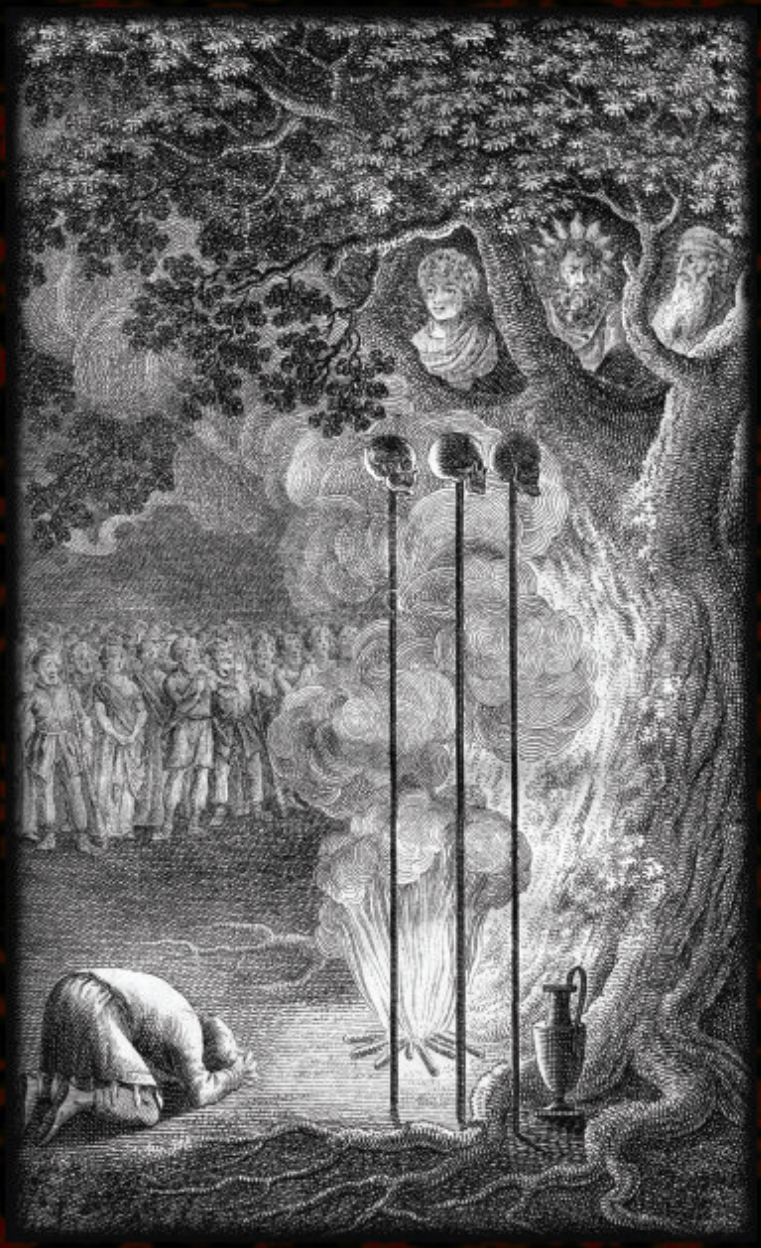

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INSTEAD OF INTRODUCTION: HOW OLD IS SACREDNESS?

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It is customary that references to history are used to legitimise one's ideological and religious statements. This method is particularly visible in contemporary pagan and spiritual movements, in which history has a crucial position not only in justifications of religious claims but also in searching inspiration for contemporary beliefs and for providing a structural framework for (re)constructing past religions. The commonest explanation for using history in arguments and rhetoric in religion is to add credibility to one's claims. Examples can be found in traditional institutional religious organisations, in contemporary spiritual movements, but also in the rhetoric of individual charismatic leaders. Such rhetorical manner is not common to contemporary religions only but can also be followed in historical folk religion (see, e.g., Johanson 2018). For instance, in a record of a heavily worn eighteenth-century copper coin, used for healing magic in the early twentieth century, the old age of the coin is specifically valued (Fig. 1).

According to a legend, copper was filed from a coin to help people and animals to recover from bone fractures. The same can also be observed in magical customs, including, for instance, preference for older prints of the Bible for magical rituals (see, e.g., Kõiva 2017: 144). These examples demonstrate how references to history add somewhat stronger and more serious attributes to an object or a claim.

The role of history is also apparent in the rhetoric – either in that of a religious group or in the wording of academic studies. It is probably often unconscious, but the mapping of the usage of adverbs of time, such as 'yet' or 'still', provides a good example. These words create a suitable context for leaving an

Figure 1. *When a bone was broken, either of a man or an animal, copper was filed from such a coin into water, and it was given to drink to the patient. Copper was supposed to heal the fracture. Old people say that copper powder was often found at the animals' bone fractures that had been treated like that. This means, they believed that copper moved to the* [broken] *bone. A broken leg was secured tightly with four splints and then 'copper drinking' followed. Older copper coins were used. Modern coins were not supposed to be of pure copper. Larger coins were usually used. (ERM 14356) Photograph by courtesy of the Estonian National Museum.*

impression of the old age of some phenomena and due to such a context a more detailed study about the age of some particular details seems unnecessary. A good example comes from the modern discourse of Estonian natural sacred places, often related to pre-Christian traditions. One of the arguments in support of this view is a repeated claim in internet sources, popular writings, but often also in academic articles, that *offerings are still brought to Estonian sacred sites nowadays*. Such phrasing leaves a distinct impression of a continuous tradition of worshipping sacred places and leaving deposits since ancient paganism. Although the sources for studying the usage of sacred sites in Estonia are scarce, it is apparent that the modern tradition to leave deposits was initiated at the end of the 1980s and became widely acknowledged only in the 2000s (in more detail see Jonuks & Äikäs 2019).

Nevertheless, the continuity of sacred sites is a crucial concept and even if no evidence exists, the desire to prove the old age of natural sacred places

is apparent. The Estonian sacred sites in nature, some of which undoubtedly have a long history, attracted attention anew in the late 1980s, together with the national and independence movement. Since then, the main organisation to guide ordinary people to understand the sites has been a contemporary pagan movement called *maausk* (earth-belief) and its official organisation *Maavalla Koda*. The *maausk* organisation has had a very successful branding (as Ringo Ringvee (2017: 64) has stated) in comparison to other contemporary pagan movements in Northern Europe. The organisation was founded in the 1990s as a religious union but since the 2000s the spokespersons have changed the public focus from the pagan religion to general cultural, national, and heritage issues. In numerous articles (over 700 in four years!) published in local newspapers and popular journals they have not advertised *Maavalla Koda* as a religious community but rather as a union to join and represent people who are interested in and concerned about Estonian cultural heritage, and to preserve sacred sites as cultural objects. Sacred sites are presented in this view as places inherited from Estonian history and defining Estonian national identity. These are also demonstrated as sites from pre-Christian paganism, which are not preserved in such a good condition elsewhere in Europe. Linking the sacred places with national identity and Estonian culture has brought the whole subject to the next level, resulting in general appreciation of the sites, where pagan understandings are also shared by people who themselves do not belong to pagan communities or identify themselves as pagans. This has created a fruitful context for the general acknowledging of pagan ideas, so that Estonia in general is described as following the "nature-loving precepts of neo-paganism" (The Economist 2017).

Estonian natural sacred sites are usually determined by the followers of the contemporary pagan community as being old, ancient, or originating from times immemorial. As the main source for natural sacred places is folklore, which in most cases is undatable, such uncertain dates are the best that can be achieved. Likewise, the chronicles and written sources from the Middle Ages and early modern period provide only scarce data. From the Middle Ages there are only a few records that can be associated with a site. Early modern writings provide some good descriptions of locals acting superstitiously, and usually confirm that sacred places are old cultic sites. In fact, when following the descriptions in detail, it appears that what has been described as 'pagan' customs are often just Catholic traditions or folk interpretations of Catholic rituals that were regarded as superstitious deeds by the local Lutheran clerics after the Reformation and reinterpreted as pre-Christian paganism by scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Archaeology as the main discipline concentrating on dates and identifying the age of sites has been useless as, due to the general

lack of finds, occupation layers or constructions, the traditional archaeological methods to precisely date the use of sacred sites cannot be applied.

In most cases such vague dates are sufficient for spiritual purposes and there is no need to further discuss how old sacredness is. However, in certain cases, when academic knowledge and spiritual practices meet or when a site becomes a centre of some conflict, the exact dating of a site becomes essential. In a recent case from 2017, the cutting down of a willow tree in Tallinn caused a conflict and a heated argument between infrastructure developers and environmental protectors. The age of this tree, estimated from a couple of decades to 300 years, became an important argument for both sides, demonstrating clearly how history matters in such conflicts.

In speculations about the age of sacred sites I have found three different approaches in Estonian media – **poetic**, **pagan**, and **folksy (popular)**. The fourth approach – academic – is unfortunately largely missing. All these approaches use different methods, they reach different results, and sometimes they also compete with each other.

In most cases the age of a place has been identified only as 'old' in popular culture, characteristic of what can be labelled as **poetic dating**. While considered insufficient in academic studies, such a dating is fine in spiritual communities and even more – such a vague statement adds an amount of mysticism. Sacred places are mysterious sites and people know very little about them; their origin is hidden; sites are so sacred that people are not allowed to know about them anymore. In such emotional expressions the unidentified age becomes a positive feature, and the lack of clear academic data adds a certain value. In this tradition the age of sacred places has usually been determined to be a *millennium*. For a historian this means 1,000 years, that is ten to eleven centuries, but what is really meant is just *old*. Besides, following the general narrative of Estonia, the sacred sites supposedly originate from the pre-Christian independence period and here the estimation 'millennium' fits neatly.

The **pagan** approach to date sacred sites is somewhat similar, as the mystic component clearly exists. According to the pagan teaching, the sacredness of a site originates from nature and not from the human – a statement that makes the dating of sacred places irrelevant. Accordingly, it could only be dated when people discovered the sacredness of a particular place, but even this is not essential. Thus, the pagan community is in most cases satisfied that sacred places are just old and undatable. In this view, it is often also combined with the poetic approach. A good example of pagan dating is Vällamägi Hill in south-eastern Estonia.

According to the pagan approach, this is the oldest sacred place in Estonia as the retreating margin of the ice sheet moved from the south-east to the north-

Figure 2. *Vällamägi Hill – the oldest sacred place in modern Estonia? Photograph by Andres Kuperjanov 2018.*

west at the end of the last glacial period, leaving behind moraines. This means that the ground of today's Estonia was first uncovered in the south-eastern corner of the country, exposing also the area of the present-day Vällamägi moraine hill, which became the earliest sacred place in Estonia (Kaasik 2016: 21). In this view the possible human utilisation of the sacred place is really not relevant.

On the other hand, as demonstrated above, the spokespersons of the pagan community also wish to contribute to heritage studies, which has directed them more to the academic style. Also the general public, especially the readership of local newspapers, associates pagan authors in Estonia with popular or academic historians, and this also seems to be the intention of the authors themselves. In various articles the usage of academic phrasing leaves an impression as if the author understands the limits of academic approaches and the basic source criticism. Moreover, the source-critical approach also adds a significant portion of academic style and credibility. Some single examples of the contemporary pagan community supporting a precise date are very clearly based on historical data. For instance, a sacred tree at Palivere, western Estonia, is dated to the sixteenth century as the site is mentioned in a local church chronicle and, additionally, a sixteenth-century coin has been found on the site (Relve 2003: 116).

Such precise dates are, however, more important for a broader audience, and are related to the **folksy** approach. An ordinary reader, who often shares the worldview and values rooted in the pagan community, still yearns for a historical approach which is common in popular science. Academic phrasing and accurate dates seem more serious in this approach, add a significant amount of credibility and scientific character, and leave an impression as if the author knows what

they are writing/talking about. Differently from the previous ones, the main criterion in the folksy approach is to date human activity at sacred sites rather than the sacrality inherited from the nature. And unlike the poetic approach, which is satisfied with and rather values vagueness, the folksy method seeks for seemingly academic methodology, also suggesting archaeological excavations at sacred places. In the folksy tradition sacred places belong to a pre-Christian period and are characteristic of Estonians by default. It is interesting, however, that although the precise dating is available, the method used is not important and this has resulted in rather brave attempts to date sacred sites.

In the vicinity of Tallinn there is a sacred grove called Pärnamäe, the age of which has been determined to be 6,500 years (Taarausulised 2001). However, despite my attempts, it has been impossible to find out how such a result was achieved. In popular publications and speeches this date has been offered as granted, without explaining from where it originates. For a broader audience this is clearly sufficient enough and further discussions about the methodology are not needed. Following the Estonian national narrative, the arrival of the Estonian nation to the territory of today's Estonia has traditionally been related to comb-ceramic culture, which appeared just about the same period – 3900 BC according to the most recent datings. Possibly the age of the Pärnamäe sacred grove is elicited from this context and it is assumed that the Stone Age Estonians started to use sacred sites (as is also reflected in Estonian oral tradition), and this indicates the age of the Pärnamäe sacred grove.

The examples above demonstrate expressively how history matters in spiritual and pagan contexts. Although history is usually not placed in the primary position, it forms a necessary background, provides contexts for various claims, and is a source of inspiration. It also means that history matters only selectively, in the cases where carefully chosen facts and pieces are combined for the sake of contemporary needs. The core of this issue of *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore* originates from the end of 2017, from a session titled "History matters" at an annual conference of the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies (TK-145).[1] The session analysed strategies for using history in contemporary religious ideologies and rhetoric, asking the following questions: What is the role of academic history, archaeology, and folklore in contemporary spiritual movements? What sort of arguments are used and what arguments are ignored in spiritual ideologies? How are historical facts changed or modified for the sake of contemporary needs? How is the concept of continuity understood in these movements? It is also interesting to realise that the process of using history for religious argumentations is not one-way – the popular and widely acknowledged pagan communities can also influence academic research, either consciously or unconsciously (see, e.g., Jonuks 2018).

The session brought together fourteen scholars from various countries to discuss the usage of history in religions. Geographically discussions focused on Central and Eastern Europe and Russia and formed a well-communicating group of presentations. The discussed topics varied, ranging from the general frameworks of modern religious and spiritual movements to specific discussions of some phenomena. Several years later part of the presentations from the session "History matters" have found their way to this journal. Unfortunately, not all the presentations in the session resulted in an article in this issue for various reasons – some of the articles had already been published elsewhere, others remained as preliminary presentations. In addition to Ceri Houlbrook, Kurmo Konsa, Atko Remmel and Tõnno Jonuks, and Siarhei Anoshka from the session, this issue also includes Eda Kalmre's article about apparent death and Alise Donnere's study on interpreting Bodhisattva *Jizō* in Japanese temples, both following the same approach as the conference session. All the authors have kept the role of the concept of history in different religious or spiritual contexts under careful observation, demonstrating, either consciously or unconsciously, its central position in the formation of claims and arguments.

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[1] See https://www.folklore.ee/CEES/2017/akonve_e.htm, last accessed on 17 February 2021.

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TECHNOLOGY CREATING A NEW HUMAN: THE ALCHEMICAL ROOTS OF TRANSHUMANIST IDEAS

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to present a critical discussion of the influence of technology on humans and culture in contemporary Western society. Transhumanism is a philosophical and social movement that believes that the essential features of human life could be transformed and enhanced by applications of science and technology. In this article, I will compare transhumanist ideas about perfecting humans to the views of Roger Bacon, one of the representatives of European mediaeval alchemy. Such a treatment provides a historical background for transhumanist ideas and helps answer the moral and philosophical problems that humans are faced with due to modern technological development. Despite the fact that several transhumanist theoreticians treat it as a secular alternative to religious ideas, we can see that Christian eschatology plays a major role. Both in alchemy and transhumanism, scientific and theological aspects have been inseparably intertwined. Transhumanism can be seen as a continuation of the alchemical project in the twenty-first century. Modern science has added new tools to realise the goal of alchemical perfection. Transhumanism characterises very well the fact that the practices and theories of alchemy changed over time and adapted to changed contexts.

Keywords: alchemy, Christian eschatology, immortality, Roger Bacon, technological singularity, transhumanism

INTRODUCTION: HUMANS AND TECHNOLOGY

Human society is largely based on tools and technologies that are constantly being developed (Ferkiss 1969: 49). Throughout history, new technologies have continuously been developed and applied, and prevailing technologies supplanted by new ones. Technology on its own does not change society, of course; however, technology is intertwined with the social and societal systems. When existing technologies are replaced by new ones, a ripple of change affects the

entire complex system, encompassing production, marketing, advertising, and consumption. There is no doubt that we are living in the age of technology, and although in one way or another technology has always been an inseparable part of human culture, it has never defined human nature to such an extent. Technology plays a crucial role in the relationship between mankind and nature, as it is technology that connects humans with nature, acting as a type of intermediary (Smith 1996). Technology simultaneously shapes and describes the relationship that humans have with the surrounding environment. We might say that technology is a tool to naturalise culture and to culturise nature.

The question of the relationship between technology and mankind was by no means invented in the twentieth century; it has a long history and most of the problems that we encounter have been discussed before. The majority of arguments that are used in debates over whether and to what extent we can intervene in nature originate from as early as antiquity and the Middle Ages. In early European literature there are numerous stories of how humans tried to imitate the gods. However, even if they succeeded, the stories usually end with revenge by the gods and the destruction of what humans created.

The human body and mind are, to an increasing extent, occupied by technology, the end result of which in the near future might be the emergence of a new human race that lives in a perfect symbiosis with machines. This perspective is proposed by the transhumanist movement. In many respects, these projects resemble science fiction, from where they often derive their ideas. These projects are a sign of a changing societal and political climate. Perhaps this is an indication that we are willing to let go of the notions of human nature and humanity that we have held up to now. Since the nature of humans will change radically, likewise the understanding of what it means to be a human being will change.

One of the most important fields that dealt with the relationship between the natural and the artificial in the Middle Ages and in the early modern period was undoubtedly alchemy. Alchemy is first and foremost known as a practice that studied the transmutation of metals. In a broader sense, the questions that interested alchemists were related to the study of ethical and ontological borders between the natural sciences and technology. The quintessential questions underpinning alchemy were concerned with what was natural, what was artificial, and how humans could perfect nature with the help of technology. Assuredly, these are problems that also have crucial importance today. In the alchemical literature, clear parallels can be found to contemporary debates about whether genetic engineering should be allowed and whether it is reasonable. The technologies may be new, but they nevertheless carry on the old tradition. In the beginning, alchemists' attempts to imitate nature focused mainly on creating precious metals (gold and silver) and precious gemstones; later, however, their aims became more diverse and included the artificial creation of human life.

Transhumanism is deeply rooted in Western Christian culture, including alchemy. The Christian origin of transhumanism has been noted by several researchers (Cady 2011; Noble 1997). The reflections of other religions, such as Buddhism (Maher 2014), Judaism (Samuelson & Tirosh-Samuelson 2011), Islam (Mahootian 2011; Mavani 2014), Orthodoxy (Clay 2011), and Gnosticism (Krueger 2005; Pugh 2017) in transhumanism have also been studied. There has been almost no discussion of alchemy in this respect.

The aim of this article is to present a critical discussion of the influence of technology on humans and culture in contemporary Western society. Since transhumanism has become the school of thought that discusses the biological future of humans in most detail, I will focus on this. In this article, I will compare transhumanist ideas about perfecting humans and the end of the world to the views of Roger Bacon, one of the representatives of European mediaeval alchemy. Such a treatment provides a historical background to transhumanist ideas and helps deal with the moral and philosophical problems that humans are faced with due to the development of modern technology. It also helps assess the affect that transhumanist thought has on contemporary culture.

First, I will give an overview of how the transhumanist movement emerged, and of the ideas that constitute its background; I will then provide a brief introduction to alchemy and discuss the works of Roger Bacon, one of the representatives of European medieval alchemy, in closer detail. In the discussion section, I will focus on the parallels between mediaeval alchemy and contemporary transhumanism, and analyse their connections within the wider cultural context.

TRANSHUMANISM

Transhumanism (abbreviated as H+ or h+)[1] has become one of the most significant contemporary schools of thought that analyses the effect of technology on humans and human society. Transhumanism has been defined in varying terms in the research literature, with all the definitions underpinned by the idea of the mental and physical abilities of mankind being changed and perfected using different technological methods.[2] Supporters of the transhumanist view believe that we should use genetic engineering, nanotechnology, information technology, etc., to augment human evolution as a biological species to a significant extent, thereby lifting mankind to a new developmental stage. Transhumanism considers it inevitable that existing humans need to be redefined and surpassed, and that we need to move towards a new species. New technologies will change the world to such an extent that our descendants will no longer be humans, but posthumans. James Hughes, one of the leading transhumanists, has expressed this idea as follows:

> *Life spans will extend well beyond a century. Our senses and cognition will be enhanced. We will gain control over our emotions and memory. We will merge with machines, and machines will become more like humans. These technologies will allow us to evolve into varieties of 'post humans' and usher us into a 'transhuman' era and society*. (Hughes 2004: xii)

Although it is very hard to determine how exactly posthumans will differ from contemporary humans, this difference is nevertheless one of the key ideas of transhumanism. Information technology, the merging of humans and different technological devices, genetic modifications, and enhancement of mental abilities are the main methods proposed for human modification. Posthumans will have new and perfected physical and cognitive abilities, and will suffer neither illness nor death. Nick Bostrom, one of the leading philosophical interpreters of transhumanism, defines it as "a way of thinking about the future that is based on the premise that the human species in its current form does not represent the end of our development but rather a comparatively early phase" (Bostrom 2003).

The key ideas of transhumanism were first introduced in an essay by a renowned British geneticist John Burdon Sanderson Haldane (1892–1964), entitled "Daedalus: Science and the Future" (1924), in which he predicted that the application of sciences to change the biology of humans would reap great benefits in the future. He was also very interested in the application of eugenics, ectogenesis[3] and genetics to improve people's health and enhance their intelligence. Such ideas suffered an understandable setback after World War II, because of Nazis' abuse of the ideas of eugenics. The term 'transhumanism' was first adopted by biologist Julian Huxley (1887–1975), who used it in the title of his article published in 1957. He also called transhumanism "evolutionary humanism" and described its ideas in the following manner:

> *Up till now human life has generally been, as Hobbes described it, 'nasty, brutish and short'; the great majority of human beings (if they have not already died young) have been afflicted with misery… we can justifiably hold the belief that these lands of possibility exist, and that the present limitations and miserable frustrations of our existence could be in large measure surmounted… The human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself – not just sporadically, an individual here in one way, an individual there in another way, but in its entirety, as humanity*. (Huxley 1957: 14)

Similar ideas were also presented by psychologist Abraham Maslow, the leader of the Human Potential Movement, who coined the term 'metahuman'. A metahuman is a person who surpasses the level of a normal human being in the course of self-actualising and becomes godlike (Maslow 1971: 274).

The formal transhumanist movement started at the beginning of the 1980s at the University of California in Los Angeles, which also became the leading centre of transhumanism. In 1988, the first issue of the journal *Extropy: The Journal of Transhumanist Thought*, was published by the philosopher Max More and Tom Bell (aka T.O. Morrow); and in 1991, the Extropy Institute was founded. The founding of this institute is considered to be the institutional establishment of transhumanist ideas.[4] The institute organised numerous international conferences, and, more importantly, its mailing list became a venue for discussion of transhumanist ideas. In 1998, philosophers Nick Bostrom and David Pearce founded an international non-profit association called the World Transhumanist Association (WTA), the aim of which is to spread transhumanist thought so that it will become an integral part of scientific research and public politics. In 1998, the "Transhumanist Declaration", prepared by the transhumanist activists was published. The declaration expressed the main transhumanist positions in relation to the technological perfection of humans:

> *1. Humanity stands to be profoundly affected by science and technology in the future. We envision the possibility of broadening human potential by overcoming aging, cognitive shortcomings, involuntary suffering, and our confinement to planet Earth.*
> *2. We believe that humanity's potential is still mostly unrealized. There are possible scenarios that lead to wonderful and exceedingly worthwhile enhanced human conditions.*
> *7. We advocate the well-being of all sentience, including humans, non-human animals, and any future artificial intellects, modified life forms, or other intelligences to which technological and scientific advance may give rise.*
> *8. We favour allowing individuals wide personal choice over how they enable their lives. This includes use of techniques that may be developed to assist memory, concentration, and mental energy; life extension therapies; reproductive choice technologies; cryonics procedures; and many other possible human modification and enhancement technologies.*

In 2006, the Extropy Institute closed and in 2008 the World Transhumanist Association was renamed Humanity+. Numerous organisations deal with transhumanism today, such as the Foresight Institute, the Immortality Institute, the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies, and the Singularity Institute for Artificial Intelligence, to give a few examples. The academic discipline of Future Studies has also emerged. Despite the diverse nature of the transhumanist movement, it is characterised by shared themes such as the constant development of mankind, the perfection of humans by technological devices and methods, the constant increase in human well-being and happiness, and

questions about longevity and practical immortality. All these topics are understandably very important, not only from a scientific perspective, but also from the viewpoint of people's everyday lives and futures. Transhumanism represents a trend that is gaining more and more importance in the development and the lore of contemporary Western societies. It is a cultural reaction to the accelerated technological progress and the triumph of science.

ALCHEMY

It is not easy to provide an exact definition of alchemy, since it is a phenomenon that has existed for a very long time and in very different cultural contexts.[5] Without going into diverse contemporary definitions, I will present a definition of alchemy from the book titled *The Mirror of Alchimy* (*Speculum Alchemiae*), the author of which was erroneously thought to have been Roger Bacon. It is most likely that the book was written by an anonymous author somewhere between the thirteenth and the fifteenth century. However, since Roger Bacon has an important role to play in my current discussion, I chose the definition of alchemy from this treatise:

> *In many ancient Books there are found many definitions of this Art, the intentions whereof we must consider in this Chapter. For Hermes said of this Science: Alchemy is a Corporal Science simply composed of one and by one, naturally conjoining things more precious, by knowledge and effect, and converting them by a natural commixtion into a better kind. A certain other said: Alchemy is a Science, teaching how to transform any kind of metal into another: and that by a proper medicine, as it appeared by many Philosophers' Books. Alchemy therefore is a science teaching how to make and compound a certain medicine, which is called Elixir, the which when it is cast upon metals or imperfect bodies, does fully perfect them in the very projection*. (Bacon 1597: Ch I)

As is evident in this quote, the author of the treatise describes alchemy as a science that deals with making less precious items more precious. The most obvious example of such transmutation is transforming metals into precious metals, although in fact this applies to all natural objects. This is science, but it is also clearly a form of art, meaning that it does not only concern itself with the process of transmutation but also applies it in practice. Owing to the practical aspect, alchemy has been related to metallurgy, goldsmithery, jewellery art, and glass art.

When discussing the theory and practice of alchemy in very broad terms as the study and influence of the processes of change that take place in nature,

we can distinguish three cultural–geographical centres where alchemy evolved. Western alchemy started in the Greek-Egyptian culture (approximately 3rd century AD) and spread to North Africa, the Middle East, the Byzantine Empire, and Europe. In Western alchemy, prolonging life and achieving immortality were topics left practically untreated both in antiquity and the Middle Ages. Somewhat unexpectedly, these themes appeared in the West in the late Middle Ages, in the thirteenth century, in the writings of Roger Bacon and John of Rupescissa, both members of the Franciscan order.

