rather semi-mythical representations of the past.

John Bryan Hainsworth (1991) is convinced that epic is a phenomenon that extends far beyond the literary genre, encompassing broader cultural and social aspects, including the musical sphere. According to the scholar, an epic is not just a form of literary creation but a kind of philosophy and world-understanding that touches the deep roots of human culture. The researcher emphasises the connection of epic with the formation of national identity, mythological concepts, historical processes and cultural evolution. The author argues that the epic serves not just as a mirror of artistic achievements but also as a reflection of the spirit of the times, national consciousness and collective memory. There is a need for a more thorough study of this cultural organism, which permeates many aspects of human life.

Oral epics deserve special attention; they are a unique phenomenon that goes far beyond the boundaries of a simple literary work, according to Karl Reichl (2021). In the study, the scholar emphasises that oral epic is not limited only to verbal presentation but is a living process based on multidimensional interactions between the performer and the audience. This, according to the author's conclusions, creates a special cultural experience that cannot be fully recreated in written form. Examining works of oral epic, the researcher highlights their role in shaping collective memory and community identity. The oral performance of an epic, as the researcher argues, serves not only as a means of preserving cultural values but also as a dynamic process that supports the constant renewal and interpretation of mythological stories, which is worth investigating more thoroughly.

For example, the musical and epic heritage provided by Korkyt has an undeniable influence on the modern era. As a mythical poet, philosopher and spiritual guide, Korkyt is highly regarded in Kazakh culture and is a prominent figure in Turkic folklore and history. Generations throughout Central Asia continue to be inspired and moved by the teachings of Korkyt, who is renowned for his knowledge and contributions to poetry and music. His influence on the cultural and spiritual fabric of the Kazakh people goes beyond simple folklore; he represents tenacity, insight and the enduring spirit of the nomadic way of life (Assembly of People of Kazakhstan 2024).

The view of his heritage presented by Sholpan Smagul and Almagul Bitikova (2023) emphasises its temporal stability and significance over long centuries. The scholars note that Korkyt left behind a unique creation that permeates not only the time frame of its origin but also exists as an important component of cultural heritage. The researchers highlight that the compositional elements of "Kitabi dede Korkud" have an incredible resilience that can survive many generations. In the context of the modern era, where musical currents and styles are constantly changing, the scholars believe that Korkyt's legacy represents a unique historical component that can enrich the contemporary epic space. It is not just an artefact of the past but a living source of inspiration that can contribute to contemporary musical practices and creative pursuits. It is worthwhile to study more deeply the peculiarities of the musical epic tradition of Kazakhstan and other peoples of Central Asia.

The study of different versions of the epic "Alpamys" by researcher Amagul Turdymuratova (2023) emphasises that the differences in plots allow looking into the depth of cultural, religious and artistic aspects of each version, which contributes to a fuller understanding of the richness and diversity of the ethnic literary tradition. The researcher also emphasises the artistic value of the different versions of the epic, highlighting the power and beauty of certain lines, such as the description of Gulparshina's appearance and Gulparshina's response to his enemies. These moments, highlighted in the "Alpamys" epic, give the narrative a special character and emotional depth. She also highlights the significant increase in the praise of the Muslim religion in the epic, which, for example, contrasts significantly with the religion of the Kalmyks, adding a new level of complexity to the epic tradition by emphasising the religious differences between characters and groups. There is a need for further research on the different variants of the epic to create a general idea of the importance and power of this literary phenomenon in the context of the peoples of Central Asia.

Guzal Egamberdieva (2021) argues that in folklore, each genre has its own unique features, as there are specific internal prerequisites for depicting different images in each genre. The scholar draws attention to the fact that, with the passage of time and changing forms of social consciousness, myths undergo changes, and their classical features turn into a potential area for new forms of artistic creation. The impact of folklore is particularly noticeable in the images of magic passed into the structure of fairy tales, the researcher notes. These images, going back to their roots in folklore, change the structure of fairy tales and then are integrated into dastannas (traditional epic poems or heroic narratives of Turkic and Central Asian peoples), which emphasises the dynamic evolution of images and their ability to adapt to changing social consciousness. It is important to note that the images associated with folklore have a significant impact on magic and fantasy tales. This process not only illustrates the dynamism of cultural heritage but also highlights how mythological images are transferred and adapted within different genres and art forms. The study of these dynamics in the context of Central Asian folklore traditions will provide a better understanding of how these images enrich and shape peoples' artistic heritage.

The aim of this study is to analyse the relationship between historical events and the creation of epic works such as "Alpamys", "Korogly", and "Kitabi dede Korkud", focusing on their role and significance in the context of Central Asian culture.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The analytical method used in this study played a key role in parsing and analysing the collected materials. This method helped to identify the key components of the epics and folklore, as well as to highlight the main themes and motifs present in them. Using the analytical method, the impact of the heroic epics of the peoples of Central Asia on various aspects of the region's culture and history was explored. Analysing the epic allowed immersion in the historical context, ethnic memory and socio-cultural dynamics. This method revealed the key role of the epic in shaping the values and ethical standards of society, reflecting the norms by which social consciousness and interpersonal relations were formed. The analysis of musical epic works such as "Alpamys", "Korogly", and "Kitabi dede Korkud", considering historical events and characters, allowed a deeper understanding and appreciation of their historical and cultural significance.

The method of generalisation allowed this paper to summarise the findings and conclusions of the study. This method helped to highlight the main patterns and trends that were traced in the epics and folklore under consideration and to draw generalised conclusions about the cultural heritage and historical peculiarities of the Central Asian region. The method of generalisation in this paper allowed for studying various aspects of the phenomenon "Epic", considering it from different perspectives. The method of generalisation allowed the identification of common themes, trends and features of epic works, which contributed to a fuller and deeper understanding of the essence of the epic, its role in culture and society, as well as its impact on various aspects of human life. This method made it possible to see Epic as a multifaceted and multidimensional phenomenon reflecting complex aspects of human experience and cultural heritage. Through this method, it was possible to explore the importance of characters and their relationship to historical figures, which emphasised the role of these works in preserving and transmitting the cultural and historical heritage of the people.

The systematisation method was used to organise the information collected in the research to create a structured and logically coherent analysis. The systematisation helped to organise the data into specific categories, which facilitated a more in-depth and comprehensive study of the topic. The study of epic folklore using the method of systematisation allowed the identification of common features and unique characteristics that are important not only for historical and cultural understanding of the region but also for inspiring contemporary creativity. Using the method of systematisation, the role of epic folklore and its musical embodiment in shaping the cultural development of Central Asia has been revealed, providing a valuable source for future research and inspiration.

The application of the historical-typological method in the study of Central Asian epics and folklore allowed for assessing the diversity of their forms and content, as well as identifying the common features and specificities of the cultural context in which they emerged. Using the historical-typological method, the work investigated the epic folklore of Central Asian peoples, such as "Alpamys", "Kitabi dede Korkud", and "Korogly". This method facilitated the study of different aspects of the cultural heritage of these peoples through the prism of historicism and typology.

RESULTS

In the context of the rich epic tradition of the peoples of Central Asia, an unusually diverse repertoire was formed, closely intertwined with the ethnic history of nomadic tribes, which gives it a unique character. The heroic epic, being an integral part of the cultural heritage, represents a unique layer of knowledge about the past, transmitted from generation to generation.

Epic is not just a form of literary creation but a complex cultural phenomenon encompassing various aspects of the human experience. Epic is a way of transmitting values, traditions and moral lessons, influencing the formation of social outlook (Hardie 2020; Tucker 2021). Texts recognised as epics often contain heavily mythologized interpretations of historical events. This phenomenon is common in various cultural traditions, where the epic serves as a means of transmitting and preserving collective memory. Mythological aspects in such texts can have a variety of functions: to inspire people with heroic images, to provide alternative interpretations of historical events, and to reinforce cultural identity (Gay 2011). However, the distinction between historical facts and mythological elements in epic texts can be difficult and controversial. These texts require careful analysis in order to distinguish facts from mythological interpretations and to understand their role in shaping collective memory and cultural identity.

From the perspective of historicism, it is important to understand how the meanings of epic texts, their ideas or artefacts are shaped through their relationship to the historical context in which they occur or are transmitted. For historicism, historical conditions determine all meanings. This means that nothing has a 'natural', eternal, or universal meaning; meaning is made up of the language, beliefs, practices, institutions and desires of particular cultures within a particular historical context (Malpas 2013; Beiser 2021). In turn, the study of the music and epic tradition of Central Asian peoples based on heroic epics in the context of typology is concerned with how historical conditions and context influence the formation and interpretation of epic materials. This approach recognises that the meaning and significance of an epic are shaped by its relationship to the historical realities, culture and social context inherent in a particular epoch and people.

Epic folklore acts not only as artistic works but also embodies a kind of chronicle reflecting the events experienced by people in different historical epochs (Kongyratbay & Kongyratbay 2013). This aspect makes the heroic epic an invaluable source for researching and understanding the cultural, social and ethnic aspects of Central Asian society. It is important to realise that the heroic epic carries not only artistic heritage but also multifaceted echoes of historical realities, thus characterising the spirit and collective identity of the people (Table 1). To view the epic solely as a work of fiction is to overlook its function as a narrative history that epitomises a particular stage in the development of society.

Table 1. Features of the heroic epic

No.	Aspect	Description
1	The role of the heroic epic	The heroic epic is seen as a "people's history" through which a unique perspective on historical events is conveyed, and ethnic identity is formed.
2	The meaning of the epic	Each epic is not just a collection of heroic deeds, but also an important contribution to the preservation of cultural characteristics, traditions and the formation of public memory.
3	Implications for public memory	The epic is preserved in a continuous rhythm of the story, which allows preserving public memory and passing on historical heritage from older generations to younger ones.

Source: compiled by the authors.

Heroic epics play a role in the formation of public memory and the transmission of cultural heritage from generation to generation. Through the epic, a unique perspective on historical events is transmitted, and the cultural peculiarities and traditions of the people are preserved. The process of passing on epic works becomes a kind of ritual, symbolising not only the teaching of history, but also emphasising the role of the epic in shaping collective consciousness. In this context, the heroic epic becomes a bridge between the past and the future, uniting generations in a continuous flow of cultural heritage. It should also be emphasised that heroic epics go beyond the mere narration of heroes and events. They act as moral and socio-cultural regulators, shaping the values and ethical standards of society. Their symbolism contains the norms by which social consciousness was formed and relations between people were built (Eder & Holyan 2010; Allison & Goethals 2016). Thus, the study of the heroic epic of the peoples of Central Asia is not only an analysis of artistic and poetic features but also a dive into the deep layers of history, ethnic memory and socio-cultural dynamics. Epic is a key to understanding the unique features of a society and its relationship with the world around it, making this study relevant and important in the context of preserving and transmitting the cultural heritage of Central Asia.

Epic plays a significant role in shaping the culture and values of a people (Efremov 2025). It serves not only as a means of transmitting and preserving mythological and historical stories but also influences the self-consciousness and identity of a society. Epic sets the models of heroism, morality and ethics, which influence the behaviour of individuals and the formation of their values (Doszhan 2023b). It also influences aesthetic perceptions and cultural traditions, reflecting the particular tastes and preferences of a people. Finally, epic is an important tool for preserving and transmitting historical memory, which contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage and collective identity. Thus, it is worth concluding that the epic has a profound and multifaceted influence on the culture and values of the people, shaping them and serving as a kind of mirror of society and its historical traditions.

Kazakh "Alpamys" is an epic of the Konyrat tribe. Originating in Mongolia, the Konyrats were a well-known Turkic nomad tribe who gained prominence in the 13th century during Genghis Khan's Mongol Empire. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, following the disintegration of the Mongol Empire, the Konyrats moved westward into what is now Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. They made their home in the region surrounding the Kyzyl Kum desert and the Syr Darya river valley, which is where the epic "Alpamys" takes place. Among the Kazakh ethnic groups that arose from the ruins of the Golden Horde, the Konyrats preserved their tribal identity and customs. Their ancestral link to Genghis Khan and role in the Mongol imperial system gave the Konyrats a distinguished lineage within the complex tribal hierarchy of mediaeval Central Asia (Zhengis 2022).

The heroic epic presented in the legend of "Alpamys" becomes a common denominator for the Turkic peoples of Altai, whose history goes back to the deep antiquity of Central Asia. Today, the Kazakhs own most of the territory of Deshti-Kipchak, which may give them leadership in the Turkic world. Given that the events of the epic are closely linked to this region, it provides a great opportunity for spiritual revitalization and allows the locals to experience their national history. The complexity of ethnic processes and the sacrifices that the nobles had to make along the way are better understood by looking at the past (Abdir & Nusupova & Abdykhanova 2021). It is in heroic epics that national cultural values and traditions are found. The plethora of animated series, books and tales about Alpamys in the last ten years is a landmark achievement in preserving this cultural heritage. By focusing on the personality of Alpamys, it is possible to merge modern values with the traditions of the past, giving new meaning to this epic in a new era. To limit the history of the Kazakh people only to the period of the foundation of the Kazakh Khanate is wrong. The modern generation can perceive "Alpamys" as a source of inspiration and pride in the national heritage.

The text of the epic "Alpamys" notes the struggle with the Kalmyks, which is a historical memory of the times of the Oirat nomadic state in the steppes of Dzungaria. Such passages contain descriptions of military battles, the defence of the native land from the Kalmyks' invasion, and other events related to this conflict. The description of the customs, traditions and social organisation of the people, including references to marriage rites, customs of taxation, the system of tribal relations and other aspects of life also contains references to historical events and realities. The epic reflects the historical role of the Konyrat tribe in the Genghis Khan era, when it occupied an important position. The information that Genghis Khan's mother and eldest wife were from this tribe, as well as the marriage of their daughter to a representative of this people, confirm their connection with the Konyrats. Additionally, the mention of kinship and matchmaking between Konyrats and Kiyat, according to Rashid ad-Din, emphasises their importance in the social structure of that time. It is also known that historical and genealogical sources confirm the migration of the Konyrat tribe from Mongolia to Central Asia in the early 13th century. Thus, the epic not only reflects these real historical events but also serves as an important source for understanding and studying the role of the Konyrats in shaping the cultural and social heritage of that time (Kongyratbay 2021).

At the same time, Korogly is a semi-mystical folk hero, covering the second half of the 16th century in his legend. The 16th century was a turbulent period, marked by political upheaval and power struggles between various empires and dynasties vying for control over territories in Central Asia and the Caucasus region. The once-powerful Timurid Empire was crumbling at this time, and in the early 1500s, the Shaybanid Uzbek dynasty emerged to dominate its eastern lands. The Safavid dynasty in Persia was extending its sphere of influence in the west while frequently at odds with the Ottoman Empire over contested territories.

The image of Korogly permeates the folklore of many Turkic peoples and becomes a common motif in their folklore. According to one legend, Korogly's mother became pregnant by the light and was buried alive. However, the newborn Korogly survived by sucking his dead mother's milk. In Azerbaijani Turkic tradition, he is called Korogly (son of the blind man) because his father's eyes were gouged out. There are different versions of the legends adapted in different countries. The concept of blindness in the stories of Korogly means not only loss of sight but also invisibility. Heroes become invisible in order to protect themselves. This aspect of blindness in the "Korogly" legends represents more than physical loss of sight; it is a symbol of invisibility in society. The image of Korogly and his story are reflected in the "Korogly" epic. In this epic, "Korogly" appears as a brave warrior, a talented poet and ashug, author of poems, which remains in history as a fact (kizi Eminova 2021). In the context of historicism and typology in the study of the musical epic tradition of the peoples of Central Asia, the story of Korogly is not only a folklore character but also a key element of cultural heritage. His image and the legends surrounding his name serve as an important source for studying the traditions, values and musical heritage of these peoples. The study of different variants of the "Korogly" legend makes it possible to identify common features and differences in the cultural aspects of different groups of Turkic-speaking peoples.

The "Korogly" epic contains elements that can be related to historical events and characters. It describes the struggle of heroes against tyrants and injustice, which reflects the historical context of the times of rebellions and freedom struggles. Characters such as the Korogly may be inspired by real historical figures who participated in rebellions against authority. Some events in the epic, such as fleeing to the mountains, forming their own gang of brigands, and fighting against tyrants reflect real historical processes such as rebellions and struggles for the rights of the people. Thus, the story of Korogly, interwoven into different legends, not only reveals the unique features of folk culture but also enriches the understanding of the musical and epic traditions of Central Asia. Korogly's leading role in the formation of the national epic testifies to its importance as a key cultural artefact passed down through generations and serving as a source for the study and understanding of these peoples' past.

In turn, the musical-epic legacy of "Kitabi dede Korkud" is a tale that represents one of the most significant works of Turkic literature. This monument partly describes the life and exploits of the legendary hero Korkyt. "Kitabi dede Korkud" stands out for its unique compositional richness and exquisite language, surviving centuries and enriched with new meanings in a modern context. These elements not only hold their value through the centuries but also acquire new meanings that resonate in contemporary art. It is particularly important to note that in the modern era, when art strives for authenticity and depth, Korkyt's epic tales take on a special significance and become a source of inspiration. This is due not only to his storytelling skills but also to the deep spiritual essence he puts into his works. Thus, Korkyt's musical and epic heritage continues to be an integral part of the cultural canon. Its current relevance not only emphasises the artistic heritage of the past but also demonstrates its potential to inspire and influence contemporary creative endeavours. This heritage is a living bridge between the past and present, skilfully adapting to changing times and remaining a valuable source of inspiration for new generations of creators. An important aspect of this epic is that it not only tells of the hero's exploits but also embodies the values and traditions of the Kazakh people. "Kitabi dede Korkud" serves not only as a source of entertainment but also as a symbol of national identity and pride. This epic is important as a cultural artefact that transmits and preserves the cultural heritage of the Kazakh people and its history.

The epic "Kitabi dede Korkud" is an important literary work that combines elements of folklore, history and the culture of Turkic peoples. It describes the adventures and exploits of heroes overcoming various trials and fighting for their land and people. The historical events and periods described in the epic reflect the displacement and conquests of the Oghuz, their confrontation with other ethnic groups, as well as the life and culture of these people. The places of action in the epic correspond to the historical and geographical regions inhabited by the Oghuz and other Turkic tribes. The Oghuz tribes left their ancestral country in Central Asia and undertook a huge wave of westward migration between the 9th and 11th centuries CE. They encountered conflict and interacted with other ethnic groups across the Eurasian steppe as a result of their expansion. The Oghuz arrived in the late 9th century and settled in the territories west of the Ural River and north of the Aral Sea, where they interacted with the local Pecheneg, Bulgar, and Khazar tribes. The Khazars and Bulgars were conquered by the Oghuz by the 10th century, and they were assimilated into their tribal society. They then engaged in combat with the Pechenegs and Byzantines as they advanced further westward into the Pontic-Caspian steppe. Under the leadership of tribe chiefs like Seljuk and his successors, the Oghuz reached the height of their dominance during this period in the late 10th and early 11th centuries, dominating extensive areas spanning from the Aral Sea to the Black Sea region (Karamustafa 2023).

The main character of the epic "Kitabi dede Korkud" is a symbol of wisdom and devotion to his people. He helps to solve problems and fights for justice, being a messenger from the future and giving advice. The images of other characters in the epic also reflect heroism, devotion and the struggle for their ideals. Each of the twelve tales that make up the epic contains elements of heroism, devotion and the struggle for freedom and justice. Despite its literary significance, the "Kitabi dede Korkud" is also a source for the study of the history and culture of Turkic peoples, and the correspondences between the epic's content and historical data emphasise its importance as a cultural and historical source.

Historicism and typology play a key role in the study and understanding of epic folklore, such as the "Alpamys" and "Korogly", among the Turkic peoples of Central Asia. These stories, although they have fictional elements, are important for the study of historical events, cultural characteristics and traditions of the peoples of the region. In their totality, they represent a valuable source for the study of ethnic memory and socio-cultural dynamics. The legends of "Alpamys" and "Korogly" fit into the vast genre of heroic epics and are key elements of cultural heritage. Their study allows for a better understanding of the evolution and formation of these legends, as well as their role in the preservation and transmission of the cultural values of the peoples of Central Asia. The musical-epic heritage of Korkyt also stands out for its unique compositional richness and exquisite folkloric language, which continues to be an integral part of the cultural canon. Its relevance in today's world emphasises its potential to inspire and influence contemporary creative aspirations. Thus, these epic tales are not only key elements of the cultural heritage of Central Asia but also a valuable source for learning about the past and inspiring future generations.

DISCUSSION

The study of the problem of historicism and typology in the context of the musical epic tradition of the peoples of Central Asia, especially in connection with the heroic epic, has attracted the attention of many scholars. Their works present a variety of approaches to the classification and interpretation of epic materials, taking into account their historical background, cultural peculiarities and social contexts. Some scholars tend to analyse different versions of the epic in different historical periods, identifying changes in plot, images and motifs. Others focus on identifying the typological features of the epic by comparing it with similar traditions in other cultures or regions. Comparing these perspectives with the results of the present study will reveal commonalities and differences in the methods of analysing and interpreting epic materials. Such comparison contributes to a deeper understanding of the Central Asian musical epic tradition and its diversity in different research contexts.