ROGER BACON'S TREATMENT OF IMMORTALITY

Not much is known about the life of Roger Bacon.[6] He was born around 1214/1220 to a relatively wealthy family in England. After having completed his studies at Oxford, he worked there as a lecturer. He went on to complete a master's degree at the University of Paris and also taught there. He had a wide range of interests, from mathematics and philosophy to optics, alchemy, and magic. Bacon himself divided his life into two parts: first, his secular career as a scholar; and later, his life as a Franciscan friar, devoted to "the search of true wisdom" (Antolic-Piper n.d.). He probably joined the Franciscan order in 1256. In 1263 or 1264, he met Cardinal Guy Folques and discussed his scientific views with the cardinal. The cardinal became Pope Clement IV the following year and immediately gave Bacon the directive to write works explaining his ideas in more depth. In 1268, Roger Bacon completed his *Opus Tertium* (Third Work). Indeed, this was a part of a larger body of texts that he wrote at the demand of Pope Clement IV. *Opus Tertium* was an overview of the work *Opus Minus* (Lesser Work), which was in turn a summary of *Opus Majus* (Major Work).[7] The works dealt with philosophy, theology, and also alchemical topics.

Bacon divided alchemy into speculative and operative alchemy. Operative alchemy involved carrying out experiments; theoretical explanation was not the main focus. Operative alchemy was practiced by experienced alchemists who nevertheless failed to understand the main aim of alchemy. According to Bacon, speculative alchemy was practiced by only a few alchemists who knew how to use alchemy both with lifeless bodies and living substances. Indeed, the human body was the main subject of speculative alchemy (Bacon 1912: 88; Newman 1997). Bacon also considered astrology to be very important, and believed that the heavenly bodies affected earthly bodies as well as the physiology of the human body. The effect of heavenly movements on humans changed constantly and combined with the humoral structure of the human body, which Bacon called the complexion of the body. The effect that stars and humours have on human behaviour is important. Therefore, the balance of humours in the

body is to an extent determined by the position of the stars at the time of birth. Bacon did not deny that people had free will, since it would have contradicted Christian doctrine, but he claimed that these influences made people inclined to certain deeds. Bacon hoped to weaken negative influences and strengthen positive influences with the help of astrology and alchemy.

Bacon held the view that it was possible to prolong a person's life and improve their health if the right tools were used. He based his arguments mainly on the Bible (Gen:5), where it is written that people lived longer before the great flood, even up to a thousand years. Bacon thought this to be the natural lifespan of a human being, and that in his contemporary world, people lived much shorter lives due to their sins and corrupt way of life. He wrote:

> *The Possibility of Prolongation of Life is confirmed by this, that Man is naturally immortal, that is, able not to dye: And even after he had sinned, he could live near a Thousand Years, afterwards by little and little the Length of his Life was abbreviated. Therefore it must needs be, that this Abbreviation is Accidental; therefore it might be either wholly repaired, or at least in part. But if we would but make Enquiry into the Accidental Cause of this Corruption, we should find, it neither was from Heaven, nor from ought but want of a Regiment of Health. For in as much as the Fathers are corrupt, they beget Children of a corrupt Complexion and Composition, and their Children from the same Cause are corrupt themselves: And so Corruption is derived from Father to Son, till Abbreviation of Life prevails by Succession. Yet for all this it does not follow, that it shall always be cut shorter and shorter…* (Bacon 1683: 63–64)

Since Bacon believed the shortening of people's lifespans to be an accidental process conditioned by external factors, not a characteristic feature of humans, then lifespan could also be prolonged. In order to do this, he intended to use primarily alchemical methods. Bacon was the first person in the Western alchemical tradition to write about prolonging lives. He recommended an alchemical elixir as the main tool to prolong one's life.[8] A balance of elements is the theoretical foundation of the alchemic elixir:

> *If the elements should be prepared and purified in some mixture, so that there would be no action of one element on another, but so that they would be reduced to pure simplicity, the wisest have judged that they would make a perfect medicine*. (Matus 2017: 46)

There is no such medicine found in nature; it can only be prepared through alchemy.

According to alchemical theory, all bodies are composed of four elements: fire, water, earth, and air. All natural bodies emerge from these elements. The elements themselves can never be found in perfectly pure form, they always contain some of each other to a smaller or a larger extent. The differences between all things can be attributed to the occurrence of the elements in distinct proportions (Principe 2013: 37–38). When combined in the human body, the four elements form bodily fluids, or humours. This theory of humours was systematised by the physician Galen of Pergamon (AD 129–ca. 200 (Gruman 2003 [1966]: 21–22). In simple bodily fluids, there is one dominant element with its corresponding qualities. The bodily fluids are: yellow bile, dominated by fire; black bile, dominated by earth; blood, dominated by air; and phlegm, dominated by water. According to Bacon, the humours found in the body were the result of a combination of these primary bodily fluids. For instance, the phlegm found in the human body was a secondary bodily fluid composed of all four humours, although the dominant humour was primary phlegm. Bacon found that primary humours could also be found in bodies other than animals (Newman 1997).

According to the humoral theory, there is a balance of humours in a healthy human being known as eucrasia. A medicine in which the elements are balanced can recreate the balance of the bodily humours by cleansing the body of excessive fluids and replacing what is lacking. Bacon presented the first man, Adam, as the most convincing argument to support his theory. Adam's body, like all earthly bodies, was made up of elements and bodily fluids; decomposition and ageing were the result of these bodily fluids affecting each other. As with everyone who has existed since, Adam had to balance the humours through food. In normal food, the elements are not balanced and therefore one cannot balance one's bodily fluids to perfection. Adam, however, ate the fruits of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden; his body retained its immortality because in this fruit, the elements were in perfect balance. Adam's body was, of course, more perfect than the bodies of the people who have come since. Yet every human body is immortal in nature, capable of existing endlessly, if only the composition of the body remains in perfect balance. Here, Bacon once again relies on the Bible and its description of the dead, who, resurrected as creatures with perfect and imputrescible bodies, are immortal. Bacon claims that this is due to a perfect balance of elements.

To prepare the elixir, explains Bacon, one must use human blood that is divided into four basic humours:

> *The alchemist seeks to separate these humors from one another and to purge each from the other. When they have been led back to their pure*

> *simplicities by means of difficult works, then they should be mixed in a secret and most sure proportion. Quicksilver is added to them after it has been mortified and sublimed multiply. Likewise the calx or powder of the baser metal from which the nobler will be made. Likewise* [calx of] *the nobler. Then they should be incorporated together until they make one body. This is then projected onto the liquefied baser metal, and it thus becomes nobler*. (Newman 1997: 331)

Heavenly influences had an important part to play when preparing the elixir. The elixir had to be taken outside at precise intervals, determined with the help of astrology, to be influenced by certain heavenly bodies; only then could the preparation process be completed. The effect of the elixir was by no means limited to the body, but also affected the mind and morals of a person. Bacon assures us that, "if this greatest thing can be done [the production of the elixir], it is evident that all other things are possible, namely that man might reach great foresight and perfect wisdom that he may know how to rule himself and others, with the help of the grace of God" (Matus 2017: 49).

It is possible to change a person completely with the help of the elixir, this being the true goal of alchemy.

Not only does the elixir guarantee a person knowledge of all sciences and secrets, but it also helps one to understand God and the truths of Christianity. Therefore, the result of the elixir is not only a perfect body but also a perfect Christian soul. Bacon believed that this human perfection opens up huge possibilities. Once an alchemist has become perfect himself, he can invent and construct devices to collect, copy, and transmit the same heavenly rays that were used to prepare the elixir. Bacon thought that huge mirrors had to be constructed so that those divine emanations could be transmitted to faraway lands. With the help of such emanations, it would be possible to change the complexion of these distant lands and the people living there, so that they would become Christian, or at least receptive to Christianity.

But why would all this be needed? Bacon's grandiose project acquires more meaning within its historical context, particularly with regard to doomsday. In Bacon's time, the end of the world was not a distant future: it was an upcoming reality that had to be taken into consideration on a daily basis. Bacon's letter to the Pope reads: "All wise men believe that we are not far removed from the times of Antichrist" (Bacon 1928: 417). Bacon was convinced that the sciences he was developing had a very important part to play in the doomsday battle with the antichrist. He believed that the antichrist also used science and the secrets of nature in his fight against Christians. He used alchemy, astrology, bewitching (the changing of a person's nature), and magic words. This was not simply a religious and a spiritual battle; all possible occult weapons were employed.

With Bacon's elixir, it would have been possible to increase Christendom to a significant extent. Slow missionary work would have been replaced by changing the complexion of nations and regions, thereby making them receptive to the Word of God. Such a large-scale Christianising would have brought all nations under the rule of the Church and helped create an army to fight the antichrist. Bacon hoped that the Pope would implement the scientific and education programme that he had presented. However, in 1268, Pope Clement IV died and Bacon's programme elicited little interest from the church. It might have even been that his views were condemned, and he was accused of spreading "certain suspicious novelties". It is not known whether he was officially charged, but in 1278 he left Oxford for Paris. Bacon's attempt to create a Christian alchemy that would help the Church in the doomsday battle had failed.

DISCUSSION

The relationship between transhumanism and religion is complex. The central ideas of transhumanism are related to overcoming the biological limits of the human being, prolonging lifespans, and finally achieving immortality and bliss. Parallels to different religions are obvious. Generally, transhumanists themselves do not admit this connection, or at least do not consider it important (Noble 1997; Campbell & Walker 2005; Maher & Mercer 2009; Hopkins 2005; Bainbridge 2005). Even if religion is seen as the initial source of transhumanist ideas, a very clear border is drawn between them:

> *Transhumanists seek to make their dreams come true in this world, by relying not on supernatural powers or divine intervention but on rational thinking and empiricism, through continued scientific, technological, economic, and human development*. (Bostrom 2003)

Some Christian theologians are very critical of transhumanism (Waters 2006). On the other hand, others try to interpret some transhumanist ideas in light of Christian theology (Hefner 2003; Peters 1996, 1997, 2003).

Transhumanist thinkers find their origins in eighteenth-century Europe, the Age of Enlightenment. As Bostrom claims that rational humanism emphasises "empirical science and critical reason – rather than revelation and religious authority – as ways of learning about the natural world and our place within it and of providing a grounding for morality. Transhumanism has roots in rational humanism" (Bostrom 2005: 3).

This is undoubtedly true, but at the same time what is not considered is the fact that the ideas of the Enlightenment were based on the earlier hermetic

and religious schools of thought (Merchant 1980; Shapin & Schaffer 1985; Dobbs 1975), one of which was alchemy. The most general goal of both alchemy and transhumanism is to change the world, although the aims and methods of achieving this goal might differ. Both traditions offer a theoretical framework and practical solutions. The central problem in both transhumanism and alchemy is the relationship between humans and nature, and the human capability to make nature artificial.

Transhumanism tries to overcome the opposition between nature and human culture: "if we reason in evolutionary rather than static terms, transhumanism cannot be considered as 'unnatural'. We are rather trying to establish a new harmony between culture and nature" (Campa 2008). To minimise this difference, transhumanism draws on technology, just as the alchemists did. Bacon found that the power of science surpassed even the forces of nature: "Now, although nature is powerful and marvellous, yet art using nature as an instrument is more powerful than natural strength, as we see in many things" (Bacon 1618: 21). In this sense, the prolongation of human life had a special significance: "But the ultimate degree to which art complements all the power of nature is the prolongation of human life over a long time. Many experiments show that this is possible" (Bacon 1618: 47). Bacon, like most alchemists, did not claim that humans would be capable of creating completely new creatures and species that did not already exist in nature. Alchemists tried to achieve the same results as nature by accelerating natural processes, thereby making nature more complete. Additionally, the methods used by alchemists were based on natural processes (Newman 2004: 292). Transhumanism pushes the limits of human capacity much further.

In our terms, Bacon's project was largely theoretical; it is most probable that he never tried to prepare the alchemic elixir. Similarly, the majority of transhumanist ideas, other than leading a healthy lifestyle and consuming food supplements, are still theoretical. In both cases, what is important is to prove the theoretical possibility, and not the immediate, practical implementation. If the elixir was an important part of the divine plan, as Bacon claimed, then its practical implementation would have been inevitable. The general aim of Roger Bacon's project was to assist in carrying out the divine plan of redemption. The broad transhumanist vision is also related to apocalyptic predictions: that is, predictions of technological singularity, soon to arrive.

The idea of technological singularity is based on the accelerating change argument, which extrapolates future technological and economic development. In brief, the idea is the following: history has shown us that technological development has been accelerating constantly and it is very likely that it will also accelerate over the next couple of decades. If this is the case, the changes

that technological development will bring about in society, the economy, the biological nature of humans and their way of thinking are so deep that there will be a rupture in historical development, which has so far been constant. This rupture has been called a singularity, a name that refers to cosmology.

It is clear that Bacon did not manage to create an elixir that would have changed people into perfect immortal Christians. In his works, he presented the theoretical justification for preparing such an elixir and the instruction for its preparation. Why did he not prepare the elixir then and remove all doubt? Because it was the theoretical possibility of the elixir that mattered to Bacon. Its practical preparation in the current world held no importance. The elixir was intended to work in a world that had not yet come into being. The elixir was an imagination of the world as it should be, as well as a tool to achieve such a world. This was a tool for the end of the world, and since it was a Christian tool, it was inevitable that it would work once the apocalypse arrived. It was an inevitable realisation of a possible work, since this was how God had arranged it.

According to Bacon and also other alchemists, humans and their activities were part of God's plan. The largest difference between Bacon's views and transhumanism is the fact that Bacon based his theories on the Christian worldview and cosmology. Transhumanism, however, is a clearly scientific project. Nevertheless, it is also largely based on Christian eschatology, although it treats the perfection of humans mainly from the scientific and the technological points of view. One expression of this is the fact that the development of transhumanist ideas has increasingly led to an association with religion. The Mormon Transhumanist Association, which was established in 2006, is a good example of successful integration of transhumanist ideas in a mainstream religion (Cannon 2017). A Christian Transhumanist Association discussion group was launched online in November 2013 and the organisation was formally established in 2014 (CTA n.d.). In addition to transhumanist tendencies in existing religions, independent transhumanist religious movements have emerged, such as the Turing Church or the digitalism movement. The problems associated with Christian eschatology are inherited to transhumanism. Is human nature related to body or soul? Is the resurrection physical or spiritual?

Like transhumanism, mediaeval alchemy was also a borderline phenomenon. There were constant doubts about whether it was getting too close to the limits that God had set on humans, whether the alchemist with his practices was not trying to play God. The same claims are now being made about transhumanist ideas (Coady 2009). One of the most significant critics of transhumanist ideas is Francis Fukuyama, who was a member of the US President's Council on Bioethics between 2002 and 2005. Fukuyama favours strict national regulation of new biotechnologies and finds that new technologies pose a threat to

human nature. He defines human nature as "the sum of the behaviour and characteristics that are typical of the human species, arising from genetics rather than environmental factors" (Fukuyama 2002: 130). He also emphasises the importance of language, consciousness, and emotions in defining a human being. According to him, such "constant human nature" is the foundation to liberal democracy. Therefore, new biotechnologies that might change human nature also pose a threat to the Western political and economic system.

Alchemy has always been associated on the one hand with the techno-chemical practice of the time (chemical technology since the seventeenth century) and on the other hand with philosophical and religious views of nature. Before the eighteenth century, alchemy and chemistry were basically indistinguishable; considering alchemy to be radically different from science is a later position. Bacon's alchemical project was based on the scientific foundations of the time, just as transhumanism relies on modern science.

Transhumanism can be seen as a continuation of an alchemical project in the twenty-first century. Modern science has added new tools to realise the goal of alchemical perfection. Transhumanism characterises very well the fact that the practices and theories of alchemy changed over time and adapted to changed contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

Treatment of transhumanism is very important as it places us in the middle of cultural and social problems that have been caused by the rapid development of science and technology over the past century. The transhumanist treatment of the future development of humans as a biological species has been significantly affected by previous schools of thought. Despite the fact that several transhumanist theoreticians treat it as a secular alternative to religious ideas, we can see that Christian eschatology plays a major role. Both in alchemy and transhumanism, scientific and theological aspects have been inseparably intertwined. Transhumanism has obvious connections to alchemical ideas. However, when it comes to such comparisons, it is important to keep in mind that, although there is a general continuity of Western ideas, the huge differences in historical context must be taken into consideration. After all, transhumanism interprets ideas originating from previous times based on the contemporary cultural context and the needs of our contemporary society.

The rebirth of mankind is important both to Bacon and transhumanists, but its essence is rather different. For Bacon, the transformation of mankind is first and foremost a moral process that does involve alchemical technology although is still meant to evoke spiritual change in humans. Bacon's programme provides

a clear answer here: perfection can only mean changing humans and the world as a whole, encompassing the body, thought, soul, and culture. Whether technology is capable of this, no matter how developed it is, is highly questionable. The transhumanist understanding of human nature is overly simplistic: moral and cultural aspects are of relatively secondary concern (Ranisch 2014). The transhumanist vision of the end of the world and mankind as we know it, the technological singularity, is thoroughly materialistic and secular. According to Roger Bacon's alchemical treatment, a human being was something beyond body and mind. The end of the world was not only about perfection and resurrection of humans; these were necessary prerequisites for moral and spiritual rebirth, which should be treated not from the human but from the divine perspective. Bacon recognises the potential of mankind, its opportunity for development and importance in the development of the entire universe. Mankind has an important role to play once doomsday arrives. Both Bacon and transhumanist thinkers find that the world has a goal. For Bacon, the goal lies in God; for transhumanists, in the mind and desires of humans themselves.

NOTES

[1] H+, that is, enhanced humanity.

[2] This article will not discuss the ideas of cultural posthumanists, which are more related to philosophy, cultural studies, criticism of modernism, feminism, postcolonialism and other approaches (see Tirosh-Samuelson & Mossman 2011: 35).

[3] Ectogenesis is creating and sustaining life in an artificial environment.

[4] The term extropy was coined by Max More as a substitute for the more technical term negentropy, to denote negative entropy.

[5] On defining alchemy, see Principe & Newman 2001.

[6] To provide an overview of Roger Bacon's life, I have used Power 2012.

[7] For Bacon's works, see Bacon 1859 and Bacon 1897.

[8] On Bacon's elixir, see Matus 2017.

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FROM NATURE ROMANTICISM TO ECO-NATIONALISM: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF ESTONIANS AS A FOREST NATION

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Abstract: Forest plays an important role in many North European national identities. The Estonian example is one of the extreme cases as Estonians consider themselves a forest nation, the claim being backed up with references to both history and contemporary data. The article explores diachronically the formation of this motif in the Estonian national narrative and studies the nuances of intellectual and social history that have shaped the development of the concept from ethnic nature to eco-nationalism.

Keywords: eco-nationalism, Estonia, ethnic nature, forest nation, national identity, national narrative

Estonians and their relatives the Livonians did not live scattered in the woods like their neighbours the Latvians. Instead, they had villages and towns, to which the power of the enemy could do no harm for a long time. (Jakobson 1991 [1868]: 17)

As the most prevalent landscape in Estonia has most likely been the forest, the title 'forest nation' suits quite nicely. … Since there are fewer forest peoples in the world than indigenous peoples (some nations are instead

> *connected with the ocean, the mountains or the deserts), then a crucial mission falls to Estonian culture: to preserve the invaluable relationship with the forest and the land.* (Mikita 2015: 19)

National narratives provide recognisable and consolidative stories, which form a basis for the creation and preservation of national identities. Coakley (2004) identifies three types of national narrative: a) related to origin, b) related to development (through the Golden Age, Dark Age and Age of Struggles), and c) related to destiny. In such narratives, the past tends to have a central and legitimising role. During the creation of a myth, suitable details are selected from history and combined into a fitting narrative, depending on the needs of contemporary societies (Annus 2000). Therefore, national narratives are flexible and prone to adaptation. As a result, national narratives include values and assessments from the time the story was created and are therefore more revealing about the periods and contexts of their creation than the periods they claim to describe.

Most of the national narratives are referred to as singular entities, and sometimes a distinction is made between "meta-narratives" and "micro-narratives" (stories about stories) (Auerbach 2009). Yet, especially from the perspective of intellectual history, national myths are bundles of different sub-motifs, which are loosely attached to a backbone, the main incorporating narrative or idea. These sub-motifs have their own origins, high and low points in popularity. They support the main narrative – the unifying paradigm (Morden 2016) – and, simultaneously, are supported by the main narrative itself.

In the Estonian case, the main narrative is about the survival of Estonian culture (Tamm 2008), while sub-motifs surrounding it describe different archetypal 'Estonians': the silent and reticent but devoted farmer *Esthonus laborans*; the educated and rational *Esthonus sapiens*; the music-loving *Esthonus canens* (reappearing before and after the National Singing and Dancing Festival every four years); the submissive *Esthonus servus*, and his brother, the peace-loving *Esthonus pacificans*, both of whom suffer under mighty landlords; and their distant relative, *Esthonus bellator*, who ruled the Baltic Sea in ancient times. Among these, there is also a nature-loving *Esthonus silvanus*, the forest Estonian, protagonist of this article.

The quotes provided at the beginning of this article illustrate the evolution of *Esthonus silvanus* over 150 years: from the romantic longing for the golden past to contemporary eco-nationalism. The rise of eco-nationalism – the idea of the endurance of national culture as connected with the preservation of the

local natural environment – has been associated with the developments of the late Soviet period (Dawson 1996; Malloy 2009). Diachronic analysis of the *Esthonus silvanus* trope indicates that the idea of eco-nationalism resonates across a much longer time, although the exact narrative of the forest Estonian was indeed formed in the past few decades. The article focuses on how this motif was historically formed and what circumstances affected its development. The length of the article does not allow us to give a comprehensive overview – the article is rather a condensed sketch that offers first glimpses into the process of eco-national myth-making.

SOURCES

The selection of sources for the study of the Estonian national narrative is problematic as the topics it covers, their boundaries and spread, are vague. First of all, there is a question: when does a narrative become national? Is it when a certain bundle of ideas spread among the intelligentsia, while its members – writers and composers or scholars – may purposefully contribute to the development of the narrative? Or is it when the motifs of the national narrative appear unconsciously in popular science articles, schoolbooks, and fiction, where the construction of the national story is not a primary goal and national narrative is used to achieve other objectives? The situation is even more vague, since occasionally the national narrative has even been applied to pre-existing works due to their later interpretations. Secondly, the genres that are important for the spread of national ideas vary in relevance throughout different eras. During the nineteenth century, journalism played an important role in spreading national ideas (Peegel et al. 1994: 44–46). The importance of textbooks in the development of a nation should also be noted, whilst fiction, music, and art exerted a more prevalent influence especially in the field of ecological thinking during the Soviet era (Dronin & Francis 2018).

Considering the above, we decided to trace the emergence of the bundle of ideas that interests us in different genres, which is the best indicator of their spread: from popular science to scientific literature, from schoolbooks to literature related to tourism and forestation management. The main criterion for the selection was a (possible) relationship with nature and the Estonian identity. This list is definitely not exhaustive as the inclusion of other media such as art, music, and film can give more detailed – and perhaps alternative – insights into the development of the Estonian national myth and the evolution of *Esthonus silvanus*.

ENLIGHTENERS, ROMANTICS, AND AWAKENERS

The nineteenth century, the era of "inventing traditions" (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1992 [1983]), also gave birth to the Estonian nation as an "imagined community" (Anderson 2016 [1983]). Since the Middle Ages, Estonia had been governed by different foreign nations so that by the nineteenth century the local elite consisted mainly of a German-speaking nobility. Estophiles originating from those circles were the first to be interested in the heritage of locals and to identify Estonians and Latvians as nations equal to others. As their source of inspiration was the German context, many of the early motifs of the Estonian national narrative can be traced to their German origins, transferred to the Baltic context (Plath 2008: 39).

Most of the Western European national stories are backed up by written sources. The German national narrative usually begins with the heroic victory of German tribes over the Roman legions in 9 AD as described by Tacitus in *Germania*. Using the same method, the forefather of the Estonian national myth, Garlieb Helwig Merkel (1798) anchored the story to Henrik's *Livonian Chronicle*, which depicts the ancient Estonian–Latvian struggle against the Catholic crusaders in the early thirteenth century. In Merkel's narrative, the conquest divided Estonian history in half, with the 'Golden Age' before, followed by aggressive occupation by the greedy Catholic Church.

Merkel's narrative was built on social and religious contradictions, although concepts such as 'nature' and 'wild' also had a significant position. Eighteenth-century romanticism and sentimentalism gave rise to the ideas of "returning to nature" and "noble savage", which were now imported to the Baltic countries, and attributed to the local residents in the Baltic countries (Plath 2008: 41). However, only the 'pre-crusade' pagan ancestors of the contemporary peasants were considered 'noble' (Jonuks 2009: 20) as Estonians and Latvians after the thirteenth century were considered 'civilised' and lost their contact with nature (Plath 2008: 46). Nevertheless, an echo of their noble savageness was noticed in folk songs, which inspired Herder (1773) to value local song traditions with a sensitivity appropriate to the romantic spirit. This set of ideas about a formerly pristine and noble culture was seized on enthusiastically by the nascent Estonian intelligentsia, who took over the nation-building project in the late nineteenth century (Jansen 2004: 116) and started to create their own national narrative.

In the words of Denis Cosgrove (2003: 16) "the forest has been crucial in framing national identities in most countries north of the Alps". However, due to the lack of sources, it is hard to estimate the importance of nature and the forest to Estonians' self-perception until the end of the nineteenth century. It

is possible that nature was not in a significant position in self-determination but only in a "supportive role" since the usage of natural resources (e.g. hunting, use of wood and other raw materials) has been a marker of social position and prestige (Varep 1983). The position of nature even for the nobility becomes apparent only from the Enlightenment. The qualitative value of 'wild' nature is most apparent in the tradition of English parks, spreading to Estonia in the late eighteenth century (Hein 2007). This style emphasised natural and romantic elements, groves, grottoes, ruins, and shaped the parks on both rural manors and in towns. Ironically, such parks became the only green oases in the deforested landscape of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which suffered from extensive logging:

> *It is nearly impossible to find oak forests that used to be so common earlier. We no longer have them, we have cut them all down, destroyed them! Only a few stand – here and there – and they too keep on disappearing! Who is considering reforestation? Only a few and even they have only recently embraced the noble idea, but the destruction of forests is on everybody's mind!* (Germann 2018 [1803]: 1031)

The wood was needed for the construction of manors and towns, but also for different industries, including distilleries – one of the main sources of wealth for Estonian manors. The disappearance of the forests was also associated with the peasants' love of wooden fences (e.g. Hupel 1777: 104, 488; Friebe 1794), but also with "the habit of our people to clear land for the production of grain by burning trees and underbrush, … heating the threshing barns to dry the grain and the lavish manner of heating houses" because "the Estonian, who does not think of living in a warm but a hot room, does not consider economising on trees" (Baer 2013 [1814]: 24, 57).

As indicate different proverbs and sayings about nature and forest (FES 2011), in which the motifs of hunting, gathering and practical use of trees dominate, the attitude of Estonian rural population to the forest in the nineteenth century was pragmatic and rational. In metaphorical uses, the forest in folklore appears as neutral or even negative: the forest is a place where one gets lost, it is strange, full of animals and evil spirits. Therefore, many expressions based on *mets* (forest) refer to negative associations, such as *metsa poole* (towards the forest = out of one's mind), *metslane* (savage), *mine metsa!* (go to the forest = get lost!).

In the literature of the nineteenth century, metaphorical uses of the forest similarly have neutral or negative connotations. Nature, and the forest in particular, is rather insignificant in the national epic *Kalevipoeg* (Son of Kalev) (Kreutzwald 1862). The scenes with this mythical hero take place on cultural

landscapes like fields, meadows, etc., with the forest mentioned only in contexts where Kalevipoeg chops it down. His nickname – The Great Ploughman – also characterises the hero as a creator of cultivated landscapes (Eilart 1961), where most of the rural population lived at the time.