Frederick Turner (2012) emphasises many important functions of the epic. The researcher notes that the epic not only defines the nature of the human narrator but also recalls the creation of the world and the human race. In addition, the epic describes the paradoxical role of the hero as a philistine and radical exception and establishes the complex quest underlying all human actions. The main thesis of the researcher is that these aspects of epic narrative are universal cultural elements present in different geographical locations, historical eras, ethnic and linguistic groups and at different levels of technological and economic development. The researcher emphasises that the epic, despite criticism and neglect, remains the most fundamental and important of all literary forms. The author argues that the epic is the source and beginning of all other literature, providing the framework within which any story is possible. In the opinion of the author, the epic deserves serious critical attention, and his aim is to fill the gaps in the literary understanding of epic studies and to inspire future epic writers and composers. It should be noted that the epic of the peoples of Central Asia is a significant cultural phenomenon that plays an important role in the formation and preservation of their identity. This epic not only conveys historical and mythological stories but also reflects the values, beliefs and traditions of that culture. It serves as a means of transmitting knowledge and experience from one generation to the next, enriching the cultural heritage of the region. It is also important to note that Central Asian epics have a universal significance, promoting understanding and respect for cultural diversity in a global context. Turner looks at the epic tradition in general, but the current study focuses on how the epics of Central Asia embrace the archetypal qualities and purposes the researcher lists for epics, including defining the human experience, establishing heroic ideals and quests, and passing down cultural memory. The researcher's claims regarding the importance of epics are supported by the analysis, which offers a case study with a regional emphasis.

Hüseyin Alhas (2023) claims that understanding the changes in the images of epic heroes is important for a deeper perception of the evolution of the epic literary genre. The scholar draws attention to the influence of cultural and social changes on the characteristics of epic heroes. The researcher is convinced that epic characters reflect the spirit of the times, emphasising their evolution in accordance with the changing values and expectations of society. By analysing epic characters in the context of Central Asian folklore, it is possible to identify features that distinguish them from Western epic heroes. The influence of historical and ethnic processes on the formation of hero images in epics becomes a key point of comparison with changes in the images of epic heroes. The cultural meanings and unique traits of Central Asian peoples form unique aspects of epic heroes, emphasising the diversity of this region in the context of epic tradition (Issakova et al. 2023). This corresponds to the methodology employed in the current study, which examines the archetypal heroes found in the epics of Alpamys, Korogly, and Kitabi Dede Korkut by connecting them to the historical, cultural, and ethnic settings of Central Asian societies. The unique depictions of characters such as Alpamys and Korogly exemplify the heroic ideals and ethos influenced by the particular experiences of the Turkic nomads living in that area.

Richard B. Rutherford (2012) suggests that there is an important relationship between epic and historiography. The researcher examines the structure and meaning of epic works in the context of historiography, identifying parallels between the two types of literature. The researcher stresses that epic and historiography, despite their differences, share common features in the organisation of narrative and the provision of meanings. Rutherford is convinced that epic works include the description of historical events, characters and cultural features of a certain epoch, which allows epic to be used as a source of information for studying the past, reconstructing historical events and analysing the socio-cultural environment. Epic can serve as a means of the formation and transmission of historical memory, preserving important events and characters for future generations and helping to preserve the historical heritage and cultural identity of peoples (Doszhan 2023a). Consequently, in the context of the musical epic tradition of the peoples of Central Asia, one can see parallels with the way heroic epic interacts with historical material. This analogy may shed light on the influence of epic tradition on the formation and transmission of historical memory in this region. By analysing how particular Central Asian epics contain elements and depictions that parallel historical accounts, the current study supports the opinions of Rutherford by demonstrating how these epics can be useful resources for comprehending the historical eras, figures and cultural contexts of that region. The analysis points out instances in which these epics record or mythologize important historical occurrences and figures that are pertinent to the ethnic history of communities in Central Asia.

Lascelles Abercrombie (2019) examines the epic in the context of its structure, function and impact on the reader. The author points out that epic is not only a form of art but also plays an essential role in culture and society. The scholar emphasises how epic shapes the world around it, influencing the perception and understanding of history, morality and cultural values in society. By comparing the results of this study with the music-epic tradition of the peoples of Central Asia, one can see parallels in how the epic influences the formation of cultural values and historical memory. In this context, the music-epic tradition serves not only as a means of artistic expression but also as a key element in the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage in this region. The present study's comprehensive examination of how epics such as Alpamys, Korogly, and Kitabi Dede Korkut have influenced Central Asian cultural identities, moral frameworks and historical consciousness throughout millennia validates the opinions of the scholar. The analysis presents empirical data from primary sources that highlights the substantial effects these particular epic works have had in areas where the researcher theorises. Epics have the ability to significantly influence the worldviews of entire communities (Sheikh 2018).

Karl Reichl (2021) emphasises several important aspects concerning the oral epic. The researcher draws attention to the close relationship between the performer of oral poetry and his audience, believing that the process of creating and performing an oral epic is inextricably linked to the context of this interaction. According to Reichl, this process has a significant impact on the interpretation of the text once it has been fixed in written form. One of the key points emphasised by the researcher is the transition from the oral transmission of epic material to its interpretation in written form. The scholar argues that in the process of oral performance, there are specialised mechanisms and strategies that are used by performers of oral poetry to attract the audience's attention and convey the story. These elements, according to the study, influence the perception and interpretation of the text once it becomes an object of written analysis. Comparing the results of this study with the musical epic tradition of Central Asian peoples, it is necessary to emphasise the importance of the transmission of oral epics in different cultural contexts. This phenomenon testifies to its significance and wide dissemination in world cultures. The current work's analysis of famous oral epics from Central Asia benefits greatly from the researcher's attention to the performative dynamics of oral epics. The textual analysis considered how the oral performance environments described by the scholar, in which bards used methods to engage live audiences, might have influenced the written copies. Comprehending this shift from oral to written forms reveals subtle interpretations in the epics examined here, which reflect a rich legacy of storytelling in performing arts throughout the area.

Researchers emphasise the importance of epic as a cultural phenomenon and its evolution in different cultural and historical contexts. According to scholars, the epic plays a fundamental role in literature and culture, remaining the source and beginning of all other literature. It is worth paying attention to the evolution of images of epic heroes in the context of cultural and social changes, as well as to the unique features and meanings that are formed under the influence of historical and ethnic processes, particularly in the epic of the peoples of Central Asia. The significance of the epic as a cultural heritage and its influence on the formation and preservation of the identities of different cultural communities is great. It is an important tool for transmitting and interpreting historical events, moral lessons and cultural norms in different cultural contexts. The parallel between epic and historiography indicates that epic works are more important than just literary works; they also represent an important source for historical analysis and understanding of the past. The impact of the epic on the formation of cultural identity and the transmission of cultural heritage points to its key role in preserving and disseminating the cultural wealth of different societies. Thus, epic is an integral part of the cultural heritage of humanity, which continues to be relevant and significant in the modern world.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine how historical occurrences influenced the composition of epic poems like "Alpamys", "Korogly", and "Kitabi dede Korkud", with an emphasis on the poems' meaning and function within Central Asian culture. The study of the heroic epics of the peoples of Central Asia not only contributes to the analysis of their artistic and poetic aspects, but also delves into the deep layers of history, ethnic memory and socio-cultural dynamics. Epic plays a key role in shaping the values and ethical standards of society, reflecting the norms by which social consciousness was formed and relations between people were built. The influence of the epic on the culture and values of the people is also important.

It was discovered that the epics "Alpamys", "Korogly", and "Kitabi dede Korkud" included allusions and representations that closely matched documented historical events and periods that the peoples of Central Asia went through. The research showed that these epics encode real historical people, cultural customs and sociopolitical realities in their unique contexts rather than just retelling mythological heroic tales. Key figures such as Alpamys are inextricably linked to the collective historical experiences and ethnic heritage that they represent. The depicted customs, power structures and value systems closely resemble the nomadic societies that the epics are derived from. As a result, this research has shown that the musical epics of Kitabi Dede Korkut, Alpamys, and Koroglu are in fact priceless resources for learning about the past, identities and worldviews of Central Asian civilizations. Their importance goes much beyond their artistic or intellectual worth; in essence, they are generation-by-generation anthropological anthologies. Through analysing the historical elements woven into their poetic stories, it is possible obtain a comprehensive understanding of how the Central Asian peoples interpreted their own historical experiences and worldviews.

Therefore, a richer comprehension and contextualization of the historical and cultural heritage reflected by these storytelling traditions is made possible by analysing these musical-epic works in relation to documented historical events and people. Future research on this subject should focus on contrasting various regional and ethnic renditions of the studied epic folklore, as this can reveal distinctive elements of cultural heritage and recurring themes, as well as information about how these legends have developed and interacted with one another.

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A Discourse Analysis on the Abdera Decree

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Abstract: The Abdera Inscription, which is the subject of this research, was discovered during archaeological excavations at the ancient city of Teos. Researchers deciphered the inscription, completed the missing parts, and read it from an epigraphic perspective; additionally, the inscription's aspects that shed light on ancient history are explained. The main aim of our study is to perform a discourse analysis of this inscription, which is the subject of a comprehensive and valuable book. The Abdera Inscription is not an ordinary honorary decree; it significantly differs from other similar honorary decrees found throughout Anatolia. Most importantly, the inscription honors a city-state, not an individual. While the inscription's formal structure resembles typical honorary decrees, its discourse adopts a different attitude. This text is written from the perspective of the Abderites and reflects their collective consciousness. It is this distinctive discourse that prompted us to analyze the inscription's content. The core focus of this study is on the words and expressions used by a society facing hardships in ancient times. The inscription narrates the community's struggle against significant problems, expressing various emotional reactions such as disappointment, helplessness, and gratitude. The Abderites not only honor the Teians who helped them during critical moments but also impart historical and cultural knowledge to future generations through this inscription. The city reflected its emotional world through the way the inscription was organized, along with its narration style and tone. In this study, the inscription is analyzed as a formation of social memory, an expression of emotions and an object of communication. This study employs document analysis, a qualitative research method, and it focuses on the original Ancient Greek form of the inscription. The conceptual framework of the research is built upon data from the fields of communication, and collective consciousness.

Keywords: Abdera, discourse, literature, rhetoric, Teos

INTRODUCTION

The Abdera Inscription honors the city-state of Teos and its people. The inscription was found during the excavations of Teos in 2017. Although the find site is Teos, we preferred the name "Abdera decree" as a reference to its authors. The Abderites sent it to Teos. A comprehensive study was carried out on this inscription by Mustafa Adak and Peter Thonemann (Adak & Thonemann 2022). They indicated that this newly found inscription is worth examining because it reflects the uniquely close relationship between Teos (for today's settlement information of the ancient city of Teos, see Frederiksen 2011: 193–194) and Abdera (for today's settlement information of the ancient city of Abdera, see Frederiksen 2011: 122–124). The relationship went on for over four hundred years, from the original settlement of Abdera in ca. 540 BC to the aftermath of the Roman sack of it in 170 BC (Adak & Thonemann 2022:5). Researchers traced the long common history of Teos and Abdera (Ibid.).

Teos is located in modern İzmir Sığacık. It was a port city of Ionia in Antiquity, on the Anatolian coast of the Aegean Sea (Adak & Thonemann 2022: 76). Archeological excavations have been continuing since 2010 (for information see Kadıoğlu 2021). The excavation team unearthed a sharpened white marble stele in the temenos of the Dionysus temple. The stone is broken from above and below but almost intact on the right and left. The written text is also largely in good condition. The editors estimate that the entire original text was approximately 135 lines long. They also state that the original height of the stele cannot be determined precisely because the length of lost uninscribed space at the base of the shaft is unknown. The best estimate is that the stele should have initially been approximately 2.5m–2.75m high (Adak & Thonemann 2022: 4). The ancient city of Abdera is on the Thracian coast of the Aegean Sea (Ibid.: 1). It was first excavated in 1950 by D. Lazarides (Graham 1972: 295–301).

The Abderites honor Teos for a number of reasons. The decree begins with a sentence emphasizing the special bond between Abdera and Teos beyond the metropolis-colony relationship. The Ancient Greek sentence is as follows:

> *ἐπειδὴ Τήϊοι, πατέρες ὄντες τῆς πόλεως ἡμῶν, τὴν προγονικὴν εὔνοιαν ọụ̓ λόγοις, ἔ̣ρ̣[γοις] δὲ τηρεῖν προαιρούμενοι, …* (Adak & Thonemann 2022: 22)

This text is translated as "Abdera Demos[1], honors (Teos) Demos, because the people of Teos, the fathers of our city, decided to continue the goodwill of their ancestors not in words but in action". "Πατέρες ὄντες τῆς πόλεως ἡμῶν" means "the father of our city". This expression that the Abderites prefer to use does not show much parallelism with other inscriptions (Ibid.). Using "father" to describe the relationship between the colony and the metropolis is striking and unusual. The expected word would be οἱκισταί or κτίσται. Abdera's relationship to the metropolis, its subordinate position (in the context of aid provided by the Teians) and its determination to preserve an ancestral relationship of mutual goodwill (προγονικὴ εὔνοια) is a standard metaphor for Hellenistic interstate diplomacy (Ibid.: 23).

The Greeks called these colonies "apoikia". Apoika meant "away from home". The colonies were independent of the metropolis and had their own form of government. On the other hand, the colonies and the metropolises were connected to each other in terms of the gods they worshipped, the calendars they used, and so on. The colonies were unique markets and reliable supporters of the metropolises (Diakov & Kovalev 2008: 304–305). According to Dionysios of Halicarnassus, apoicas respected metropolises just as children respected their fathers (Ibid.: 305). When the traces of diplomatic and cultural relations between Abdera and Teos are followed, different determinations are encountered in ancient and modern sources. Hicks and Hill point out that the majority of Teos's population sought a new home in Abdera rather than submit to the Persians (Hicks & Hill 1901: 27). Strabo also says that the Teians, fed up with the Persian attacks, left their cities and migrated to Abdera, a Thracian colony. After this migration, the line "Abdera, the beautiful colony of the Teians" has been sung. Strabo also writes that some of the Teians who migrated to Abdera returned to Teos. (Strabon 2005: 205; Strab.14.1.30). The fact that thousands of Ionians migrated to the West in the second half of the 6th century due to the Persian conquests is an important development in terms of archaic history (Vlassopoulos 2007: 175). Indeed, as Gray points out, later Classical and Hellenistic rhetoric, actions and institutions associated with the concept of exile provide important insights into the political cultures of the Greek civil world as a whole and specifically the cities (Gray 2015: 19–20). According to Tiverios, one of the main points of interest between Teos and Abdera is the struggle for survival. As a matter of fact, at the end of the Persian attacks, in 545 BC, the Teians entered into a fierce war with the Thracians to leave their city and settle in Abdera (Tiverios 2008: 91). Abdera had very close relations with Teos at the political, religious and legal levels (Ibid.: 97). Diakov and Kovalev, on the other hand, are content to say that Abdera and Maroneia were established at the starting point of the trade routes leading to the Balkans and the Danube, while talking about the establishment of the Thracian colonies (Diakov & Kovalev 2008: 307). They say that these two cities are from the Greek colonies, but they do not give information about the role of Teos. Rhodes, in the chapter of his book devoted to Teos's decrees, firstly states that there are few decrees in Teos, but these have interesting content (Rhodes & Lewis 1997: 393). Then, starting from a decree dated 2nd qr C5 registered in SEG xxxi 985, he states:

> *It includes an oath not to revolt, not to punish anybody without a vote of 200 or more in Teos and a conviction, or 500 or more in (Teos' colony) Abdera, and again not to set up an aisymnetes;*[2] *a curse is*

> *to be read out at the three festivals in Teos and also in Abdera, with penalties for failure to read it out.* (Rhodes 1997: 393–394).

These words of Rhodes are an interesting record showing the colony-metropolitan relationship between the two cities. According to Scott, with the scientific characterization of the relationship between the metropolis and the colony, the view that there is a one-way relationship that sees the colony as a mirror image of the metropolis is left aside. It has evolved towards the recognition that there are different kinds of relationships between different metropolitan/colonial pairs (Scott 2013: 110–111).

It is understood from the Abdera decree that there was an unusual relationship between Abdera and Teos. The relationship between a city and its colony is described with the mother-daughter metaphor in ancient times. "The father of our city", has changed the mother-daughter metaphor to the father-son metaphor. This puts the inscription in a different place from its counterparts.

This change constitutes the main starting point of our study. We subjected the text to discourse analysis, especially the expression "father of our city". Through this inscription, the Abderites' way of perceiving life, their fears, wishes, their ways of expressing gratitude, etc. are to be illuminated, albeit partially; an attempt has been made to understand the world of a society that lived thousands of years ago. For this purpose, the study was planned and conducted as a piece of basic research. According to Neuman, basic research focuses on rejecting or supporting theories that explain how the social world works, what causes events to happen, why social relations happen in a certain way and why society changes. It is the source of most new scientific knowledge and ways of thinking about the world, and its primary audience is the scientific community (Neuman 2009: 37). Since the study is a discourse analysis, its aim is to contribute to research in literature. Historical texts can be examined like literary texts. According to some researchers, the New Historicism movement considers history a narrative and focuses on the textuality of history. The historical context is established, written and examined through texts as a concept open to interpretation (Oppermann 2006:1). It has been brought to the attention of researchers working in other fields of social sciences as well as literary science.

The study was carried out on a single inscription, and the text of the inscription was subjected to discourse analysis. The analysis was based on the Ancient Greek original of the text.

The main subject is what is said in the decree, which is a tool of communication, and which words and expressions are chosen in expressing feelings and thoughts. The conceptual framework of the research was formed by the data of the fields of communication, and collective consciousness, since the inscription has a message that the cities of Abdera and Teos conveyed to both the people of that day and future generations.

DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ABDERA DECREE

This inscription has been examined in two aspects: a means of communication and a narrative text. While Chapter 1 consists of a single title, Chapter 2 is divided into 6 sub-titles.

1. The Abdera Decree as a Communication Tool

Persians started to attack Teos in 545 BC and many Teians left the city in 543 BC, migrated to Thrace and established Abdera as colony in the Nestos delta. Abdera quickly became rich thanks to its silver mines. They were attacked by the Romans in 170 BC. This attack reduced Abdera to ruins. Some of its citizens died and many others were sold into slavery. The city suffered great destruction. The Abderites argued that what was done to them was unfair, that they were victimized, and they asked permission from Rome to rebuild the city. Rome noticed this injustice and allowed the city to be repaired and rebuilt (for detailed information, see Adak & Thonemann 2022). However, rebuilding a city requires substantial material and motivation and it is only possible with great support. Help came from Teos. Erecting an inscription of honor is an expression of gratitude. Abdera prepared two identical inscriptions. One of them remained in Abdera; the other was sent to Teos. The inscription erected in Abdera is lost (Ibid.: 202).

First of all, we find it useful to clarify what the inscription says and what it means. In reality, a text is never just a text. It has a message. According to Fiske, "The message is not something sent from A to B, but an element in a structured relationship whose other elements include external reality and the producer/reader" (Fiske 1996: 19). Communication, on the other hand, is the transmission of information, ideas, attitudes or feelings from one person or group to another, mainly through symbols. According to scientific research on communication, language and how it is used are important, and there is a close link between society and communication (Türkoğlu 2004: 21). Communication is a reflection of humans' socialization. It is a result of their need to adapt to society and the environment (Oskay 2001: 1). Communication is more than just transmitting news from the source to the receiver. It also reproduces the event using key symbols, slogans, or themes that give meaning to the event. It aims to direct, persuade, appeal to emotions and encourage certain behaviors (Ibid.: 3–8). According to some researchers, communication is a necessary condition for a person's physical, psychological and social existence (Erdoğan 2007: 12). When people communicate, they inevitably create and change the culture in which they live (Dicleli 2000: 23). The main purpose of communication is to influence others and at the same time to be influenced by them (Gökçe 2006: 16). It is worth mentioning that the researcher İncilay Cangöz has pointed out that, as social beings humans have a desire to know and change the world, and their interest in news and information increases when human-induced violence such as war, conflict and crisis increases (Cangöz 2008: 149). The harsh conditions the Abderites endured seem to have forced them to erect an honorific inscription for the Teians. According to the sources of communication science, in fact, written communication is a little more delayed than verbal communication, because receiving and perceiving the message, interpreting it and reacting to it takes more time (Gökçe 2006: 51). Walter Benjamin states that to grasp the past historically is not to recount events as they happened, but to seize the sparks of hope within the past during moments of danger and carry them into today's struggle (Benjamin 1969: 255). He says that a chronicler who tells both big and small events behaved in line with the fact that nothing that happened once can be erased from history (Ibid.: 254). Eduardo Cadava attributes the possibility of historical survival to the survival of traces of the past and the ability of people to read them. He says that the fact that these traces are historically stigmatized does not mean that they belong to a specific time and he emphasizes the continuity of the historical text as a means of communication (Cadava 2008: 101).

The text establishes a one-way communication with us. The people of Abdera not only wrote down their situation but also created a memory for future generations. The Abdera Inscription is actually a kind of mass media. According to researchers, communication is a process by which people collectively create and organize social reality (Türkoğlu 2004: 21). The Abderites prepared two identical inscriptions and planted one in their own city and the other in Teos. In this case, their message reached both cities. In addition, the text may have reached their future generations. Abdera's demos makes a note to the history and tells about the injustice they suffered. As Buck-Morss underlines in her work, the need for narrative arises from the social change of "time", the uniqueness and irreversibility of human events within the concept of history (Buck-Morss 2010: 76). The concept of history implies that human beings can influence events, and they also have moral and political responsibility as conscious subjects who can shape their own destinies (Ibid.: 97). In a sense, the inscription is a product of the purpose of the Abderites to fulfill their responsibilities. They aim to pass on to the next generations the important events that took place in the nearly 400-year long history of their city and the good deeds done by the people of Teos during these events. Then, the communication subject of the inscription is Abdera's struggle for survival and for honor. In the text the communication aspect is positive; benevolence, loyalty, respect, appreciating the good done and the need to not leave it unrequited are the values. The Abderites tried to communicate and explain themselves. Teos seems to be in a passive position according to our current knowledge and Abdera seems to have established a one-way communication. Abdera describes itself as "us", and the recipient city as a single person. There is only one party speaking: Abdera. Abdera glorified Teos for its help. The text was engraved on stones and the stones were planted in public places; therefore the intended communication has taken place.

2. The Abdera Decree as a Narrative Text

The inscription is a decree taken by a city-state, an official document. This is exactly why it is important and worth considering. As an official document, we expect a formal text that is devoid of emotion. Official documents must adhere to specific rules based on their characteristics, subject matter and intended purpose. These rules also impose some limitations on language. The Abdera decree conforms to the general characteristics of honorary inscriptions in terms of form. However, in terms of discourse, there is an emotionally charged narrative and the actors of the narrative (Abdera and Teos) that appear in the text from time to time are not real but legal persons. What the text wants to tell us is explained below in sub-headings.

a. Honoring

Honoring refers to an action, the arrangement of the text in connection with this action and the value given to the person honored. The formal, external aspect of the action is that the Abderites decide to honor the Teians and announce it with a text. The reasons for honoring are the internal, intellectual part. In this context, the inscription erected by the Abdera to honor the Teians can be seen as the transmission of knowledge, thoughts, attitudes and feelings of the citizens of one city-state to the citizens of another city-state. Abdera and Teos are not just any two city-states. There is a main city-colonial city link between them. According to the sources, the acquisition of suitable lands by the people of a tribe or a city outside their own borders in order to engage in agricultural or commercial activities is called 'colonization' (Tekin 2010: 70). It is natural that there are some relations, especially trade, between the colony and the main city. Honorary inscriptions were normally written for individuals. What is unnatural is that a city honoured another city. While explaining the concept of "writing", Fernand Braudel stated, "Writing is primarily a technique of commanding at a distance, of recording, transmitting, ordering. Societies with wide spheres of influence and empires are the sons of writing. Writing occurs everywhere with them and in similar processes" (Braudel 2007: 90). Thus, it means that Abdera has something to say to Teos, a message to give.

When we look at the first line of the inscription, we see that first of all, the Abderites wanted to "honor" the Teians. Although the first sentence of the inscription does not contain the word "honor", the word "honours/honoured" are supposed in the sentence pattern since they are a characteristic feature of these kind of inscriptions. The meaning of the word "honor" here is worth considering on its own. It is clear that the ancient people did not honor everyone, and that in order for a person to deserve to be honored, they must render important services to the society they live in (Cook 1998: 29–32; Şahin 2016: 100–103). These services vary according to the needs of the city and the characteristics of the period (being at war, being in a famine, experiencing a great natural disaster, etc.). The fact that the Abderites honor the Teians with an inscription indicates an important and strong connection between them. In the following lines of the decree, the reasons why the honoring inscription was written are stated. What draws attention here is that a city is honored, not a real person. No human name is mentioned in the text. This is extremely important. This makes the inscription extraordinary. Of course, Teos has an institutional structure that takes the administrative decisions about the city and there are people who are at the head of this structure. The decision to help Abdera was undoubtedly taken by the people in the administrative offices, as required by the functioning of the city-state. However, the Abderites preferred to honor the whole city rather than the people who are the actors of this decision mechanism, and they almost personified Teos. Teos is depicted as a person who helped Abdera and therefore deserves to be honored. The main motivation of this unusual behavior in the context of the honorific inscriptions must be that the aid given to Abdera was paid with the income of the people of Teos.

While Teos is shown as a whole and a single person in the narrative text, Abdera refers to itself as a community by using the 1st person plural pronouns "us, our, we". Researcher Abel Miroglio (1973: 12) argues that the psychology of societies encompasses distinct static and dynamic elements, along with a specific and tangible psychological structure that is fundamentally sociological in nature. He further argues that when individuals are considered either in isolation or as representatives of a broader collective, their personal identities tend to dissolve within the contexts of the group (Miroglio 1973: 12).

Circumstances form the collective consciousness. According to P. K. Bock, human behavior is embedded both in individual self-awareness and the network of social meanings. Within the tension between societal norms and personal actions, each influences and transforms the other. In this dynamic, language plays a central role in articulating life and conveying structured meanings (Bock 2001: 304). The people of Abdera, who wrote the inscription, probably aim to appear stronger under the difficult conditions they are in, by including Teos in the community they define as "us".

b. Father of Our City

In the decree, the phrase "πατέρες ὄντες τῆς πόλεως ἡμῶν" (father of our city) is followed by the phrase "πατέρες ὄντες". This phrase shows that the people of Abdera describe the Teians as "father" and Teos as "father's hearth/house". According to Adak and Thonemann, the word "father" is a usage that has not been seen before in the inscriptions, apart from the mother-daughter depiction between two city-states, one of which was formed by the colonization of the other. This expression reveals how helpless Abdera feels. An objection may arise at this point. Why is using the concepts of father/son and father's hearth to define the main city-colony city relationship seen as a difference when the mother-daughter metaphor is not a problem? The mother-daughter metaphor may not be properly evaluated by those who do not know under which conditions and how the city-states formed colonies in ancient times.

Between 750 and 550 BC, Greek colony settlements began to be established by those fleeing the Doric invasion and those leaving their cities for other reasons. In time, economic reasons such as finding raw materials and trading were added. People from various settlements established many colony cities on the Mediterranean and Black Sea coasts (Mansel 1999: 155–158). The colonial city was independent of the metropolitan city, and the citizens of the colony were not counted in the metropolitan community. However, there was a religious unity between the colony and the main city. Festivals were celebrated around the altar where the fire brought from the main city was lit. In addition, the city law and the phyle order were similar and the same calendar was used (Ibid.: 160). This demonstrates a close relationship between Abdera and Teos. In this analogy, Teos serves as the "mother" city, while Abdera serves as the "daughter." However, the people of Abdera modified this natural analogy to suit their own time, defining Teos as the "house of their fathers". Although Teos was not a particularly wealthy or powerful city, it provided financial support to Abdera. This connection highlights the analogy by emphasizing the father's economic power within the family and his duty to protect his family in all circumstances. The metaphor of the metropolitan city as a mother reflects a traditional understanding of longstanding social structures. In contrast, the concept of the patriarchal home signals a shift in how the relationship between the metropolitan and colonial cities is perceived. E. Fromm argues that when a person cannot obtain the sense of personal identity through their own creative activities, they try to achieve it by identifying themselves with another person or group (Oktay 2000: 125). On the other hand, in his study entitled "The Anatomy of Human Relations in Communication Science", O. Gökçe states that the way of looking at the world differs from society to society, culture to culture, and that societies with different cultures and languages perceive the objective environment with the concepts presented by their own cultures (Gökçe 2006: 48). These views explain the difference in the point of view of the people of Abdera that makes them describe Teos, who had done them a great favor, as "father" and themselves as "child".

According to Fromm, language includes a perspective on life and it is a stereotyped expression of living life in a certain way (Fromm 2019: 122). Fromm says that isolation from others and being alone is a very strong urge. According to him, this is because the feeling of loneliness and separation from others is a feeling close to madness as long as a person is a "human". For a healthy psychology, it is necessary for a person to learn to live with others. This need for unity with others is a human's strongest passion, and one cannot bear to be alone, not to associate with fellow humans (Ibid.: 131). His happiness is based on the sense of solidarity he feels between himself and his fellows, between past and future generations (Fromm 1997: 52). Man can adapt to almost any condition. However, among his inherent characteristics is the need for happiness, belonging, love and freedom. If these are somehow blocked or suppressed, members of society want to change the existing order according to their needs. If such change is impossible, the resistance of society is lost, which is destructive. Changes that satisfy human needs are more easily achieved when certain conditions are met (Fromm 2003: 75). Fromm underlines a particular issue. According to him, helplessness and doubt paralyze life; people choose survival over freedom, and they are dragged into a new dependence. This dependence controlled by those who are in power or by the society itself is different from the original bonds, which are in fact not severed. This escape does not restore the lost sense of security; it just makes people forget to perceive themselves as a separate entity (Fromm 2012: 256–257).

Alfred Adler also argues that man reveals his style clearly and distinctly only under unfavorable living conditions and difficulties (Adler 1992: 59). According to Adler, the oldest instinct of humans is to associate with others. Humanity has progressed as a result of people approaching their human kin with a sense of sharing, and family is a way of life in which this sharing is of great importance (Adler 1998: 235). In a sense, this is a definition that explains why the Abderites define the Teians as father, just as a child renounces his freedom and takes shelter in a parent. The Abderites are so helpless and in such great doubt that they will survive that they must have been dragged into a new devotion for the Teians. As a matter of fact, Fromm, while examining the relationship between parents and children, says that the relationship of the child with the father is very different from that with the mother. According to him, the mother is the homeland where we were born: nature, land, sea. On the other hand, the father does not represent such a natural place. The father expresses the child's world of thought, law, order and discipline, travel and adventure. He tutors the child, shows them the way to the world (Fromm 2007: 54). From this point of view, the greatness of the meaning of Teos for Abdera is obvious. In fact, it would be useful to examine Fromm's definition of the mother-child and father-child relationship in the context of Abdera. Namely, in the mother-child relationship, Fromm defines the mother as the homeland that one is born in, which helps us to understand the mother-daughter metaphor between the metropolis and its colony. Those who founded a colony city left their own cities and homelands and established a life for themselves in a new geography. This is similar to a young girl getting married and starting a new home, a new life. However, Abdera calls Teos "father", emphasizing that in a sense, the bond between them is shaped according to the world of thought and other dynamics of life such as law/order and discipline.

E. Schwertheim, moving from the foundation legends cited by Strabo and Athenaios, states that the foundation stories (or foundation legends) of cities are remembered even after a thousand years, and this is important for the collective consciousness of the people. He says that separation from the old homeland and remaining relations with this homeland were remembered in the later periods and these affected history (Schwertheim 2009: 35). Collective consciousness reflects a process, not a specific situation. The identity of a society changes over time with the relationship it establishes with other societies (Bilgin 1999: 59). The need for collective identity develops and is experienced in relation to social structures and organizations, environmental norms and values, and the atmosphere of the world and the age (Bilgin 2007: 14).

Kinship is an important factor in the regulation of interpersonal relations and political and social organization (Kottak 2001: 394). In his article on rituals, Chaniotis notes: "Philostratus reports that all the Athenians attended the funeral lamenting the death of their benefactor 'like children who have lost a good father' (ὅσα παῖδες χρηστοῦ πατρὸς χηρεύσαντες)" (Chaniotis 2023) (See: Philostratos, Vitae sophistarum XV, 20: ἀποθανόντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ Μαραθῶνι καὶ ἐπισκήψαντος το (...) (Ibid.). This document, which establishes a similarity between the father figure and the ruling power, is remarkable.

It is understood from the statements made in the inscription that the people of Abdera had a collective consciousness. In the introduction to this decree, the Abderites explain their intention to honor the Teians, describing them as the fathers of their city, and their reasons for this honoring. Thus, they also tell why they wrote the decree of honor. According to this, the Teians take a stance "determined to preserve their goodwill" for Abdera inherited from their ancestors. They show endless interest and generosity towards the Abderites, not only with words but also with actions. On the other hand, the part of the decree at 1: 32–35 of Fragment B has the confusing statement where Abdera refrains from acknowledging her ancestor in midair:

> (32) *συμφερόντων τὸν δῆμον ἡμῶν γενέσθαι· ἐπιβ̣άντων δὲ καὶ Μαρωνιτῶν*
> *ἐ̣π̣ὶ̣τ̣ὴ̣ν̣πάτριον ἡμῶν χώραν οὐκ ἐπιβαλλόντως καὶ παραγενομένων ν.*
> *εἰς ἀμφισβήτησιν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς, ληφθέντος κατὰ δόγμα τῆς συνκλήτου*
> *κριτοῦ τοῦ Ἐρυθραίων δήμου, αἰσθόμενοι Τήϊοι καταφρονουμένους ἡ*

It is emphasized that the lands of Abdera were polluted by the Maroneians. What is polluted here is ancestral land. Considering that the Teians took refuge in Abdera during the Persian attacks, it is seen that Abdera defined his own city as his ancestral land.

c. Ancestral Hearth

The phrase ἑπὶ τὰς πατρώιους ἐστίας "the hearth of their fathers" that is used on line 7 of the fragment B also plays an important role in describing the mood of the people. The word Hestia (ἐστία) is a nominative feminine noun in the Ancient Greek. It means hearth; the part of the house where the altar is located; it also means house, residence, household, shelter (Çelgin 2018: 327). In the lexicon, another entry is Ἑστία (Lat. Vesta), defined as 'Hestia, daughter of Kronos and Rhea, goddess of the hearth and guardian of the civic flame of the polis" (Ibid.). The stove is important for cooking, heating and as a source of light. If the stove is not lit, life is paralyzed. The family, according to Aristotle, is a union that shared the same bread, established in accordance with the law of nature (Aristoteles 1982: 11). It was the rule that the colonist took fire from the sacred hearth of the metropolis (Hestia) to light the sacred hearth of the colony. The purpose of this ritual was to maintain the bond of the new community with the old one (Graham 1964: 25). The common sense of a belief or feeling by a community of people who are in contact with each other gives that belief or feeling great power. Similar states of consciousness reinforce each other through the mutual exchange of feelings (Durkheim 2006: 130).

From this point of view, the burning of the hearth is a metaphor in the sense of the continuation of the family's existence. The burning of the hearth depends on economic power, which is provided by the father in patriarchal societies. The ancestral hearth, the father's house, thus ceases to be an ordinary place. The importance of the family, the mother and the father for the child is undeniable. According to research, while motherhood is the feeling of love, compassion and protection for the child, the basic element of fatherhood is trust (Nirun 1994: 157). The Abderites expressed their trust in Teos. They knew that their ancestors' hearth would be a shelter for them. In fact, there is an "identification" here. According to Ç. Kağıtçıbaşı, people behave in harmony with the groups they are in or want to be in, for various reasons and in various ways. Identification, which is one of the processes of social influence and attitude, gives the person the feeling of being like the people he values (Kağıtçıbaşı 1988: 70).

The ancestors' hearth is not only a house, a place, but it also indicates the existence of a group with which there is a strong kinship. So, if we consider Abdera's situation within the framework of the mother-daughter relationship, it makes one think of a young girl's separation from the family and her independent life. Those who left Teos established a new life for themselves in new lands. The colonial city is now a free and separate social structure, although there are some commonalities in terms of belief systems, etc. However, the ancestral hearth brings to mind the authority of the family's father rather than the mother's tender embrace. The effort of the Abderites to identify with their homeland from which they broke away nearly 400 years ago is worth emphasizing. In fact, the Abderites explain this in the text. Two cities helped each other, especially in times of war, and provided each other with financial and moral support. Thus, the young girl who started a new home was replaced by a son who had a strong bond with his family.

According to Durkheim, an individual who loves their country and humanity feels a moral obligation to engage in solidarity and offer help to others (Durkheim 1968: 83). That is why the relationship between Abdera and Teos resembles that between two living people. As Durkheim points out, it is the beliefs, dispositions and practices of the collectively conceived group that create social phenomena (Durkheim 1982: 54). Collective habit expresses itself in a formula that is repeated by word of mouth, transmitted through education, and made permanent in writing (Ibid.: 54–55). For a phenomenon to be collective, it must be shared by all members of society, or at least by the majority, if it is a general phenomenon (Ibid.: 56). Every strong state of consciousness is a source of life; it is a fundamental factor in our general state of vitality (Durkheim 2006: 127). The phenomenon of social solidarity exists because many states of consciousness are common to all members of society (Ibid.: 141). States of consciousness do not arise from the psychological nature of man in general, but from an attitude with which people have been related for a time, interacting with each other according to whether they are more or less numerous and close to each other. Only the nature of the group can explain the product of group life (Durkheim 1973: 133). Durkheim states that an individual cannot change the social situation alone. According to him, the way to influence society is through the coming together of individual forces to form opposing collective forces. There are social reasons at the root of the understanding of personal compassion, which tries to be a balm for evils. Apart from special circumstances, the cause of misery in a society depends on the state of economic life, the conditions of this life; in short, the form of organization (Durkheim 1968: 83–84). The Abdera decree shows that there is a collective consciousness between the two cities. C. G. Jung states that in addition to the personal unconscious, there is also the collective unconscious, which is transmitted to individuals by society (Eroğlu 2004: 179). According to Jung, peoples and ages, like individuals, have their own tendencies (Jung 2006: 325).