Another example of the negative connotations associated with the forest is the usage of the word *kõrve* (originally 'large uninhabited (swampy) forest') as a translation of 'desert' in the Estonian Bible (Kents 1947: 10–12). In the same vein, the forest was associated with illiteracy and barbarity. Friedrich R. Kreutzwald, the creator of the national epic *Kalevipoeg*, used the forest as a metaphor for those who are uneducated and uncared-for, the antidote to which is culturalization: "But if we plant a wild forest flower in fertile garden soil and tend to it, then in time it will grow into a beautiful flower outshining its brothers and sisters growing in the meadow" (Kruus 1940: 15). The forest was also considered unhealthy, for instance, by Baer (2013 [1814]: 92): "The forests, which still are too widespread from a medical perspective, are harmful due to the disruption of airflow but especially if there is, as per usual, a lot of rotting wood."

The motif of the forest as strange, unnurtured, and uneducated intertwines with the narrative of historical disruption in the thirteenth century. In C. R. Jakobson's view, the forest represents darkness in the battle between "light" and "dark": "one thousand years ago when many European countries were cloaked in the forests' darkness". Jakobson turns this around: "Truly, this was the Estonian time of light!" Henceforth emerge the anti-German and anticlerical motifs, in which the forest is regarded as a safe haven, especially when describing punishments used for indoctrination of Christianity, due to which "the people often escape from their ministers to the forest". This critical remark, however, does not mean a criticism of Christianity but rather a criticism of the clerical system, as was common in the nineteenth century. Christianity largely formed the model for understanding the world in general at that time. Even the descriptions of the ancient Estonian religion that relied on the trope of disruption, and contrasted "ancient holism" to Christian dualism, actually presented Christian concepts within a framework of prehistoric religion, used Christian language and even referred to the Ten Commandments (Heraklides 1908; see also Laanes 2012: 159).

Although the beginning of the twentieth century is today commonly regarded as the birth of the Estonian nation (phase three in Hroch's (1985) periodisation), the connections between Estonian identity and nature were not topical. Being a socially second-rate ethnic group with rising national consciousness, it was preferable at the time to emphasise the high level of ancient Estonian culture (Laanes 2012: 160). Most references to the forest still represented either

the utilitarian relationship or described the forest as a strange and dangerous place. Aarelaid and Relve (1980: 98) explained it with the collapse of traditional agrarian society, which regarded nature as an equal partner, replaced now by the 'hireling's attitude', which emphasises only monetary value. Another current describes the forest within the framework of (Neo-)Romanticism, explained by Aarelaid and Relve (1980: 98) as a reaction that opposes urbanisation, where everything urban was considered the root of all evil, while rural life was idealised. Indeed, this idea was straightforwardly put by Eduard Vilde in his comedy *Pisuhänd* (1913: 52):

> *Haven't you heard of our latest literary trend? What has a writer to do with the town! What artistic material does he acquire in the town! Who cares about the shallow workings of the townsman! A writer must stay in the village, dear man! Only there can he discover poetry, the big idea; all of our uniqueness lies in the barn and the threshing room!*

Thus, during the time when nation and national consciousness were formed, we cannot find a positive image of the forest. An idealisation and exaltation of the forest and the wild is present in (neo-)romantic literature and historical novels, which indeed influenced the first generations of the local intelligentsia and indirectly also Estonian folklore. However, despite the efforts of the romanticist literati, the local peasantry themselves did not use nature or the forest as a cornerstone of their national identity.

ESTONIANS AND NATURE DURING THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA

Estonia, like many other nation-states in Eastern Europe, gained statehood after World War I, in 1918. The era of independence in the interwar period brought remarkable changes to Estonian social life and national identity. Now, the national narrative based on two main archetypes – *Esthonus laborans*, the hardworking Estonian, and *Esthonus bellator*, the warrior-Estonian who heroically protected his home – combined with *Esthonus servus*, the Estonian as victim, who had suffered 700 years of enslavement under German rule.

These two archetypes formed a suitable context for the appearance of *Esthonus silvanus*. Nature provided a background, whereas the real values were the results of hard work – as, for instance, in one of the most influential sources for the Estonian national narrative, A. H. Tammsaare's *Tõde ja õigus* (Truth and Justice):

> *This surviving field here on a faraway swamp island seemed like a fairy tale. It felt strange and homely. It didn't need to be said that someone had moved, worked, and thought here at some point in time. A human's joys and woes had once been connected with this small field*. (Tammsaare 1981 [1926]: 12–13)

However, not only writers valued work. Giving a new value to nature has been described as a part of farmers' mindset: "I have been a sad witness to an occasion where an elderly man said after chopping down a beautiful spruce forest that the landscape had now become much more beautiful, everything is now so pretty and bare" (Reim 1940: 98). One should also note here the two-layered discourse, a discordance between the elite's conservationist attitude and an ordinary representative of the nation.

Statehood brought along the most important development in the field of nature and nationality, the concept of *ethnic nature*, that is, interpreting local nature through a national(ist) perspective, and within the physical borders of the nation-state. Already in the nineteenth-century Germany the forest was considered not only a physical but also a spiritual and cultural entity, forming later into an imagination of an ethnicised forest: "Germans need the forest like man needs wine" (Zechner 2011; see also Imort 2005). This concept would have been impossible in Estonia before the land reform of 1919, which nationalised previous manor lands, after which "Estonians became the masters of their lands and forests once again after 700 years of foreign rule" (Daniel 1929: 21).

The search for identity, especially in the 1920s, developed by opposing earlier dominances. This happened mainly nationally, against the former upper class, the Germans, but also within religion. The concept of ethnic nature fitted into the schema perfectly as the Estonians' ancient religion was opposed to Christianity (brought by the Germans): "The pagan traditions protected the oak forests before the Germans came. They tried to destroy everything related to paganism. Their anger first hit the sacred groves which were mainly oak forests" (Helm 1924: 62).

This opposition became especially prominent in the rhetoric of the Taara faith (established in 1925), which claimed to be a modern revival of the ethnic religion of Estonians before Christianisation in the thirteenth century: "You cannot serve two gods at the same time: Christ and Estonia. Either you are a good Christian and a bad Estonian, or vice versa" (Hiis 1930a: 14). The followers of Taara faith repeated earlier romanticist claims of ancient Estonians who lived in harmony with their surroundings and tried to show the underlying paganism in contemporary holidays while minimising the impact of Christianity on Estonian culture: "But the traditions of Christmas, which bring us that

special fragile excitement and jolly mood, are actually 'secular', 'pagan', and therefore 'Taara-ish'" (Hiis 1930b: 26). Yet nature and the forest were secondary in the philosophy of the Taara faith, mainly appearing as metaphors – their ideal was cultivated nature, just like in the nineteenth century. Their distance from nature is well characterised by an attempt to establish a new sacred grove in Tallinn (the Sõjamäe sacred grove), and the introduction of indoor shrines (see, e.g., Hiis 1933: 88).

Studies of nature and nationalism have so far paid little attention to conservationists and forestry scientists, who also contributed to the story of *Esthonus silvanus* in the 1920s and 1930s. The history of Estonian forestry, discussed at the first Forestry Science Gathering in January 1923, appeared in accordance both with the national narrative and the concept of ethnic nature. Especially striking is the anti-German attitude, the representatives of which were blamed for forcing Estonians to deviate from their natural harmony with nature:

> *That the peasants gave no mercy to the forests was elementary: their only option was to sell products they got from the forests to provide for what little they could get done, as all of their time and labour belonged to the landlords. It is more than understandable that constant forced labour, centuries of weeding the forest and burning underwood did not engender a sense of compassion and love for the forest*. (Daniel 1924: 18)

The eighth Estonian Forestry Science Gathering, in 1931, is interesting as folklorist Matthias Johann Eisen was invited to provide "an overview of how the forest is reflected in the soul of our nation" (Daniel 1931: 11). In his speech, Eisen declared that "the forest was sacred to ancient Estonians; some forests more, others less", "like the church in our day; *hiis*, a sacred grove, was a taboo back then" (Eisen 1931). His presentation was followed by a lively discussion in which Eisen stated that "in general, the forest is seldom mentioned in folk songs" and that this is "mainly a recent development". Despite this sceptical evaluation, forestry scientist Karl Verberg (Kaarel Veermets) claimed:

> *[T]here was a great respect for the forest in the ancient times. … This was very beneficial to the preservation of the forest. … Apparently, a new movement called Taara has appeared. … Wouldn't it be reasonable for the foresters to spread the beliefs of this new old-fashioned religion among the people? Then people would have a new attitude towards the forest that allows better protection than required by law. I think foresters should become quite attentive followers of this ancient Taara faith*. (Eisen 1931: 26)

Whether this meeting can be considered a turning point or whether the shift occurred with the general rise of nationalism in the late 1920s and the 1930s is uncertain, but henceforth national romanticism was nearly ubiquitous in the speeches of forestry scientists and conservationists. Veneration of the forest was referred to as a fairly recent, although still past, phenomenon (e.g. Mathiesen 1937: 12–13), often intertwined with anti-German as well as anti-Christian stances (e.g. Viator 1936: 38), although in a slightly milder form than at the beginning of the 1920s:

> *The Germans brought Christianity, which banished the old gods from the temples, but they still couldn't silence the sigh of our oaken forests. The forests became a refuge and a symbol of freedom. People complained to the spirits about the loss of their freedom and summoned up courage for battles whilst gathering secretly in sacred forests*. (Sikk 1932: 393)

A more systematic creation of the Estonian national narrative began in the 1930s and was influenced by the nationalism then gaining relevance in Europe, but also by the rise of nationalist movements in Estonia, such as the Vaps Movement, the Estonian Nationalist Club, and the Taara faith movement. Now, the signs of relating nationality to religion and nature occurred clearly, as in the use of traditional sacred sites for national events. For example, the commemoration of the Saint George's Night Uprising (1343–1345) was celebrated in a "sublime mood" on the Tõrma sacred hill (Virumaa Teataja 1929) and similar celebrations took place all over Estonia in the 1930s. These events manifested the *Esthonus bellator* motif, binding ancient and modern history with national feelings.

Even some scholars contributed to the national myth, most active of them being Oskar Loorits (1932, 1939). His central motif was opposition to Indo-European, especially German, identity; therefore Loorits described Estonians (as well as other Finno-Ugric peoples) through the following antagonisms: Finno-Ugric inactivity and pacifism in opposition to Indo-European conquest and expansion; modesty and conservatism to the development of culture and technology; closeness to nature to Indo-European urban culture, etc. His narrative did not receive much attention during the 1930s, becoming influential to the national narrative only in the late 1980s and 1990s (Selart 2014: 155 ff.).

Defining Estonians as Finno-Ugric people had become a norm in the academic world by the early twentieth century. In 1927 the Fenno-Ugria organisation was founded with government support to develop relations with other Finno-Ugric peoples. Madis Arukask (2018: 108) states that the subject of Finno-Ugric affairs "had a remarkable effect on society, especially the elites". However, its impact on national identity at that time seems to be weak, as in culture and

politics Nordic countries were idealised, and "the Nordic beauty of our homeland" (Haavaniit 1940: 63) was emphasised.

One of the most important innovations in the creation of the national narrative in this era was the introduction of a new type of source – folklore. The first generation of folklore collectors had collected and published folklore but had not yet arranged it into a uniform story. Therefore, an appropriate situation had formed to include folklore in the creation process of a national narrative. Oral tradition is more diverse and more open to multiple interpretations than historical sources, which had thus far been dominant, providing proofs for both master motifs, the heroic warrior, and the hard-working farmer. In folklore collections, however, nature holds a notable place, allowing Loorits to compile a special volume of forest- and hunting-related folklore (Loorits 1941), dominated by stories of practical and utilitarian relations with nature. The few texts that praise the beauty of nature are written in a romantic style, posing the question of whether the whole concept of nature glorification derives from the romantic literature and school textbooks and has nothing to do with folklore. Here, Loorits' ideological position becomes very clear as he systematically describes the nature cognition of Estonians as a positive and equal relationship, ignoring the utilitarian attitude and potentially dangerous features of nature that dominate in the nineteenth-century folklore: "Perhaps the most charming characteristic of the Finno-kind peoples' religion is the great cognition of nature, reaching up to the devoted and humble veneration" (Loorits 1932: 66).

A practical aspect that influenced Estonians' relationship with nature was the systematic improvement of nature tourism in the 1930s, enforced by the romantic idea of the urban environment as an unnatural habitat. By the nineteenth century, parks had developed in towns (e.g. Toomemägi Park in Tartu and Kadriorg in Tallinn) "where one can forget mundane problems and enjoy nature, developing one's sense of beauty" (Suur 1938: 40) and "even be able to lie on the grass" (Lint 1938: 110). Now, with the development of motorised transportation, the focus drifts to 'recreational forests' around towns, especially promoted for the working class. More distant 'forest resorts' also became popular; for example, Taevaskoda, a scenic combination of pine forests and sandstone cliffs, which was little known until the railway was built in 1931. Since then it has become a favourite place to spend short holidays and weekends, considered today a natural sacred site.

The 1930s saw the beginning of the culture of active holidays – spending time in nature for recreational purposes. Part of the goal was to familiarise Estonians with the forest, as spending time in nature for non-utilitarian reasons was still foreign in the early years of the republic:

> *A few decades ago, a simple park with a few flower patches, a few alleys and walkways in a geometric style, where groups could come for walks, was enough for the average citizen. Someone who tried to get closer to nature was considered a spoiled artist and a dreamer*. (Seidra 1938: 80)

For that purpose, the Institute of Nature Preservation and Tourism was established in 1938, organising forestry days, discussing forest-related topics at schools, and spreading popular works on forestry, hiking, and nature tourism (e.g. Kompus 1939). This was mainly directed towards city dwellers, who had access to media and transport and were more open to modern changes than people living in the countryside (Jürgenson 2005: 38). These changes fell in line with the popularisation of local tourism due to the growing tensions in the European political landscape.

Thus, during the interwar period, a set of ideas was established which later enabled the development of the *Esthonus silvanus* motif, most importantly the concept of ethnic nature. National identity and nature did not yet form a uniform narrative, but as a step towards it, Estonians' relationship with local nature was projected into the long-gone golden ages and then mirrored into recent history. Still, it seems that these views did not gain broader societal resonance at that time.

THE SOVIET ERA: OLD MOTIFS, NEW SHAPES

According to Marek Tamm (2008), the main outlines of the Estonian national narrative had taken shape by the end of the independence era and the Soviet period had surprisingly small influence on the patterns of national historical memory. The fight for Estonian cultural perseverance – now presented in the form of Marxist class struggle – indeed remained the backbone of the national narrative, although some new motifs did emerge, among them the motif of the intimate Estonian relationship with nature, shaped by a number of contrasting factors.

The first factor was the earlier concept of Estonians as a Finno-Ugric nation, which became popular in the 1960s and 1970s, as the Soviet ideology supported the idea of finding one's cultural roots from within Russian territory. Thus, for Estonian scholars, ethnographic expeditions offered the possibility to study something both exotic and their own. This also fell in line with an important slogan of Soviet cultural policy: "National in form, socialist in content", meaning that different national concepts and practices should be filled with socialist ideology (see also Annus 2019).

Despite the ideological desires, Finno-Ugrism is one of the examples of subtle anti-colonial developments in national cultures. Kuutma (2005) describes the Finno-Ugric cultural marker as an "imaginary Finno-Ugric wall", which Estonians used as intellectual resistance against Soviet ideology and cultural hegemony. In Soviet ideology, the past had negative connotations ("vestiges"), while the future held the goal of a utopian state. Finno-Ugrism emphasised exactly the opposite: the main context of the "Finno-Ugric wall" was the search for authenticity from one's own past and locality. The connection with ancient authenticity was created through the Finno-Ugric kindred peoples, mirrored to both ancient *and* contemporary Estonians. Through this (self-reflexive) concept of the noble savage, Estonians were compared to Native Americans, emphasising harmonious co-existence with nature.

Associating Estonians with Finno-Ugrians provided a framework that combined both cultural and ecological references by introducing a new connection, common belonging to the forest belt: "Sacred groves and sacred trees became the most important objects of veneration, probably because we are a traditional forest belt nation" (Relve 1982a: 313), also emphasising a common nature-friendly worldview: "[P]erhaps we should favour more the ancient animistic religion that provided support for a more controlled behaviour [towards nature]" (Relve 1982a: 312). Valuing the culture of kindred Finno-Ugric peoples had a certain impact on art, literature, music, and other domains of creative arts, which further supported this new traditionalism.

Many of the creative intelligentsia were associated with the Estonian Society for Nature Conservation (ESNC), founded in 1966. In the activities of the ESNC, the goals of conservationism and culture preservation were entangled with nationalist ideas – another example of the subtle "lived anti-colonialism" of Soviet-era everyday life. As a result, articles by folklorists about the forest and folklore were published in the popular journal *Eesti Loodus* (Estonian Nature), which provides a perfect basis for studying the development of the idea of the connection between Estonians and nature. These associations do not appear in the 1960s but are clearly visible from the 1970s onwards. Initially they emerge as projected onto the past, often through kindred nations: "A close relationship with the forest was the cause of deep feelings towards nature and a tender attitude towards this element of everyday life" (Viires 1970). Soon, the connection was presented as of contemporaneous relevance: "Nevertheless, we are the descendants of the traditional inhabitants of the forest" (Viires 1975: 7).

Another strand that influenced the ideas about Estonians and nature was the nature writing genre. This tradition had begun with travelogues in the interwar era and continued in the form of animal stories and nature descriptions after the war (e.g. Johannes Piiper, Richard Roht, Eerik Kumari). The 1970s

saw the emergence of a new generation of 'nature mediators': Fred Jüssi, Rein Maran and others, whose approach was very personal, tender, and intellectual, as philosophical topics dominated over aesthetic or social–economic aspects (Tüür & Maran 2005: 264). The importance of nature writing and nature mediators became apparent already in the 1980s: "It seems that a relationship with nature through nature and its mediators prevails over the direct relationship. These mediators prepare opinions and attitudes that people who go on vacation subconsciously take into account" (Relve 1982b: 231).

While the 'Finno-Ugric wall' and nature writing offered an intellectual background to the formation of the concept of forest nation, other aspects, like nature tourism, were connected with the actual forest practices of the increasingly urbanised descendants of the 'primeval forest people' – by the 1970s almost two thirds of the population was urban (Beltadze 2012: 12). Spokespersons of conservationists and healthcare saw the separation from nature as a negative phenomenon: "observations prove that those holiday-makers who just go walking in the forests, are very few in numbers" (Palm 1983: 26) while "living in the cities deepens the lack of interest towards the nature as the urban milieu itself hardens peoples' spiritual life and emotions" (Kumari 1973: 158).

The 1970s saw the rapid development of nature tourism, propellered by a set of different changes: the development of "recreational forests" around towns, with a suitable infrastructure such as fireplaces and hiking trails (Kumari 1973: 347), and the creation of conservation areas and national parks such as Lahemaa National Park in 1971, the first one in the Soviet Union. Two additional changes contributed to the increase in nature tourism: the five-day work week since 1966, and the decision to increase the sale of private cars in 1971 (Margus 1983: 101). Thus, paradoxically, the closeness to nature is inevitably connected to ecologically harmful transportation – according to contemporary statistics, car owners spent time in nature three times more than those who did not own a personal vehicle (Lausmaa 1983: 30). Nature tourism was also supported by the popularisation of gathering mushrooms and berries.

These changes resulted in a tourist boom that created "a so-called one-hour tourist, who agrees to leave the bus or car for no longer than one hour and no farther than 500 meters" (Ranniku 1976), while "solo hikers who have escaped the urban milieu were replaced by hordes roaming around the bogs to gather berries in the autumn, which has created serious problems [for the environment]" (Aruja 1983: 66).

In conclusion, during the Soviet period the goals of environmentalism became closely combined with preserving Estonian culture, giving rise to the motif of Estonians' intimate relationship with nature, thus creating fertile ground for the establishment of the concept of 'Estonians as a forest nation'.

THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE AND THE ERA OF INDEPENDENT ESTONIA

In the 1980s, large-scale Soviet industry and its accompanying immigration concurrently threatened both the environment and Estonian national identity. This resulted in the close entanglement of environmental and national ideas (Tüür & Maran 2005), culminating in the so-called Phosphorite War in 1987. As a result of this tension and together with earlier developments, in the last years of the Soviet system the concept of Estonians as a forest nation emerged.

The expression "forest nation" was actually in use beforehand, signifying the inhabitants of the forest – that is, birds and animals (Fig. 1). One of the first occurrences of this expression for an ethnic category was in December 1988, when archaeologist Heiki Valk spoke in the Estonian Public Broadcasting programme of Estonians as a forest nation (Mõttekiir 1988). Although this is the earliest use of the expression in such a meaning known to the authors, very likely the idea circulated already before amidst a smaller group of Estonian intellectuals but had not been used in print. This concept fell on fertile ground, as demonstrated by the rapid rise in usage of this expression in the following decades (see Table 1), skyrocketing during the debates over forest management in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Today, the expression is used mainly as an ethnic category.

Figure 1. *A. Saldre's drawing titled "Forest Nation at Work". Cover of the children's journal* Täheke *(Starlet), May 1960.*

Table 1. *The occurrence of search-word "metsarahva" (forest nation) in Estonian periodicals.*[1] *The table does not include the occurrences of the same idea with different wording, and one must take into account that older texts are less frequently digitised.*

Decade	Frequency
1890–1899	1
1910–1919	2
1920–1929	3
1930–1939	10
1940–1949	5
1950–1959	5
1960–1969	30
1970–1979	14
1980–1989	8
1990–1999	39
2000–2009	241
2010–2019	2035
2020	211

For Estonian identity, the collapse of the Soviet Union changed perspectives and reference points. Concerning nature, perspective moved from forested Siberia to (Western) Europe, which, compared to Estonia, seemed like a cultivated land without forest: "A good relationship with nature helps to improve our international image, which helps to draw nature-loving visitors to Estonia" (Soots 1991).

The aspect of international tourism brought a new force into narrative creation – the publicity industry, with its unruly fantasy and prospects surpassing the total of any earlier Estonian identity creation. Previously, the rhetoric about Estonians' relationship with nature had been directed towards a domestic audience, but since the 1990s Estonian nature has been increasingly marketed internationally. As a result, a new motif emerges, which speaks of untouched Estonian nature and describes Estonia as a new green Eden, presenting it both in the context of nature tourism and (existential) health (see Fig. 2). Green Eden rhetoric is then associated with authenticity that rises from the special relationship between Estonians and nature, which, in turn, is used in the 'ecoisation' of local products (see Fig. 3).

Aside from the marketing industry, the most influential vehicle for the forest nation archetype is the identity literature – publications that deal with the aspects of Estonianness, often in popular scientific form. This literature has appeared since the 1990s, when the authors started to be published who were banned during the Soviet period, most notably by Oskar Loorits and Uku Masing.

Figure 2. *Estonian Stress Buster: Let Estonia's pure nature relieve your stress. We have come to accept stress as a normal part of our lives. But it does not have to be that way. The Estonian Stress Buster has the antidote. Source: https://defol.io/kuldmuna/2018-the-estonian-stress-buster, last accessed on 4 January 2020.*

Figure 3. *Description of the product from Põhjala Brewery: The forest has a deep influence on Estonian culture and cuisine. This heritage is embodied in our Forest Series. In these editions, we twist rare botanicals, forest ingredients, and Estonian folk-medicine with ancient methods into absolutely extraordinary beers. Source: https://pohjalabeer.com/forest-series, last accessed on 16 December 2020.*

Their ideas were used as intellectual proof of Estonians as forest people, supported by new identity literature, originating from contemporary paganism as well as academic circles. During and after this wave the Estonian relationship with nature has become a favourite topic of many authors, of whom Valdur Mikita has become the most influential identity writer. The core of Mikita's narrative is about the Eastern European forest zone and specifically Estonian nature, its specialty, and the human relationship with nature, entangled with the unfolding ecological catastrophe (Kaljundi 2018). As a result, Mikita highlights Estonians to the rest of the world, especially to Western Europeans, who have lost their nature. This storyline is attractive and easily consumable, as indicated by the sales figures of his books as well as the use of his ideas by people who have never read his books – a clear indicator of an idea going 'national'.

The forest nation motif is actual due to the continuous debate over Estonian forest management policy that started already in the 1990s. Interestingly, one of the arguments to support the idea of the forest nation and to restrict extensive logging has been a reference to Estonia as a historically forested country. Compared to the interwar period, when Estonia as a forested country was referred to in the past tense as only about 20 percent of Estonia was forested, the percentage of forested areas increased to more than 50 percent by 2016 (Servinski & Kivilaid & Tischler 2018: 22–23). The growth was a result of the Soviet period abandonment of cultivated land and grasslands due to collective farming and urbanisation; nature conservancy and the creation of national parks, but also due to restricted access to border zones and numerous Soviet Army military bases. This aspect contains a significant dissonance as the Soviet period is considered negative, yet it created one of the most important and positive identity markers for contemporary Estonians.

Thus, in the debate over forest management, two opposites collide: on the one hand, the memory of the forested Soviet Estonia, on the other hand, a pragmatic attitude towards the forest as a renewable natural resource that ripens regularly. This debate culminated in 2015 and subsequent years, when the protests and demonstrations (for example, the so-called white willow affair in 2017 (Annist 2020) and the 'Emajõe chain' protest against building a cellulose factory in 2018 (Kõiv 2020)) could even be compared to the Phosphorite War in the 1980s, and impelled the foundation of several civil society organisations (e.g. *Eesti Metsa Abiks* (Estonian Forest Aid) in 2016). During this debate, Estonians' intimate relationship with nature acquired the value of a national treasure, which, along with the conservancy arguments has managed to influence political decisions, such as the abandonment of the cellulose factory beside the Emajõgi River.

Another aspect influencing the entrenchment of the *Esthonus silvanus* motif has been the development of nature tourism. The Estonian State Forest Management Centre (SFMC) has created an extensive network of hiking trails, cabins for overnighting, etc., which offer a quick and safe relationship with nature along with carefully planned environments with lakes, rivers, bogs, and beautiful sightseeing spots. But nature tourism depends on transport. In 1990 there were 240,900 registered cars in Estonia, which doubled in ten years to 463,883, reaching 746,464 in 2018 (Statistics Estonia 2020). Considering the Estonian population of 1.3 million, this impressive number in combination with SFMC's advertisement campaigns, which often use national motifs, is well reflected in the SFMC statistics: in 2014 recreational and conservancy areas were visited 1,900,000 times, the number reaching 2,700,000 in 2018 (SFMC 2018: 44), with more than 75 percent of the visitors being domestic tourists (Ehrlich 2013: 26).

Although Estonia is considered one of the most secular countries in Europe (Pickel & Pollack & Müller 2012), religion plays a significant role in the development of the concept of *Esthonus silvanus.* During the religious boom at the end of the 1980s, a contemporary pagan movement *Maausk* (Earth Belief), supported originally by a small circle of intellectuals, became public. In the late 1980s and in the 1990s, *Maausk* agenda was mainly religious, including the restoration of sacred groves and the propagation of *Maausk* as a native and traditional religion (Västrik 2015). The 2000s, however, marked the period of *Maausk* public campaign to protect sacred groves, threatened by various economic activities. As a result, a certain spiritual aspect was included not only to sacred sites but also to nature in general, which was not present during the Phosphorite War 15–20 years earlier.