We understand that in the 170s BC, the ancestral hearth was a well-established and accepted concept in society. In Greek mythology Hestia is the protective goddess of the hearth; in Roman mythology, it is Vesta. According to sources, in Roman culture Vesta, the goddess of the hearth of the house, became the goddess of the state (Campbell 2025). Vesta and Hestia are supernatural females. It is interesting that values represented by the concept of the hearth are attributed to an ordinary male in the Abdera decree. The guardianship and ownership of the hearth/house is attributed to the role of the father in the family institution, and Teos is depicted as a father's home for Abdera, as we see in the text. The movement of these two values related to home and family life from mother to father is a reflection of the age and the patriarchal order of the society. On the other hand, the adventure of the transition from matriarchal to patriarchal discourse in the history of world literature is a study in itself worth investigating through epigraphic documents.

d. Not Letting Others Surpass Them in Goodness

The Abderites say that they wish not to leave the other side an opportunity to surpass them in doing well. This is the expression of the ancient people's desire to do good deeds, to be useful to people, which is expressed with the words εὐεργέα – εὐεργής (euergesia – euerges). The Abderites convey the great favor done to them by the Teians through inscriptions. Between lines 24 and 31 of the Fragment B it is told that the Abdera once again asked Teos for help. Teos send the first aid for the construction and recovery of Abdera, which was destroyed after the war. This situation is described in Fragment A of the inscription. Abdera states why it asked for help from Teos for the second time: the city needs to invest in agriculture to feed its population. Abdera's demos asked Teos to borrow some money in order to buy oxen. Teos's attitude towards this request is explained as "The Teians, despite their lack of wealth, but surpassing all other men in good faith, have provided us five loan-free talents for more than five years, wishing that our demos should never be deprived of means". In fact, Teos, which was not a very rich city, gave five loan-free talents. The Abderites regarded this as evidence of a form of greatness that surpasses all others in moral virtue. Notably, the phrase 'all men' was used instead of 'all people', reflecting the prevailing mindset of a male-dominated society. It is only possible for men who work, produce and earn to help others. Having a say in the spending of monetary wealth is unique to men. However, as we understand from the inscription, the favors of Teos toward Abdera are not limited to these. Between lines 30 and 53 of the Fragment B, Abdera mentions another very important help given to them by the Teians. When the Maroneians confiscate the lands of Abdera (which is described very harshly in the inscription as "when they violated the lands of our ancestors"), Teos again helps. The Abderites especially emphasize that the Teians helped them, even though the problem they had with the Maroneians was not directly related to Teos. They clearly describe the issue in the inscription: the conflict between Abdera and the Maroneia was resolved in the Roman Senate. Erythrai's demos was appointed as a judge by the senate. Realizing that Abdera had been subjected to humiliating treatment due to their lack of livelihood, Teos embraces Abdera's case as its own and appoints an authorized delegate to act as Abdera's legal advocate in the Abdera-Maroneia case. This person was capable both of understanding the problem and taking a prudent stance without being distracted by the legal claims that would be put forward during the investigation. When the people of Teos realize that the size of the case exceeds the power of a single person, they ask Miletos for another person to defend this case, and they pay the fee of this person, too. Abdera succeeds against the Maroneia. After this court process is explained in the text, it is stated:

> *And most importantly, with the goodwill of both Gods and the Teians added to our legal claims, our demos succeeded in the verdict against the Maroneians. The Teians, by their actions, have erected for all men an eternal monument of their goodwill to their kin, and they have left no room for anyone else to surpass them in usefulness.*

The expression “with the goodwill of both Gods and Teians added to our legal claims” is worth emphasizing here. The gods helped, the Teians took ownership of the cause and provided financial support, but the Abderites were not wrong in their cause. Thus, they underline that they are not in an unjust struggle, and they also emphasize that Teos displays the virtue of being on the side of the right, not the strong. After describing this court process, they state again that the Teians did such an important job that they could not be surpassed by anyone else in terms of usefulness. Here the phrase “pass all men in good faith” is repeated. However, a new issue is touched upon, for which goodwill or assistance is shown. All of this actually supports the discourses of the “father of our city” and the “father of the hearth” that are at the very beginning of the decree. These also reveal the father’s power, responsibilities and determination within the family institution. The transformation of Teos from a main city to a father’s house can be associated with sacrifice, bravery, ability to endure hardship, but most of all with economic power. From beginning to end, the text depicts the actions of Teos, whom it defines and personifies as a father. Teos has the character of an adult and Abdera describes this character almost as a child would: Teos is valiant, helpful, honorable and virtuous.

e. Tyche/Fate

Also worth mentioning are the words “when misfortunes [thrown] ruthlessly to the affairs of demos, and the city remains surrounded by only a wall, and some of its inhabitants [their lives?] at war, and others, captives” in Fragment A lines 15 to 20 of the text:

> *οἱ τῆς πόλεως καιροὶ τῆς παρ᾽ ἐκείνων ἐνεδεήθησαν* [βοηθεί]-
> *α̣ς κ̣αὶ ἡ̣ τύχη τοῖς τοῦ δήμου πράγμασιν ἀγνωμόνω̣ς* [?διέ]-
> *κ̣ε̣ι̣ τ̣ο̣ κ̣α̣ὶπερίβολος μό̣νον τειχῶν ἡ̣ πόλ̣ις ἀπ*[- - c.7 - -, τῶν]
> *δ̣ὲ̣ἐνοικούντων οἱ μὲν εἰς τὸν πόλεμον ἀνήλωσαν* [- c.6 -],
> *οἱ δὲ αἰχμάλωτοι γενόμενοι Α̣ΙΣΣ̣ΗΝΣΑ̣ΝΕΙΧ̣*[- - c.10 - -]

At first glance, it seems like a society that has lived through the harsh realities of war tells what happened. The walls of the city were destroyed in the war, some of its citizens were killed, and some were taken prisoner or even enslaved. However, it is interesting to see that the culprit of all these evils is “misfortune” (ἡ τύχη). However, here we are talking about a war, not a natural disaster, that is, there are states at war with each other. It is interesting that the name of the state and nation that attacked their cities and devastated their homeland is not mentioned, and the source of the problem is given as "misfortune, bad luck, destiny". Similarly, between the 10th and 15th lines of the Fragment B, when talking about the destruction of the city walls and the temples of the Gods, there is also an expression that we translate into English as "event of war" or "because of the war". Instead of saying that the enemy or that enemy destroyed the walls and temples of the city, they said that they had a great disaster. However, the power that destroyed the city is clear, and that is Rome. In 170 BC, Abdera was attacked by Rome and the city fell to the ground. At that time, Rome was a great and powerful state. Abdera was aware of the plight of such a power. The text avoids mentioning Rome as an enemy. In addition, the fact that Abdera was attacked by the Romans is actually an unexpected event for Abdera. This is in fact because Rome's target is Macedonia, which is a neighbor to Abdera. When Rome marched on Macedonia, it attacked Abdera with the provocation of Pergamon, even though there was no apparent problem between them. As a matter of fact, Abdera appealed to Rome itself to remedy the injustice. Realizing the situation after burning and demolishing Abdera, Rome found it appropriate to rebuild the city. Perhaps the choice of the word "misfortune" was partly due to the desire to avoid the deterioration of the peace that was re-established with powerful Rome.

f. Immortalization of Memory

In the whole of Fragment A of the inscription and in the first 52 lines of Fragment B, the people of Abdera talk about when and how the people of Teos helped them. From 53 onwards, they tell about the things they have done and plan to do in return for the favors done to them. Accordingly, they first wanted to erect an honoring inscription. However, here again, one statement is noteworthy. They express their purpose of erecting this honorific inscription as "(to) praise the Teians for their continued disposition and goodwill towards our demos". Thus, on the one hand, they express their gratitude; on the other hand, they state that Teos's financial and moral support is ongoing. It would not be wrong to say that they want Teos's support to be permanent.

The Abderites specify every detail: the shape of the inscription of honor, the material, where it will be erected, where and when it will be sent. A monumental bronze statue was to be erected, featuring a Nike figure crowning the Teos demos with ivy. In front of this statue, an altar would be positioned. On the thirteenth day of Anthesterion, the gymnasiarch was to perform a sacrificial offering, followed by organizing a contest. During the contest, prayers would be made for divine favor toward the Teians and Abderites. Furthermore, when the Abderites held torch races for both boys and adults, the Teians were granted front-row seating. The sacrificial meat was to be given not just to adults, but also the winners; permission was to be given to withdraw funds from the public bank of the gymnasiarch to cover future expenses for the sacrifice and competition.

It is necessary to clarify the importance of the front seats. In various competitions, the front seats are extremely important. In some other inscriptions, it is noted that those who have done important and useful works for the city are given the right to sit in the front seat by the decision of the city's demos and boule[3]. Abdera has also deemed it appropriate to give such a right to the guests from Teos, in addition to erecting a statue and writing an inscription of honor. The people of Abdera think that these decisions they have taken should rightly be known by Teos. Thus, they list in the decree the people who will go to Teos to announce these and to do some work there as well. The works to be done are not limited to these. In addition, in order to announce that Teos's demos is crowned with a golden crown and a bronze statue, and for people of all ages to learn this, the man (/men) selected from among the nomophylacs (executive magistrates) on duty every year travels to Teos in the month of Leukatheon as a thank-you to Teos's demos and the Abdera demos.

They say that the nomophylacs should be allowed to choose a bull for sacrifice in the month of Apatourion. They decide to distribute the meat of the sacrifice in question to the victorious young men and boys in Leukathea, to allow the nomophylacs to obtain the money needed for the purchase of bulls from the public bank, and to send 1000 medimnoi of wheat to the Teians. They say that the men sent to Teos should request a place in the temple of Dionysus or in the agora where they can erect a white marble stele, and that this honorary decree is written on and the expenses are met from the funds reserved for the embassies. They record that in the year after the priesthood of the Schesistratos, the commissioned people (nomophylacs) are allowed to take office, sending a copy of the decree to Teos and allowing the same nomophylacs to be responsible for erecting the statue and other works specified in the decree.

In the concluding part of the decree, they state that this announcement was made to show gratitude to the Teos demos. They complete the text by counting the names of those chosen for this important task. However, since the part with the names of the ambassadors has been corrupted in the inscription, their names cannot be read. These works seem to be quite extensive and costly. The money and manpower required for the preparation of a statue and a stone containing a long text and the offering of sacrifices in Teos must be substantial.

Since the inscription was found in the Teos excavations, Abdera seems to have done what it said in the text. This inscription is not only about gratitude. Abdera sent the stone inscription to Teos and requested that it be erected in the agora or temple of Dionysus. The honorary text is not written on paper, ceramics or any other cheap material. In other words, it is made of an extremely large, permanent and expensive material that is difficult to lose and hide, and more importantly, it was erected in a place where everyone can see it. Thus, Abdera made it possible for the people of both cities to know the important events of their history full of wars and deprivations, as well as the help of Teos during these important events, and the things they did or will do in order to thank them in return. The size and material of the inscription indicate that the Abderites were concerned about addressing not only the present but also the future.

The intention "to distribute the meat of the victim to the victorious young men and boys in Leukathea" is significant. It is especially important to note that sacrificial meat is given to young men and boys who are victorious in a war. Young men and boys are seen as the guarantee of the existence of the state and the nation. There is a rush to see them as the future of the state and especially to teach them the deep ties between the two cities. With the permanence of the stone, Abdera tried to pass on unity, power and historical knowledge from generation to generation.

Brandt points out that religious holidays were the backbone of Greek social and political life and institutions (Brandt 2012: 140). Religious beliefs are not only accepted for individuals by all members of the community, but they also belong to the community and ensure its unity (Durkheim 1976: 43). Chaniotis indicates that rituals contribute to identity construction. The erecting of a monument, honoring someone, commemoration and anniversary celebrations, feasts and similar rituals are extremely important for understanding the memory of the past. Wars have become a part of the collective and cultural memory of the cities and contributed to the construction of identities (Chaniotis 2005: 215). Memory organizes time for the gods and the men in generational and genealogical order. Social groups, cultural patterns and religious systems live in the past and use the past to model and maintain representations of identity (Cusumano 2013: 17). Memory is a "reconstructive" reorganization of the past in the present according to frames of reference. If the sense of the past gives a collective continuity to experience, history is also material that opens new horizons of meaning. However, the past shared in this way has normative value for the present (Ibid.). The preservation and erosion of memory are two aspects of the same process. This process furnishes a space in which to negotiate the tension between change and innovation on one hand, and the tendency to discern elements of immutability on the other (Ibid.). Institutions, values and other elements which structure society all exhibit a relationship with the past. The change in the social and political balance, the re-formulation of a system of rules with a common shared meaning, the creation of a social order place memory in the center, and power relations are produced by the intertwining of knowledge and knowledge (Ibid.: 18).

The Abdera decree reminds us of the importance and necessity of making a note of history and transferring the lived events to future generations. As Campbell pointed out, the fact that Abdera was geographically located at the mouth of the Danube, one of the strategically crucial rivers of Europe, brought it to an important position (Campbell 2012: 25). This gives an idea about the economic and strategic power of Abdera. On the other hand, according to Ekstein, the fact that Maroneia was in a strong position due to its alliance with Rome made the Abderians uneasy (Derow 1991: 267–270 as cited in Eckstein 2008:

46). Some researchers argue that Rome made military alliance agreements with the city-states, and according to these agreements, the cities that signed the agreement were supposed to provide military support in the future wars of Rome and to submit to the interests of Rome diplomatically (Ibid.). As a matter of fact, there is an inscription dated to 160 BC which records the alliance between Rome and Maronea by referring to the terms of such treaties (Ibid.).

CONCLUSION

The Abdera Inscription is first and foremost a historical document and contains an honorific decree. Leaving aside the classical introductory part of the honor and the missing part in which the names of the ambassadors are counted, the text consists of two main parts. In the first chapter, the city of Abdera states that it needs to honor Teos for the help and support it provided in difficult times. It is underlined that Teos helped financially in the rebuilding of Abdera, which was destroyed in the war, and that it did this even though its means were limited. The second major event that Abdera underlined is Teos's attitude towards the problem they had with the Maroneians. When the Maroneians violated some of Abdera's lands, Abdera took the matter to the Roman Senate and sought its right. There is a kind of judgment or reasoning process. In this process, Abdera asked Teos for help in defending its rights. First, Teos sent a representative but this was insufficient so they hired a strong representative from Miletos (perhaps it would be more accurate to call it a lawyer here). Abdera, who was unable to defend itself properly in its just cause, emphasized how important the help of Teos was in its situation. For Abdera, the violation of its land is extremely humiliating. However, regardless of the outcome of the case, Abdera expressed its gratitude to Teos for saving them from the humiliation of not being able to follow their just cause due to lack of economic power. In this section, the people of Abdera describe the city-state of Teos as a father who rushes to their aid whenever the need arises. Abdera, on the other hand, defines itself as a group by using plural pronouns. It is noteworthy that a specific human name is not used. In the text, both Abderites and Teians are personified and given human-specific character traits. In this first episode, Teos is like a person who performs good deeds, while Abdera is like another person expressing his feelings. In any honorary inscription, there is a formal text, such as "This person is honored for these services". However, in the Abdera decree, the effect of the services and good deeds on the emotional world of the people of Abdera is also expressed. What distinguishes the inscription from the others and makes it important is that emotions are also expressed along with events and thoughts.

In the second part of the text, what the people of Abdera want to do in return for the favors done to them is listed. In this section, the narration changes. There is an explanation of the decision taken and the work to be done accordingly.

Teos seems to be a distant friend. While listing the things to be done, the narration gets rid of the emotional load. In the first part, Abdera clearly underlined the bond of love and gratitude to Teos, and why it needed to be honored. There are no expressions in the second part that repeat this. Rather, there are optative sentences, "let it be done, let the envoys be sent, let the sacrifices be sacrificed, the meat of the sacrifices distributed to these people" and so on. Command statements for second persons are included. In terms of discourse, this part of the text reflects more the characteristics of classical honorific inscriptions. The text ends with the enumeration of the names of the envoys assigned to carry out the determined works (this is the corrupted and lost part of the text).

The Abdera Inscription is not an ordinary decree that tells only the history of a city and lists the things to be done. This text of the decree is a narrative and a positive message that includes emotions and thoughts and it aims to raise awareness in the society. The source of the message is Abdera; its recipient is the people of Abdera and Teos and their future generations. Despite unfavorable natural conditions, wars, and human destruction, the inscription has survived to the present day. Until the Abderites and the Teians disappeared from the scene of history, we can conclude that the inscription carried out the function of transferring knowledge, history and culture. Today, it continues to contribute to scientific research as a historical document.

Abdera and Teos helped and supported each other in situations such as war and invasion. There is a great sacrifice in the relationship between the two cities. At first glance in the decree, Abdera seems to have a great feeling of gratitude towards Teos. However, Abdera expresses an image in which they are more dominant with the words of father's hearth, paternal house, ancestral land. That makes the decree even better, because in Abdera, the emotional state is perceived as that of a child who has stepped into adulthood and is in a hurry to get rid of his father's authority. The magnificence of the inscription that Abdera sent to Teos, the fact that it was erected as two in both Teos and Abdera, and the financing of sacrificial rituals indicate economic power and independence. Abdera is not helpless and powerless. On the contrary, in the articles of the decree, there is the impression of a more dominant and powerful city than Teos. That is why Abdera's rhetorical strategy to evoke poignant emotions is remarkable, because, Abdera displays a resolute stance despite going through a crucial crisis. There is a balancing strategy to emphasize its capacity for independent decision-making. He declares to the people of Teos and his own citizens that the friendship between the two cities continues but that he is now more powerful and independent. We do not know what the Teians thought when they saw the text of this decree. The real reason for Abdera to write such a decree must not be simply a feeling of gratitude. Abdera says with the utmost respect that he has overcome great suffering and is skilled at surviving. It declares that it is independent and resilient.

APPENDIX 1
(Adak & Thonemann 2022: 12–15)

Fragment A

(in wreath)
ὁ δῆμος
ὁ Ἀβδηριτῶν
τὸν δῆμον.
ἐπειδὴ Τήϊοι, πατέρες ὄντες τῆς πόλεως ἡμῶν, τὴν προγονικὴν εὔνοιαν ọὐ

λόγοις, ἔṛ [γοις] δὲ τηρεῖν προαιρούμενοι, πεị ṛ ῶνται ̣ πρὸς ὑπέρθεσιν ἀεὶ τῶνείς ἡ- ν.
μᾶς εὐεργεσιῶν ἁμιλλώμενοι τὴν ἑαυτῶν σπουδὴν καὶ φιλοτιμίαν ἀκατά
παυστον πρὸς τὸν δῆμον ἡμῶν διαφυλάξειṇ, ἀθάνατον παρασκευά[ζον]-
τες, ὅσον ἐφ᾽ ἑαυτοῖς, τὴν ἐκ τῆς ὁμονοίας ἑκατέραις ταῖς πόλεσιν π[εριγε]νο
μένην εὐδοξίαν, ὑπερβολὴν εὐεργεσιῶν οὐθενὶ βεβουλημένοι ἀ̣π̣[ολιπεῖ]ν

τῶν [ἐ]πὶ τὰ παραπλήσια δεδωκότων ἑαυτοὺς δήμων, ΩΙΓ̣Α̣Ν̣[- - c.7 - -]
[- - c.7 - -]Θ̣ΕΙ φιλανθρωπίας ἀπαραστόχαστον τὴν Τηΐωṿεί[ς] ἡμ̣ᾶςΕ[- - c.7 - -]
[- c.5 - τὴ]ν ἁ̣δρότητά (?) τε καὶ [- ?τοῖς ἀνθρώ]-
π̣ο̣ις καὶ κοινῆι ταῖς πόλεσιṿἐκ̣ ṭẹθεικότων αὐτῶν ṭὴν πρὸς τοὺς σ̣[υγ]-
γενεῖς ἑαυτῶν ἀπροφάσιστον σπουδήν· κ̣αὶ [.]. Α̣Λ̣[- - - c.11 - - -]

οἱ τῆς πόλεως καιροὶ τῆς παρ᾽ ἐκείνων ἐνεδεήθησαν [βοηθεί]-
α̣ς κ̣αὶ ἡ τύχη τοῖς τοῦ δήμου πράγμασιν ἀγνωμόνω̣ς [?διέ]-
κ̣ει̣ ṭọ κ̣α̣ὶπερίβολος μ̣όνον τειχῶν ἡ πόλι̣ς ἀπ[- - c.7 - -, τῶν]
δ̣ὲ̣ἐνοικούντων οἱ μὲν εἰς τὸν πόλεμον ἀνήλωσαν [- c.6 -],
οἱ δὲ αἰχμάλωτοι γενόμενοι Α̣Ι̣ΣΣ̣ΗΝΣΑ̣ΝΕΙΧ̣[- - c.10 - -]

[. .]Τ̣Λ̣Η̣[. .]Α̣Ν ἀποβεβληκότες, τότẹἐπὶ ταῖς̣ κ̣ο̣ι̣[ναῖς χρείαις? - c.4 -]
[- c.3 -]Π̣ΑΣ̣Α̣Ν̣[...]Σ̣Υ̣Ν̣ δ̣ιακούσαντες ΕΚ̣ΛẸΠ̣[- - c.17–19 - -]
[τ]ὴṿάγορὰν καὶ [τοὺ]ς ναοὺς τῶν θεῶν κ̣αὶ[- - -̣ c.17–19 - - -]
c.4 -]Α̣ προσκρίνοντες τοῖς ΕΙΣ̣[- - - - c.24–6 - - - -]
[- c.3 -]ΤΩΝ̣Β̣ΙΟ̣ ̣[- c.3 -] συνπενθεῖν κ̣αὶ[- - - -̣ c.24–6 - - - -]

[- c.5 -]ΙΣΛ̣Α̣[. .]κ̣αὶ ἐν ταῖς δυστυ̣[χίαις? - - - - c.21–3 - - - -]
[- - c.10–12 - -]ΑΙ τὴν πόλιṿ ̣ἡμ[ῶν - - - - - c.26–8 - - - - -]
[- - - c.17–19 - - -]ΣΤ[- - - - - - c.31–3 - - - - - -]

Fragment B

[- - - - - - - - - - - - - c.40–2 - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -ἡ]μ̣ῖṿἐṿṭῶι̣
[- - - - - - - - - - - - c.33–5 - - - - - - - - - - - - -]Ι̣[.]άμενοι τὴν χάριν ΠΕ- ν.
[- - - - - - - - - - - c.30–2 - - - - - - - - -] π̣αρ᾽ αὐτοῖς καὶ κατορθώσαν-
[τες - - - - - - - - c.23–5 - - - - - - -]ΕΝ ἄνευ λύτρων ἐποίησαν ΑΦΕ-