This 'holy war' significantly increased the visibility of *Maausk*, which started to present itself not so much as a religious organisation, but rather as a movement devoted to maintaining and protecting national cultural heritage. This made their agenda acceptable for people who did not identify as *Maausk*, and became a foundation of their wider popularity – while only 4 percent of ethnic Estonians consider themselves followers of *Maausk*, more than 60 percent agreed that *Maausk* is Estonia's true religion (RTE 2014). Thus, *Maausk* is not a majority religion, but enjoys high reputation due to successful identity politics and rhetoric on conservation, so that *Maausk* is perceived more as a (secular) culture rather than a religious movement (Jonuks 2017; Remmel 2019; see also Kõiva et al. 2020).

Today, the entanglement of forest/nature, national identity and religion has three main storylines. Firstly, the image of Estonians as religiously tepid nation. This concept, formed in the early twentieth century and cultivated during the period of Soviet atheist propaganda, saw a recent revival due to sociological

surveys, which pointed out the unimportance of Christianity, creating a motif of Estonians as "the most atheist nation in the world" (Remmel 2016). Concurrently, sociological surveys also revealed the popularity of non-institutional beliefs, such as animism, which is used to support the *Esthonus silvanus* concept.[2] The result is a curious operation of identity mathematics: Estonians as atheists + Estonians as a forest nation = the forest is Estonia's church.

The second storyline derives from a health-related functional aspect: both nature and religion (churches) are considered consolations, providing security or silence for self-reflection. Therefore, both Estonian nature and Estonians' intimate relationship with it becomes a peculiar 'existential resource'. As a result, the earlier negative expressions are sometimes used in a positive sense. For instance, the expression *mine metsa!* ('get lost!', literally: go to the forest!) was explained by an interviewee, "Well, it actually means go to the forest and get yourself in order, get your thoughts right…" (Luule, F: 53).[3] The third aspect is about aesthetics, as both churches and forest trails are dim and silent, and the trees bending together high above the ground resemble vaulted church ceilings. Yet, 'religious' in this context often seems to be used only in the metaphorical sense, as a shorthand for existential importance. In that respect, 'religion' has become less religious.

CONCLUSION

National narratives are not the stable homogenous stories that they claim to be. Instead, national narratives include different stories from which suitable elements are chosen that actualise in specific situations. These stories operate in constant interaction with the societies that produce them and which they concurrently more or less influence.

Associating ethnic cultures with local nature reaches back to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and the concept of the noble savage. In the Estonian case, the forest did not have a significant position in identity formation. Instead, in the nineteenth-century folk culture, the forest had neutral or even negative connotations. One can find positive treatments of the forests only in the (neo-) romantic nature descriptions of the beginning of the twentieth century, which also carried a certain anti-urbanist agenda. This agenda became prominent during the interwar period, especially due to the growing association of nature and health in the 1930s. Along with the development of recreational forests near the cities, the promotion of an active relationship with nature emerged as an important factor. This tendency was also supported by the general rise in the living standards and a broader appearance of the middle class. In such

a context nature was not merely a resource for the living but provided aesthetic and emotional qualities – enjoyed by the nobility already in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, yet now being available for a broader population.

However, the most important change that followed the creation of the independent Republic of Estonia and the agrarian reform was the emergence of the concept of ethnic nature – the treatment of nature within certain geographical boundaries and through the lens of nationalism. This understanding supported the tendency to ascribe close connection to (ancient) Estonians and nature – the motif appearing already in the late nineteenth century, but becoming widely used in the 1930s by nature conservationists, who combined cultural elements with conservationism, finding arguments from the former for the latter. Since then, conservationist arguments have remained an important undercurrent in the Estonian national narrative, actualising at suitable moments in different forms, for instance in the 1960s and 1970s in association with the creation of national parks and the popularisation of nature's role in recreation. These decades were also a period of rapid development in transport that together with the development of hiking trails and tourism culture helped to facilitate a new form of quick and safe relationship with nature.

The 1960s also saw the re-emergence of Finno-Ugrism as an important cultural marker. The revitalisation of the 'noble savage' imagery to describe the culture of linguistically kindred nations soon had an effect on Estonians' self-perception. Mirroring the nature-friendly worldview of the kindred peoples, first to the ancient Estonians and then in the 1970s to contemporary Estonians, introduced an idea about belonging to a kin group of traditional forest-belt nations. Finno-Ugrism influenced different kinds of creative art, thus founding a new set of traditionalisms. At the same time a new generation of nature mediators emerged, their books carrying the idea of Estonians' intimate relationship with nature.

These developments paved the way to the next milestone. The 1980s could be regarded as another crucial decade after the emergence of the concept of ethnic nature in the 1920s, as the precisely formulated concept of *Esthonus silvanus* was probably first worded in the 1980s, apparently initially within a narrower circle, but then publicly by the end of the decade. The emergence of *Esthonus silvanus* not earlier than the 1980s can also be explained by the fact that only by the later years of Soviet rule in Estonia was there so much forest as to leave an impression of a heavily forested country. Thus, the arguments about Estonians' intimate relationship with the forest did not seem a retrospective mirage but a tangible reality.

The Phosphorite War in the 1980s together with the concept of *Esthonus silvanus* allowed the earlier understanding of ethnic nature to develop into

eco-nationalism – the idea that Estonian culture and nature are inherently entangled and, by protecting nature, Estonian culture is also preserved. This concept has remained very much alive in the context of the debates over logging policy after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as is the idea of Estonians' special relationship with nature. Thus, it seems that the emergence of *Esthonus silvanus* as part of the widespread 'national' narrative did not occur before the 1990s or even the 2000s. The idea was still spearheaded by the creative intelligentsia (e.g. Valdur Mikita), but began to be widely promoted by eco-communities, advertising, and tourism, and most influentially by contemporary paganism, with selected elements presented as authentic native heritage, appealing to the historicity of the concept.

Although we described the development of *Esthonus silvanus* as non-linear, a universal change has developed in the background. Emerging from a nineteenth-century Romanticism and anti-urbanist agenda, the forest, or nature in general, has changed from a mainly negative or neutral place to an exclusively positive resource over the last century. Due to this the Estonian national narrative is not the only one to include the motif of a close national relationship with nature – one can find "cognate motifs" from Germany, Finland, Sweden (Thurfjell 2020), and elsewhere. This semantic change, supported today by the climate change debate, has opened the way to new interpretations and has made the forest an attractive element not only for (national) identity creation, but also for (existential) health, religion, tourism, and many other fields (Hastrup & Rubow 2014; Ohlsson 2020). Yet, during this process of 'ecoisation', the forest and nature often lose their initial content and become – just like science – only a signifier of high social capital for better marketing.

Thus, the story of *Esthonus silvanus* was formed at the crossroads of very different ideas and processes, affected by changes in the political order, forest practices, urbanisation, and various other factors. These ideas were selected through contemporary values, and legitimised through references to history, therefore they do "not represent a real relationship with nature, but an imagination of how things should be" (Valk 2005: 40).

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NOTES

[1] See dea.digar.ee, last accessed on 16 December 2020.

[2] According to LFRL 2015, 63 percent of ethnic Estonians agreed that "plants have a soul". Yet, according to secondary cognitive testing, the agreement very likely means that plants are alive, therefore interpreting the data as animism is questionable.

[3] Interviews (unpublished) were conducted by Atko Remmel in 2017–2019 as a part of the project: "Relocation of Transcendence: The sacred of the seculars around the Baltic Sea", funded by the Baltic Sea Foundation.

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SUSTAINING AND SUBSTITUTING THE SACRED: COIN TREES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

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Abstract: It is the character of a natural holy place to shift and alter. Sometimes the changes are the product of natural causes; other times, they are the result of human intervention. The mutable character of these natural sites, however, does not impair their ability to act as *holy* sites; instead, it appears to benefit them, for just as nature is not static, neither is the 'sacred'. In order to explore how appropriate natural sites are as 'settings' for the 'sacred' because of their very mutability, this paper will focus on coin-trees. These are natural places of pilgrimage in Britain and Ireland, which have sustained themselves as sacred centres for decades – in some cases, centuries – and have, during that time, undergone numerous recontextualisations, adapting themselves to the religious and cultural changes of their surroundings.

Keywords: Britain, Christian saints, coin-trees, holy wells, Ireland, sacred

INTRODUCTION

It is the character of a natural holy place to shift and alter; natural environments, subject to organic processes, undergo constant change. Sometimes they are small and barely discernible: the slow growth of a tree or a slight change in the depth of a holy spring. At other times, they are drastic and hard to miss: the felling of a grove of trees or the destruction caused by a flood. Sometimes they are purely the product of natural causes; at other times, the result of human intervention. Either way, change is inevitable.

The mutable character of these natural sites, however, does not impair their ability to act as sacred sites; instead, it appears to benefit them, for just as nature is not static, neither is the sacred. Defined as that which is "dedicated, set apart, exclusively appropriated to some person or some special purpose" (OED 2019b), the 'sacred' is used here heterogeneously to mean sites that are

perceived as 'special', but *not necessarily* through religious association. On the other hand, the 'holy', which is defined as being "appropriated or set apart for religious use or observance" (OED 2019a), is applied in this paper to sites and structures that have been explicitly linked to Christianity.

In order to illustrate how appropriate natural sites are as 'settings' for the 'sacred' because of their very mutability, this paper will focus on natural places of pilgrimage in Britain and Ireland, which have sustained themselves as sacred centres for centuries and have, during that time, undergone numerous recontextualisations, adapting themselves to the religious and cultural changes of their surroundings. However, because of the vast number and variety of natural pilgrimage sites in Britain and Ireland, this paper focuses on one particular type: those containing coin trees that are still active today. In order to contextualise these contemporary coin trees, the sites' histories are traced, revealing long discourses of ritual adaptation.

COIN TREES: AN INTRODUCTION

As this paper is not intended as a study of the coin tree itself, but rather employs it as a micro-historic exemplar in an exploration of how natural 'sacred' sites change over time, only a necessarily brief summary of the practice is supplied (see Houlbrook 2014, 2015, 2018a, 2018b for more detailed considerations).

Coin trees are exactly what the name would suggest: trees (often logs) which have coins embedded edgeways into their bark. Thus far, 40 sites containing over 200 coin trees have been catalogued, distributed widely across England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland. These sites are often in rural areas accessible to the public, situated alongside popular woodland or riverside footpaths. Of the 40 sites, 37 are 'active', insofar as people today continue to participate in the custom of inserting coins into the trees. During fieldwork conducted in 2011–2013, all coins deposited into/on coin trees at 31 of the sites were catalogued, reaching a total of 165,360. Fieldwork and archival research discovered that the majority of coin trees are contemporary, dating to the late twentieth or twenty-first century; the possible reasons behind this modern-day surge have been explored by Houlbrook (2018a). Some coin-trees, however, did prove to be historic.

The earliest known coin tree is an uprooted oak on Isle Maree, a small island in Loch Maree in the Northwest Highlands of Scotland (Fig. 1). The first reference to deposits at this site comes from Thomas Pennant's 1775 *A tour in Scotland and voyage to the Hebrides*, in which he describes the island's holy well, said to have been consecrated by Saint Maelrubha – also known as Saint

Maree – in the eighth century and widely believed to cure insanity. Beside the holy well was a tree, which was utilised as an 'altar'; pilgrims who sought a cure from the well would leave their tokens of thanks to Saint Maelrubha on this particular tree (Pennant 1775: 330).

Figure 1. *The coin tree on Isle Maree, Northwest Highlands of Scotland. Photograph by the author, 14 April 2012.*

According to the *Inverness Courier* of 4 November 1852, cited by Reeves (1857–1860: 288–289), the well was believed to have lost its curative powers when a farmer brought his dog to the island and lowered it into the well, hoping to cure it of madness. Dixon writes that this "desecrating act is said to have driven virtue for a time from the well" (1984 [1886]: 157). The curative powers of the well were thus believed compromised, and by the 1860s, it was no longer resorted to for the cure of insanity. By the time Mitchell visited Isle Maree in 1863, the well was dry "and full of last year's leaves, and the flat stone which serves for a cover we found lying on the bank" (1860–1862: 262). Today no visible trace remains of either the well or its stone slab covering – but the tree, described by Pennant in 1775 as the 'altar' on which pilgrims left their tokens of thanks, still just about stands.

According to Pennant's wording, the tree was incidental to the custom; it was simply a convenient structure in close proximity to the well. In many cases, however, trees do appear to have developed more significance. Indeed, numerous holy wells were named after trees, such as 'Ash well', 'Holly well', and 'Oak well', and in some cases, the trees do seem to have been essential to the efficacy of the wells. At Easter Rarichie, Ross and Cromarty, for example, there was a well believed to cure tuberculosis so long as a certain tree stood beside it. When this tree was felled, the well purportedly lost its power; the same occurred when two trees fell beside a well near Perth in 1770 (Bord & Bord 1985: 59, 101). Trees are often believed integral to this custom due to the protection they offer. Trees were often utilised as apotropaic devices, and several different species, most notably ash, were believed to function as protective agents in the early modern period, planted beside wells as guardians to ward off fairies and witches (Hope 1893: xxii; Hull 1928: 113; Shepherd 1994: 2, 63; Rackard & O'Callaghan & Joyce 2001: 8). Whether or not this was the origin of the tree on Isle Maree, it certainly developed greater significance than as a convenient altar. It appears to have replaced the well as a pilgrimage destination.

Trees standing beside holy wells often partake in their sanctity (Lucas 1963: 40). In some cases, the water is believed to have physically transferred from the well to the tree. This transference of sanctity from water to tree not only imbues the latter with power, but allows it to establish itself as a ritual structure independent of the holy well, so that it might subsequently outlive it. In other cases, the transferal is symbolic, with the tree developing sacredness as the well loses it. This is what appears to have happened with what would later become the Isle Maree coin tree.

Initially, the tokens left on this tree appear to have been rags (strips of cloth also known as clooties), which were common votive offerings. However, during the nineteenth century, pilgrims began leaving other objects such as

nails and pins (Campbell 1860: 134; Mitchell 1860–1862: 253). These metallic objects had originally been employed to hold the rags in place on the tree, but had gradually become offerings in and of themselves (Dixon 1984 [1886]: 152). By the late nineteenth century they appear to have been replaced by coins.

In 1877 the site received a famous visitor: Queen Victoria, who travelled to Isle Maree on a tour of Scotland. She and her party embedded some coins into the tree themselves, although by this point the coin was simply viewed as an offering to St Maelrubha rather than as a bid for the cure of insanity. Queen Victoria described the tree in her diary, in an entry dated 17 September 1877, as follows:

> *The boat was pushed onshore, and we scrambled out and walked through the tangled underwood and thicket of oak, holly, beech, etc., which covers the islet, to the well, now nearly dry which is said to be celebrated for the cure of insanity. An old tree stands close to it, and into the bark of this it is the custom, from time immemorial, for everyone who goes there to insert with a hammer a copper coin, as a sort of offering to the saint who lived there in the eighth century, … We hammered some pennies into the tree*. (Duff 1968: 332–333)

Queen Victoria referred to the coin as a "sort of offering to the saint", showing how the tree had maintained its Christian associations. However, with the loosening grip of the Church and the declining faith in the power of saints and their holy wells, traditions needed to adapt in order to retain their popularity.

By the late nineteenth century, the tree's purpose had changed. It had become a "wishing tree", a term employed by Dixon (1984 [1886]: 150), Godden (1893: 499), McPherson (2003 [1929]: 76), Barnett (1930: 114), and Macrow (1953: 88–89). It was now believed that, in McPherson's words, a "wish silently formed when any metal article was attached to the tree, or coin driven in, would certainly be realised" (2003 [1929]: 76). No longer associated with healing, the tree had become imbued with the power to grant wishes or ensure good luck (MacLeish 1968: 420), the only two traditions which participants seem familiar with today. Local residents in the nearby town of Gairloch, for example, associate the tree with only two things: wish-making and good luck.

The tree has therefore shed its curative properties and become a wishing tree instead, a custom much more inclusive – albeit perhaps less earnestly observed. This does not necessarily mean that by extension it has also shed its associations with Christianity. It is not explicitly stated in the literature, but the depositors could have been appealing to the saint or to God for the granting of their wishes. However, the specificity with which the tree was once affiliated with Saint Maelrubha was gradually eroded, and later pilgrims were probably

more likely to appeal to some vague, Christian or not, wish-granting power, much like when candles are blown out on a birthday cake or a coin tossed into a fountain. McPherson describes the wishing tree as a "degenerated" custom, a "deterioration in tree worship…[which] speaks of a lingering belief and devotion" (2003 [1929]: 76). The tree has retained its sacredness as something "set apart… [for] some special purpose", although for many visitors it may no longer be considered a 'holy' site, in the Christian sense of the word.

The biography of the Isle Maree site is given in more depth by Houlbrook (2015, 2018a), while this paper explores the other coin tree sites which boast similarly lengthy biographies. Of these, three are in the Republic of Ireland (Fore, Co. Westmeath; Clonenagh, Co. Laois; Gougane Barra, Co. Cork), one in Northern Ireland (Ardboe, Co. Tyrone), and one in Wales (Patrishow, Powys).

FORE, CO. WESTMEATH

In Co. Westmeath, the Republic of Ireland, there is a small village named Fore, known in Irish as Fobhar Feichin – Feichin's Spring. It is named after St Feichin, a seventh-century saint who founded several monasteries across Ireland, including one at Fore, which was his first and largest. Because of this historical religious association, despite the village's small size, it contains several significant sites: a thirteenth-century Benedictine Priory, a fifteenth-century anchorite's cell, and a holy well, to name but a few. It is also well-known for its 'Seven Wonders', which are listed on a large information board in the village car park: Water that will not boil, wood that will not burn, water that flows uphill, the Abbey in a quaking bog, a mill without a race, the Anchorite in a stone, and the stone raised by St Feichin's prayers.

The first two of these 'Seven Wonders' are of significance here. Water that will not boil refers to St Feichin's Well, believed to be particularly curative for toothache and headache. There is some confusion over the location of this well. In her work on Celtic sites, Elizabeth Rees describes it as a "triangular structure, its walls formed by three great stone slabs" (2003: 27), located on the path between the car park and the abbey. Elizabeth Healy, however, believes the well to be the circular stone structure in the enclosure beside the car park (2001: 71). According to Healy, the triangular structure, referred to by Rees, is actually 'St Feichin's Bath', a stone-lined vat known as the Doaghfeighin. An information plaque beside this vat describes it as follows:

> *Beneath an ash tree is Doaghfeighin, a box like structure built of huge stones. The name means St. Feichin's vat or keene. It is about 1.3m square, and the side walls are each formed of one large stone. It is now dry but*

> *formerly contained water in which St. Feichin is said to have knelt in prayer. Delicate children were immersed in the water to obtain a cure through the invocation of St. Feichin.*

There appear, therefore, to be two water structures associated with St Feichin: the holy well and St Feichin's vat. At some point in the last century, the well dried up, but is now marked by the stump of a tree and a young ash, which have – like the Isle Maree tree – been imbued with the well's sacredness, therefore replacing the well in pilgrims' ritual attention. Wood that will not burn apparently refers to the tree stump, and is a common description applied in Ireland to trees associated with holy wells. When this tree was still alive, it traditionally had three branches, representing the Trinity, and was – according to local belief – resistant to fire. And growing beside St Feichin's vat, still with some of its roots within the water, is a mature ash tree. All three of these have been, at some point in history, tied with rags and embedded with coins.

It is unclear when the practice of embedding coins at this site began. Photographic evidence from the 1980s shows that the original ash tree in the well – now a stump – had been filled with coins by that time. It fell in the 1990s and was removed by the local council. Local resident and business owner, Jane O'Reilly, was rather cryptic when I asked where the coin-encrusted bole was removed to, assuring me that "it's somewhere safe" and adding, tongue-in-cheek, that "it wasn't burned". Even though now all that remains of this tree is a stump, on my visit there in 2012 it still contained two coins, both of which must have been inserted since the tree fell, for they date to 1999 and 2006.

Growing above this stump and concealing it is the young ash tree, which was planted by the local council following the fall of the original and was intended as a replacement (Fig. 2). Today it is still customary to leave offerings at the tree. Affixed to its branches are all manner of objects: strips of fabric, socks, gloves, hair bobbles and clips, bra straps, key chains, baby's bibs, stockings, handkerchiefs, shoelaces, scarves, belts, pieces of string, sweet and crisp wrappers, a piece of tin foil, shoes, earrings, and a toothbrush, to name only some examples.

Similarly, the living tree growing beside St Feichin's vat has been adorned with a vast and seemingly random collection of objects: strips of fabric, socks, gloves, hair bobbles and clips, key rings, teddy bears, shoes, scarves, earrings, bracelets, a watch, a lighter, shoelaces, belts, rosary beads, pieces of string, a coat hanger, baby's bibs, stockings, sweet and crisp wrappers, bra straps, handkerchiefs, trainers, a broken umbrella, a Primark clothes label, a bridal veil – even insurance documents and a boarding pass from Latvia attached to the tree in a plastic wallet.

Figure 2. *The rag tree sitting on the site of St Feichin's holy well, now dried up. Fore, Co. Westmeath, Republic of Ireland. Photograph by the author, 3 October 2012.*

The two living trees have thus replaced the original, a method of substitution that is certainly not atypical. In many cases, one tree dies and another is adopted. Hartland, appearing rather disapproving of this process, notes that "the reason for the sacredness of many trees or wells has passed from memory; and it has consequently been natural to substitute any tree or any well for a particular one" (1893: 469–470). In some cases, depositors have had to be quite imaginative. For example, at Doon Well, Co. Donegal, which was resorted

to for cures during the nineteenth century, a nearby hazel was used as a rag tree. This tree eventually became too heavily adorned with rags to admit new additions, but the well was situated in a largely treeless landscape, so there was no convenient replacement. In answer to this problem, people began embedding crutches (a popular deposit indicating a successful cure) into the ground beside the well, and subsequent visitors began attaching their rags to these instead. More often than not though, young trees replace old trees, a method of substitution that we will see repeated below.

CLONENAGH, CO. LAOIS

Less than 100 miles south of Fore is another site with a similar history: Clonenagh, Co. Laois. Perched on a grassy bank a few metres to the side of the R445, a busy road running between Dublin and Limerick, is a young sycamore. Close by is an interpretation panel set up by Laois County Council, which offers the following information about what it dubs "St Fintan's Tree":

> *This tree was planted 200 to 250 years ago, within the area of the ancient Monastery of Clonenagh.*
>
> *A well which also venerated the Saint was nearby. When the well was closed, a spring appeared in the fork of the tree and became the focal point for "patterns" (celebrations on the Saint's feast day) for many years.*
>
> *A custom developed of inserting coins into the bark of the tree, and it became known as the "Money Tree". Because of metallic poisoning and damage to the bark due to this custom, the tree has now gone into decay. But a number of shoots have been salvaged and it is hoped that these might prolong the life of the tree.*
>
> *Please refrain from inserting any metal into the tree or damaging it in any way.*
>
> *Saint Fintan pray for us.*

This information plaque clearly demonstrates a firm connection between the tree and St Fintan, a sixth-seventh-century Irish saint who is believed to have founded the monastic community of Clonenagh (Sperber 2004: 29–30). According to local historian Roe, writing in the 1930s, there was once a "fine spring well" nearby, which was "always the subject of great veneration among the country people" (1939: 27). This veneration continued until the mid-nineteenth century, until it was filled in by the landowner, a Protestant farmer who was "annoyed by the number of people who visited this well" (ibid.). According to local legend, St Fintan subsequently diverted this spring from the farmer's

land to a hollow in the nearby sycamore tree, St Fintan's Tree, which became known as the "Well in the tree" (Morton 2004 [1998]: 195), through the process of sacred transference, as outlined above.

The veneration awarded to the Clonenagh tree led to its employment as a rag tree. People made wishes with the water from the well and then tied a rag or ribbon to the tree's branches. A photograph taken by Father Francis Browne in 1933 shows a priest sitting in the branches surrounding this hollow, possibly having just made an offering of his own (Harbison 1991: Fig. 102). It is unclear when rags were replaced by coins, but it must have occurred between the 1930s – no coins are visible in Father Browne's photograph of the tree – and the 1990s, for at the time Harbison was writing his work on pilgrimage in Ireland in 1991, there were apparently "thousands of coins hammered into the tree by passers-by" (1991: 231). When the tree died and fell in 1994, the practice of coin insertion had become so prolific that the tree is described as having been densely embedded with coins to a height of two metres (Simon 2000: 28). This tree-encrusted bole has since been removed, but (despite the appeal to the contrary in the interpretation panel: "Please refrain from inserting any metal into the tree or damaging it in any way") people have begun embedding coins into the young offshoot, which grows on the same site.

GOUGANE BARRA, CO. CORK

Gougane Barra is a lakeside settlement in Co. Cork, named for sixth-century St Finbarr, who is believed to have built a monastery on an island in the lake. This island, which is connected to land by a causeway, also contains eighteenth-century ruins from a priest's retreat, a nineteenth-century oratory, and several coin trees. Although these trees do not appear to have any significant history, unlike those above, the island of Gougane Barra has long been the site of both pilgrimage and ritual deposition, its remote location making it a prominent site for rituals which combined Christianity with pagan practices (McCarthy 2006: 21).

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, several hundred pilgrims would flock annually to the island of Gougane Barra for the Eve of St John's feast, a pilgrimage described by Irish folklorist Thomas Crofton Croker, who partook in the celebrations there in 1813. He recounted the following scenes:

> *It was not without difficulty that we forced our way through the crowd on the shore of the lake, to the wall of the chapels on the island, where we stood amid an immense concourse of people: the interior of the cells were*

> *filled with men and women in various acts of devotion, almost all of them on their knees; some, with hands uplifted, prayed in loud voices, using considerable gesticulation, and others, in a less noisy manner, rapidly counted the beads of their rosary, or, as it is called by the Irish peasant, their pathereen, with much apparent fervour… Adjoining the causeway, part of the water of the lake was inclosed and covered in as well, by which name it was distinguished… Within, the well was crowded to excess, probably seven or eight persons, some with their arms, some with their legs thrust down into the water, exhibiting the most disgusting sores and shocking infirmities. When those within came out, their places were as instantly filled by others. Some there were who had waited two or three hours before they could obtain access to this "healing fount." The blind, the cripple, and the infirm jostled and retarded each other in their efforts to approach; whilst women and boys forced their way about, offering the polluted water of the well for sale, in little glass bottles, the bottom of broken jugs and scallop shells, to those who strength did not permit them to gain this sacred spot…* (1968 [1824]: 277ff.)

Croker proceeds to give a detailed account of the excessive drinking and night-long dancing which invariably followed these rites. He does not reference any custom involving a tree, but does refer to a wooden pole standing in the centre of the Pilgrim's Terrace; this was apparently all that remained of a large cross which once stood there. Croker describes the popular custom of attaching votive rags and bandages to this wooden pole, "by those whose faith has made them whole, intended as acknowledgments of their cure". These rags and bandages were affixed to the pole by nails, causing it also to be "braced with many pieces of iron" (1968 [1824]: 276–277).

These were banned as being 'pagan' by the Catholic Bishop of Cork, John Murphy, in 1818 (McCarthy 2006: 21). However, this does not appear to have deterred pilgrims from attaching their offerings to the wooden post in the Pilgrim's Terrace, and then to the replacement wooden cross that was commissioned by the parish priest in the early 1900s. By this time, the rags and "many pieces of iron" seem to have been replaced by coins, and as the cross became too densely embedded, people turned to the ash tree that stood in the main cell's enclosure – which fell in a storm in 1973 and its remains were removed. But the custom continued; seven other trees scattered across the small island are currently being embedded with coins.