[- - - - - - - c.21–3 - - - - - - ἐφ᾽] ὅ̣σον ἰσχύοσαν, πάλιν ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρχαί-
[αν - - - - - c.15 - - - κατ]ά̣στασιν, συλλέγοντες ἐκ παντὸς τόπου
[- - - - - c.16 - - - - -]Σ̣ κ̣α̣ὶ ἀναπέμποντες ἐπὶ τὰς πατρώιους ἑ⟨σ⟩τίας
[καὶ τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς] πολιτείαν· οὐ μόνον δὲ ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ἡ φιλαγαθία τὴν
[ἀπὸ τῆς συ]γ̣γενείας εὔνοιαν προσφερομένη τὴν κοινὴν πρὸς τὸν
[δ]ῆμ̣[ον] ἡμῶν φιλοστοργίαν ἐπὶ τῆς κατ᾽ ἰδίαν ἑκάστωι βοηθείας v.
τῶν ἐ̣πταικότων ἀπεδείκνυτο, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπειδή τινα μὲν ὁ χρόνος v.
κ̣αθείρηκει τῶν τειχῶν, ἃ δ᾽ ἡ τοῦ πολέμου περίστασις διέφθαρκ[ε],
π̣αραπ̣λησίως δὲ καὶ ναοὶ θεῶν ἐπανορθώσεως προσδεόμεν[οι]
οὐθένα τῶν πολιτῶν εἰς τὴν ἐπισκευὴν εἶχον τὸν χρήσοντα
τ̣ο̣ῖ̣ς πολίταις, διαλο⟨γ⟩ισάμενος ὁ τῶν Τηΐων δῆμος διότι προγονι
κῶν θεῶν πρόνοιαν ποιήσεται καὶ κοινὴν πᾶσιν Ἀβδηρίταις βοήθει
αν ἔσ̣ται προσενηνεγμένος ἐπιδοὺς εἰς τὴν τῶν τειχῶν ἐπα
νόρθ̣.ω̣σ̣ιν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φιλαγαθίαν, προήκατο χρημάτων ἀναποδότων πλῆ-
θος, ὅσο[ν] ἰσχύειν αὐτῶι τότε ἐδίδοσαν οἱ καιροί, δεικνὺς ὡς οὐ τῆ[ι]
πολυπληθίαι τῶν ὑπαρχόντων τὴν ἑτοιμότητα τῆς χορηγία[ς]
ὑ̣πομένειν̣, τῆι δὲ εὐνοίαι πρὸς πᾶν τὸ παρακαλούμενον ἀνέλλει̣- v.
πτον τὴν φιλο[τι]μίαν παρέχεται· τοῦ χρόνου δὲ προκόψαντος καὶ τῆ[ς]
πόλεως ἡμῶν ἤδη πρὸς βελτίονα κατάστασιν ἐρχομένης διὰ τὸ κα[ὶ]
πλῆθος ἤδη μέτριον ἠθροῖσθαι πολιτῶν, πολλῆς τε δαπάνης γινομέ
νης εἰς τὴν τῆς χώρας ἐξεργασίαν καὶ διὰ τοῦτο θλιβομένων τοῖς
β̣ίο̣.ις̣τ̣ῶ̣ν ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἀπροσόδων γινομένων, πέμψαντος πά
λιν πρὸς Τηΐους τοῦ δήμου καὶ παρακαλοῦντος εἰς βοῶν καταγορασ
μ̣ὸ̣ν̣ἐ̣α̣.υ̣τῶι προχορηγῆσαι διάφορα, Τήϊοι τ̣ῶι μὲν πλουτεῖν λειπόμε
ν̣οι, τῶι δὲ εὐνοεῖν πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὑπεράγοντες, προέχρησαν ἄτο
κα τάλαντα πέντε εἰς ἔτη πέντε, βουλόμενοι κατὰ μηθὲν ἐλλιπῆ τῶν
συμφερόντων τὸν δῆμον ἡμῶν γενέσθαι· ἐπιβ̣άντων δὲ καὶ Μαρωνιτῶν
ἐπ̣ὶ̣τ̣ὴ̣ν πάτριον ἡμῶν χώραν οὐκ ἐπιβαλλόντως καὶ παραγενομένων v.
εἰς ἀμφισβήτησιν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς, ληφθέντος κατὰ δόγμα τῆς συνκλήτου
κριτοῦ τοῦ Ἐρυθραίων δήμου, αἰσθόμενοι Τήϊοι καταφρονουμένους ἡ
μᾶς διὰ τὴν στενοχωρίαν τῶν βίων οὐ προήκαντο, ἀλλ᾽ ἴδια νομίσαντες
ἑαυτῶν εἶναι τὰ διὰ τῶν ἰδίων προγόνων κρατηθέντα καὶ κατοικισθέν- v.
τ̣α̣, ἀ̣ξίως καὶ μεγαλομερῶς ἐπέδωκαν ἑαυτούς, πάσῃ προθυμίαι καὶ φιλαγα-
[θ]ίαι χρησάμενοι, πρὸς τὸν ἀγῶνα τὸν ὑπὲρ ταύτης τῆς χώρας, ἐπέλεξάν
τε γὰρ ἐ̣ξ ἑαυτῶν συνέδρους χάριν τῆς τῶν δικαίων ἐρεύνης τοὺς νοεῖν
τ̣ε̣ καὶ προσκαρτερῆσαι δυναμένους ἀπερισπάστως τοῖς πρὸς τὸν v.
ε̣τασμὸν παρατεθησομένοις δικαίοις, εἵλοντό τε καὶ τὸν ἐροῦν
τ̣α̣ ἐπὶ τῆς κρίσεως τὰ δίκαια καὶ πᾶσαν ὅλως τὴν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀγῶνος ἀ

νελάβοσαν φροντίδα, διαλαβόντες δὲ καὶ μὴ ἱκανὴν ἑνὸς ἀνδρὸς ὑπάρχειν
δύναμιν διὰ τὸ μέγεθος τοῦ ἀγῶνος καὶ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἀποδείξεων, ἔ- ν.

πεμψαν εἰς Μίλητον τὸ ἐλλεῖπον δοκοῦν τῆι καθ᾽ ἑαυτοὺς σπουδῆι καὶ ν.
φιλοτιμ̣ίαι προσαναπληροῦντες ἀπὸ ξένης καὶ τὸν συναντιληψόμενον ν.
ἐν τῶι ἀγῶν̣ι̣ μετεπέμψαντο καὶ χάριν ἰδίαν αἰτησάμενοι καὶ μισθὸν πα- ν.
ρ[.] ἑαυτῶν ὅ̣σ̣ον ᾔτησεν ἐκτείναντες, καὶ τὸ συνέχον, τῆς τῶν θεῶν καὶ Τηΐ
ω̣ν̣ εὐνοίας ἅμα τοῖς δικαίοις προσγενομένης, κατώρθωσεν ὁ δῆμος
ἡμῶν ἐν τῆι̣

π̣ρ̣ὸς Μ̣αρωνίτας κρίσει, ἀθάνατον ὑπόμνημα τῆς πρὸς τοὺς συγγενεῖς εὐ
ν̣οίας διὰ τῶν ἔργων πᾶσιν ἐ⟨κ⟩θέντων ἀνθρώποις Τηΐων καὶ πρὸς ὑπερβο- ν.
[λὴ]ν εὐεργεσιῶν οὐθενὶ τόπον ἀπολειπόντων· ν. ἵνα οὖν καὶ ὁ παρ᾽ ἡμῶν δῆ-
[μο]ς ἀξίως ἐφ᾽ ὅσον ἰσχύει τιμῶν φαίνηται τοὺς ἑαυτὸν εὐεργετήσαν- ν.
[τας·] τ̣[ύχ]ηι ἀγαθῆ̣ι· δεδόχθαι τῆι βουλῆ̣ι καὶ τῶι δήμωι τῶι Ἀβδηριτῶν· ἐπη̣-

[νῆσθαι Τηΐου]ς ἐπὶ τῆι αἱρέσει καὶ εὐνοίαι ἧι ἔχοντες διατελοῦσι πρὸς τὸν
[δῆμον ἡμ]ῶν, ν. στῆσαι δὲ καὶ εἰκόνα χαλκῆν κολοσσικὴν τοῦ Δήμου τοῦ
[Τηΐων ἐπὶ τῆς] ἀγορᾶς ἐν τῶι ἐπιφανεστάτωι τόπωι, τῆι μὲν δεξιᾶ̣ι σπέν-
[δοντα κανθάρω]ι, τῆι δὲ ἀριστερᾶι ἀπηρεισμένον ἐπὶ τὴν στήλην ἐν ἧι γε-
[γράψεται τόδ]ε̣ τὸ ψήφισμα, ἔστω δὲ καὶ κιόνιον παρεστηκὸς ἐκ τῶν εὐωνύ̣-

[μων, ἐφ᾽ οὗ ἐπ]έστω Νίκη στεφανοῦσα τὸν Τηΐων Δῆμον κισσοῦ στε-
[φάνωι· κατὰ πρ]ό̣σωπον δὲ τῆς εἰκόνος βωμὸς κατασταθήτω ἐ̣φ̣[.] ο̣ὗ̣ θυέ-
τω ὁ γυμνασίαρ]χος ἐν τῶι Ἀνθεστηριῶν̣ι̣ μηνὶ τῆι τρεισκαιδεκάτηι ἱερεῖον ν.
[καὶ ἀγῶνα τιθ]έτω, κατευχομένου τοῦ ἱεροκήρυκος διδόναι τὰ ἀγαθὰ τοὺς
[θεοὺς Τηΐοις καὶ] Ἀβδηριταῖς, καλείσθω δὲ ὁ δῆμος ὁ Τηΐων εἰς προεδρίαν, συν̣-

[τελούντων ἡμῶν λ]α̣μπάδα τῶν παίδων καὶ ἀνδρῶν, καὶ τοῖς νικήσασιν διαμερίζε-
[σθω τὰ κρέα τοῦ ἱερ]είου[.], ἵνα μὴ μόνον παρὰ τοῖς ἐν ἡλικίαι τῶν πολιτῶν ὑπάρχου̣-
[σιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ παρὰ τ]οῖς νεωτέροις ἐπίσημος ἡ τιμὴ τοῦ Τηΐων ὑ̣π̣άρχῃ δήμου
[καὶ προτρέπωνται] πάντες ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης vac. 6 ἡλικίας τῆι πρὸς τοὺς εὐ-
[εργέτας εὐχαριστία̣ι̣· τὸ] δὲ ἐσόμενον{ον} ἀνάλωμα εἰς τὴν θυσίαν καὶ τὸν ἀγῶνα ἀπο-

[γραψάμενος ὁ γυμνα]σίαρχος λαβέτω ἀπὸ τῆς τραπέζης, ἐπιμελὲς δὲ ποι- ν.
[ησάτω τὸ λοιπὸν ὁ ἀ]εὶ γυμνασίαρχος· καὶ ἵνα πρὸ τοῦ ἀγῶνος ἀναγορεύῃ ὁ ἱερο- ν.
[κῆρυξ διότι στεφανοῖ] ὁ δῆμος τὸν Τηΐων δῆμον χρυσῶι στεφάνωι καὶ εἰκόνι χαλκῆ̣ι
[ἀρετῆς ἕνεκεν καὶ ε]ὐ̣νοίας τῆς εἰς ἑαυτόν· ἵνα δὲ καὶ ἐν Τέῳ πᾶσα ἡλικία πα-
[ρακολουθῆι ταῖς τιμαῖ]ς, οἱ νομοφύλακες ἀεὶ κατ᾽ ἐνιαυτὸν αἱρείσθωσαν ἄνδρας

[(number) ἐμ μηνὶ Ἀπα]τουριῶνι τοὺς ἀποδημήσοντας εἰς Τέω καὶ θύσοντας
[ὑπὲρ τοῦ δήμου ἡμῶν βο]ῦν ἐμ μηνὶ Λευκαθεῶνι χαριστήρια τῶι Τηΐων Δήμωι,
[τὰ δὲ κρέα οἱ πρεσβεύσο]ντες τοῖς τε νέοις καὶ παισὶν μερισάτωσαν τοῖς νι-
[κήσασιν (?) τὰ Λευκάθεα, εἰς δὲ τὴ]ν τιμὴν τοῦ βοὸς διάφορον χορη ̣ ⟨γη⟩σάτωσαν οἱ νομοφύ-
[λακες ἀπὸ τῆς τραπέζης· δια]πέμψαι δὲ Τηΐοις πυρῶν μεδίμνους χιλίους v.
[καὶ τόπον αἰτησάσθων οἱ πεμ]φθέντες ἄνδρες ἐν τῶι ἱερῷ τοῦ Διονύσου ἢ
[(?) ἐν τῆι ἀγορᾷ ἐν ὧι στήσουσι] ṣτήλην λευκοῦ λίθου ἐν ἧι ἀναγεγράφθω τόδ̣[ε]
[τὸ ψήφισμα· τὸ δὲ γενόμενον] ἀνάλωμα εἰς τὴν κατασκευὴν τῆς στή[λης]
[καὶ τὴν ἀναγραφὴν τοῦ ψηφίσμα]τος τὸ συνκριθὲν χορηγείτωσαν οἱ νομ[οφύλα]-
[κες (?) ἀπὸτῶνεἰςτὰςπρεσβείας· ἵναδὲ] ḳαὶΤήϊοιπαρακολουθῶσιντ οῖςὑφ᾽ἡμ[ῶνἐψη]-
[φισμένοις, ἀποστειλάτωσαν οἱ με]τὰ ἱερέα Σχησίστρατον νομοφ̣[ύλακες]
[τὸ ἀντίγραφον τοῦ ψηφίσματος πρὸ]ς τὸν Τηΐων δῆμον· τὴν δὲ ἐπιμ̣[έλειαν]
[(e.g.) τῆς τε ἀναστάσεως τῆςεἰκόνος] ḳαὶ τῶν ἄλ[λ]ων τῶν δηλου[μένων (e.g.) ἐν τῶι]
[ψηφίσματι - - - c.12–14 - - - ποιησάσθ]ωσαν οἱ αὐτοὶ νομοφ[ύλακες - - c.7 - -]
[- - c.9–11 - - · τὸ δὲ ψήφισμα τόδε εἶναι] εἰṣεὐχαριστίαν τ[οῦ δήμου· εἱρέθησαν]
[πρεσβευταὶ------c.20–2-------ὁ]πρεσβύτερος,Ἀθ̣[ηνα----c.11–13----]
[-----------c.32–4----------]νος̣ὀκτωκαιδ[εκάτηι-----c.11–13-----]
[--------c.26–8-------ὁπρεσβύτ]ερος,Ἀθην[α--------c.19–21--------]
[------------c.33–5------------]μ̣ηνὸς Ε[---------c.21–3---------]

Vacat

APPENDIX 2
(Adak & Thonemann 2021: 16–19)

A 'The dēmos of the Abderites (honours) the dēmos (of the Teians). Since the Teians, being the fathers of our city, having resolved to maintain their ancestral goodwill not in words but in deeds, attempt to preserve unceasing their eagerness and generosity towards our dēmos by striving always to add to their benefactions towards us, thereby rendering eternal, as far as is in their power, the glory that has accrued to both cities through their like-mindedness, and wishing to leave no opportunity for exceeding them in benefactions to any of those dēmoi that have dedicated themselves to comparable ends, [(?) by which all might recognize, by the (?) magnit]ude of their generosity, the inestimable [(?) goodwill] of the Teians towards us, [...] strength (?) and [... for m] en and in common for the cities, with them having exhibited eagerness without excuses towards their kinsmen; and [… e.g. when] (15) the city's circumstances called for [assistance] from them, and fortune was cruelly [disposed] to the affairs of the dēmos, and the city [was left as] a mere circuit of walls, and of the inhabitants, some in the war expended [their lives?], and others, having become captives, [e.g. were enslaved …] (20) having lost […]; then, in the face of this common [need, …] hearing […] the agora and the temples of the gods […] judging […] to join in grieving […] (25) in our misfortunes […] our city […]' (c.14–16 lines missing)

B '… us in the … gratitude/favour … among them, and succeeding … without ransom, they made … (5) … as far as they were able, back to their former … [con] dition, collecting from every place . . . and sending them back to their ancestral hearths [and their former] state of citizenship. Yet not only within these limits did their excellence of character, bringing to bear the goodwill that comes from kinship, show collective (10) affection for our dēmos in their individual assistance to each of those who were in distress, but since the passage of time had brought down some parts of the walls, and other parts the crisis of war had destroyed; and likewise also the temples of the gods, though in need of reconstruction, had found none of the citizens who would lend the citizens (what was needed) for their repair – (15) the Teian dēmos, reckoning both that they would have care for their ancestral gods and that they would have provided collective assistance to all the Abderites by committing their excellence of character towards the reconstruction of the walls, handed over a large sum of money which did not need to be repaid, as much as the present circumstances then permitted them to be able to do, showing how (20) they provide their generosity unfailingly, not through an abundance of property to sustain a ready supply of income (?), but rather through goodwill in the face of every request. When time had passed, and our city was now returning to a better condition because of the fact that a moderately large body of citizens had now been gathered together, but great expense (25) was being incurred for the cultivation of the territory, and for this reason the people were being oppressed in their livelihoods and had no revenues, the dēmos sent once again to the Teians and called on them to advance us a sum of money for the purchase of oxen, the Teians, although lacking in wealth, but outstripping all other men in goodwill, advanced us (30) five talents without interest over five years, wishing that in no respect our dēmos should be lacking in what is beneficial. And when the Maroneitai encroached upon our ancestral territory, although it did not pertain to them, and entered into a dispute over it, and when the dēmos of Erythrai was appointed as judge by decision of the senate, the Teians, perceiving that we were being treated (35) contemptuously because of the poverty of our livelihoods, did not abandon us, but considering as their own possessions the lands conquered and settled by their own ancestors, they dedicated themselves worthily and magnificently to the lawsuit over this stretch of land, employing all enthusiasm and excellence of character; for also they selected from among themselves commissioners for the sake of seeking out the legal claims, those able both to understand and (40) to persist without distraction in the face of the legal claims that would be put forward in the enquiry, and they also appointed a person who would present their claims at the hearing, and they completely took on in all respects the care of the lawsuit; and when they perceived that the ability of a single man was insufficient given the scale of the lawsuit and the volume of depositions, they sent (45) to Miletos, to supplement from a foreign city what seemed to be lacking to their own eagerness and ambition, and requested someone who would join in taking on the lawsuit, requesting a private favour (from Miletos) and providing whatever fee he demanded from their own resources – and most importantly, with the goodwill both of the gods and the Teians being added to our legal claims, our dēmos was successful against the Maroneitai (50) in the judgement, with the Teians having set up through their actions an eternal memorial for all men of their goodwill towards their kin, and leaving space for no one else to surpass them in benefactions. And therefore, in order that it should be clear that our dēmos honours worthily – insofar as it is able – those who confer benefactions upon it, with good fortune, be it resolved by the boulē and dēmos of the Abderites, to (55) praise the Teians for the disposition and goodwill which they continue to hold towards our dēmos, and to erect a colossal bronze statue of the Dēmos of the [Teians], on the agora in the most prominent spot, pouring a libation [with a kantharos] with the right hand, and with the left hand/arm leaning on the stēlē on which this decree shall be inscribed; and let there be a small column standing by on the left-hand side, (60) [on which] let there be placed a Nike crowning the Dēmos of the Teians with an ivy-w reath; and [in fr]ont of the statue let an altar be erected, on which let the [gymnasiar]ch sacrifice a victim on the thirteenth day of the month Anthesterion and [hold a contest], with the sacred herald praying that the [gods] should give good things to the [Teians and] Abderites, and let the dēmos of the Teians be called to a front seat when [we] (65) hold the torch-race of boys and adults, and let the [meat of the vic]tim be distributed to the victors, in order that not only among those of the citizens who have reached adulthood, [but that also among] the younger ones the honour conferred on the dēmos of the Teians might be conspicuous, [and that] all from the earliest age [should be inspired to gratitude] towards their benefactors; and let the gymnasiarch in[voice] the future expenses for the sacrifice and the contest (70) and draw them from the public bank, and let each gymnasiarch in office [in future] have care for this. And in order that before the contest the sacred herald might announce that the dēmos crowns the Teian dēmos with a gold crown and a bronze statue for the sake of its virtue and goodwill towards them, and in order that also in Teos people of every age [might learn of these honours], let the nomophylakes in office each year choose (75) [(number)] men [in the month] Apatourion who will travel to Teos and sacrifice [on behalf of our dēmos a b]ull in the month Leukatheon as a thank-offering to the Dēmos of the Teians, [and let the ambassad]ors distribute [the meat] to the young men and boys who are victorious [(?) at the Leukathea], and let the nomophylakes provide the money for the price of the bull [from the public bank]; and send to the Teians 1,000 medimnoi of wheat. (80) And let the men who have been sent [request a spot] in the sanctuary of Dionysos or [(?) in the agora in which they can set up] a stēlē of white marble, on which let this [decree] be inscribed, and let the nomophylakes provide the agreed expenditure [incurred] for the making of the stēlē [and the inscription of the dec]ree [from the funds reserved for embassies. And so that] the Teians too might learn of the [things decreed] by us, (85) let the nomophylakes in office in the year after the priesthood of Schesistratos [send a copy of the decree t]o the Teian dēmos. And let the same nomophylakes have respon[sibility for (e.g.) the erection of the statue] and the other things laid out [(e.g) in the decree … and let this decree be for the purpose of (showing)] the gratitude of [the dēmos. The following ambassadors (90) were chosen: (name) son of (name) the] elder; Ath[ena- son of (name) …] on the eighteenth (of the month) [--; (name) son of (name) the el]der, Athen[a- son of (name) …] of the month ….'

NOTES

1 Demos (δῆμος): country, people, population, citizen, subject; one of the types of rural settlements located within the territories of the people's council, the police, and an administrative region in Attica, of which Athens is the center (Çelgin 2018: 173). It means the people's assembly here.