ARDBOE, CO. TYRONE

Over the border, in Northern Ireland, is another historic site which houses a coin tree. Ardboe, Co. Tyrone, has hosted two trees of cultural significance, one replacing the other. The original, known locally as the 'wishing tree' or the 'pin tree', was one of several beech trees standing within the Old Cross graveyard, in close vicinity to Ardboe High Cross, the tallest cross in Northern Ireland. The original tree had probably been planted in the mid-nineteenth century by local resident Christopher Treanor. It is both possible, although difficult to prove, that it was planted to replace an earlier healing or wishing tree, and that it was planted on the site of a former holy well (and thus became the centre of ritual attention through the process of sacred transference), both theories proposed by local historian and author Pat Grimes (2000).

This coin tree was initially a rag tree. Mr C. D. Deane, the former Deputy Director of Belfast Museum and Art Gallery, was quoted in the *Mid-Ulster Mail* in 1959 as describing the coin tree as having been originally adorned with rags, which "were not merely offerings, they were riddances, the putting away of the evils impending or incurred by sin or sickness" (1959). Deane also describes how rainwater would collect in a hole in the tree, in which the sick would bathe their faces hoping for cures (ibid.). This is reminiscent of the Clonenagh sycamore, above.

By the 1940s, local tradition held that warts and lumps could be cured by pricking them with a pin and then inserting that pin into the tree, but many other objects were also inserted. Francis Quinn, caretaker of the Old Cross of Ardboe – and consequently also the tree – describes the site: the "tree, filled with pins, pennies, nails, buttons, and such things, is called the wishing tree or pin tree. It was there in my father's and grandfather's time. Everybody that comes here puts in a pin or a nail or any such thing and makes a wish" (Devlin 1948).

Eight years later, in an article in the *Mid-Ulster Observer*, Quinn was interviewed again concerning this tree: "When asked if the wishes came true, Francis only smiled and declared that he did not know. He did add that young girls often wished for a husband but he had never heard tell of the tree proving obliging in this respect" (Anonymous 1956: 3). Three years later, when Deane's talk on the Old Cross of Ardboe was broadcast (1959), he described how "the bark is stained with the rust of a thousand pieces of metal: hairpins, safety-pins, pennies, nails, bolts, and even a military badge, the personal offerings of a wishful public".

This tree fell in the winter of 1973–1974, and as local resident Pat Grimes writes, "[a]lmost immediately visitors and pilgrims to Ardboe began to use an adjacent mature beech tree as a repository for their coins, pins, and wishes" (1999). However, this substitute tree fell during a storm on Christmas Eve,

1997, and although another replacement was planted in 1998 (ibid.), it has not yet been subject to ritual deposition, probably because it is still too small. Coin-encrusted segments of the original fallen tree survive though: one stored in a garage behind Coyle's Cottage, the home of the Muintirevlin Historical Society; another contained within a cardboard box and held in store at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum (Accession Number 346-1998); and another being used as a coffee table by a local resident.

PATRISHOW, POWYS

The Patrishow coin tree stands close to the holy well of St Issui. The life of this saint is little known, but he is often described as a holy man living a secluded life in a hermit cell beside Nant Mair, or Mary's Brook. Close by was his well, containing niches in which offerings could be left (Figs. 3–4). Legend tells of a French pilgrim whose leprosy was cured by this well; in gratitude, he left a sack of gold, which was used to build the earliest part of the nearby eleventh-century church (Baring-Gould & Fisher 1911: 321–323; Jones, F. 1954: 145; Pemberton 1999: 190; Jones, A. 2002: 68–69).

Figure 3. *The holy well of St Issui, Patrishow, Powys, Wales, surrounded by niches for offerings. Photograph by the author, 22 July 2017.*

Figure 4. *One of the niches containing offerings at the holy well at Patrishow. Photograph by the author, 22 July 2017.*

The well that occupies the site now is probably an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century rebuild (Jones, A. 2002: 68; De Waal 2011: 73). Fed by a shallow spring, the well is surrounded on three sides by stone walls and covered by a stone slab. In 1804, Welsh topographer Richard Fenton described it as "a very scanty oozing of water, to which, however, was formerly attributed great Virtue, as within the building that encloses it are little Niches to hold the Vessels they drank out of and the offerings they left behind" (Fenton 1917: 26). By the nineteenth century, therefore, this site was still a place of ritual deposition, and indeed it continued to be one throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first. A photograph in Siân Victory's *The Celtic Church in Wales* shows how the well still contained niches for offerings in the 1970s (1977: Plate IV (a)). And on my visit to the site in 2017, there was a vast variety of objects deposited around the well, from candles and makeshift crosses to jewellery, semi-precious stones, and children's toys.

There was also, a few feet away, a tree encrusted with coins (Fig. 5). We might assume then that this is another historic coin tree, akin to those explored above, in Ireland and on Isle Maree. However, this coin tree does not seem to share the well's antiquity. None of the identified sources describing ritual deposition at the site, which range in date from 1804 to 2011, mention a tree (Fenton

Figure 5. *The tree standing beside the holy well at Patrishow, embedded with coins and bedecked with rags, ribbons, and other offerings. Photograph by the author, 22 July 2017.*

1917; Jones, F. 1954; De Waal 2011). Granted, an absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence, but none of the coins embedded into the Patrishow tree appeared to be pre-decimal. In fact, many of them were new, one at least dating as recently as 2017. The likeliest explanation therefore is that the spread of attention from the well to the tree is recent, probably contemporary with the late twentieth / early twenty-first-century rise of the coin tree custom (Houlbrook 2018a).

If this site follows the patterns of others, then it is possible – probable even – that the coin tree will eventually replace the holy well through the process of sacred transference. The well might dry up, both in terms of its supply of water, already described by Fenton in 1804 (published in 1917) as "a very scanty oozing", and in terms of its religious relevance. The holy wells of Isle Maree, Fore, Clonenagh, and possibly Ardboe, have disappeared now, leaving trees in their stead, while the trees at Gougane Barra replace a large wooden cross. The sites may still be associated with Christianity, but modern-day visitors appear more inclined to participate in a custom with fewer religious overtones: they hammer coins into trees to make wishes rather than drink water from walls to effect cures and offer votive rags to their presiding saints.

CONCLUSION

The sanctity of these Scottish, Irish, and Welsh sites has been sustained, surviving centuries. However, they have certainly not remained static for all this time. With the loosening grip of the Church and the declining faith in the power of saints and their holy wells, the traditions needed to adapt in order to retain their

popularity. Thus, these sites are now largely employed for wish-granting, evidently a more popular and inclusive practice than appealing to Christian saints for remedies to ailments. This transition is reflected in the biographies of the sites.

Holy wells become desecrated, dry up, or simply fall out of use, and sanctity – and thus ritual attention – is transferred to nearby trees, which can sometimes become 'holy wells' in and of themselves. They are transformed from altars of convenience to rag trees; from rag trees to nail or pin trees; and then to coin trees. As one tree falls – literally – another is adopted as replacement; the sacred is substituted and therefore sustained. By tracing the history of these sites, it becomes clear that just as a natural site changes over time, through both organic processes and human intervention, the 'sacred' is equally malleable. Both lend themselves to adaptation, making them not only compatible with each other, but perpetually relevant to contemporary society. They are both mutable, ambiguous, and – like everything else – they must adapt in order to survive.

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A JOKE, MOCKERY, OR SOMETHING MORE? THE CHURCH OF THE FLYING SPAGHETTI MONSTER – AN INVENTED RELIGION OR A NEW MOVEMENT?

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Abstract: This article attempts to analyse a contemporary phenomenon from the sphere of alternative religiosity in the form of joke religions. The main subject of the analysis is a new religious movement called the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster (CFSM), founded in the USA in 2005. By referring to the theory of carnival fun, joining the *sacrum* and *profanum*, and passing through the various doctrinal threads of this religious movement, the author attempts to answer the question of whether the CFSM can be considered a genuine religion or only a joke.

The article begins with a short reflection on the possibility of joking about religion and faith, and the response to religious humour by people of faith, which may range from anger to disgust and sometimes even to aggression. Then, after a short history of this new (pseudo-)religious movement, a perspective is developed. It emerges that the whole structure of the so-called doctrine of this (quasi-)religion refers to other known religions and beliefs, including other new religious movements.

Keywords: alternative religiosity, Church of Flying Spaghetti Monster, humour, joke religion, new religious movements, Pastafarianism, quasi-religion, *sacro-fanum*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of monotheistic religion is rarely associated with what is funny. Rather, religion pertains to the state of communing with the holy. The spiritual experiences associated with participation in religious life leave no place for joking. Making fun of religion or parodying it is a form of profanation, bringing the sacred element to the secular sphere, or even humiliating it (Nowicki

2011: 57). Thus, humour and laughter sometimes seem amoral (McDonald 2012: 92) or even distressing to the targets being ridiculed (Kozintsev 2015: 4). As V. Saroglou writes, "it implies an arrest of moral judgement" (2002: 191–214). This may be why in the fifteenth century the faculty of theology in Paris issued a letter to the prelates of France, expressing abhorrence and execration regarding a certain kind of ritual merriment called the Feast of Fools. The origins of the feast lay in ancient pagan rites, the *festum fatuorum*, condemned long ago by the apostle Paul, as well as St. Augustine (Harris 2011: 1–7). In polytheistic religions, the absence of humour does not seem to be obligatory, because in such religious systems we encounter divine mirth, for example in Shinto (Laude 2005: 119) or in the Chinese and Japanese forms of Zen Buddhism (Gilhus 2004 [1997]: 132–133).

Analysing humour in the widest perspective, we should pay attention to the fact that humour depends on the cultural context in which it arises (Rynkiewicz 2012: 85). After World War II, humanity began searching for different patterns of belief, which resulted in, among other things, the emergence of new religious movements. Among them were jokes disguised as religions (or religions disguised as jokes). This phenomenon is part of a paradigm shift, with spoof religions being associated with the ideas of postmodernism, in which there is no simple reference to the *sacrum* (Ulmer 1985: 92).

In the humanities, both in studies of religion as well as in sociology or theology of religion, this phenomenon has different names and definitions. One scholar in the field of comparative religion, D. Chidester, proposed the designation *authentic fakes*, because they have authentic features familiar from religion, while at the same time simulating religion, which is why they are a falsification (Chidester 2005). Richard L. Smith called them *neophilic irreligions*, A. Possamai calls them *hyper-real religions* (Geoffroy 2012: 23), while the Australian historian of religion C. M. Cusack stated that they are simply *invented religions* (Cusack 2010). This is a completely new type of religiosity, and religious parody. Movements mocking religion can become new areligious or even new atheistic movements. Although most scientists do not take invented religions seriously, they can be considered functionally similar, if not identical to traditional religions (Mikhelson 2018: 130). Such movements may also be labelled *cyber-religions*, *hyper-real religions* or *fake cults* (Obadia 2015: 117).

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, an interesting phenomenon appears within the protest movement in the West, one that tries to present serious fundamentals in a playful or even comic manner. Gaming forms of protest are usually non-violent, although, despite their parodixical-comic character, they can provoke feelings of dislike or even aggression in society. It is no secret that such protest forms are now international in character, present both in

the Western Hemisphere and in the post-Soviet space, in the former so-called "countries with victorious socialism" (Moddelmog-Anweiler 2017: 114). Often, protest movements began to take the form of carnival in its original meaning, when discontent and social tension were expressed in society with the help of game instruments, and, accordingly, were not real, but were only the likeness of discontent and tension. And what could be more pleasant than humour, jokes, and the possibility of presenting a serious subject comically or as parody?

In the carnival culture of the Middle Ages, whence the phenomenon now known was born, laughter and jokes were of immeasurably great significance. With the help of humour, there was a reduction in social tension; overcoming fears, in fact, the world was, as it were, born, or at least updated (Lochrie 2016: 67). In this rather harsh period of a rigidly structured society, when any violation of the rules was strictly punished by both the church (laughter was something that mocked heaven) and the state and even by ordinary public opinion, as we now call it, the carnival approach provided an opportunity to see as a friend or equal one whome we might normally see as a superior. Thanks to the ability of jokes to relieve tension, allowing one to make fun of things that would otherwise be frightening, humour turns a grim reality into something worthy of ridicule, and therefore makes it easier to bear.

Many such jokes are not strictly connected with faith or religion but rather with archetypal characters of citizens or clergy (Davies 1998: 61). The carnival allowed people not only to become entangled in new roles but also to play tricks on others, as well as on themselves, without fear of punishment or conflict. Russian linguist and literary critic, M. Bakhtin, saw the carnivals of Medieval Europe as occasions during which the authority of the state and the church were temporarily inverted. One such carnival did not coincide with any commemoration of sacred history but marked the last days before Lent (Bakhtin 1984: 8).

Bakhtin recognises that the tradition of carnival dwindled in Europe following the Renaissance (Bakhtin 1984: 218–219). In the modern world, carnival has lost its purpose and banter, irony and humour are not always adequately perceived in society, especially if the topic is serious, for example worldview, faith, and religion.

In this article I would like to focus on a concrete example, a case study of today's form of carnival entertainment in the field of religion. This is a new religious movement (or quasi-religious movement) known as the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster (the CFSM), or Pastafarianism. Carnivalesque as well as playing with the sacred is inherent in the CFSM because its attributes and symbols parody Christian symbols, thus being something like sacred parodies, the so-called *parodia sacra* (Burde 2010: 231) that were played during the carnival (Russian *Maslenica*) and Easter carnivals.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CFSM MOVEMENT

Pastafarianism is a so-called new religion (Pawluczuk 1990: 32)[1] that appeared at the beginning of the twenty-first century in the USA, a country where, with a few exceptions, most joke-religions were born (Nowicki 2011: 60). The founder of this quasi-religious movement is a young physician, Bobby Henderson, who was born in 1980 (Obadia 2015: 121).[2] In 2005 a Kansas court decision required the introduction of a school course called Intelligent Design as an alternative to evolutionary teaching (Beckwith 2003: 160–161).[3] Henderson proposed the introduction of a course about a new religion that he had created.

Pastafarianism began when Henderson sent an open letter to the Kansas Board of Education in June 2005 in response to the debate on whether to give the theory of intelligent design (ID) equal time with the theory of evolution in biology lessons. On his site, venganza.org, the name of which comes from the Spanish word for 'revenge' (Kamiński 2015: 37), Henderson formally demanded equal time to teach classes on the Flying Spaghetti Monster (Fig. 1) (Pittman 2016: 242)[4] as the creator of the Universe[5] – the same as for the other versions of the theories of intelligent design and evolution. He warned that if his request was not met, he would be forced to take legal action. This drew attention to the problem that if the teaching of any religion is to become compulsory in schools, then choosing one of them could provoke opposition from others. Members of the Kansas Board of Education generally responded favourably, saying that such humour is needed in times of serious debate (Nowicki 2011: 78).

The venganza.org site (Beckford & Demerath 2007: 360)[6] gained more attention when the Boing Boing portal mentioned it in June 2005. The portal announced that it would pay $250,000 to anyone who could prove that Jesus was not the son of the Flying Spaghetti Monster (Limelie 2014: 21–22). Website traffic also increased in August 2005 when information about the FSM began to appear in online blogs.

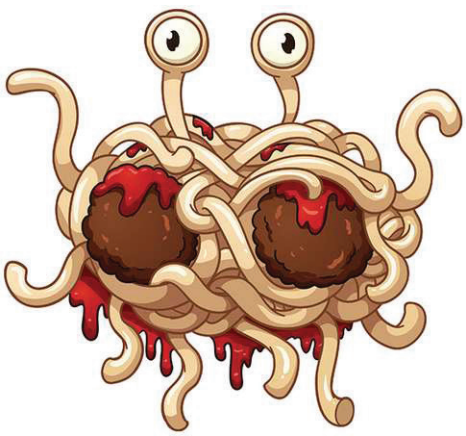

Figure 1. *Flying Spaghetti Monster. An artist's rendition of the Flying Spaghetti Monster. © Memo Angeles / Shutterstock.com.*

The idea of faith in the Flying Spaghetti Monster is to spread tolerance and common sense among people (Fang 2014: 230; Grobler 2014: 191). Monster followers do not submit to any regulations or orders. The approach to the faith of each of the followers is individual, they do not perform any rituals, masses or prayers. Faith is based on certain basic elements. The world was created by the Flying Spaghetti Monster who began the process, starting with mountains, trees, and dwarfs. Anyone who calls for evidence for evolution is wrong – they were planted by the Monster (Henderson 2006: 33).

In the *Gospel of the Flying Spaghetti Monster*, published in 2006, there are many elements typical of beliefs known from other religions, for example:

- Believing that your own theory is "probably" true, and the theories of others are false. According to Henderson, other religions are not bad, but their followers are wandering. However, they can always convert to Pastafarianism. Unfortunately, this is not possible for believers from some other religious systems, for example Scientologists (Sieradzan 2013: 30).
- It is a peaceful religion, which is best for everyone.
- Faith in the FSM as the Creator of the world. The FSM is the first cause and is the source of life. It is hidden, invisible, benign, and omniscient.
- Belief in hell: hell resembles heaven with the difference that beer is stale, and strippers (as in Las Vegas, which Henderson emphasises) carry venereal diseases (Dooling 2008: 224–225).

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CFSM AND ITS CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS AND BELIEFS

What is the religious manifestation of this movement? After all, if Pastafarians want to consider themselves religious believers, an integral part of the doctrine must be a religious dogma – an external expression of inner experiences associated with religious experience.

The sacred food for all Pastafarians is macaroni, which all believers should eat – Henderson claims that pasta is "food for the soul" (2006: 46). Here one can observe the first element of parody: instead of the Holy Communion (Eucharist)[7] of the Christian tradition, Pastafarians eat the body of their 'god'. Some scholars perceive it as a moment when the 'cult' is developing roots in an historical era in which plenty of food is perceived as a cult of abundance and wealth, including at the religious level.

Let us return for a moment to the theory of carnival. During the feast, food becomes almost sacred, food becomes something of a fetish for the people

involved in this action. The abundance of food is not only an image of new life and victory of life over death, but also has a sacred significance, being an attribute of a heavenly place (Tiaglova 2014: 18–19). Some researchers who are familiar with the Christian tradition and the Bible in particular, might quote the Old Testament: "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-matured wines strained clear" (Isaiah 25:6). The dishes and drinks on the table were prepared by God Himself, so we can expect them to be better than what man makes. However, when we read further, we see that on the table there are greasy foods and wine, against which the Holy Bible warns us many times.

When the Bible was written, wine and fatty foods were considered some of the best dishes for the Israelites. The act of eating in the archaic consciousness is an important element of the cosmogonic act. This view emerges in the age of totemism, in which society and the surrounding light were 'contained', and reappeared in the act of eating. A joint meal, the act of eating food, can thus have the character of a sacrifice, during which 'death' and the subsequent 'resurrection' of the food object – totem, god – takes place. In the image of the Spaghetti Monster, a certain dualism is seen: on the one hand one can observe the cult of food, its abundance, and on the other, ridiculing this approach, a parody of the cult of plenty. For Pastafarians even the Tower of Babel (in the CFSM the Tower of Scrapple) is a tower of food leftovers (Henderson 2006: 74–75).

Proofs of the existence of the Spaghetti Monster are built in a comic form and make fun of creationism.[8] At the same time, it is important in Pastafarianism to reduce the slogans, actions, and acts of evidence to absurdity (Dyadushkin 2013: 13–14), thereby demonstrating the frivolity of their own intentions. An example of such *reductio ad absurdum* is Bobby Henderson's inclusion in the 'theology' of his church of the concept of piracy. In a letter to the Kansas Board of Education, Henderson argues that reducing the number of pirates in the world leads to global warming (Obadia 2015: 124).[9] In this absurd example and inference, the young American physician wants to show that the relationship between the number of pirates and global warming is not equal to causality (Kamiński 2015: 41–42).

In this case, the use of the image of the pirate and piracy in Pastafarianism is quite interesting. According to the teachings of this 'church', pirates are the chosen people, they proclaim the word of the Spaghetti Monster, give out sweets to children, and make geographical discoveries. Historically, their image was changed, and therefore persecution of pirates began (Henderson refers to the eras of Antiquity and the Middle Ages). But since the era of Romanticism, the image of pirates has changed for the better, mainly thanks to literature. The

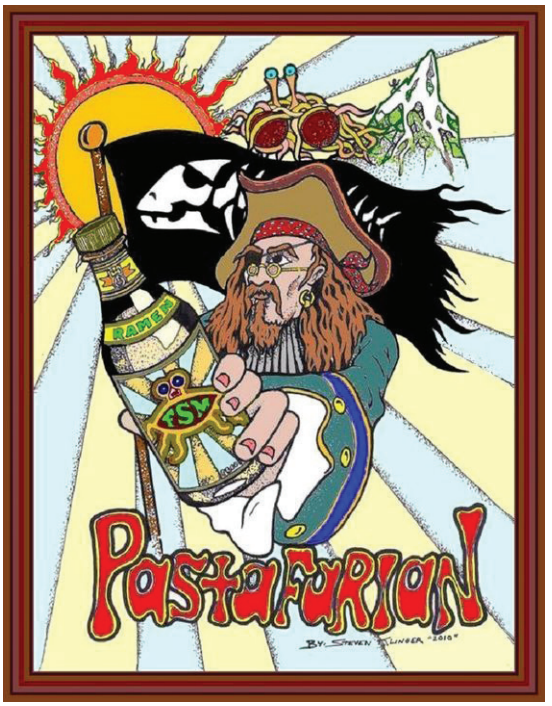

Figure 2. *Propaganda Materials of the FSM Church. © Steven Klingers, coloured by Yves Forban 2013.*

pirate embodied the ideals of freedom, nobility, and a gentlemanly nature. The best example could be seen in the movie saga *Pirates of the Caribbean* (Tiaglova 2014: 19–20).

Because Pastafarianism recognises pirates as almost sacred (Cusack 2012: 307),[10] the prophet Bobby plans to build a pirate ship from funds obtained from the sale of his book on the Flying Spaghetti Monster and religion-related issues (Smarsh 2010: 128). The image of the pirate Jack Sparrow has ambivalent features, for example, an archaic evil and at the same time a charming personality. The doctrine of the pirates in the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster contains an element of travesty, that is, the comic concept of carnival.[11]

Despite the seemingly humorous underpinnings of the whole doctrine, representatives of this movement convince us that they believe in this quite seriously. Pastafarians believe that people originated from pirates[12] and that they will find broadband Internet and trees on which small kittens grow in heaven. Heaven for each Pastafarian is simple, consisting of elements that every admirer of the Flying Spaghetti Monster considers heaven for him- or herself. You will be able to move through the advanced system of gryphon air transport, by turning into a bird or dragon, and will enjoy entertainment such as swamps of hot chocolate, rivers of lemonade, and beer volcanoes.[13]

The concept of heaven in the CFSM could be a parody of the eschatological doctrine of Islam: paradise, according to the Spaghetti Monster, features a Stripper Factory, in which we can see humorous scoffing at the promise of paradise for Muslims, filled with 72 houris (Aarde 2013: 36). Admittedly,

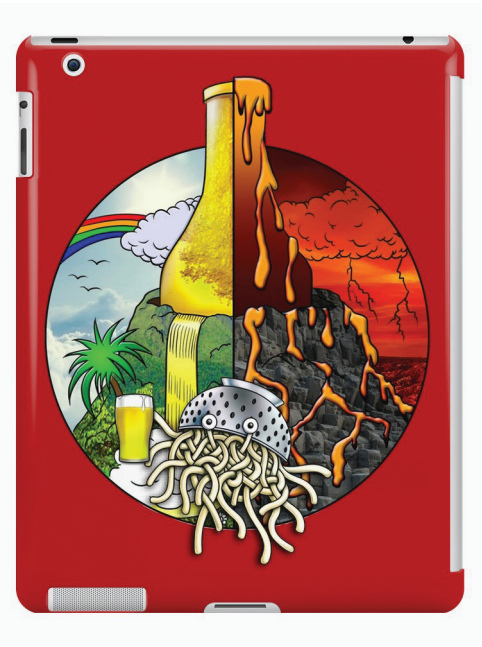

Figure 3. *Heaven & Hell Beer Fountain Volcano. Poster of the FSM Church.* © *DooodleGod / Redbubble.com.*

Henderson does not forget about the ladies, because in heaven there are male strippers for the satisfaction of the saved women Pastafarians, though the latter remain invisible to non-gay men.

Instead of the traditional word Amen from Judeo-Christianity, Pastafarians use *Ramen* to end their prayers (Smith 2008: 7), which in this particular example is not only humorous; it also refers to the Spaghetti Monster by alluding to the Japanese noodles (see Solt 2014).

FSM followers may be guided by eight tips that clearly indicate what they should not do. It is also known as the Eight Flying Spaghetti Condiments, or Octalogue. Each of them begins with the phrase "I'd Really Rather You Didn't". For example, the third of the guidelines says:

> *I'd Really Rather You Didn't judge people for the way they look, or how they dress, or the way they talk, or, well, just play nice, okay? Oh, and get this through your thick heads: Woman = Person. Man = Person. Samey – Samey. One is not better than the other, unless we're talking about fashion and I'm sorry, but I gave that to women and some guys who know the difference between teal and fuchsia.* (Henderson 2006: 78)

So, Henderson is parodying religion as a social institution. He also includes another worldview, Buddhism, which in the last decades has become popular in the West, including in the USA. As with the teachings of Prince Gautama, Pastafarianism promotes an absence of dogma (Gajewski 2016: 24), in its extreme form, including even the negation of the Spaghetti Monster itself (Sieradzan 2013: 31). Just as tantra Buddhists believe that the deity visualised in meditation is just a creation of the mind (Brunnhölzl 2009: 122), Henderson proposes that each follower should make his or her own simulacrum of the FSM.

Henderson sees Pastafarians as having most in common with Rastafarians (Ras Tafari, Haile Selassie, Negus Neghesti ('king of kings') emperor of Ethiopia from 1930 to 1974): from similar names, to Rastafarian dreadlocks resembling curly noodles. The similarity of these two new movements is emphasised by the fact that both have been carefully constructed to have the appearances of a religion (Livraghi 2009 [2004]: 142).

THE CHURCH OF THE FSM AND THE LAW: PASTAFARIANISM IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES (SELECTED ISSUES)

In 2011, a Pastafarian case from Vienna gained publicity when a young man contested a law that prohibits headgear in official photographs. The legal provision excluded cases in which the headgear is associated with a religion. Niko Alm presented a photograph for a new driving license showing him with a colander on his head. The Austrian explained that the colander, used for straining pasta, is religious headgear for Pastafarians. The officials refused his application, although after a court case lasting three years the decision was reversed. Since then Alm has had a driving license that shows him with a colander on his head (Hopko & Scott & Garrison 2018: 18–19; Maffei 2012: 491).

In Brno in 2013, Czech Pastafarian Lukáš Nový received permission for a temporary ID (valid for 30 days) with a photograph in which he wore a colander on his head. Nový argued that his religion required him to wear such a covering on his head at all times, including in photographs for documents (Barnat 2017: 318–319). At the same time, the Czech Ministry of the Interior announced that it was not possible to issue an ID with such a photograph, as the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster was not registered in the Czech Republic.

Figure 4. *Lukáš Nový's ID. Source: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2382465/Im-Pastafarian-Man-claims-religion-forces-wear-sieve-head-given-permission-wear-official-identity-card-picture.html, last accessed on 14 December 2020.*

Figure 5. *Logo of the FSM Church of Australia. Source: https://pastafarians.org.au/, last accessed on 14 December 2020.*

In the USA in 2014, Christopher Schaeffer, the newest member of the Pomfrett NY Town Council, swore his official oath with a colander on his head (Starratt 2016: 210). The first official marriage between two Pastafarians, Toby Ricketts and Marianna Fenn, took place in April 2016 in New Zealand,[14] where the movement had been recognised as a religion a year earlier (Durrant & Poppelwell 2017: 4). In the Netherlands the CFSM was officially recognised as a religion in 2016 (Hopko & Scott & Garrison 2018: 18).