2 Aisymnētēs (αἰσυμνήτης), "Aisymnētēs according to *Aristotle (Pol. 1285a), a supreme ruler appointed by some early city-states in times of internal crisis, for life, for a prescribed period, or till the completion of the task, e.g. *Pittacus at *Mytilene (IACP no. 798 at 1027). Aristotle defines the office as an elective *tyranny; *Dionysius (7) of Halicarnassus (5. 73) compares the Roman *dictator. If Aristotle's account is accurate (and his definition has been questioned), these aisymnētai have affinities with the early lawgivers (*Solon, *Zaleucus, *Demonax, etc.), the difference presumably being one of local nomenclature. Inscriptions (Syll.3 38, 57, 272, 642, 955) show regular magistrates so called in Teos, Miletus, Naxos, Megara, Selinus, and Chalcedon. The word first occurs in Od. 8. 258, meaning a referee (see Hainsworth's note; cf. also Il. 24. 347 with Richardson's note for the related word αἰσυμνητήρ)" (Ure & Hornblower 2015).

3 Boule (βουλή): desire, wish, will, counsel, suggestion, advice, proposal, plan; assembly, deliberative council (Çelgin 2018: 147). In this context, it refers to a consultative assembly.

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The Importance of the Aesthetic Component in Musical Performance: The Case of Chinese Folk and Western Music

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Abstract: The study purpose is to determine the importance of the aesthetic component in musical performance through the example of Chinese folk and Western music. The questionnaire method, which provided data for the study through teachers' responses, and the hierarchy analysis method, which affected determination of aesthetics criteria significance, which are interrelated with the psychological component, were used. It was found that the development of sensory abilities and the aesthetic component are not completely interconnected at the initial stage of training. Based on the results of group 1, which was taught to perform Chinese compositions, and group 2, which performed Western compositions, a high level of aesthetic performance was observed in 16% and 18% of the students, respectively. The study identified elements that affect performance aesthetics and listeners' perception: performance technique, musical literacy and musical and aesthetic consciousness. The most important criteria are tonal beauty (0.37) and emotionality (0.25). After 1.5 years of study, the level of aesthetics of performance significantly increased. In the group that studied Chinese folk music, a high level is observed in 86% of the participants; in the group that studied Western music - in 89%. The research results are of scientific interest to teachers.

Keywords: artistic component; Chinese folk music; emotionality; musical and aesthetic consciousness; musical art; student assessment test

INTRODUCTION

The need of a person to convey their mood with the help of sounds contributed to the development of vocal art based on the mastery of one's own voice. Singing can be of various types: solo, choral, ensemble, as well as academic, pop, jazz, folk, etc. (Téllez & Valles 2020). The vocal art of each country is formed under the influence of national traditions, culture, religions, spiritual development and other components, and is also the most common type of musical performance (Man 2015; Keping 2017). The quality of performance depends not only on a performer's skills but also on the aesthetic component of the performance. The aesthetics of musical text reproduction affects the performance and the artistic component. A performer must be able to reproduce the musical text, which conveys the idea of an author. However, misreading the notes affects the transmission of the text and the composer's intention (Kizin 2019; Beermann et al. 2021). The mastery of performance depends on the proper transmission of various experiences and emotions: fear, anger, joy, happiness. The main task of a performer is to convey all the emotions and feelings of the author of the work, which affect reproduction aesthetics. Music aesthetics is a collection of aesthetic categories that have been transformed under the influence of different periods. Musical aesthetics is interconnected with emotional expression, the enrichment of melodies with artistic elements that affect the quality of perception by listeners and the possibility of their interpretation by musicians (Wong 2022). Musical aesthetics is shaped by the harmony between the music and the text of the composition, which is interrelated with the genre. Musical aesthetics is an element that reflects changing trends in society and depends on cultural traditions (Correia et al. 2022). Musical aesthetics reflects the characteristics of a particular era, which is reflected in the work of composers. The aesthetics of the perception of musical compositions depends on the embedded emotions (Stone 2021). The perception and display of musical aesthetics are related to the psychological features that are evident in musical psychology. Music psychology is a discipline that affects the definition of musical aspects, the structure of compositions, psychological perception, and the effects on the human psyche (Stone 2021). Music psychology manifests itself in the study of musical abilities, the development of hearing, musical creativity fundamentals, and the consideration of aspects of musical phenomena. Music psychology within the framework of the presented work is based on the study of the upbringing and education of students (Liu et al. 2021).

Chinese folk music is one of the oldest that includes a variety of genres and forms that evolved separately from the Western culture. This division is associated with different philosophical, religious and political views, as well as with geographical remoteness (Fang & Shang & Chen 2017). Chinese music aesthetics evolved under the influence of various historical, religious and political periods (Tang 2021). Chinese folk music is characterized by a varied spectrum and styles of sound, free separation of phrases and rhythm flexibility (Keping 2017). In Chinese folk music, the same melody can be varied while Western music is more melancholic, which affects the emotional attitude (Zhang et al. 2021). The aesthetics of Chinese music reproduction depends on the culture of the East and the aesthetics of Western music is determined by ancient Greek classical music (Ibid.). Creative Chinese folk music does not extend to large segments of the population; Western music is based on the search for comfortable emotional expression (Román-Caballero & Martín-Arévalo & Lupiáñez 2021). In Chinese music, aesthetics is based on the artistic concept and the category of beauty; Western music pays more attention to emotions and emotional expression (McAuley et al. 2021).

At the end of the 20th century, Western elements of performance began to be introduced into the musical culture of China; this technique is called "bel canto" (Jiayin 2019) and is based on the principles of breathing and phonation. In Western music, sound and falsetto are combined during the performance depending on the pitch, and the bel canto technique is used. Chinese folk music is based on singing with high octaves and a full timbre while using a single register with well-developed voicing. Western music is based on the combination of falsetto with clarity and smooth transitions to different pitches (Jiayin 2019). Musical aesthetics is shaped by different cultures, resulting in diversity.

Each music type has its own characteristics, and a number of literary sources were analyzed to determine the importance of the aesthetic component in musical performance. The study by Khurmatullina and Yachina (2015) analyzed the individual performance of musical compositions by a rising music teacher. The researchers found that the artistic and aesthetic cycle contributes to the spiritual, mental, psychological, emotional and creative development of students. The study indicates that the individual style of creative activity of a rising teacher is formed based on target, managerial, content, procedural and personal components of the structure. The study by Konieczna-Nowak and Trzęsiok (2018) indicated that the aesthetic performance of a musical composition is a psychological therapy that promotes inspiration.

Touizrar & Knoll & Siedenburg (2021) analyzed the relationship between the aesthetic reproduction of music and the repetition of musical excerpts. The authors found that there are problems in the aesthetic performance of unfamiliar compositions. The repetition process affects memory and helps to structure the tonality of the music piece with each repetition. In this study, the aesthetics of performance was assessed in accordance with the following stages: acquaintance with a piece of music, listening, consistency, recognition and listeners' reaction, which manifests itself in the psychological perception. During the performance of musical compositions until 1970, there were significant positive changes in the aesthetics of performance, but in modernist music, the aesthetic component was formed only under the influence of the improvement of music education quality. Intonation during vocal performance depends on the availability of emotional resources, which depend on the variety of voice. The relationship between text and tone affects the quality of intonation delivery, which depends on the emotional content. Emotional perception depends on the quality of influence and the capacity of the voice (Spreadborough 2022).

Guo& Su & Yue (2020) believe that the aesthetic performance of musical compositions affects the sustainable development of the cultural component. The researchers studied the aesthetic component to develop a new, improved music education program. As a result, a learning model based on environmental rationality, sustainable development, musical ecology and the aesthetic component was built. Music psychology includes five main aspects that relate to musical exploration, emotion development, mood regulation, social reward and sensory-motor features. Music perception is influenced by sensitivity, which is formed as a result of mental influence. The emotionality of music perception depends on the individual development of sensitivity (Cardona et al. 2022).

Ryazanova (2019) concluded that the influence of time is a spatial structure and the main element in the formation of the artistic image of a composition. Zagorski (2017) indicated that the aesthetics of reproduction is of great importance in the formation of the pitch, its intensity, duration and timbre which can be managed through rational sequential methods. Vestrucci (2015) outlined the conditions that affect the aesthetic reproduction of a musical composition. The author found that artistic expression depends on notes, timbre, rhythm and sound. An important element in the aesthetic reproduction of the compositions is the psychological mood of the musicians. The aesthetic component is an important indicator as just one sound can disrupt the sound flow and the conveyance of the idea laid down in the composition.

The subtleties of aesthetic perception of melodies are interconnected with the psychology of music, which is reflected in the assessment of behavioral and neurophysiological indicators. Acquisition of musical knowledge is interconnected with the students' motivation for learning. The interest in acquiring musical knowledge affects the quality of its perception, which is manifested in the emotional development (Cui & Troje & Cuddy 2022).

In the studies analyzed, the main emphasis is placed on the aesthetics of performance as one of the elements of music education. Thus, the purpose of the study is to determine the importance of the aesthetic component in musical performance through the example of Chinese and Western music. The research objectives are as follows:

- to determine the level of sensory abilities and aesthetic component during the performance;
- to identify the elements that influence the aesthetics of performance in the process of acquiring musical skills and knowledge;
- to determine the importance of the aesthetic component during the performance of musical compositions, focusing on the method of hierarchy analysis;

– to measure the level of development of aesthetic skills during a musical performance upon 1.5 years of studies.

METHODOLOGY

The importance of the aesthetic component in musical performance was investigated among two groups of participants who were trained to sing Chinese folk and Western music. The study involved 290 students aged 8 to 11 years from 5 schools in Beijing (Table 1). All students had normal hearing and voice and no cognitive impairment. The participants were not divided into separate training groups, and they studied music as part of the general education program; however, the students who had an ear for music were included in music ensembles. The students who were not good at singing opted for drawing and were not involved in the music learning process. Thus, the number of participants dropped from 370 to 290. The attendance of music or art electives was compulsory in the five schools under consideration, and the students received annual marks for the courses. All participants who took part in the research process were placed in equal conditions and informed about all stages of the experiment. For this purpose, there were agreements outlining all stages of training and taking knowledge assessment tests. Written consent to participate in the study was received from the parents of 290 schoolchildren. The students were evenly divided into two groups: Group 1 studied Chinese folk music and Group 2 studied Western music. The study took place from the second half of 2019 to the second half of 2020.

Table 1. Distribution of study participants by age

Age of participants	Number of people, Group 1		Number of people, Group 2	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
8	5	18	7	21
9	3	25	5	27
10	12	32	14	29
11	2	48	18	24

The initial stage of the research aimed to determine the skills already acquired in musical performance and their relationship with the aesthetics of performance as the schoolchildren had already been studying music for 7 months before the start of training. For this purpose, after the knowledge assessment test, which involved singing various musical compositions, a survey of teachers was conducted (Gubanova & Kolosova 2013). Based on the experimental data, the level of sensory abilities (pitch, rhythm, dynamics, timbre), as well as the aesthetics of performance, were determined. These qualities were chosen for the study because they influence the aesthetics of performance to a greater extent and are interconnected with musical psychology, as they require special preliminary training, both from a technical point of view and emotionally. Pitch, rhythm, dynamics and timbre were initially defined as criteria, which were taken into account during the interim knowledge test. The criteria were determined by the teachers through an oral vote. The selection of the criteria was based on their ability to enhance the expressiveness of the compositions. The criteria for aesthetics were found to be the same for the two types of music (Chinese folk and Western), as these indicators affect the aesthetics of the compositions and influence the harmony of the musical elements. Different criteria can affect the relevance and accuracy of data. In the questionnaire, the teachers noted the number of people who, in their opinion, performed a certain element in a quality manner. The data presented by the teachers were consistent with each other and were not characterized by significant discrepancies. The quality of the performance was determined by the harmony of sound, absence of false notes, as well as accurate representation of pitch, rhythm, dynamics and timbre.

The level of aesthetic performance was identified separately for each group of participants as the Chinese folk and Western ways of singing significantly differ. The method of analysis (Gubanova & Kolosova 2013) showed that this is due to phonetic differences in the language, as well as different levels of emotionality of Chinese folk and Western melodies.

At the next study stage, the elements that influence the aesthetic component of the performance were identified based on the analysis of various literature sources, which were presented in the introduction. The elements that influence the aesthetics of performance are as follows:

- performance technique: general knowledge of music; work with rhythm and tonality; work with the purity of sound;
- musical literacy: proper reproduction of music and the ability to convey the composer's mood; transmission of musical text; creative improvisation;
- musical and aesthetic consciousness: the transmission of emotions and experiences, interest in the musical text; aesthetic assessment.

Having studied all the elements, the authors determined the importance of the aesthetic performance of musical compositions with the help of the hierarchy analysis method. This is a special element of mathematical analysis, which makes it possible to divide and structure a holistic problem into separate elements, as well as to highlight the most significant ones, based on the selected criteria (Saaty 1989). The selected criteria included the following ones: 1 – emotionality; 2 – artistic component; 3 – proper transmission of the experiences of the author; 4 – teacher's assessment; 5 – improvement of the performance technique; 6 – correct sound generation; 7 – tonal beauty. The selected criteria are of the greatest importance in the aesthetic performance of a melody regardless of territorial distribution. The selection of criteria was based on the personal experience of the authors of the article and was agreed upon by the teachers. Also, during the selection of the elements that affect the aesthetic component and the criteria for aesthetics, the psychological component, which manifested itself in the need for students to expend effort to learn, was taken into account. The psychological component was taken into account, as it affects the display of problems that arise in students during the performance, as well as aiming at the representation of artistic meaning.

Within the framework of the hierarchy analysis method, the correctness of the constructed matrix must be checked as this method is subjective and there is a mathematical determination procedure. The correctness of the matrix was calculated according to formula 1:

$$I_Y = \frac{\lambda_{max}{}^{*} - n}{n-1}, \qquad (1)$$

where λ_{max} is the total geometric designation of the matrix; n is the number of criteria.

The final study stage aimed to determine the level of the aesthetic component of the two groups of schoolchildren after 1.5 years of study. Throughout the study, students were taught vocals, focusing on the constituent elements of musical performance aesthetics developed by the authors. After 1.5 years of training, the determination of the level of aesthetics was carried out by the same teachers as after 7 months of training, because this allows tracing the accuracy of performance by the same category of teachers. Teachers also already have information about the quality of students' compositions as they learn, not just at the midterm. The involvement of other teachers may affect the bias of the assigned grades. Cultural differences do not have a significant impact, since students in group 1 studied exclusively Chinese folk compositions, while students in group 2 studied Western compositions. At this stage, the indicators were compared based on the calculation of the Spearman correlation coefficient:

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{6\sum_i d^2}{N(N^2-1)}, \qquad (2)$$

N – number of indicators

d – ranked coefficient, which depends on the table value (Dobson 2016).

If the calculation is higher than 1, the scores between the two groups of students do not correlate with each other. The data obtained during the experiment were calculated and processed in Microsoft Excel as this spreadsheet software program makes it possible to save and process numerical and text values, including with the use of formulas, as well as build graphs based on the data presented. The experiment did not violate the rights of schoolchildren, as it took place as part of the educational process in compliance with all ethical standards (The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees 2019) and within the stages previously agreed upon. The limitations of the presented work may be related to the correlation between the students' sensory abilities and the aesthetics of composition performance. Despite this, the paper studies the peculiarities of aesthetic performance of Chinese folk and Western compositions.

RESULTS

Due to the fact that the research process involved two groups of performers who had previously started learning Chinese folk and Western styles of singing, their sensory abilities were identified (Figure 1).

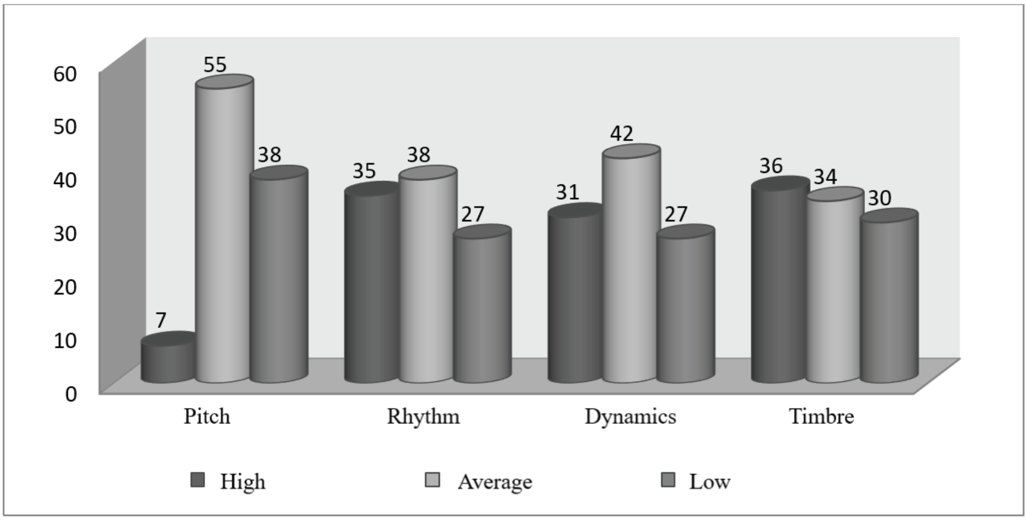

Figure 1. The level of sensory abilities of schoolchildren after seven months of music training, %.

Figure 1 shows that, in general, all indicators of sensory skills are at an average level. Pitch, which is aimed at performing high pitch sounds (from the third pitch), is at an average level in 55% of schoolchildren; therefore, additional training is still needed to achieve high results. Rhythm (38%) and dynamics (42%), which the expressiveness of the performance depends on, are also developed at an average level as the schoolchildren have not yet mastered their vocal apparatus. The largest number of schoolchildren (36%) have a high level of timbre, which forms the peculiarity of each voice. After the control performance, it was found that the development of these indicators does not affect the aesthetic component as many schoolchildren failed to convey the entire range of emotions embedded in the composition (Table 2).

Table 2. The level of performance aesthetics in the groups of participants

The level of performance aesthetics	Group No. 1	Group No. 2
High	16%	18%
Average	39%	32%
Low	45%	50%

The results of Table 2 showed that in Group 1, the aesthetics of performance is at a high level (according to teachers) in 16% of students and at a low level in 45% of schoolchildren. The schoolchildren who studied Western music demonstrated a high (18%) and a low (50%) level of the aesthetics of performance. These results are due to the fact that there is no emotional expression among the students of Group 2 and no smooth separation of phrases during the performance among the students of Group 1. These data confirm that the correct performance technique does not guarantee a high level of aesthetic performance, which ensures a greater interest in musical composition while listening. In this case, the emotional transmission of the melody was disturbed; there was no expressiveness and emotions laid down by the authors of the musical compositions.

For this purpose, the elements that affect the aesthetics of reproduction were identified. Due to the fact that the aesthetics of the performance of a musical text is associated with the sensory reproduction of the melody, the correct transmission of the musical text, aesthetic taste, rhythm, skill and communication with the audience, it is necessary to perfect the technique of vocal performance to achieve it. Initially, the elements that affect the aesthetics of perception and reproduction of a musical composition were identified (Figure 2).

Three main elements (performance technique, musical literacy, musical and aesthetic consciousness) were highlighted as it is these elements that are aimed at the clear reproduction of a melody. The technique of performance determines the correct perception of sounds by listeners and the formation of the musician's voice is based on theoretical knowledge of the art of music; in addition, working with rhythm, tonality and musical sounds allows musicians to achieve sound clarity.

Musical literacy is formed based on improving the performance technique. This is due to the fact that a correct performance technique allows a musician to master their skills, which contributes to the proper perception of the musical text. This element is important as a musician needs to convey the whole range of emotions laid down by the author of the text and the composer. Also, in the process of developing technical skills and literacy, creative skills are formed.