In Poland Pastafarians chose an inopportune moment in political history to become active (Moddelmog-Anweiler 2017: 116).[15] In August 2010 a macaroni action–happening took place in Warsaw, during the unrest that surrounded the so-called scandal of the cross. The organisers of the happening, modelled by Henderson, aimed to make demonstrators aware of the existence of other religions and so went to the Presidential Palace in Krakowskie Przedmieście Street with a bowl of pasta, which they ritually consumed among the group of protesting Catholics and atheists (Nowicki 2011: 79).

In July 2012, Polish Pastafarians formally applied for their church to be entered into the register of churches and other religious associations (Tyrała 2014: 144). During the scandal which followed the attempt to register the new religious association, two religious scholars from Kraków answered the question of whether the CFSM can be called a religion. They stated the following:

- In the individual and private domain – yes (because everyone can recognise what they like, even if it is absurd).
- In the official or formal domain, when it comes to state office, and especially the Ministry, no (because such 'recognition' then receives a social and state dimension, and above all has legal consequences); one may also suspect that the group's application for recognition as a 'religious community' is a continuation of this parody (Banek & Czarnecki 2012).

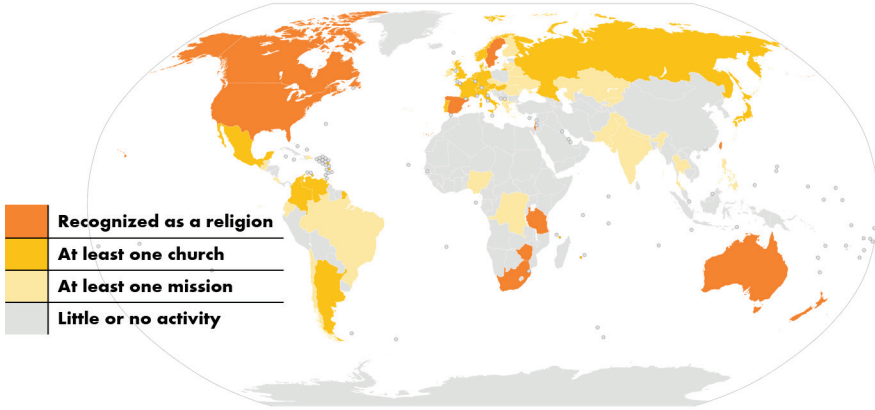

Figure 6. *Recognition of Pastafarianism around the world. © Conquistador. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pastafarianism_recognizing_states.svg, last accessed on 15 December 2020.*

While this expert opinion was not binding on the Ministry, Minister Michał Boni refused to register the movement (Firlit 2015: 24). Nevertheless, on 8 April 2014, the Voivodship Administrative Court in Warsaw annulled the decision of the Minister of Administration and Digitisation, Michał Boni. In October 2014, Secretary of State Stanisław Huskowski issued a decision on behalf of the Minister of Administration and Digitisation, refusing to register the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster (Grobler 2014: 189). The Church appealed and the next hearing regarding registration took place on 28 April 2015, when the Administrative Court in Warsaw ruled in favour of the Church because the refusal was issued twice by the same official (Wyrok 2014). On 18 May 2016, the Voivodship Administrative Court in Warsaw dismissed the complaint; and the same decision was adopted by the Supreme Administrative Court in Warsaw on 19 November 2016. At present, this dispute between the 'Church' of the FSM and the Polish state remains unresolved (see Libiszowska-Żółtkowska 2016).

According to Polish religious scholars, among others Dr. Paweł Boniecki, declaration of faith in the Flying Spaghetti Monster has gained popularity among atheists and agnostics.[16] There was also opposition because in the documents used for registration it was stated that a community would be established in order to profess and spread its faith, which has a system, doctrine and rituals, and requires one to register in the community (Święchowicz 2013: 60). However, on 18 November 2020, the Association of Flying Spaghetti Monster Fans was registered in the National Court Register with its seat in Gdańsk.

Henderson gives a twofold answer to the question of contradictions in his religion: first, they aim to test the faith of believers, and secondly, without contradiction, religion could not accumulate a large number of followers (examples can be Christianity and Islam). Questions arise as to how Henderson wants to reconcile Christianity, which he considers to be the embodiment of violence, a kind of "religious Rambo" (2006: 28), with Buddhism, which is a "highly peaceful religion". In accordance with his faith, he does not propose a common prayer or meditation, but rather eating their favourite meal together. However, even with this approach we can recognise a somewhat ironic reference to the Christian feast *agape*, which, especially in the first centuries of Christianity, was of great importance to believers (Shackleford 2005: 86).

CONCLUSION

Even the most absurd joke does not have to be deprived of the sacred element, and vice versa, humour can appear even in serious phenomena such as religion. But is the idea of Pastafarians really religious?

An undoubted advantage of Pastafarianism is the sense of humour of its founder, as evidenced by the drawing of the skull with one eyepatch, which is the image of the pirate as a perfect believer, and the slogan *Convert or Die!* The official teaching of this Church says that "any content that seems ridiculous and humorous is only fortuitous" (Gajewski 2016: 24). If someone feels offended by the beliefs of the CFSM, Henderson responds that other beliefs also offend him as a follower of the FSM. However, he reserves the right not to persecute or kill others in the name of his religion, as fanatics of other religions do (2006: 65).

The FSM religion claims to respond to the challenges of the new times in which the idols of media, film, music, art, sport, etc., are justified and their fame is often as short-lived as eating a portion of pasta. The CFSM attempts to show the truth about American Christians as followers of a syncretic ideology that combines the free, subjective reading of the Bible with the unscientific hypotheses of Intelligent Design. The CFSM uses jokes and parody and even lies. However, the motivation underlying the activity in its assumption is positive. It is not only about fun but also about social criticism. FSM doctrine pokes fun at and criticises both itself and other religions. For "believers" of invented religions like the CFSM irony is an instrument that does not offer true knowledge but just shows what we do not know and that searching for the Absolute (= truth) is doomed to fail (Reece 2002: 160).

The FSM itself fits perfectly into what has long been noted by religious anthropologists and religious researchers, i.e. that the new postmodern religions

are of a sacrophanic nature in which the rigid division of religious ideologies into *sacrum* and *profanum* has been replaced by a new *sacrofanum* (such as the new postmodern religions of capitalism, consumption, television, technology, football, rock, the Internet, etc.) (Sieradzan 2013: 33). By reading and analysing the Holy Scriptures of Pastafarians, we see unmistakably that the FSM has not non-sacral but rather sacrophanic attributes. Then it becomes obvious how such movements as the CFSM do not come into conflict with traditional or other forms of religiosity. They represent alternative worldview positions. We can almost certainly say that the activities of the CFSM cannot realise religious needs (Dyadushkin 2013: 14). The postmodern sacred in pop culture (and the CFSM is one form of this culture) exists as a supplement to religion (Libiszowska-Żółtkowska 2015: 15).

At present, the dispute between the CFSM and the Polish state remains unresolved. On the one hand, it is a parody bearing the banner of protest while preserving the carnivalistic, sarcastic approach to beliefs and postulates. Through laughter there is a deliverance from fear, and the possibility of a new perspective on the world around us. Although supporters of the Spaghetti Monster deny the idea of clericalisation, perhaps even subconsciously they continue to play with a variation of this theme, thereby implicating the idea of worship.

On the other hand, in such a humorous form adherents of the doctrine defend their own scientific views, the sources of which must be sought in the Age of Enlightenment. It makes a game of something sacred, which is an act of parody, and at the same time reproduces the deep subconscious ideas and desires of worship, including religious ones. The paradox of the *sacrum* play can be explained by the Johan Huizinga's Homo Ludens theory, which says that worship and play have a common property in that they are both a closed space separated from everyday surroundings (1998: 46–49). Inside this fenced circle is a game in which special rules apply: exclusion from everyday life and the joyful nature of the action. Fun is a different mode of action, turning the order of everyday life upside down, as with the carnival of medieval Christianity or Purim in Judaism.

The views expressed by followers of the CFSM have a visible ideological duality: when there is a need, this organisation is supposed to pretend to be a religion, while at other times the main goal is to parody and insult existing religions and religious movements, especially Christianity. In order to register as a religious association in various countries, Pastafarians proclaim that they do not want to offend anyone, and that their faith is authentic.

It seems possible to distinguish two completely different categories: the religion of laughter, and mocking religion. The first is intended to amuse believers while not offending other religious systems or ridiculing their doctrines or forms

of worship. Such religions of laughter do not impersonate real or traditional belief systems with the intention of parodying or compromising those religions. An example of this may be the Feast of Fools, rites and rituals which were not subversive to the Christian tradition. The Feast of Fools took its name not from fools who rebelled against God, but from fools who are loved by God for their lowly status (Harris 2011: 68). Mocking religions, including the CFSM, are mainly parodies of real beliefs, which they ridicule.

In FSM 'doctrine', it is easy to find an aversion to religion in general, and most of its followers are atheists (Pachciarz 2015: 21). It seems that humour in the CFSM has a subversive character. The CFSM mainly opposes Christianity, but it also critically refers to selected structural elements of other religions to hide some of its real goals, high on the list of which is striking at the religious tradition of the West, as found in Christianity (see the critique of the Our Father and Hail Mary prayers in Kamiński 2015: 45–46). It should be said that the CFSM was created only to oppose Intelligent Design, not to profess and spread a faith. The CFSM is a form of joke in which there is an evident intention to ridicule the dogmas of Christianity and some other faith systems (to a lesser extent), and to parody the cult, doctrine, and rites of the authentic form of religiosity. This is not a proper, genuine mode of religious expression.

NOTES

[1] According to some of the most liberal approaches, religion is everything that a human considers as a religion.

[2] In the literature Henderson is sometimes called the first prophet of the CFSM. Such a statement is not entirely correct, because the first prophet of the 'Church' for Pastafarians is Captain Mosey.

[3] The story began in 1999 when the Kansas Board of Education set new standards in education that did not contain references to the age of the Earth, the Big Bang theory or the theory of evolution. What's more, knowledge about the latter was not required in school exams, which meant that students were not being made aware of its assumptions. Finally, in 2005 Intelligent Design found its place next to the theory of evolution in the biology programme.

[4] This being was described in one of the American newspapers as "a googly-eyed blob of noodles grasping two meatballs".

[5] Another mockery of traditional religions – both Judaism and Christianity – the Spaghetti Monster did this, however, faster than the Jewish god, i.e. in five days.

[6] In three months, this web page received nearly two million hits a day and has been commented on in major print media, as well as in various online chats, discussion forums and blogs.

[7] Pastafarians even have a kind of sacramental bread, *Sacrilicious* (Latin *hostia*), reminiscent of that used in the Catholic liturgy. Admittedly, this is not, of course, a consecrated host, in addition to which on every wafer is the likeness of the Spaghetti Monster.

[8] Another joke religion that ridicules the idea of creationism is Last Thursdayism. See: Jennings 2015: 23; Lagemaat 2015 [2005]: 286.

[9] To support his thesis with evidence, Henderson presented a graph of statistical data on the average annual temperature on Earth over the last few centuries against the declining number of pirates. This is why one of the slogans of the CFSM is 'Stop Global Warming, Become a Pirate'.

[10] There is even a special feast day in the CFSM calendar, Talk Like a Pirate Day, 19 September, when everyone is encouraged to speak in a pirate accent. Other festivals are Ramendan (in reference to the Muslim Ramedan) and Pastover (in reference to the Passover) (see Chryssides 2012: 92).

[11] Pastafarians are required to wear a full pirate costume or at least an eye-patch, and every Friday is a day off, which should be celebrated by eating a bowl of spaghetti.

[12] 95 percent of human DNA is shared with monkeys, and 99.9 percent with pirates.

[13] The image of the volcano could be 'borrowed' from the covers of L. Ron Hubbard's *Dianetics*.

[14] In all fairness, it should be noted that the first Pastafarian wedding in Europe took place in the Polish city of Łódź in 2014, but as the movement is not considered a religion in Poland, the event was not noticed by the world's media (see La Capitale 2018).

[15] Poland is an example of a European country where there is a so-called 'endorsed church' phenomenon, i.e. the preference for a certain church that is not defined in a legal way but is traditionally associated with the national identity.

[16] Since 2008 the Missouri State CFSM has sponsored Skeptikon, the largest atheist convention in the US Midwest, although Henderson does not claim to be an atheist (see Chryssides 2012: 92). The Pastafarians themselves define atheism as "the simple consequence of FSMism".

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BURIED ALIVE: THE PHENOMENON OF APPARENT DEATH IN ESTONIAN TRADITION

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Abstract: Hardly any other folklore subject or motif can offer a more colourful bouquet in genre than apparent death, ranging from fairy tales and romantic legends to rumours, ballads, and jokes. The historical origin of stories of apparent death extends back to antiquity, probably also relying on some true events; however, the formation and spread of folktales on this subject falls into the Enlightenment period in Europe. The emergence and development of this topic relate to medical and religious practices, journalism and literature. The article focuses on the traditional context of apparent death in eighteenth-nineteenth-century Europe, including Estonia.

Keywords: apparent death, Enlightenment, funeral, legend, premature burial, rumour, seemingly dead

As a metaphor, the Estonian word *varjusurm* (Ger. *Scheintod*, *Scheintote*) is still in active use in Estonian, meaning 'seemingly dead', 'apparently dead', 'dormant', 'death trance', or 'lethargy'. Today the word is used to signify something that exists but is dysfunctional. Consider, for example, the following random headlines in the Estonian media: *aktsiafondid on varjusurmas* 'stock funds are apparently dead', *hüpnoosravi Eestis on varjusurmas* 'hypnosis as a form of treatment is apparently dead in Estonia', etc. At the same time, the direct meaning of the word is not entirely forgotten or obsolete among the general public. Time and again, newspapers publish translations of news reports of dubious truth value about the sudden resurrection of someone who has been declared dead. These sensational reports are likely to migrate from one publication to another and from one country to another via online media, whereas those who publish them often do not bother to check if they are true.

In Europe, the subject of identifying death and the phenomenon of apparent death have been discussed for centuries. Real or potentially real cases of the dead returning to life have been addressed in oral lore, literature, early journalism, as well as in medical literature. The first (and by far the most frequently quoted) reference to such stories can be found in Plato's *Republic.* Here Plato recounts the story of an Armenian soldier who was slain in battle. When his body was picked up ten days later, it was intact and so was taken home, but when the body was placed on the funeral pyre to be burnt, he returned to life (Bondeson 2001: 19). The monograph *Buried Alive: The Terrifying History of Our Most Primal Fear* by Jan Bondeson, professor at the University of Wales College of Medicine, discusses the fear that once overcame humanity, and can be considered one of the most exhaustive modern studies of the phenomenon of *Scheintod*, or apparent death, taking into account many sources and aspects of different fields. That same year as Bondeson's book, another rather comprehensive historical and folkloristic monograph appeared, titled *Erzählungen* über *den Scheintod. Faktizität und Fiktionalität in medizinischen Fallberichten* (2001) by Ines Köhler-Zülch. Relying on the thorough approaches by Bondeson and Köhler-Zülch in my paper, I will provide an insight into the topic of apparent death through the lens of folkloric, literary, medical, religious, and journalistic sources, focusing on this material in Estonia from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century as well as the first decades of the twentieth century.

APPARENT DEATH FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MEDICINE

Apparent death is a popular term marking a deep sleep-like state that in previous centuries not even doctors were always able to diagnose. In such a state, an individual's metabolism is reduced to a minimum and breathing and heart activity cannot be detected by external observation. The state could last for days or even for weeks. Such symptoms are quite typical of several modern-day diseases, or cases of significant blood loss or intoxication (by opium or chloroform), as well as sometimes occurring in new-born babies. Fairy tales about Sleeping Beauty are probably based on this very phenomenon. Certain illnesses, such as diabetes, epilepsy, etc., can cause a person to lapse into a coma, then seemingly returning to life.[1] Modern medicine refers to such autoresuscitation using a biblical term – the Lazarus syndrome. In 1968, an important decision regarding confirmation of death was made with the advent of the so-called Harvard criteria on brain death, i.e. the cessation of the functions of the entire brain. Patients in this irreversible state are defined as being dead, and their organs

become available for harvesting and transplant (Lehtmets & Elmet 2013). Jan Bondeson (2001: 270–272) notes that even after the Harvard criteria were established, the doubts and fear about returning to life on the operating table while being harvested for organs persisted for at least another decade, as the debate among medical professionals continued, leading to special tests being conducted for additional examination, such as using EEG to test bioelectric signals of the brain. Journalists too played a role in instigating such doubts, and it was only in the 1980s and 1990s that brain death became a generally accepted measure.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT-ERA BREAKTHROUGH: MEDICINE AND PRACTICES THROUGH THE CENTURIES

In the Enlightenment era, taphephobia, or the fear of being buried alive, one of the most primal human fears, suddenly became very topical as a result of the combination of several factors.

In seventeenth-century medicine, pagan myths, religious legends, and popular beliefs existed alongside science-based ideas.

> *Death was defined as a state where life was extinct and the soul had left the body; a person could be either dead or alive, and no concept existed of a* process *of dying. Death was regarded as a whole supernatural, obscure phenomenon, outside the limits of rational analysis*. (Bondeson 2001: 22–23)

During the seventeenth-century plague, doctors and relatives of the sick were accused of killing people or deliberately burying them alive (Slack 1985: 274–275). However, during that century views on death and dying began to change. In the eighteenth century, evidence of the fear of apparent death emerged, for example in the burial sites of plague victims. During a grave excavation in Marseilles, corpses were discovered with long needles driven in their fingers as a form of verification that the people were indeed dead. This means of verifying death was later widely used (Bondeson 2001: 32–33). Primarily owing to the epidemics, many doctors learned the fatal consequences of burying the dead prematurely to prevent the spread of the disease. In the eighteenth century, uncertainty over what signs showed life and death, and the phenomena accompanying the process of dying turned into a problem for medical science, to which solutions were sought (as noted above) as late as the twentieth century. The line between life and death became blurred, and the transient state, apparent death, was

defined, although its actual identification proved too challenging for both educated medical practitioners and – even more so – for the uneducated peasant. Even as late as the nineteenth century, the stench of putrefaction was considered the only efficient medical proof of someone's death. At the time, medicine and healthcare policies were intended to instil fear and warn people against being buried alive. As additional measures, attempts were made to observe the corpse and legally extend the time of burial (Köhler-Zülch 2012: 179).

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, medicine was developing and exploring. During this time, many important discoveries were made. Tallinn's first chickenpox vaccinations took place in the first years of the nineteenth century; in the 1830s, a distinction was made between syphilis and gonorrhoea (see Gustavson 1969: 47; 1979: 12). In the nineteenth century, the movement against premature burial gained momentum in Europe. Among other things, relevant societies were established, one of the most influential among them being the London Association for the Prevention of Premature Burial, founded in 1896. The society published newspaper stories about people buried alive, seemingly dead women giving birth, etc., and attempted to have the British Parliament pass a bill to prevent burial or disposal of a body without a medical certificate issued by a doctor, and to ensure that no such certificate was issued without a thorough inspection and examination of the body.[2] In fact, the emergence of the topic of apparent death coincided with the general aspirations of the governing elite, intellectuals, doctors and economic and religious circles of the Enlightenment era to educate the general public and to make the world a better place.

Case reports, describing people who had returned to life or had been mistakenly buried after appearing to be dead, were used to provide better examples, emphasise the seriousness of the problem, and present the material in a more attractive way. Among the most famous and influential medical works that shaped attitudes, instilled fear and confusion, and spread folklore in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, were the volumes of *Dissertation sur l'incertitude des signes de la mort et l'abus des enterremens et embaumemens précipités* (vols. 1–2, 1742–1745),[3] and *Abhandlung* von der *Ungewißheit* der *Kennzeichen* des *Todes* und dem *Mißbrauche* der mit *übereilten Beerdigungen* und *Einbalsamirungen vorgeht* (1754) by Jacques Jean Bruhier, and the so-called dictionary of apparent death, *Der Scheintod oder Sammlung der wichtigsten Thatsachen und Bemerkungen darüber, in alphabetischer Ordnung* in 1808 by the prominent Doctor Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland (1762–1836)[4] (see Bondeson 2001; Köhler-Zülch 2001).

Ines Köhler-Zülch and Jan Bondeson demonstrate in their studies how facts and fiction, folklore and literary adaptations intermingled in these supposed case

reports. Both authors mention that in Europe in the Age of Enlightenment, the topic of apparent death remained popular because of advancements in medicine, journalism, literature and folklore, church and religion. All these institutions strove to inform and educate people, and continued to retell old and new stories about cases of possible or actual apparent death. At the height of this debate, rules and laws regulating death and burial were officially adopted. In fact, so many printed publications at the time instigated the fear of apparent death that by the mid-nineteenth century it had evolved into a hysteria (see Köhler-Zülch 2001). Special hospitals were built to observe dead bodies, customised coffins had bells attached to them, etc. Many historians, when contemplating the fear of premature burial, which gripped Europe in the mid-eighteenth century, have admitted that this fear was a kind of by-product of the dechristianisation process (see Ariès 1991: 399–401; Bondeson 2001: 77).

> *Many people had begun to question the traditional Christian dogma, and the secular rationalism left an emotional vacuum for those who had to confront the thought of death without the hope of paradise. This led to an increased fear of death. …people became concerned about what happened to their dead – or perhaps not so dead-bodies: If they did not enter a better world in the odor of sanctity, what befell them? The physical torments of a premature burial – the ghoulish minutiae of gnawed hands, bruised heads and beaten bodies that recur in Bruhier's books – may be taken to represent some kind of secularized hell.* (Bondeson 2001: 77)

The most active movement for preventing premature death was in Germany, where Hufeland was also active. In his hometown, Weimar, the first *Leichenhaus*, a waiting mortuary, was built as early as in 1792. But the movement for preventing premature death had a significant effect also in France, England, and elsewhere. In Germany, however, most waiting mortuaries had either been demolished or had changed their purpose by the mid-nineteenth century, although they continued to operate in major cities, such as Frankfurt, Mainz, Munich, and Berlin. Similar new institutions were still being opened in Düsseldorf, Stuttgart, and Hamburg in the 1870s (Bondeson 2001: 90–91, 104, see also 88–117).

Many famous people, such as novelists Hans Christian Andersen and Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and chemist Alfred Nobel and others, lived in fear of being buried alive. Nikolai Gogol (1809–1862) was terrified of being buried while being lethargic, and rumours later suggested that this is exactly what happened to him. According to the rumours, when Gogol's grave was opened for reburial in 1931, his body had moved, and there were scratch marks inside the coffin's

lid. Although there were alternative explanations, the speculation about him having been buried alive still lingers in many works on Gogol's life and death (Lovejoy 2015). The topic of being buried alive received lively discussion in the works of many famous nineteenth-century authors, for example Gottfried Keller (1819–1890) in his poem "Lebendig begraben", Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) in *The Premature Burial*, etc.

THE TOPIC OF APPARENT DEATH IN ESTONIA

An analysis of various sources reveals that this fear and the topic in general arrived somewhat later in Eastern Europe, including Estonia, and did not gain perhaps the same momentum as elsewhere. Still, the topic was known here and was discussed in daily life, in newspapers, in law, and, certainly, in folklore in the form of legends and rumours.

Articles about various cases of suspected apparent death were written not only in Estonia but also in neighbouring countries. For example, in the 1880s, several articles on the subject were published in a Russian medical journal. One of these describes a case of exhumation because the dead body had been seen with tears upon his face at the funeral. Village or parish priests often took on doctor's responsibilities, which included pronouncing death. To provide the village priests with the knowledge of how to confirm death, a special magazine containing such advice was designed for the priests by the Kiev Theological Academy in the nineteenth century (Warner 2000: 73–74). Information was also shared with peasants. The first printed publications in the homes of Estonian peasants were calendar books, and already eighteenth-century calendars contained instructions on how to resuscitate people in the case of hypothermia, drowning, and apparent death. Such instructions were published, for example, in the *Eesti-Ma Rahva Kalender* (Estonian Peasants' Calendar) and *Ramma Josepi Hädda- ja Abbi-ramat* (Ramma Josep's Emergency Manual) by Friedrich Gustav Arvelius in the early 1790s (see Martsoo 2007: 11).

In Estonia, the church regarded hasty funerals and wakes for the deceased as a pagan phenomenon. In this context, it makes sense that clerical circles were particularly keen on inciting a fear of being buried alive, often by opposing and rejecting the traditional family-centred death and funeral traditions.

The church had every reason to be discontented. Several works analysing the funeral traditions of Estonians and their kinsfolk (Reiman 1915; Mikkor 1994, 1995; etc.) reveal that Estonians were not particularly eager to observe Christian traditions, even though they had converted to the church centuries

before. Merike Lang, who has studied northeast Estonian funeral culture, has argued, relying on some sixteenth to nineteenth-century sources (David Dubberich, Johann Wilhelm Ludwig von Luce) that, in reality, people tried to bury the dead as soon as possible (Lang 2004: 84). There were probably many reasons for this, one being poverty, because people attending a wake had to be fed, while another was the time away from work that a wake entailed. The church tried to instil new content in the ritual of the wake (Rimpiläinen 1971: 207, 259). In 1799, a church law was adopted prohibiting the washing of the dead, or apparently dead, before rigor mortis had completely set in, or before all vital signs were lost, and obliging at least a three-day delay to the funeral (Rosenplänter 1823).

It is safe to assume that in the nineteenth century the fear of being buried alive was part of everyday life. People wrote about it, spoke about it, and spread rumours and longer tales with traditional plots (migratory legends) about being apparently dead or buried alive. Certainly, people also joked about the subject, and these romantic tales inspired popular ballads. Among the most extreme measures against being buried alive were the abovementioned special waiting mortuaries, and patent coffins with special signalling devices. Such material has not been recorded in writing, but according to an oral report, a coffin with a signalling device was known to have been used at Raadi cemetery in Tartu.[5]

In the 1860s, a waiting mortuary was built near the railway station in Tallinn for the inheritance, specially assigned for this purpose, of an eccentric doctor Heinrich Heinrichsen (1781–1855), who had lived in the area.[6] Heinrichsen had been interested in hypnosis and homeopathy and, throughout his life, had struggled with the fear of being buried alive (Gustavson 1979: 204; Vende 1990: 50–51). This peculiar mortuary in Tallinn has been described in a humorous tone by Werner Bergengruen (1892–1964) in his short story "Die wunderliche Herberge" (Bergengruen 1966).

THE TOPIC OF APPARENT DEATH IN ESTONIAN FOLKLORE

Some of the motifs and narrative plots surrounding the topic of apparent death are old and known all over the world. The earlier of the texts held in the Estonian Folklore Archives date back to the late 1880s while the most recent ones were recorded in 2000. The author of this article has also collected quite a number of such texts during annual fieldwork conducted each summer since 1986. This material also resulted in a review paper presented in 1988 (Kalmre 1988).

Most of the Estonian tales about apparent death were collected in the latter half of the twentieth century. One of the possible reasons for this is that the majority of such material circulated as rumour in the early days of folklore collecting, i.e. the final decades of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, meaning that the incidents seemingly occurred to a friend of a friend. Because of the criteria that folklore collecting was based on at the time, collectors could not recognise the traditional nature of the tales and regarded them as information that reflected daily life, especially because the nineteenth-century newspapers published similar news about supposedly real cases of apparent death. Folkloristic fieldwork materials suggest that the tradition of tales of apparent death remained in living memory in the final decades of the twentieth century. The following extracts from the accounts recorded in the 1970s and 1980s and preserved in the Estonian Folklore Archives (RKM) are indicative of this:

> *My mother's relative lapsed into apparent death during childbirth.*
>
> *It happened right here, in Lelle.*
>
> *When my grandmother saw someone who had passed away in her sleep, she believed the person was apparently dead.*
>
> *When my uncle passed away, my father was not sure that he was completely dead and checked with a mirror to see if he was still breathing. Some people have been apparently dead, you know.*
>
> *A midwife once asked to have her veins sliced to avoid being apparently dead.*
>
> *In childhood, these stories about apparent death were quite scary; people told them often.*
>
> *In my youth, it was said that a dead body should not be kept at home before the funeral; instead, it has to be taken to the hospital and the burial postponed for several days.*

Leaving aside the fairy tales featuring elements of apparent death (Sleeping Beauty aka Little Briar Rose, Snow White), the Estonian tradition contains four main plot variations according to tale type indices (Uther 2004; Simonsuuri 1987). Firstly, 'A woman feigns death', or in the Estonian material rather 'The seemingly dead bride' (885A) is categorised as a so-called short narrative folktale with the following plot: a young woman (or princess) falls in love with an older man. But her parents force her to marry another. On her wedding

day, the woman lapses into apparent death (faints, chokes on something). The groom hears voices from her grave, opens the grave, rescues the maiden and they get married. Alternatively, the maiden is saved by a grave robber. In some variants, a wax figure is made after the maiden is buried. The story has Chinese origins, while the European versions date back to the Middle Ages (e.g., *Decameron*, 4th tale of Day 10; see Boccaccio 2004: 609–614; Uther 2004: 510). This plot has also been called a romance and has been recorded most numerously in southeastern Estonia, more specifically the Seto region.

Secondly, 'A seemingly dead person reawakens' (990; Uther 2004: 617 or C1901 according to Finnish legend repertoire, see Simonsuuri 1987: 67). A woman falls ill during a pandemic and lapses into a deathlike state. She is placed in a grave with a valuable ring. A gravedigger comes to rob the grave, but as he pulls the ring from her finger the woman returns to life, goes home, and lives a long life. In some cases, she marries the grave robber (merges with plot 885A). This tale was documented in the late Middle Ages (cf. *Decameron*, 5th tale of Day 2 and 4th tale of Day 10, Boccaccio 2004: 93–101, 609–614) and is known in most parts of the world (Uther 2004: 618)[7]. These two plots usually have a happy ending with the seemingly dead person brought back to life.

The third plot, 'A pregnant woman lapses into seeming death' (C1921, see Simonsuuri 1987) does not end happily: a woman is buried, gives birth in the grave and dies. In these tales, the evidence of being buried after apparent death was the child (or children) born in the grave. The voices heard from the grave and the bones of children found in the coffin after exhumation were proof of this horrible event.

> *It happened right here, in Lelle, in Nassa's house. There was this young woman, and she died. She was also pregnant. And all the time she kept appearing in her husband's and parents' dreams. And she was telling them things in their dreams and they dug her up. She had given birth to a child in that grave. It is a miracle how she could have survived there for that long without air.*
> (RKM II 402, 164(19) < Juuru, Ingliste parish, Palu village – A. Korb < Aliide Kallis, 79 years (1987))

In some cases, the seemingly dead bride and the not-quite-dead pregnant woman giving birth merge into one. In the narrative variants given here, the protagonist of the tales is a young woman. Even though these traditional tales had all the features needed to spread as widely as the case reports of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century medical literature, they were also popular sources of fiction. In fact, the line between the two genres was somewhat vague, as suggested

by the foreign-sounding names of the characters, the romantic plot, etc. The second plot given here is known outside Estonia as 'The lady with the ring'. From the fourteenth to the nineteenth century, the story, adapted to the local situation and featuring local characters, was one of the most popular migratory legends in many European towns. For example, in Shankill cemetery in Ireland a tomb monument has been erected for Lady Margorie McCall, who was reportedly buried alive and rescued from the grave by grave robbers. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Germany, an analogous story is known from at least 19 towns (Wikipedia: Lady with the Ring; see also Bondeson 2001: 35–71). During the 1988 fieldwork in Puhja, I wrote down a sentimental account of events that allegedly happened in the town of Mitau, told by 83-year-old Hilda Pääsuke.

> *There was this manor lady once, from the town of Mitau. She died, and the funeral was held and all. But the cemetery guardian, he used to be very poor, had a dozen children or so. But the manor lady had a lavish funeral, and all this gold was placed in her grave, rings and all. So, he thought that he should take these. But he had a 12-year-old daughter who followed her father to the cemetery. After a while, she saw her father running back from the cemetery and going towards the pond. … The girl asked where he was going. The father rushed into the pond. The daughter was holding her father by the hand, trying to calm him down. You see, he had dug up the grave at the chapel to get the ring from the lady's finger. So, he took a knife and poked with its end, but he cut into her finger so that it bled and the lady woke up. The lady stood up and then returned, saying, hurry, the cemetery guardian is trying to drown himself. People were first frightened of her, believing that she was a ghost, but then realised that she was human and went to the pond. The 12-year-old girl had held her father until then. But she couldn't have done it much longer! So, they rescued the cemetery guardian. And later he told the manor lord that he did that because he was so poor. The lord was happy that he had got his wife back and gave the cemetery guardian a horse, a cow and a piglet, and a plot of land on top of it. It is a true story. The lady, whom my mother was serving, was also from Mitau – she told the story.*
> (RKM II 413, 483/5 (22))

These tales may be presented in a rather romantic tone, especially those about a wealthy baron's daughter marrying a poor grave robber who rescued her. In terms of early sentimental popular literature, which drew ideas from the social themes of general interest and from folklore, the focus on apparent death as

a phenomenon was quite typical. The tales that have survived to the present day in the form of folktales and literature were often linked to some young lady of noble descent. In the Estonian tradition, one of the most famous women to give birth to a child while apparently dead was princess of Braunschweig, Auguste Friederike Luise, daughter of a Prussian duke, who is buried in Kullamaa Church. The princess was sent into exile to Koluvere Manor after becoming involved in court intrigues in St. Petersburg. In Estonia, the young princess's fate proved rather unfortunate. Local tradition still knows the legend of an unfortunate Friederike, who gave birth to a child after being buried alive (see Kaljund 2012).[8]

Estonian tradition also includes, although in smaller numbers, belief legends about an apparently dead person who returns to life before the funeral (C1931) but is forbidden to speak about what he or she saw in the state of death. The texts suggest that such a person usually dies within a year, or three or four years.

> *There used to be a house near the Rebuoja forest in Tammiku. And the master of the house died. His wife and five children were left behind. The wife was crying rivers and summoned the coffin makers. When the men arrived, the dead man returned to life and told them to bring three mouthfuls of bread, salt, and water. Then he told them: "Come back in three years." The man refused to speak about what he saw or where he was, when he was in the state of death. Or else he would die instantly. Three years later, the man died completely*.
> (RKM II 83, 151 (8) < Väike-Maarja – H. Muru > Valdo Mattisen, 86 years (1959))

While tales like the one above contained homogenous and stable (sometimes even complex) plot features representing so-called folkloric tale types, it was much more common that, against the background of general fear of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, stories about apparent death, and reawakening from apparent death, were spread as tall tales or rumours. These tales were generally short descriptions of unusual incidents that were associated with specific (local) people and cemeteries.

> *In Karijärve people said: she was eating chicken when a small bone got stuck in her throat. They started to bury her, went to the cemetery. And she was the mother of Mitt of Nosse. Well, they went with horses, it happened a long time ago. And the road was bumpy, and the bone came loose and they both came home together*.
> (RKM II 414, 177/8 (18) Puhja, Kaimi village – A. Korb < Alma Sütt 80 years (1988))

Of course, this is also very much reminiscent of a motif (E21.1) from Snow White: by shaking the poisoned piece of apple loose from the girl's throat the prince brings her back to life.

THE TOPIC OF APPARENT DEATH IN NINETEENTH- AND EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY ESTONIAN NEWSPAPERS

In Estonia, popular cautionary tales and warnings to delay funerals were also spread in the newspapers of the nineteenth century, and even of the first decades of the twentieth century. Already in 1806, an article warning against being buried alive was published in the second issue of the first Estonian-language weekly newspaper, *Tarto maa rahwa Näddali-Leht* (Tartu Country People's Weekly). The article emphasises the need to delay the burial of a dead body for three days because many people had already been buried alive. In this piece of writing, again, the stench of putrefaction is considered the most reliable sign of death:

> *The clearest sign indicating that someone is completely dead, is the stench of death, which everyone recognises. When the stench can be smelled, the dead body will start moving or swelling; and foam comes upon you and black and blue marks appear on the body. This is how long everyone must wait with the burial, when all that is seen*. (Tannberg 1998: 167)

In order to solve the peasants' problems with labour and scarcity of food, the article in the weekly newspaper suggested that an elderly person in the village can be appointed to observe the death wake for a small remuneration and that those who visit the dead are not offered food and drink. The article also emphasised that, according to the law, funerals had to be delayed for three days (Issakov & Peegel 1998: 137; Tannberg 1998: 166–167).

The newspapers also published longer tales based on legends and adapted to the local context. For example, the long story published in 1928 in *Oma Maa* is very similar to the story of Princess Auguste Friederike Luise of Koluvere manor and is categorised under the tale type 'A pregnant woman lapses into seeming death'. The tale recounts the story of a manor lord on Saaremaa who married, against his mother's wishes, a manor servant's daughter who lived near Tallinn. The young woman became pregnant, despite her husband having travelled away from home. Her due date arrived and since the young woman's mother-in-law did not take care of her, she fainted. Immediately the mother-in-law had a coffin brought, and the young woman was laid in it. The mother-in-law nailed the coffin lid shut with her own hands and locked the room where the

coffin was kept. The maids heard screaming and moaning from the room. But the mother-in-law had the coffin quickly buried. The young manor lord came home and was full of sorrow. He overheard maids talking about the screams and had the grave opened. The grave was opened, and the horrible story became known to all. The young woman was dead, her face was scratched and bleeding, with a dead baby at her feet. The cruel mother-in-law lost her mind and went raving mad (Oma Maa 1928). Even though the title of the article positions it in the past (*õudne lugu minevikust*, 'a horrible story from the past') and refers to it as a folktale from Saaremaa, the legend characteristically retains the necessary degree of credibility, made plausible by having a plot that involved local characters and places.

A survey of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Estonian newspapers suggests that so-called true reports of the apparently dead were characteristic mainly of the nineteenth century, although the topic definitely captured the public imagination in the first decades of the twentieth century.[9] In the second half of the nineteenth century, newspapers published dozens of short reports of cases that happened in Estonia. Often such 'news' spread from one media publication to another, until another publication proved that the story was not true. A rather typical example was a story about a 21-year-old woman from Kohava parish who had been buried alive. The story was initially published in the weekly *Wesenberger Anzeiger* and was translated for the Estonian media. In 1883, this short news report was published in several local papers: on 9 August (no. 32) in *Wirulane* (Viru Man) and on 10 August (no. 32) in *Kündja* (Plougher). In the next issue of *Kündja*, the following announcement was published, refuting the news: "From Rakvere. Dr. Voss, the county physician of Wiru County, refutes *Wesenberger Anzeiger*'s news published in *St. Petersburger Zeitung* about the woman buried alive in Kohava" (Kündja 1883). In 1884, *Wirulane* published a story about a woman who had died twice: "We have received information that on 10 March an elderly mother, who had died twice, was buried in Laiuse cemetery" (Wirulane 1884a). A few days later, however, the news report was declared false: "In issue 12 of our newspaper, there was a message which had been sent to us to be published [but] in Laiuse parish, the old woman was not apparently dead but had died right away" (Wirulane 1884b). Of course, not all the rumours were refuted, such as the following: "In the Haapsalu area, people are speaking about an innkeeper who had been dead for a week and then returned to life" (Postimees 1887). It is safe to assume that these newspaper stories also spread by word of mouth, as rumour, and, in fact, journalism and folklore operated in synergy in this: newspapers published rumour, then what was published in the newspapers was spread as rumour. In addition to the

above examples, news pieces about apparent death were also published in early twentieth-century newspapers such as *Päevaleht* (Daily) and *Põhja Kodu* (Northern Home).

Thus, we may agree that until the 1930s, journalism was quite actively involved in the topic of apparent death, publishing various case reports and articles that educated the general public in the topic or discussed it as a medical phenomenon. The majority of the articles, however, were translated stories, such as "Varjusurm. Prof. Obolenski järele" (Apparent death. After Prof. Obolenski) (Eesti Postimees 1904); "Hirm elusalt maetud saada. Inglise lady, kes oma laibal laskis läbi lõigata kõri" (The fear of being buried alive: An English lady who had her throat cut after death) (Esmaspäev 1926); "Kas surnud on tõesti surnud?" (Are the dead really dead?) (Postimees 1926); "Varjusurma tont. Muumiate ja tinakambri laipade vereproov" (The spectre of apparent death: Blood tests on mummies and corpses in the lead chamber) (Postimees 1928a); "Lõpp varjusurmale. Inimelektri ime" (An end to apparent death: The miracle of human electricity) (Postimees 1928b).

IN CONCLUSION

Folktales, in their unique way, are the repository of the dreams of humanity. Today, many ideas that used to be expressed in dreams, such as flying carpets, seven-league boots, etc., have been realised in some form. However, the wondrous awakening of Snow White or Sleeping Beauty from their long sleep remains unresolved. The almost childlike idea of cheating death by prolonging the final end in a lethargic state, which has been expressed in folktales, is perhaps even more topical for humanity today than it was fifty or a hundred years ago. Such are the contributions of the modern scientists who explore the limits of life, for example, manned extended-duration space flights. Some steps have already been made in extending human life, for example the freezing of egg cells for future pregnancy is possible even in Estonia. Even now there are many private institutes and organisations around the world that specialise in cryonics, i.e. preserving the bodies of dead people or animals at low temperatures in the hope of resurrecting and restoring them to full health in the future. However, so far no cases are known in which a person in such a state has been revived.[10]

As a folklorist, I certainly argue that hardly any other topic or folktale has evolved into such an array of genres than that of apparent death, from folktales and romances to tall tales and rumours. This work, however, does not cover the ballads and jokes on apparent death that circulated in Europe and also emerged

in the Estonian tradition, although in very few instances. From this perspective, tales about apparent death constitute a fascinating example of how the motifs established in the fictitious world of traditional folktales have spread into the real world of legends, where everything 'really' happens to 'real-life' people. The subject of apparent death and being buried alive has been and continues to be popular in modern works of pop culture, movies, and literature.

Apparently, this reciprocally functioning/feeding material on the topics of apparent death, which has emerged in various media (oral history, journalism, literature, written works on medicine, religion, and social politics), forms a discursive entity. Although associated with cults of religion and the dead and based on myths, fairy tales, and legends, these tales also touch upon human life and existence and other non-religious facets of culture.

Observing the historical context of the folktales about apparent death reveals the extent to which the tales have been shaped by the evolution of medicine, early developments in journalism and the literary fiction that was popular in its time.

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ARCHIVAL SOURCES

RKM – Folklore collection of the Estonian Folklore Archives

NOTES

[1] See https://www.kliinik.ee/haiguste_abc/varjusurm/id-1969, last accessed on 9 December 2020.

[2] Apart from influencing politics and the written press, the cofounders of the Society, William Tebb and Edward Perry Vollum, also published a rather popular book, titled *Premature Burial and How It May Be Prevented,* in 1896 (see Hartzman 2017).

[3] A German translation was published soon after (1754).

[4] Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland wrote his thesis on *Scheintod* in 1783. He was a kind of a typical Enlightenment scholar who, aside from studying signs of death, actively focused on educating lay people. His book of instructions, *Die Kunst, das menschliche Leben zu verlängern* (1798) was translated into Estonian in 1904 by H. Ilves under the heading *Kunst, kuidas kaua elada võib* (The art of prolonging life). The book presents various instructions on living a stress-free life, nutrition, hygiene, aging, and illnesses that have relevance even today.

[5] The report comes from Urmas Oras, a nursing home cleric, who had heard it years ago from a woman born in the early twentieth century in Tartu nursing home.

[6] The exact year when the hospital was opened varies in different sources. Valdeko Vende has suggested it was opened in 1865, while Heino Gustavson suggests the year 1869. Heinrichsen's foundation was used in the early twentieth century in an attempt to open another medical institution in Tallinn, although not a waiting mortuary but a hospital for the poor (see Vende 1990: 50; Gustavson 1979: 148, 204).

[7] For example, in the type index of Russian folktales, the tale has the same type number and is titled 'A robber rescues a woman buried alive' (*Заживо погребенную спасает грабитель*), see Barag et al. 1979: 252–253.

[8] This historical piece of fiction involving major international political figures has captured the attention of the local media on several occasions. Most recently, it was discussed on 9 October 2019 in the popular Estonian television programme *Pealtnägija* (Eyewitness), where the old tale was presented in a completely modern context. Here Friederike was introduced as the great-grandmother of current British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who has played a major role in implementing Brexit (see Pihl 2019).

[9] This claim is based on data in the database of Estonian newspapers DEA and DIGAR, and the files of the bibliography department of the Estonian Literary Museum.

[10] See the ALCOR Life Extension Foundation, available at https://alcor.org/, and the Wikipedia article at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcor_Life_Extension_Foundation, both last accessed on 10 December 2020. See also Maaleht 2019.

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JIZŌ IN ACTION: THE ROLE OF *JIZŌ* STATUES IN TEMPLE ATMOSPHERE, SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF SENDAI TEMPLE ABBOTS

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Abstract: This article shows how abbots at four Buddhist temples in Japan interpret the image and role of the Bodhisattva *Jizō* – the most popular folk deity in Japan. Statues of *Jizō* can be found in almost every Japanese Buddhist temple, but their roles differ significantly due to the folk character of this Bodhisattva and the wide range of its functions. *Jizō* was granted the role of universal saviour in Japanese folk religion, with more and more functions added throughout the centuries. The author attempts to show that abbots see *Jizō* statues very differently, and that sometimes the *Jizō* statues of one temple can be interpreted differently by the abbots of different temples.

Keywords: Folk Buddhism, Japan, *Jizō*, statues, temple Buddhism, temples

INTRODUCTION

In this article, I will attempt to show the differences in how statues of one of the most venerated and beloved Bodhisattvas in Japan, the Bodhisattva *Jizō*, are interpreted by abbots of several temples in a large city in the eastern part of Japan, Sendai city. The image of *Jizō* can vary according to the way an abbot sees his temple and his duty within it, and the point I want to clarify is that there are many ways a statue of the same Bodhisattva can be used according to the needs of the temple. We are going to trace four different stories of the temples and their *Jizō* statues and see how the abbots interpret the image of *Jizō*.

I chose four temples that store venerated statues of *Jizō* (although they are only meaningful to locals and are not well-known to the outside world) together with other *Jizō* statues, from those that were erected long ago to those that were erected by the acting abbot of the temple. The reason for this selection was my wish to show the difference in how statues are interpreted based on the circumstances surrounding their erection. As the main reason for my selection was the variability of the statues, I was not trying to select temples

from different parts of Sendai or from different Buddhism sects. However, the temples are located in different places: two of them are in Izumi ward, while the other two are in Aoba ward. Although the temples in Izumi are in the same ward, they are located quite far from one another, while the other two temples are within walking distance of each other. One temple belongs to Jōdo-shū, the remaining three are Sōtō-shū. Some of the stories contain private information, and for privacy I would prefer to refrain from giving the actual names of the temples, as well as calling the abbots by their names. In the majority of cases, I interviewed the acting abbots of the temple. In the case of Temple D, it was basically the former abbot, as he was the one who erected, or allowed the erection of, the majority of the statues in the temple. In the case of Temple C, the abbot's mother kindly participated in our conversation to clarify some points. The interviews were conducted from 2015 to 2017 on several occasions.

THE FEATURES OF *JIZŌ* STATUES IN JAPAN

Following Manabe Kōsai, many authors see the prototype of Bodhisattva *Jizō* (Skt. *Ksitigarbha*) in the ancient Indian earth goddess *Prthivi* (Manabe 1959: 4–5; also found, e.g., in Hayami 1975: 11; Yoritomi 1984: 97; etc.). The name, literally 'the earth's treasury' (the character 地 means earth, while the character 蔵 means storehouse or treasury) creates an image of a merciful 'earthly' deity who takes care of all living creatures (see, e.g., Sawa 1974: 97). Thus, probably the most noteworthy feature of *Jizō* is his familiarity, friendliness, and accessibility to the prayers of common people. In the main sutras about *Jizō* – *Jizōjyūrinkyō* and *Jizōbosatsuhongankyō* – *Jizō* is depicted as a saviour of beings who suffer in the *mubutsu sekai*, the world without buddhas, after Shakyamuni has entered Nirvana but before the next Buddha appears.[1]

Although *Jizō* is attributed the power to save suffering beings in all realms, he is closely connected with the death realm, more precisely hell. *Jizō* is believed to be the saviour of those suffering in hell, and at the same time, according to the *Bussetsu Jizō bosatsu hosshin In'en jūō kyō* (The Ten Kings Sutra as Preached by the Buddha on the Causes and Conditions That Lead to the Boddhisattva Jizō's Aspiration for Enlightenment), is one with *Enma-ō*, the most prominent of the Ten Kings of Hell, who judge the dead in the underworld.[2]

In Japanese Buddhist temples, *Jizō* statues can be found in great numbers. A temple can store more than 150 *Jizō* statues simultaneously, and many Japanese choose to have a small *Jizō* statue erected at their family grave.[3]

Why are there so many *Jizō* statues in Japanese Buddhist temples? *Jizō*, while being a popular Bodhisattva, is definitely not the main object of worship

at Buddhist temples. To provide an answer to this question, we have to turn to aspects of *Jizō* worship in Japan identified by Japanese and foreign researchers.

In Japan, *Jizō* is usually depicted in monastic form. A monk (especially *kozō*, a small monk), is the most frequent disguise in which *Jizō* appears in *Jizō*-bosatsu *reigenki* (The Miraculous Tales of Bodhisattva *Jizō*) (Ōshima & Enomoto 2002–2003) and other *setsuwa* (Buddhist legends). The majority of *Jizō* statues in Japan depict him in the form of a monk. Manabe Kōsai (1959: 18) mentions the fact that *Jizō* does actually have *bosatsu-kei* (Bodhisattva form), with a crown on his head and a *semuin* ('do not fear' gesture). This appears in *Hachi Dai-bosatsu Mandara Kyō* (Sutra of the Eight Bodhisattva Mandala) or *Jizō Bosatsu Giki* (A Way of Performing a Ceremony for Bodhisattva *Jizō*). As *Jizō* is supposed to appear among common people, he came to be depicted in monastic clothes to "soften his light" (Manabe 1959: 18). According to Manabe, his human-like appearance is what distinguishes *Jizō* from other Bodhisattvas, who are mainly depicted in their usual Bodhisattva form (Manabe 1959: 19).

Many researchers attribute the popularity of *Jizō* to this human-like form. Gorai Shigeru argues that if we analyse the extremely varied cult of *Jizō*, we will eventually find that it is nothing but a Buddhist version of the most fundamental Japanese object of worship, the ancestor spirit (Gorai 2007: 271).

Hank Glassman, who has conducted very thorough research on the image of *Jizō* in mediaeval Japanese Buddhism, also attributes great significance to the monk-like form of *Jizō*:

> [Jizō is] *a familiar and in many ways a very ordinary figure. At the same time, of course, this Buddhist monk is absolutely extraordinary. He is exemplary monk, but also a guide and mediator between life and death, a shaman, a thaumaturge, and a teacher.* (Glassman 2011: 19)

However, this exemplary monk is still very similar to a simple human being. As Gorai puts it, *Jizō* can pose not only as a monk, but also as an ideal parent, or a child (2007: 271).[4]

Again, *Jizō* can adopt many different roles and thus appears as a protector or helper in almost every aspect of human life. Sugawara Ikuko, in her article on *Konjaku Monogatari-shū* (Anthology of Tales from the Past) analysed the ways in which *Jizō* saves believers, finding that there is an almost equal amount of benefit in this world as in the afterworld, although it is clear that the most frequent motif is of *Jizō* returning someone to life. This, again, shows that *Jizō*'s connection to hell is an important feature of the cult (Sugawara 1966: 96).

In mediaeval Japan, together with the spreading of *Mappo Shisō* (the philosophy of the time when Buddhist law has come to an end), a belief in the inevitability of hell appeared, giving birth to an impression that any afterworld

is in fact hell itself (Hayami 1975: 104). Places that somehow resembled the image of hell, like *Osore-zan* (Mount Osore, 'Mount of Fear') in Aomori prefecture, were perceived as borders or gates to the afterworld. As Suzuki Iwayumi pointed out, these places are not strictly Buddhist hells, but rather are familiar, cosey 'hells' that once a year become comforting spots of communication and fraternisation with the dead (Suzuki 2002). This concept of a place that serves as a borderline between the realms of the living and the dead can be applied to cemeteries as well.

Many *Jizō* statues can be found in these places. It is natural to have many statues of Bodhisattva *Jizō*, the saviour from hell, in places connected to death, but at the same time, if we use Gorai Shigeru's (2007) theory about *Jizō* as the incarnation of Japanese ancestor spirits and combine it with Suzuki Iwayumi's (2002) theory of the 'familiar hell', a meeting place with the dead, then we can assume that statues of *Jizō* in cemeteries, or 'hells on earth', are simultaneously images of the dead who can be contacted by the living.

There is a theory that the reasons for erecting *Jizō* statues could be grounded in much older, pre-Buddhist beliefs. Yanagita Kunio, Wakamori Tarō, Gorai Shigeru, and other researchers have observed a similarity between *Jizō* and *Dōsojin* (also known as *Sai-no-kami*, the deity of borders). Yanagita Kunio's theory was that as *Dōsojin* were erected near roads or at the edges of villages, and *Jizō* are also often erected in the same liminal places, *Jizō* might be perceived as a *honchi* (the real form of the deity) of *Dōsojin* (Yanagita 1963: 277–282). Wakamori Tarō suggested that *Jizō*, who moves freely inside the six realms guiding suffering beings from one realm to another, came to be perceived as a deity that normally stands between the worlds, and, thus, has the ability to protect borders in our world. This has led to *Jizō*'s merging with *Dōsojin*, the ancient deity of borders (Wakamori 1951). Gorai Shigeru stressed the fact that *Dōsojin* was actually a stone monument of phallic shape, protecting a village from the evil spirits of disease and disaster (Gorai 2007: 266–271). These monuments were usually erected at a crossroads which were conceived as the entry points of evil spirits. Under the influence of Buddhism, these phallic stones were replaced with stone statues with a similar form, i.e. statues of *Jizō*. But *Dōsojin* had also influenced belief in *Jizō*. As the image of male genitalia, *Dōsojin* was also a deity of love, fertility, and easy birth, all functions that were also granted to *Jizō* (ibid.).

It is hard to tell if old folk traditions have any influence on contemporary Buddhist temples, but it might be that the positioning of *Jizō* statues in Buddhist temples was also shaped by local beliefs in *Jizō* as deity of borders.

Jizō is a Bodhisattva who appears in a human form, specifically the form of a monk. This form is distinctive and recognisable so that any primitive statue

of a monk can be interpreted as *Jizō*. At the same time, in this form we can see not only *Jizō* but also the image of the ancestors, children, and so on. While a Bodhisattva, *Jizō* is also a human being. In addition to this, while he is part of the great Buddhist tradition, belief in *Jizō* might be based on the older folk beliefs, making it harder to understand why statues of *Jizō* came to be placed where they are today.