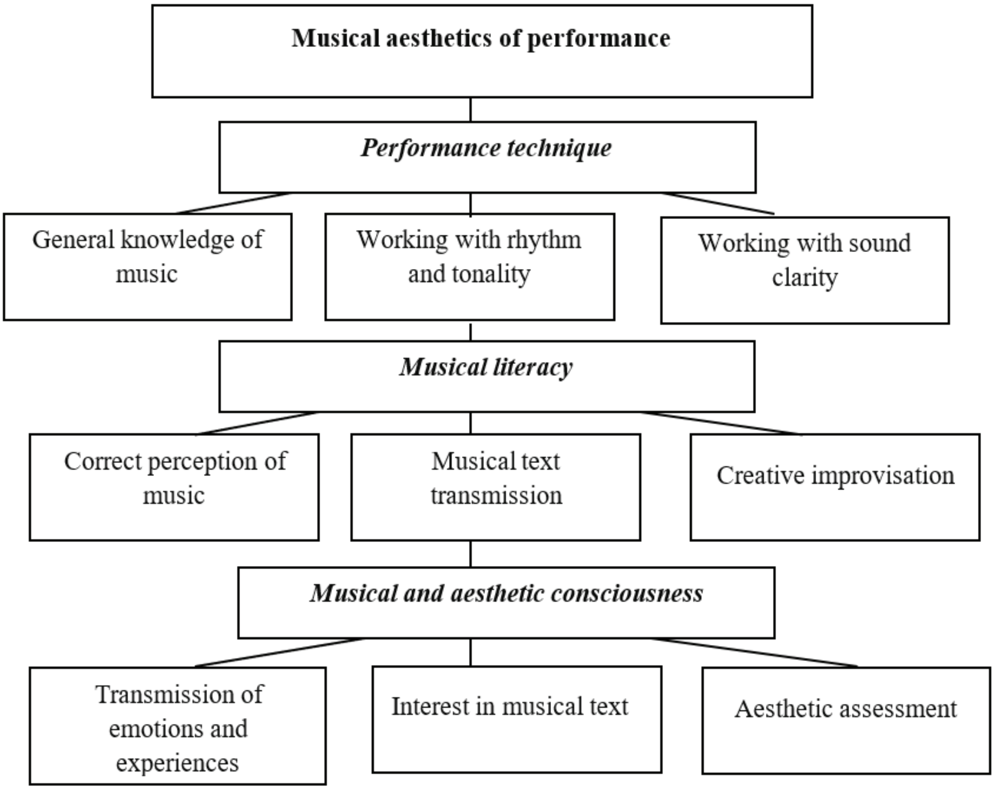

Figure 2. The elements of the musical aesthetics of performance.

Note: Compiled based on the data from Jiayin (2019).

Musical and aesthetic consciousness is associated not only with the clarity of sound, but also with the beauty of perception. The performer should not dryly convey the text to the viewer but develop emotional reproduction with all the experiences contained in the original text. For this, the performer must be interested in the learning process, as well as in the musical text that they are going to perform. The musician must have evaluative knowledge and be able to correctly evaluate their own performance and the performance of colleagues.

In the course of setting the performance technique, the correct formation of sounds was taken into account as in Chinese folk music the sound is monotonous and it can be performed in different variations, in contrast to Western music, which is more diverse and more emotional. When performing various sounds, it is necessary to avoid distortion; the sounds should be smooth and expressive. Training took place with the use of various musical instruments, which were different in the context of timbre, duration of sounds, rhythmic improvisation and visual modeling of various compositions by a teacher for correct improvisation. The difference between Western and Chinese folk music performance is also associated with the phonetic features of the language, as

Western vowel sounds are formed in the back of the oral cavity, which significantly facilitates sound production and acoustic resonance. In Chinese folk music, the distance between consonants and vowels is quite large; thus, when performing, it is necessary not to lose the specificity and national flavor of the voice culture. Therefore, during the musical performance, the schoolchildren were focused on the phonetic features of the language, and the aesthetic component was formed with the help of these elements.

During the development of the aesthetic performance skill, its significance was revealed with the help of the hierarchy analysis method (Table 3). The criteria were as follows:

1 - Emotionality;
2 - Artistic component;
3 - Correct transmission of the experiences of the author;
4 - Teacher's assessment;
5 - Improvement of the performance technique;
6 - Correct sound generation;
7 - Tonal beauty.

Table 3. Matrix of paired comparisons of criteria

Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	W*	W * norm
1	1	4/1	2/1	7/1	3/1	5/1	1/2	2.37	0.25
2	1/4	1	2/4	7/4	3/4	5/4	1/5	0.63	0.07
3	1/2	4/2	1	7/2	3/2	5/2	1/3	1.21	0.13
4	1/7	4/7	2/7	1	3/7	5/7	1/8	0.37	0.04
5	1/3	4/3	2/3	7/3	1	5/3	1/4	0.84	0.09
6	1/5	4/5	2/5	7/5	3/5	1	1/6	0.51	0.05
7	2/1	5/1	3/1	8/1	4/1	6/1	1	3.45	0.37
∑	4.43	14.70	7.85	24.48	11.28	18.13	2.58	9.37	1.00

The consistency index of the matrix is (in accordance with formula 1):

λmax =4.43 *0.25 + 14.70*0.07 + 7.85*0.13 + 24.48*0.04 + 11.28*0.09 + 18.13*0.05 + 2.58*0.37 = 7.01

$$I_Y = \frac{7.01-7}{6} = 0.002 < 0.2$$

The matrix of paired comparisons shows that aesthetic performance has the greatest influence on the beauty of sound (0.37), as while performing a song, it is very important to convey its idea without distorting facial muscles. Emotionality (0.25) is another component that is associated with the aesthetics of performance, as it is important for a musician to convey the entire spectrum of emotions from joy to fear that were embedded in a musical composition while maintaining the clarity of sound and aesthetics of performance. An important element is also the correct transmission of the experiences of the author (0.13), which is associated with emotionality, as the aesthetics of performance still involves the preservation of all the emotions of the author, and a sad song cannot be performed with a joyful facial expression. There is no doubt that it is impossible to exclude the criterion that is associated with a teacher's assessment (0.04) of the performance of the assigned task, as a certain number of schoolchildren are not interested in music education and perform the assigned tasks to receive marks that will allow them to keep their academic success. It was noted that the matrix of paired comparisons of the criteria is correct as the consistency index is 0.002 while its normal value is 0.2.

After considering the elements that affect the aesthetic component among schoolchildren during training, a final knowledge assessment test was carried out, which made it possible to identify the level of development of aesthetic skills (Table 4).

Table 4. The level of musical performance aesthetics upon 1.5 years of studies

The level of performance aesthetics	Group No. 1	Group No. 2	Comparison of results using Spearman correlation coefficient
High*	86%	89%	0.072
Average**	11%	10%	0.054
Low***	3%	1%	0.069

* high level of knowledge was in the range of 90–100 points
** average level of knowledge was in the range of 60–89 points
*** low level of knowledge was in the range of 30–59 points

The data in Table 4 confirm that a properly developed approach to learning and understanding of the importance of the aesthetic component allows musicians to develop it in the course of the learning process. Thus, 86% of the schoolchildren in the group studying Chinese folk music developed aesthetic performance skills after 1.5 years of study; they can convey the musical text with the correct intonation, rhythm and tempo while preserving the emotions laid down in the composition; 11% of the schoolchildren of the same group need more time to acquire aesthetic skills, as during the performance they have tension in facial muscles and lack the required emotional spectrum; 3% of the schoolchildren in Group 1 and 1% of the students in Group 2 missed the final knowledge assessment test for unspecified reasons so they were automatically included into the category of students with the low level of aesthetic performance skills. In 89% of the schoolchildren in the second group, the aesthetics of performance was at a high level, which was associated with the correct combination of falsetto and clarity of sound; also, when switching to a different pitch, the facial expression was maintained with no distortion of facial muscles. The study results also showed that the indicators in the two groups are correlated and do not have significant differences, since the training took place in children 8-11 years old, who previously did not have a set voice, and were taught voice directly during the passage of the study. The results were compared directly using Spearman's correlation coefficient.

DISCUSSION

To compare the uniqueness of the study, a number of literary sources, which reveal the aesthetics of vocal performance of musical compositions, were analyzed. Dalskaya (2020) analyzed singing expressiveness. The main focus was placed on interaction between aesthetic realization and deep emotional experience of a singer. The aesthetics is manifested not only in reflex manifestations but also in the conscious application of the emotions required. The movements of hands, head and eyes help to express the emotions needed and achieve an aesthetic effect. This study also shows the relationship between performance and the aesthetics of singing, but the emphasis is on the importance of the aesthetic component, which contributes to greater emotionality, artistic expressiveness, the transmission of the experiences laid down by an author and the improvement of the performance technique and tonal beauty.

Yushchenko et al. (2019) showed the aesthetics of performance as one of the elements of teaching modern pop performance. The researchers concluded that the interconnection of theoretical, artistic, aesthetic and pedagogical methods contributes to the formation of a modern vocal style. Bicknell (2018) indicated that excessively loud expressive singing affects the aesthetic component of performance. Szyszkowska (2018) analyzed the relationships between aesthetics and phenomenology that help convey musical experiences. The study of sound, sound playback and the perception of musical compositions contributes to the development of music, including the aesthetic component of performance.

Jianzhao (2019) indicated that Chinese folk music was formed under the influence of traditional singing, which naturally reflects emotions and tonal beauty. The author established that the aesthetics of modern musical compositions should correspond to modern forms of expression, which complement traditional singing.

Chen (2015) presents a study of the main characteristics of Chinese folk and Western musical aesthetics taking into account similar and different elements. The authors found that the importance of aesthetic reproduction lies in harmony, artistic concept and rationality, which are interconnected with Confucianism and Taoism. The research also indicates the difference between Western and Chinese folk music formed under the influence of various cultural traditions and historical events. The authors established the relationship between aesthetic performance and the difference in language associated with the formation of sounds.

Chen (2015) described music aesthetics as a listener's experiences of aesthetic pleasure and the beauty of the musical form. Lin (2021) characterized Western music aesthetics as formal beauty and aesthetic freedom. To avoid psychological problems during training, the emphasis should be on communication. This approach will contribute to the formation of aesthetic performance, as it is based on constant and meaningful rehearsals. An aesthetic performance is about sensitivity, moods and expressiveness of a composition (Roesler 2022).

The aesthetics of different cultures through the example of musical compositions was described by Oh (2017). The author found that their differences are associated with the aspects of intercultural interaction of different musical compositions of the 21st century. The aesthetics of reproduction conveys social and historical elements that were formed under the influence of the cultures of the East and West. The analysis of the presented compositions makes it possible to overcome cultural barriers in the context of different cultures, which are closely related to society. The present paper is not focused on individual compositions, as this can significantly limit the scope of the study. The analysis of the aesthetic component's importance is shown through the example of Chinese folk and Western music.

Ellis (2019) showed that rhythmic expressiveness in choral performance depends on natural speech intonations and linguistic principles. The accuracy of the rhythmic performance in the choir has a significant advantage over the textual expressions in the ensemble. In American music, an increase in the length of the first syllable can make performance rigid, thereby disrupting the aesthetics of expressiveness. Music instruction is based on the interaction of technical skills, thinking and students' psychological attitudes. This is due to the fact that musical expression is interconnected with thought, hearing, movement and moods, which contribute to the formation of dynamic consciousness. The psychological preparation of students and the emphasis during instruction on the aesthetic component contribute to a more accurate performance, the coordination of notes, the representation of real sounds (Robb 2022).

Kim (2017) showed that it is possible to improve cognitive and socio-emotional development and aesthetic reproduction in children through music education. The author found that aesthetics is formed under the influence of the rhythm, tempo and melody improvement. The researcher also indicated that the aesthetic component depends not only on the technique of performance, but also on musical literacy, as well as the ability to convey one's emotions.

Marin-Liebana & Blasco Magraner & Botella Nicolas (2020) considered the musical identity of students and their preferences in popular music. After analyzing 161 pieces of music, the researchers concluded that the inclusion of popular music in the curriculum is not feasible as it is considered to be aesthetically defective; however, at the same time, it contributes to students' motivation.

Musical rhythm affects the aesthetics of melody playback because it contributes to changing the music structure. The rhythm of musical compositions is coordinated with the dynamism of performance. Aesthetics, by means of rhythmic changes, is achieved as a result of the precision and sequence of performance, which are characterized by different durations of pauses and intonation (Tichko & Kim & Large 2022).

The analysis of various literary sources shows that research is more focused on the formation of the aesthetic component as one of the elements of the development of singing mechanisms. The present paper also discusses the importance of aesthetic elements in musical performance through the example of Chinese folk and Western music. The differences between Chinese folk and Western music, as well as their features were identified and described in the theoretical part of the study. To determine the importance of the aesthetic reproduction of musical compositions, the hierarchy analysis method was used, and seven significant criteria formed under the influence of the aesthetic component were identified.

CONCLUSIONS

In the study, the importance of the aesthetic component in music was established in the course of the training process of 290 participants from 5 schools in Beijing, who had been learning to sing for 7 months. The initial stage of the study aimed to determine the level of development of sensory abilities. The indicators of pitch (55%), rhythm (38%), and dynamics (42%) were at an average level in most schoolchildren, which confirmed the ability of the participants to sing. Timbre, which is a feature of a voice, was developed at a high level in 36% of participants and at a low level in 30% of students. To improve sensory abilities, a lengthy learning process is required.

After the participants were divided into two groups, the final analysis was performed to determine the aesthetic component during the musical performance. Only 16% of the students (Group 1), who studied Chinese folk music, and 18% of the schoolchildren (Group 2) mastered the aesthetics of performance and managed to convey all the emotions of the musical composition; 45% of the schoolchildren (Group 1) and 50% of the students (Group 2) were more focused on the technique of performance and the artistic quality of the work was lost.

Based on Table 2, the elements that should be taken into account during the formation of performance aesthetics were revealed. These include the technique of performance (general knowledge of music, working with rhythm and tonality, working with the clarity of sound); musical literacy (correct reproduction of a musical composition, transmission of musical text, creative improvisation); musical and aesthetic consciousness (transmission of emotions and experiences, interest in a musical text, aesthetic assessment).

To determine the significance of the aesthetic component, the method of hierarchy analysis was used, and the most important criteria were determined. It was found that the aesthetic component has the greatest influence on tonal beauty (0.37) and emotionality (0.25), as it is important for a listener to catch the feelings of an author described in the musical composition. Due to the fact that the aesthetics of performance has an impact on students' grades (as the learning process took place within the curriculum), the importance of aesthetics for obtaining a high grade cannot be ruled out. Its indicator is 0.04.

After 1.5 years of study, there was a considerable increase in the aesthetic performance skills of students. In Group 1 and Group 2, 86% and 89% of students, respectively, had a high level of such skills. The high results are due to the fact that during the performance, the students were able to convey the beauty of the sound and the emotions laid down by the author of the composition. The study results are of interest to researchers who are studying the processes of aesthetic significance in the performance of music through the examples of Chinese folk and Western works.

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Estonian Folk Song and Singing Culture Researcher Ingrid Rüütel 90

On 3 November folklorist Ingrid Rüütel celebrated her 90th birthday. During her scholarly career of over 60 years she has conducted versatile and fruitful research on Estonian folk music. She has applied her skills to further the Estonian folklore movement and to support the sustainability of local communities. At present Ingrid is actively continuing her work in her area of specialisation as a researcher *emerita* of the Estonian Literary Museum.

The focus of her scholarly work has been the effort to conceptualise and reveal the nature of folk culture, thereby valorising both Estonian national and regional identities.

Beginning in 1959, when Ingrid Rüütel started working in the folklore department of the Literary Museum, she has remained true to her scholarly vocation and the calling of a music researcher. As a student of Herbert Tampere she has furthered Tampere's work in systematising Estonian folksongs according to their musical characteristics and connecting them with the functional, regional and ethnic context of the songs.

Ingrid has published many research articles about both Estonian and Finno-Ugric folk music as well as popular scientific writings about folk culture. The various layers of her lifework are represented in the voluminous article collection "Remaining Oneself while Changing" [Muutudes endaks jääda] (2010). The theme that persists throughout the book is identity – the axis around which both a person's self-image and the image of their ethnicity are built. Almost all of the 39 articles (from the years 1964-2010) are connected with ethnic culture, folk music and identity. The bibliography of her works from the years 1956–2005 contains 573 entries and is in need of significant supplementation.

Photograph by Alar Madisson, 2025.

One of Ingrid Rüütel's new research directions has been a typology of runotunes using methods of computer analysis (in cooperation with computer engineer Koit Haugas). Due to the paucity of distinguishable musical characteristics, the typology of runotunes and the (re)construction of their genesis had not previously been successful. It is not easy to group older tunes, because they have many similar elements, with mixing and interweaving, thus forming a thicket rather than a tune-tree.

According to her new system Rüütel has typologized many data sets, for example, she has compiled "The Typology and Styles of Votic Folk Music" (1977), "Typology of Mustjala runotunes" (1980), "One-line Wedding Song Tunes in the General Context of Estonian Runo-songs" (1996). The principles of typologising tunes are discussed in several studies: "A Method for Distinguishing Melody Types and Establishing Typological Groups" (1990, with Koit Haugas), "Some results of computerized comparative analysis of the Balto-Finnic runotunes" (1999) and "Musical Typology of Estonian Runo-verse Folksongs" (2006). Based on the database intiated by Rüütel and Haugas, the folklore archive is developing a folktunes database for public and research use.

Ingrid Rüütel has made a significant contribution to the study of the history of the development of Estonian folk music in the context of ethnic relations, the reconstruction of which has been complicated due to the lack of older sources. These are the topics of the dissertations, equivalent to a doctoral degree: "The Shaping of the More Recent Estonian Folk Songs" (1969, published 2012), and "Estonian Folk Music Layers in the Context of Ethnic Relations" (in Russian, 1996 and English, 1998). These studies make an important contribution to research on the ethnic history of Estonian and Baltic-Finnic peoples, as well as more generally to the study of the history of singing.

Ingrid has collected folklore throughout Estonia, particularly in Kihnu, Saaremaa and Muhu. In scholarly venues she has published source materials (transcriptions, sound and video recordings) based on her own collections and the materials of the folklore archive; these impart theoretical knowledge and are suitable for practical use. One example is "Newer Estonian singing games" I, II (1980, 1983). Her collections were a significant supplement to the Kihnu volumes of the series Vana Kannel (Ottilie Kõiva, Ingrid Rüütel 1997, 2003). In collaboration with Sille Kapper, a thorough overview, "Kihnu Dances", was published in 2015.

The role of the folklore movement in Estonia is reflected in the article "Folk music in today's society" (2004); an article based on a questionnaire organised among participants in the Baltica folklore festival entitled "Traditional Music in Estonian Today" (2008) and the monograph "Folk Culture in Estonia – for Whom and What for" I, II (2005, 2006) co-authored with Ene-Margit Tiit.

Ingrid has also researched folk culture in other regions of Estonia, for example "The Layers of Setu Folk Songs and Their Ethnocultural Context" (1988), "Women in Kihnu Culture" (2013), "Folk Customs and Beliefs" (2010) and many more.

In 1969 Ingrid Rüütel established a folk music research sector at the folklore department (initially in the function of a sound archive), and in 1978 a folk music sector at the Estonian Language and Literature Institute of the Academy of Sciences (acting as its head 1978-2002), which in 2000 was reorganised as the ethnomusicology department of the Estonian Literary Museum. At that time a series of scholarly publications in folk music was established, entitled "Ars Musica Popularis" (17 issues 1980–2005) and the regional selection of songs "Our Voices Join Together" (2 issues, 1997, 2001).

While working as a senior researcher in the Estonian Literary Museum's Estonian Folklore Archive, Ingrid Rüütel has compiled five scholarly CD/DVD collections in the series "Sound Recordings from the Estonian Folklore Archive" on the folk music of Saaremaa, Muhumaa, Pärnumaa, Virumaa and Vilijandimaa; a sixth collection on Võrumaa is forthcoming. The collections are supplemented by scholarly overviews of the published material along with transcriptions from the series “What the Footprints Hold”, initiated by Ingrid Rüütel.

As a researcher of folk music and sector head Ingrid Rüütel has made a strong contribution to the continuation of the tradition of research on folk music, teaching and motivating the younger generation during a time in which folk music as a specialty was not taught in Estonian institutions of higher education and there were no opportunities to study abroad. She has maintained contact with the research world as the long-time chairwoman of the Estonian national committee of the International Council on Traditional Music (ICTM), introducing Estonian research, most recently in the article “Ethnomusicology here and elsewhere” (2022). Already before the age of computers she organised a “database” – the creation of a catalogue of folk tunes classified according to parishes, which is still sought after today.

Ingrid has also been a leader and organiser of the Estonian national folklore movement, contributing her scholarly competence and authority to their activities. In 1988 she was a founding member of the Estonian Folklore Society; initiator, in 1989, of the first international folklore festival Baltica; founding member of the Estonian Folk Culture Foundation in 1991; one of the founders of the Estonian Folklore Council; patron of the current Mooste folk music arrangements festival “Mooste Elohelü”.

Her devoted work has spanned scholarly activities and organisation of the folklore movement, collecting the folklore of Estonian and kin peoples, research and publication of source materials both in scholarly and popular format, bringing older folk culture into today’s society and supporting the sustainability of communities connected with folk culture. It is in part due to her contribution that Kihnu traditional culture was entered in the UNESCO list of oral and intangible heritage in 2003.

Colleagues

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Narrative Researcher Pille Kippar 90

On 24 October Pille Kippar's 90th birthday was celebrated with a festive seminar at the Estonian Language Institute.

The last few years have directed our attention to the history of folklore as an area of specialisation, as well as to those who have helped define it and make its existence visible amidst other philological disciplines. Recently we gained an overview of this great work with the help of recollections on the life-work of Jawaharlal Handoo.

This year Pille Kippar, the first Estonian woman to hold a PhD in folklore, celebrates her 90th birthday. She is among those who have made great contributions to the study of folklore, who have helped expand its thematics and solidified its authority as a field. She is known to us as a classic researcher in the field of folktales, who has always also found a way to pursue her own path, bringing innovative approaches to the treatment of traditional forms. For example, her international catalogue of Estonian animal fairy tales, published in the distinguished Folklore Fellows series in Helsinki (Estnische Tiermärchen. Typen- und Variantenverzeichnis. (FF Communications 237, 1986.) also contains recent animal stories, which have a certain formulaic nature. The same is true of a new story collection on Clever Ants and Vanapagan, characters to whom writers and others discussing national narratives have attributed an extraordinary role, but who (particularly Vanapagan) have meanings that transcend time. Pille has transmitted Finno-Ugric fairy tales to the Estonian reader and graciously collaborated, for example, in the creation of the first large, original German-language web anthology, designed by Kärt Summatavet.

Pille Kippar has helped make visible various new types of folklore: wall newspapers and almanacs, which she helped legalise and introduce at the beginning of the 1990s as an aspect of contemporary folk creativity. These were missing from the Estonian canon in the field, though they were represented in Finland, used in many Estonian schools and diaspora communities and remain in active use to the present day. She began collecting narratives and information from

Photograph by Alar Madisson, 2010.

Russian-speaking university students, beginning with folk stories about their origins and genealogies which are located at the borderline between written and oral stories. By their nature these are an important component of values and a sense of belonging. Pille has emphasised the importance of telling personal stories and the relation between such narration and folklore connected with professions and professional life.

All of this has been supported by Pille's field work and related experimentation. Her activities as a university teacher were propelled by the passion of sharing knowledge but also by the need to gather finances to purchase an apartment (when the tiny income from research work, at the lowest possible remuneration, was insufficient). Significantly, her teaching has borne lasting fruit; she began teaching a folklore course at the Pedagogical Institute in 1964 and continued it for almost thirty years until the Institute became the Pedagogical University in 1993, thereafter serving as a professor and Estonian philology department chair for one term. Since 1998 she has been a professor emerita. She did not believe in lecturing as a sole teaching method, but made creative use of individual and group work: at her oral examinations in folklore, singing was a requirement. Indeed, Pille's teaching has preserved knowledge about folklore in the long term and maintained its academic importance. However askance philological circles looked at the introduction of the opinions of simple people, these efforts have continued on till the present day due to the work of devoted researchers and shall live on for a long time hence. Not to mention Pille's radio broadcasts on storytelling, which have reached a broader circle of listeners. The Estonian Radio editor Silvia Karro recalls that Pille was always friendly, very well prepared, and knew how to speak in a simple and clear manner. She was also impressed that Pille was very adept at mimicking the sounds of animals and birds, and included them in her broadcasts.

Pille has been a member of ISFNR since 1984, SIEF since 1989 and the Kalevalaseura since 1993. From 1990–1995 she was folklore sector chair in the Mother Tongue Society (Emakeele Selts) and in 1996–1997 a member of the board of the Academic Folklore Society. Pille has written and given many papers on the Baltic-Finnic region as a contact zone between east and west, which is reflected in folklore and the distribution of folk narratives. Her PhD dissertation, defended in 1991, still awaits publication in Estonian. May she have much energy to continue her ongoing efforts to develop her ideas and knowledge in a theoretical direction and towards textbooks and study materials!

Colleagues

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The XIVth Finno-Ugristics Congress in Tartu

From 18-23 August 2025 the XIVth international Finno-Ugristics Congress (CIFU – *Congressus Internationalis Fenno-Ugristarum*, webpage https://cifu14.ut.ee/?lang=et) was held in Tartu. This is the world's largest and oldest regularly convened scholarly event devoted to Finno-Ugric topics. The congresses have taken place every five years since 1960, moving from one country to another. At first the congresses rotated between Hungary, Finland and the Soviet Union; newly-independent Estonia was added later, and instead of the Soviet Union, Russia played the role of CIFU host. As the 2020 congress was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic, in 2022 CIFU was organised for the first time in a non-Finno-Ugric country, at the University of Vienna in Austria.

Estonia has hosted the congress twice: in 1970 in Tallinn and in 2000 in Tartu. Therefore this year's CIFU took place in Estonia for the third time, and for the second time in Tartu. The congress has taken place twice in Budapest as well (in 1960 and 1975), but the capital of Hungary will soon outdistance Tartu: the next, the XVth CIFU in 2030, will take place in Budapest, at Eötvös Lorándi University (ELTE).

The main organiser of CIFU XIV was the Institute for Estonian and General Linguistics of the University of Tartu, where all of the congress's proceedings took place. The president of the congress was Gerson Klumpp, professor of Finno-Ugric languages.

Participants arrived at the congress from various places in the world. The geography of the represented states shows clearly that research on Finno-Ugric topics is not limited to the traditional Finno-Ugric lands. Researchers from the following states participated in the congress: Austria, Bangladesh, Estonia, Holland, Italy, Japan, Canada, Lithuania, Latvia, Norway, Poland, France, Sweden, Germany, Finland, Czech Republic, Ukraine, Hungary, USA, Russia (online), United Kingdom. It is an interesting fact that the flag of Bangladesh was represented at CIFU for the first time.

The five intensive days of the congress were filled with diverse academic content; excursions took place on the sixth day. In addition to numerous paper presentations, the congress schedule included a roundtable on introducing Finno-Ugristics to the public, book presentations and two evening receptions. On the working days of the congress, five plenary addresses were delivered: by Kristiina Ross (Estonia), Jussi Ylikoski (Finland/Norway), Ágnes Lukács (Hungary), Eszter Ruttkay-Miklián (Hungary) and Valts Ernštreits (Latvia).

In her plenary address on the opening day of the congress, which was entitled "Challenges of Standardizing a Small Baltic Finnic Language (Until the End of the 18th Century): The Case of Estonian" Estonian Language Institute linguist Kristiina Ross used the example of the Estonian language to examine trials that attended the standardisation of small Finno-Ugric languages up to the end of the 18th century. In his plenary address entitled "On Contemporary Research into Uralic Grammar", Jussi Ylikoski, professor at the University of Turku and associate professor at the Saami higher education institution in Kautokeinos (Norway), contemplated the current state of research on the grammar of Uralic languages. Ágnes Lukács, professor of cognitive science at the Technical and Economic University of Budapest, spoke in her presentation entitled "The Construction of Hungarian Grammar: Insights from Language Acquisition Research" on the grammatical structure of the Hungarian language from the perspective of language acquisition research. Eszter Ruttkay-Miklián, senior researcher at the Ethnological Institute of the Humanities Research Centre in Budapest focused her presentation, "The Legacy of Éva Schmidt. A Lifework on, to and for the Khanty" on the lifework of Éva Schmidt and publicising her legacy. The last plenary presentation, on the last day of the congress, entitled "Building a Future for Livonian" was given by Valts Ernštreits, director of the Livonian Institute of the University of Latvia, Livonian linguist and language activist; he spoke of the Livonians' successful efforts toward the preservation of identity and language and building a future for the Livonian language.

There were 19 thematic symposia in the congress's program, a poster presentation section and a general section, which gathered presentations for which no separate symposium was planned. Approximately 250 presentations were given in the symposia. Most of the participants were physically present, but ten to thirty participated on-line. The latter included the few researchers from Russia who took part in the congress as independent researchers.

Over half of the symposia focused on lingustics, which is not surprising, for lingustics has dominated in the previous congresses. Of course, other areas of ethnic scholarship were also represented. Thus in the symposium "Transdisciplinary Approaches to Research on the Human Past" 12 presentations on history and archaeology were given, but 32 presentations on ethnology, religion and folklore were presented across four separate symposia. In addition, two sections examined the balancing of power relations and hierarchies in Finno-Ugric research and ideologies in the preservation and development of minor languages, including language policies and planning. In the general section there were presentations on very diverse topics: the Finno-Ugric world view and literature, etymology and onomastics, multilingualism and many additional interesting matters.

The Estonian Literary Museum was represented at the congress by a distinguished delegation. Our colleagues organised and participated in several symposia. Mari Väina was one of the organisers of the symposium "Transdisciplinary Approaches to Studies of the Human Past", where specialists from diverse areas, including archaeology, genetics, linguistics and folkloristics joined forces in research on humanity's past. Janika Oras and Taive Särg initiated a symposium entitled "Traditional Creation and Modern Experience in Folk Music Revival", which examined contemporary ways of presenting traditional music and related experiences. Natalia Ermakov, Nikolay Kuznetsov and Sergey Troitskiy organised a symposium entitled "The Winter in Finno-Ugric Cultures".

The following presentations were contributed by colleagues at the Estonian Literary Museum: Aado Lintrop ("The Motif of Rebirth in Mansi Folk Tales"); Andres Kuperjanov ("Solar Eclipses in the Finnic-Ugric Traditions"); Andrus Tins and Reet Hiiemäe ("Finno-Ugric Worldviews in the Changing World of Technology"); Helen Kõmmus ("The Traditional Music Features and Revival Aspects at Estonian and Finnish Folk Music Festivals"); Helina Harend, Mari Väina and Risto Järv ("Family Terms in Estonian Runosongs and Fairy Tales"); Janika Oras with Triin Rätsep ("A Touch That Stays with you: Reviving a Traditional Singing Wedding in South Estonia"); Liina Saarlo ("Leelo and a Leaf Flute. Representatives of Estonian Traditional Music on Stage at the 2nd Half of the 20th Century"); Mare Kõiva with Tatsiana Valodzina ("Healing Charms and Healing with Animals"); Mari Väina along with Kati Kallio, Frog and Antti Kanner ("Historical Layers of Finnic Oral Poetry"); Marin Laak ("Cultural Resilience and Networks of the Estonian Diaspora: The Example of the Australian Forest University"); Natalia Ermakov ("Songs and Laments on a Winter Theme: Analysis of the Material Recorded during Field Studies"); Nikolai Anisimov ("Winter in the Mythological Beliefs of the Udmurts"); Olha Petrovych and Liina Saarlo with Serhii Petrovych ("Fog as a Symbol and Physical Phenomenon in Ukrainian Folk Songs and Estonian Runosongs: A Comparative Study"; Taive Särg with Marion Selgall and Helena Trei ("About the Process of Singing and the Conception of Authenticity in the 21st-Century Estonian Regilaul Tradition").

A part of one day of the conference was held at the Literary Museum. The CIFU special panel entitled "Finno-Ugric Language and Culture in the Research and Archival Field of the Estonian Literary Museum" took place there. Participants in the congress had the opportunity to get acquainted with the archives and collections of the Museum and publications on Finno-Ugric folklore and religion, as well as listening to a brief lecture on research on Finno-Ugric languages and cultures at the Estonian Literary Museum and to Finno-Ugric poetry. At the same time, participants could view an exhibit entitled "...in Between" of works by Udmurt artist Zoja Lebedeva, prepared specially for the congress and Mari design artist Natalja Lill's exhibit "Life Is Beauty – Beauty Is Life".

Most of the Finno-Ugric peoples live in Russia, and previously scholars from Russian universities and research centres have actively participated in the congresses. CIFU took place at the home of the eastern linguistic kin in 1985 (during the Soviet era) in Komi country in Sõkõvtari and in 2005 with the Mari in Joškar-Ola. Due to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russian researchers cannot travel to Estonia at present, and institutional collaboration with Russian research institutions has been broken off. The war that caused this was already underway during the previous CIFU (2022) and conditions have not improved in the intervening period. The preliminary shock and perplexity seemed to have passed; researchers have resigned themselves to the situation and manage despite restricted opportunities, although without free interaction with colleagues in Russia, attendance at conferences there and field work in the lands of the eastern language kin.

Personal contacts and interaction with colleagues in Russia have also been disturbed. The Russian state had previously intervened in international Finno-Ugric cooperation, but now this intervention has been amplified. Repressive laws and political restrictions in Russia activate self-censorship in researchers, because interaction with scholars from "hostile states" is not regarded positively by the regime. However, the previous or potential readiness for cooperation on the part of the eastern colleagues might also suffer regardless of state regulation, because their own ideological views and attitude toward the war may conform to the official position; this also means an end to their interaction with western scholars.

CIFU brought scholars together in Tartu, offering them the opportunity to interact and discuss directly and without impediment. Despite today's excellent means of interacting over the web, scholars continue to need direct meetings and interactions: this is how synergy is born, and this also gives a stronger sense of security that Finno-Ugric scholarly life will continue despite the major changes of the past years. It was a joy to see many young scholars participate in the congress and Estonian university students were included as a supporting committee in the organisation of the congress. The congress was a success in every way.

As concerns the inclusion of Finno-Ugric colleagues in Russia and their participation in international collaboration, it is unfortunately unknown how future interaction with them will turn out. Today one cannot predict that collaboration will be restored in the next few years. Perhaps the next CIFU five years from now in Budapest will show whether or how the situation has changed.

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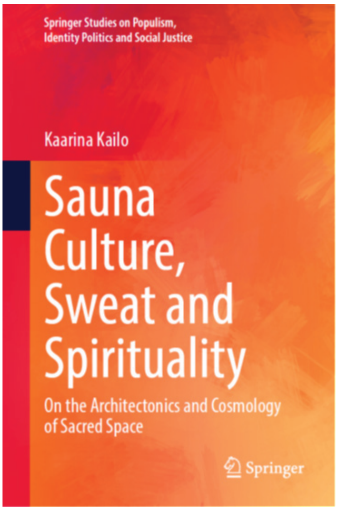
BOOK REVIEW
Sauna as Sanctuary: Ecofeminist Visions of Roots and Revival



Kaarina Kailo. *Sauna Culture, Sweat and Spirituality*. Cham: Springer, 2025. 410 pp.

This book by Kaarina Kailo, who has previously authored several books in Finnish dealing with similar topics, is a cross-cultural, comparative interpretation of the ritual practices and cultural-religious backgrounds related to various types of saunas and other sweating spaces. An average reader may be somewhat familiar with some of the sweating cultures Kailo describes, but as her book exemplifies, there are many more: besides sauna traditions in Baltic, Scandinavian and German regions, there are Irish, Iberian/Galician, Ojibway, Micmac, Cree, Lenape, Pueblo Indian, and Temascali sweat rituals under scrutiny. However, *hammam* traditions that are mainly spread in the Middle East and North Africa are mentioned rather in passing.

Kailo tries to look back into history as far as possible and while describing conflicting theories about the roots and starting points of saunas in the world, she assumes that ecological and climatic conditions have given rise to various types of saunas, not necessarily because of a diffusion of ideas and cultural influences, but because the human mind comes up with similar responses in similar circumstances (p. 153). Nevertheless, the book speculates that the spiritual roots of the sauna may be in the Paleolithic era's bear religion and the woman-oriented first rituals of rebirth and regeneration, from Native menstruation huts to sweat lodges (p. ix). These ideas already lead the reader to Kailo's central arguments but also to her steadfast ecofeminist and spiritual feminist stance. Already in the beginning of the book one will encounter passionate future-directed insights, such as "We would do well to use the sauna as a means of decolonization [of] the misguided human norms of greed and competition, and as the space for rites of passage and initiation aimed at" (p. v–vi) or "It is timely to also study the ecological importance of sweat rituals for addressing today's planetary threats, climate change, mental dysfunction, militarism, and increasing multilevel violence" (p. ix). These hint that Kailo is not writing from a neutral bystander viewpoint but is at the same time a social activist with clear personal spiritual perspectives.

Indeed, discussions about the connections of sauna rituals to matrilineal or matristic civilizations with Great Mother and bear cults continue throughout the book, and as Kailo frames her sources herself, she refers much to "brand-new research on matristic cultures" whereas ""matristic" is the term Gimbutas uses to refer to goddess cultures" (p. 19). However, there is not much discussion about researchers from different eras who have presented counterarguments to such theories. For instance, Kailo highlights patriarchal notions of sacred and profane, grounding her understandings in the findings from authors like Marija Gimbutas and Riane Eisler, who have written about ancient goddess cultures of pre-patriarchal times. Here, the reader would have expected these theories to be placed within a broader scientific discussion. However, Kailo is aware of the somewhat alternative approach she takes, describing it as a "somewhat deviant research endeavor" (p. vi) and detailing her working methods as follows: "While I base my theories on scientific studies, I have also read fictional accounts of Old Europe and other historical sites, which, based as they are on serious scholarship, also allow us to speculate on past ritual life" (p. 10). She does not deny her own role as initiator or reviver of rituals that carry a certain holistic feminist agenda: "When seeking to reintroduce woman-friendly spiritual rituals, I have been myself busy integrating into them traditional ecological knowledge, wisdom traditions that honor all life forms, human/other-than-human animal relations, and consciousness-raising about ethical goals and a solidarity-based lifestyle" (p. 17).

While describing her methods, Kailo expresses opposition to the patriarchal approach and support for engaging various senses, by stating: "My method, then, is also visual in reversal of the abstract and detached, almost clinical tendency of patriarchal scholarship with its left-brain idealization. I illustrate the book with images of little or unknown goddesses or emos from my culture, to give them a face and voice" (p. 20). A special subchapter is devoted to the notion of the masculinized sacred for further clarification of her viewpoints (p. 33 ff), and then she moves on to explaining feminist spirituality (p. 39 ff) and its perceived proximity to indigenous views on the spiritual, while describing, for instance, the principles of the gift economies of which, in her opinion, singing can be one (p. 81 ff).

Kailo emphasizes her intention to look for the "affinities" among the many described sweat cultures, rather than focusing on their differences. However, some of her conclusions seem overly simplistic and idealistic, such as arguments that "dominator societies... replaced the joy- and life-centered spiritual worldview of Paleolithic and Neolithic societies following Bronze Age conquests of Old Europe by a violence-oriented lifestyle" (p. 9). She stresses that she identified the importance of the bear – or the Great Bear Mother – in most of the viewed cultures but it seems too absolutistic to claim that all indigenous worldviews encompassed the same harmonious more-than-human dimensions of perception of the sacredness of the land, animals, plants, rocks and spirit beings. Thus, the role of the practitioner or the alternative historian often seems to dominate over the researcher's role. On the other hand, this combined role is also unique and has allowed Kailo to participate in and gain insights into spiritual practices, which, if she were only in the role of an observant researcher, would perhaps not have been approachable in such a direct experiential way.

Among other things, Kailo explains the symbols she finds most important in association with the sauna culture, e.g. by looking at the affinities between the shape of a sweat lodge and the shape of a mound or beehive, both with a small, low entrance, requiring the participant to enter with humility, and with a center pole connecting the heaven and earth. Additionally, the symbolism of the womb and the sauna ritual as a form of rebirth are highlighted, leading to the next level – symbolism related to the bears whose cyclical pattern of winter hibernation and emergence from caves in the spring with cubs is, in turn, viewed as a symbol of fertility, rebirth and regeneration. It is not far from here to reach the cults related to bear gods. However, at times, I as a reader would have liked a more precise distinction between when it comes to Kailo's own conclusions and when it comes to the views of other researchers or the ones of her interlocutors.

According to Kailo's conclusions, the sauna deserves to be viewed as the center of the world and the solution to all evil: "The sauna, after all, is the first religion, the first temple of healing and well-being and the matrix where peaceful, trusting relationships have been celebrated since the beginning of time" (p. 388). Being contrasted "to post-Enlightenment mechanistic views of Nature as a mere dead machine" (p. 337), sauna rituals have the potential to lead us back to the worldviews of "unity, oneness and Earth Democracy" (p. 338). This sounds somewhat like an esoteric self-help book – especially when being aware of the sauna as a space where rituals with a wide range of intentions (including black magic) have been performed according to Baltic-Scandinavian folklore sources, and considering the fact that Kailo herself points out, namely that for many people today the sauna has simply become a place to drink beer, party and relax. But it would be, of course, great if such an ideal world really worked and revived sauna rituals could function as a tool of empowering and bringing about a world of balance, equality, peace and sustainability (cf. p. 386). In any case, this book is likely to be successful in reinforcing identity narratives, so the book has its place and readership in our pluralistic post-secular contemporary society. But there are even more possible ways of reading it. Since the book contains technical descriptions of preparing and using various sauna whisks and oils (e.g. "You can use the supple birch easily also for binding the *vihta* and its odor is considered superior", p. 349), it can also be read as a practical manual that can offer sauna lovers new possibilities for experimentation. Additionally, for myself, the appendix that described Abigail Harkey's visit to Kailo's sauna in a detailed and multisensory way was quite exciting and intriguing reading, shifting the boundaries between the researcher and the research subject even more. In her description, Harkey comes up with a keyword that seems be well suited to sum up Kailo's approach, namely "intuitive knowing", that seems to supersede other, less experiential sources and theories.

From a more technical aspect, it would have been recommended not to include long web links in the book text; from the linguistic viewpoint, having a native speaker review the text would have been useful to correct grammar mistakes and make the book easier to read.

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