One more feature of *Jizō* is his connection to children. As mentioned before, *Jizō* often appears as a small monk in *setsuwa* (for more information, see Katayose 1974: 432; Dykstra 1978). It is perceived that this motif of changing himself into a small monk has strengthened *Jizō*'s role as a guardian for children (Hayami 1975: 152–159), including dead children. In the afterworld, *Jizō* is the guardian of children who died before their parents and thus became stuck in *Sai-no kawara* (the bank of the River Sai). As *Jizō* is a substitute parent, a custom of erecting a stone *Jizō* statue or carving as a tombstone for dead children developed to secure his benefaction in the afterlife (Yoshida 1962; Inoguchi 2000: 50). Yoshida Shōya, who has collected photographs of such stone *Jizō* statues, pointed out their child-like appearance (Yoshida 1962). Presumably these tombstones served two roles, making it clear that the child is with *Jizō*, and, at the same time, being memorial images of children. Sometimes, two images of *Jizō* were carved on one stone, possibly meaning that as it is unsafe to have a small child travelling alone to the afterlife, *Jizō* stands beside this soul to accompany it on its way (as explained in Inoue 1977). Oyama Takehide recorded another possible explanation for this practice from a stone dealer living and working in Aomori prefecture, who explained that this was usually done for economic reasons (if a family lost two children, they ordered one stone with two *Jizō* images carved on it). This was considered dangerous because saving money in this way could bring more misery to the family (Oyama 2012: 24). Although this case describes a situation in twentieth-century Aomori prefecture, it is not impossible that economic reasons drove families to carve two *Jizō* images on one stone in the past.

Mizuko kuyō, memorial rituals for aborted/miscarried foetuses, and stillborn babies, created a new iconology in the 1970s, including *Mizuko Jizō*, supposedly based on *Sai-no kawara* belief, although not corresponding to it completely (Hardacre 1997: 28–30).[5] Today, when technology and medicine have evolved dramatically, our fear of the unknown, unseen world is fading, thus *Jizō*'s role as saving us from hell has become less important. At the same time child death was no longer viewed as something usual but started to be interpreted as a tragedy, and because of this the role of *Jizō* as a children's saviour and protector in the afterlife became emphasised. As Yoritomi Motohiro puts it, despite the existence of *Sai-no kawara* belief, aborted or miscarried foetuses and the

stillborn were not cared for by any Bodhisattva or Buddha exclusively; rather they were simply among the dead, who were pacified during the *segaki* (service for the benefit of suffering spirits), or *urabon* (Bon festival or ghost festival). Only during the *Mizuko* boom were they granted their own rituals and their own Bodhisattvas (*Mizuko Jizō*, *Mizuko Kannon*) (Yoritomi 1984: 157–158).

One of the important *Mizuko kuyō* influences on the iconology of *Jizō* is exactly this further emphasis on the bonds between *Jizō* and children. The canonical *Mizuko Jizō* statue often includes a depiction of infants clinging to *Jizō*'s garments or lying/sitting in *Jizō*'s arms.[6] The heads of these sculpture infants are sometimes covered by red caps made by parishioners or the abbot's family, just as the heads of *Jizō*. Additionally, small (approximately 50 cm) *Mizuko Jizō* statues, erected at private graves, are sometimes made in the shape of an infant. It is only natural to assume that those who frequently see these babylike *Mizuko Jizō* statues and are aware of their purpose, might willingly interpret any 'pretty' or babylike *Jizō* statue as a memorial for a child.

The emphasis on rituals for dead children can be seen in the way *Jizō* festivals in some places, like *Kawakura Jizō* in Aomori prefecture, lose their recreational functions and become quiet memorial events, although it becomes evident from diaries and newspaper articles up to the 1960s that these festivals used to be wild and jolly parties for local youth and children (see Oyama 2012; Fukuma 2007: 74). Therefore, one must bear in mind that even scholars and temple abbots, who are presumably more educated than the average believer, being products of modern society, can see these statues as memorials for children even if they were not meant to be interpreted in this way. Here, I will mainly use explanations given by my informants, and so, as they tended to see the statues removed from cemeteries as memorials for children, I will interpret their primary function in the same way. However, as mentioned above, not all *Jizō* statues in cemeteries were made as memorials for children, hence some of these statues might have already survived a change in the way they were interpreted.

TEMPLE A: PROTECTOR OF CHILDREN

This temple belongs to Jōdo-shū and is located in Aoba ward, in a district with a particularly high number of temples. It was built in 1601 or in 1635 (according to other documents) and has never been moved (Sendai-shi shi hensan iinkai 1953).

The temple's *Sanmon* (main gates), called *Sakasa-mon*[7] in temple's sources, was admitted to Sendai city's list of treasures in 1986. These gates are considered to have been taken from Harada Kai's residence. Harada Kai is one of the main

characters of the Kanbun incident (*kanbun jiken*) and the temple's connection with this incident, as we will see later, is quite distinctive (for more about *kanbun jiken*, see Ōtsuki 1909; Kobayashi 1970; Sendai-shi shi hensan iinkai 2004: 4). There is a kindergarten near the temple that has been running for more than 60 years. The abbot of Temple A is simultaneously the director of the kindergarten and spends more time in the kindergarten office than in his temple.[8]

When asked about the nature of *Jizō*, he starts by explaining the difference between Buddha *hotoke* and Bodhisattva *bosatsu*.

> Bosatsu *is closer to people, walking the same roads, standing beside us;* Jizō *is the closest of all. He saves the weakest: the poor, children. Of course, he saves the dead, too, this is why* Jizō *is often erected for* kuyō*, but the living can always count on his help, too*. (Interview on 11/08/2017)

In the temple garden, under an old pine tree, three *Jizō* statues (Fig. 1) stand in a row. These three statues are called *Sakasa-mon Tomurai Santai jizō-son* (three *Jizō* statues meant to commemorate the Sakasa-mon/Kanbun incident). According to the abbot, Sakasa-mon, which became one of the main sites of the Harada family slaughter, was moved to Temple A to prevent *tatari*, spirit revenge. At the same time, or soon after, the three statues were erected to pacify the spirits. Every year, on the last Sunday of May, there is a quiet ceremony to commemorate the dead. Temple parishioners and neighbours gather in front of the three *Jizō* statues to recite *The Heart Sutra* and *Nenbutsu*[9].

Figure 1. Sakasa-mon Tomurai Santai jizō-son. *Photograph by the author, 29/10/2014.*

For the abbot of Temple A, these *Jizō* statues are meant primarily as a memorial for the dead.

> *The ceremony in May is a* tsutome[10]*. We gather to pray for those who were slaughtered here. It was a horrifying tragedy. The records say that there were many children's bodies at this gate. We pray for peace on earth as well, but this is not a* matsuri *(festival) of any kind*. (Interview on 17/10/2014)

There is one more *Jizō*, erected for the veneration of the dead. In the temple's cemetery, old gravestones and *Jizō* statues from the abandoned graves were gathered in a *muentō*, a monument for the forgotten dead, somewhere between 1965 and 1975. A particularly impressive *Jizō* with a *shakujō*[11] and *nyoihōju*[12] (Fig. 2) was placed at the top. "This one was erected by my father, not me, but without doubt it was meant for the veneration of the forgotten dead," the abbot said (interview on 11/08/2017).

Figure 2. Jizō *with a* shakujō *and* nyoihōju *in the cemetery of Temple A. Photograph by the author, 29/10/2014.*

Apart from memorial *Jizō* statues, there are three *Jizō* statues and a *Roku Jizō* that were erected for other purposes.

At the entrance of the kindergarten, there is a pretty *Jizō* statue with folded hands (Fig. 3). The statue is popular with kindergarten children, who have

adopted a morning ritual of greeting the statue, which is transmitted from the eldest to newcomer.[13] The statue was erected to commemorate the kindergarten's 50th anniversary.

Figure 3. Jizō *at the entrance of the temple kindergarten. Photograph by the author, 29/10/2014.*

> *First we didn't know which statue to choose. We simply thought that we needed a Buddhist statue* (butsuzō) *at the entrance, as this is a Buddhist kindergarten. I consulted the stone mason, and he offered us this statue. I liked the idea at once because* Jizō *is a protector of children. Besides, it looks very pretty, children would like it, I thought.* (Interview with the abbot on 11/08/2017)

At the gate of the temple, there are very small *Roku Jizō* (20 cm) (Fig. 4), erected in 2012. The abbot says that these *Jizō* statues are meant as a design element, not an object of worship. "These are a gate decoration (*kazari*). I guess they don't have any particular religious meaning" (interview on 11/08/2017).

Another *Jizō* statue, in front of the temple's *hondō* (main hall), about 70 cm tall, with palms together (Fig. 5) probably also fulfils a decorative function. "My father erected it some 30 years ago. Not sure why he decided to put this *Jizō* here," the abbot said (interview on 8/11/2017).

Figure 4. *Three of* Roku Jizō *at the gates of the temple. Photograph by the author, 29/10/2014.*

Figure 5. Jizō *statue and stone turtle in front of the temple's* hondō. *Photograph by the author, 29/10/2014.*

Although the statue is dressed in a red bib and red cap that look quite new and indicate that the statue is being cared for, it seems that the abbot does not clearly remember much about it. Initially, when I spoke about a *Jizō* statue in front of the *hondō,* he started talking about the *Sakasamon Tomurai Santai jizō-son*. He understood which statue I was talking about only after I explained its whereabouts in detail. Beside the *Jizō* statue is another one depicting a turtle. The two statues create a composition more reminiscent of garden design than of a religious object.

The last statue has an intriguing background. The statue itself is about 50 cm tall, headless and, in fact, might not be *Jizō* at all as there is nothing much left of the original sculpture (Fig. 6). It was probably erected on temple territory more than 400 years ago, as it was dug out from beneath an old pine tree that grew in Temple A at approximately this time. Several years ago, the pine started to fade away, so the abbot decided to cut it down. Under the tree, there was something that at first was considered a stone, although after the object came out it became clear that it was a severely damaged statue, probably a *Jizō*. "It must simply have been absorbed by the tree. I wonder how many years this o-*Jizō-san* had stayed underground," the abbot said (interview on 8/11/2017).

Figure 6. Jizō *found beneath a tree. Photograph by the author, 11/08/2017.*

When I first came to Temple A, in September 2014, the statue was secured in a temple corridor. The explanation I got from the abbot at that time was the following: "We did not know what to do with it and decided that it would be better to put it here. It is an extremely old statue, so we keep it inside and check it every day" (interview on 26/09/2014).

In 2017 the statue was moved to a new place near the *hondō* and was granted a small *Jizō-dō.* The abbot explained that after rethinking the situation he decided that *o-Jizō-san* would be happy to return to the place it used to occupy. In this case, the abbot had to choose between the two main concerns about the statue: first the physical, that is, how it should be treated because of its age and condition, and second the spiritual, that is, where it would prefer to be placed. The result was a decision in favour of the spiritual needs of the statue, and it returned to where it had been found.

In fact, small *Jizō* statues (or what seem to be *Jizō* statues) are often dug up or found under tree roots. In Sendai, I found three other *Jizō* statues that had been discovered when an old tree was cut down, or when the temple was undergoing renovation. In two cases the statues were placed inside the temple buildings (*hondō* and *Kannon-dō*), and in one it was placed outside, on the way to the *hondō*.

As we can see from the case of Temple A, the *Jizō* statues in its territory are treated very differently by the abbot. *Sakasamon Tomurai Santai jizō-son* and the statue on top of the *muentō* are meant to be memorials and are subjects of death rituals. At the same time, the abbot clearly separates the statue at the entrance of the kindergarten as it was erected for reasons that are only partly religious. Here, *Jizō*'s connection to children is obvious: if it is a statue for a kindergarten, it should be *Jizō.* Interestingly, when we talked about *Sakasamon Tomurai Santai jizō-son,* the abbot mentioned the slaughtered children of the Harada family, although he never made the point that the *Sakasamon Tomurai Santai jizō-son* were erected exclusively as a memorial for the Harada children.

There are *Roku-Jizō* at the gates and the *Jizō* statue at the entrance to the *hondō* that apparently do not have any religious meaning at all for the abbot; rather, he views them as decoration or design elements. And there is a pine tree *Jizō* that has a certain aura of unease surrounding it. It is an object that came out of nowhere, erected for unknown purposes, while at the same time inevitably belonging to the temple and thus requiring some special position. Eventually, it could not be treated like a statue that had been erected by the abbot or presented by someone; instead, the abbot had to guess what the statue would want for itself. Thus, it can be assumed that in the statue hierarchy of Temple A, the pine tree *Jizō* takes a position somewhere in between *Sakasamon Tomurai Santai jizō-son* and the *Jizō* at the entrance of the kindergarten.

TEMPLE B: ON THE BRIGHT SIDE OF BUDDHISM

Temple B is said to have been first built by a monk called Gessō, but it soon burned down completely with all its documents and chronicles. Many monks receive the Buddhist name Gessō, so, having the majority of sources lost, it

is impossible to say for sure who was the first founder of Temple B and when exactly it was founded. It was rebuilt in 1466 by Shōmin, the 14th abbot of Dōunji, the oldest temple in Izumi ward, also known as Yama-no Tera (mountain temple) (Izumi-shi shi hensan iinkai 1986).

The temple is situated in Sanezawa, a quiet rural area. Many of its parishioners come by car from nearby residential districts. The abbot of Temple B proudly tells me while guiding me through the temple that he is engaged in many activities that will change the image of his temple and Buddhism in general.

> *Before me, it was simply a provincial temple, nothing more. I made it so great and fun. I wanted to make it brighter, more modern, just like a museum so that people would come here to admire the works of art, to have a good time, not just for* o-haka mairi [visiting ancestor's graves]. (Interview on 17/10/2015)

At the same time, the abbot generally relies on the temple's parishioners and values the bonds between them and the temple. The annual *Garan DE Konsāto* (concert in the temple), when some performers, usually of classical Japanese or Western music or Jazz, are invited to perform in the temple's *hondō*, is aimed mainly at the parishioners. They also receive a calendar from the temple every year.

The temple's *Jizō-kō*, an event dedicated to *Jizō*, is one of the temple's annual events and is again aimed mainly at parishioners, although it is not limited to them. Temple B's *Jizō-kō* has an approximately 100-year history and is held on 16 January, the last day of the so-called *koshōgatsu*, Little New Year. The participants are mainly women, although several men participate, too. Many of the participants have inherited their duty to take part when their mother or mother-in-law died. One of the male participants told me that he started participating on behalf of his bed-ridden wife.

There used to be a *Kannon-kō* as well, but it was discontinued. The abbot explains the fact that *Jizō-kō* is still in action as follows:

> *Little New Year is a women's celebration, so I definitely want to keep it. It is a tradition that has been preserved from long ago, for example, in* Jōdo-shū *temples there is a* Nenbutsu-kō *on the 16th of January. We are* Sōtō-shū*, so we don't have* Nenbutsu-kō*, we have* Jizō-kō*. But I think that the meaning is the same. People gather at a temple, they eat together, create some bonds (*en wo musubimasu*). It is very important*. (Interview on 16/10/2016)

The abbot has changed the look of the temple as well. Thinking that Buddhist statues go a long way to creating the right image of the temple, the abbot has rebuilt the *hondō* and changed the temple's *honzon*[14] from Kannon to Shakyamuni. The previous *honzon* is now placed in the *ihaidō*[15].

There are plenty of peculiar statues in the temple's *hondō* (for example, there is a *Nehan-zō*, a statue depicting Buddha Shakyamuni entering Nirvana[16]). The abbot explains that he is always trying to find something rare for his temple. "I want people to come to the temple, see an unusual statue and get interested in Buddhism itself. I think it is totally OK to look at a temple as a museum. I would be glad if I could create a beautiful and fun temple" (interview on 17/10/2015).

The statues of *Jizō* are being erected with the same wish to entertain visitors. "But I don't search for beautiful *Jizō*, I search for pretty (*kawaii*) ones. I like *Jizō.* He is easy to relate to, and you can change his shape, think of something new and it would still be *Jizō*," the abbot explains (interview on 17/10/2015).

In the temple's garden, there are *Roku Jizō* about 50 cm tall, made of stone and looking rather pretty (Fig. 7). They were erected in 2008 to make the temple's territory look brighter and friendlier. There is another *Jizō* statue in the middle of the composition that looks as though it was made 100 or more years ago (Fig. 8). The abbot does not remember clearly where it came from. "Probably I had to relocate it and put it between other small *Jizō* statues. I don't know," he admits (interview on 17/10/2015).

Figure 7. *One of* Roku Jizō *in the garden of Temple B. Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.*

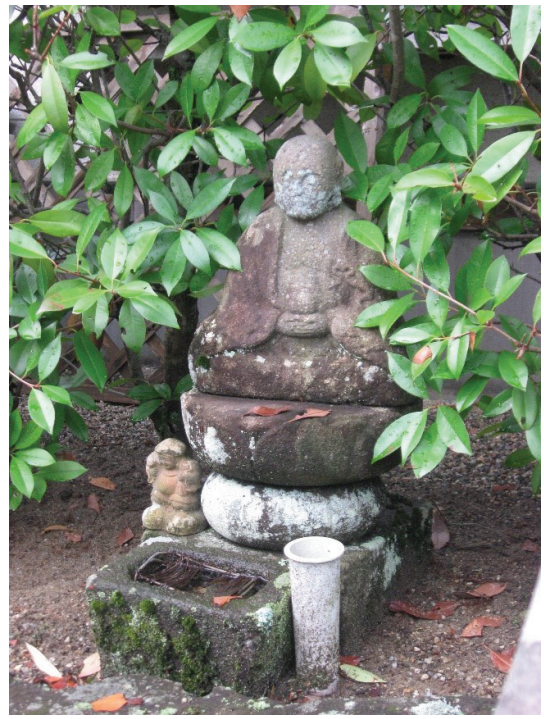

Figure 8. *An old statue standing between* Roku Jizō *in the garden of Temple B. Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.*

At the temple's gates, there are three life-sized *Jizō* statues, an unusual version of the three wise monkeys (*san'en*) that embody the proverb "See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" (Mieder 1981), with one statue covering its eyes, the second covering its ears and the third covering its mouth (Fig. 9).

Figure 9. San'en-Jizō. *Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.*

The composition was erected in 2010. The abbot said that he was drawn to it because it is *kawaii* and familiar to everyone, so he thought it would make the temple look brighter (interview on 17/10/2015).

In front of the *hondō*, at the entrance, there is a stone composition about 80 cm high, depicting three smiling *Jizō* (Fig. 10). This composition was erected in 2012. "I wanted to have something fun near the entrance to *hondō*. It creates the mood," the abbot said (interview on 17/10/2015).

However, not all the *Jizō* statues were erected for entertainment. *Gankake Enmei Jizō Bosatsu* (Bodhisattva *Jizō* who can grant wishes), which became a formal reason for Temple B's *Jizō-kō*, was erected about 200 years ago, in the nineteenth century (Fig. 11). It was highly venerated in the vicinity as a miraculous statue that could grant any wish. If a wish was granted, one had to present *Jizō* a knitted hat or other piece of clothing. The statue is still venerated by parishioners today. When speaking about the statue, the abbot stresses the fact that it is a *Gankake Jizō* and that it does not have any connection with death and mourning. "It is a *Jizō* that grants people's wishes. I always remind the participants of *Jizō-kō* about that. This is a ritual of life, *gensei riyaku* (literally 'this world's profit'), you see," the abbot explained (interview on 16/01/2016).

Some of the temple's *Jizō* statues are actually related to death. In the temple's *ihaidō* there are *Sentaibutsu Jizō*, 'thousand *Jizō* statues', carved approximately in the 1970s as memorials for a parishioner's ancestors (Fig. 12).

Figure 10. *Three smiling* Jizō *in front of the* hondō. *Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.*

They used to be in the *Jizō-dō*, but it was ruined during the 2011 earthquake. The statues that were whole and unharmed were moved to the *ihaidō*.

Figure 11. Gankake Enmei Jizō Bosatsu. *Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.*

Figure 12. Sentaibutsu Jizō. *Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.*

There is one more *Jizō* statue in Temple B's *ihaidō* (Fig. 13), part of a set of 12 wooden statues of different Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (about 20 cm high each), placed almost right under the ceiling. These serve as the protectors of visitors to the *ihaidō* (interview on 17/10/2015).

There are two *Mizuko Jizō* in Temple B. One of them is situated on the way to the cemetery and was erected in 1976 using funds collected from parishioners (Fig. 14).

The second one was erected in 1988 at the entrance to the *hondō* (Fig. 15).

The abbot comments that there was no necessity to erect another *Mizuko Jizō*, "simply these were the years when *Mizuko kuyō* was pretty popular, and these statues were erected everywhere" (interview on 17/10/2015).

A small monument, a memorial to pets, has its own *Jizō* statue nearby (Fig. 16). When the monument was erected in 2012, the abbot wanted to provide a small Buddhist statue for this memorial, to make it more noticeable. "There is no particular reason why I chose *Jizō*. It is popular and there are statues of a small size, that's all" (interview on 17/10/2015).

There are two more *Mizuko Jizō* statues at the cemetery, but, according to the abbot, they were not erected for *Mizuko kuyō* (Fig. 17–18). They are placed near a water tap to avoid people leaving it opened and spilling too much water. "Yes, they look like *Mizuko Jizō,* but it has no meaning. Simply I needed some small statue, and I used these. They are simply transmitting a message to the visitors" (interview on 17/10/2015).

As we can see, the abbot of Temple B is determined to make his temple a place of merry gathering rather than exclusively a place to mourn the dead. All the activities he carries out are aimed at promoting this brighter, lighter image, both of the temple and Buddhism in general. Peculiar statues, concerts in the *hondō* differ greatly from how the Japanese usually look at Buddhism and Buddhist temples. However, Temple B is not unique, as many temples choose to have some activities that will brighten their image in the eyes of believers; what is interesting here is how the abbot sees *Jizō* statues in this rearranged temple atmosphere.

The abbot admitted to me that he likes *Jizō* himself. The two main reasons he mentioned were *Jizō*'s friendliness and closeness to the worldly realm, and the fact that you can experiment with the shape and people will still recognise *Jizō*. These two aspects, it can be assumed, are what makes *Jizō* a good helper in the abbot's job of reinterpreting temple Buddhism in Japan. People are drawn to the familiar image of *Jizō* and are surprised and amused to see *Jizō* mimicking the three wise monkeys or smiling at them at the entrance to the *hondō*.

Figure 13. Jizō *statue in Temple B's* ihaidō*, part of a set of 12 wooden statues of different Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.*

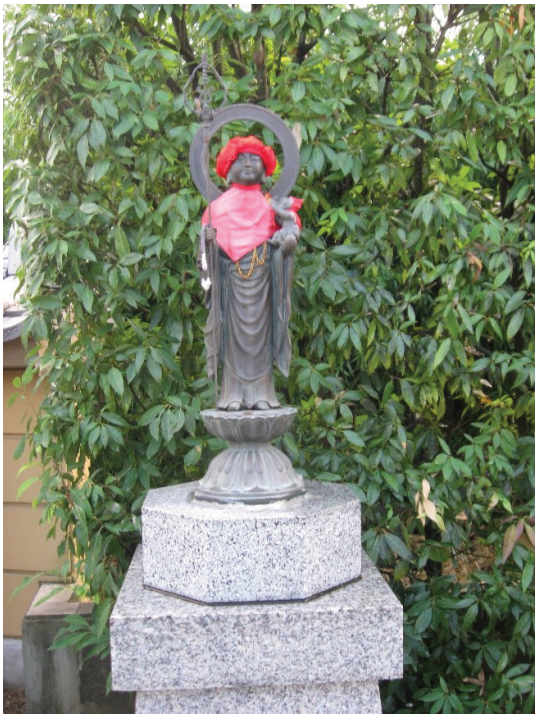

Figure 14. *Temple B's first* Mizuko Jizō*. Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.*

Figure 15. *Temple B's second* Mizuko Jizō. *Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.*

Figure 16. *Memorial to pets with* Jizō *statue. Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.*

Figure 17. Mizuko Jizō *near water tap. Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.*

Figure 18. *Another* Mizuko Jizō *near the water tap. Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.*

At the same time, *Jizō* is not only a Bodhisattva close to the worldly realm; he is the saviour of those in the afterworld and hence has a strong connection to death and mourning. This aspect is what the abbot of Temple B presumably likes the least about *Jizō.* He insisted on *Gankake Jizō*, as he has no connection to death, although many other temple priests, who rely mainly on parishioners, usually stress the universal character of every *Jizō* statue and are somehow reluctant to admit that the statues can grant wishes or cure diseases. Again, the abbot constantly pointed out to me how the statues of *Jizō* erected by him for purposes other than making the atmosphere of the temple brighter, were chosen for no particular reason. When, during *Jizō-kō*, people went out to offer some incense sticks and coins to *Gankake Jizō*, the abbot did not encourage the participants to make offerings to *Mizuko Jizō*, which stands just a few steps away from *Gankake Jizō*, although I saw some of the participants paying a visit to this statue later (as observed on 16/01/2016).

Of course, it can be that the statues selected for the water tap or pet memorial were truly selected only because of their size. Also, the abbot did not encourage *Jizō-kō* participants to pay homage to *Mizuko Jizō*, which can be explained by the fact that he forgot or was too absorbed in his duty. But the main point here is that we see that the abbot has an urgent need to rely on the worldly side of *Jizō* in his difficult task of creating a new image for Japanese Buddhism. The qualities of *Jizō* that are the most valuable for the abbot of Temple B are brightness, friendliness, and recognisability, and, on the other hand, he might have neither the need nor will to stress the connection of *Jizō* to death and mourning.

TEMPLE C: EXEMPLARY BUDDHIST AND PACIFIED SPIRIT

Temple C is located approximately a 30-minute walk from Sendai station. It was built in 1615 near the bridge of Nagamachi but was later moved to its present location. Unfortunately, as often happens with temples in Japan, Temple C has burned down several times, losing almost all of its records and a great part of its treasures. In 1888 the temple was merged with its neighbour Kōfukuji (Sendai-shi shi hensan iinkai 1953).

Together with Kōfukuji's land and parishioners, Temple C inherited one more treasure, a highly venerated wooden *Enmei Jizō* statue that was believed to cure smallpox (Fig. 20). The statue was granted a new *Jizō-dō* by a temple parishioner, and this remains the centre of parishioner attention to this day.

The statue itself is believed to have been made at some point in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. Almost life-size – 150 cm – it is usually locked inside the *Jizō-dō*, but on the 24th of each month the door stays open for the *Jizō-kō*.

Figure 19. Enmei Jizō-dō *sanctuary. Photograph by the author, 26/09/2014.*

Figure 20. Enmei Jizō *statue. Photograph by the author, 26/09/2014.*

Temple C's *Jizō-kō* is quite different from that of Temple B. It takes place every month, except for September, when the temple is busy because of the autumn *higan*[17]. It has a confirmed 50-year history, as there are no records of something like this existing before. Ten people or so participate every month, all women from their 60s to their 80s. Almost all of them have taken their precepts (*jukai*), and often assist the abbot in other temple activities. New members are usually invited by participating members, and there are almost no chances of somebody from aside come across *Jizō-kō* as there is no notification of its time and place anywhere.[18]

The abbot, when asked about his thoughts on *Enmei Jizō*'s powers, says that he sees *Jizō* as a Bodhisattva whose duty is to help people to attain Buddhahood (*jōbutsu suru*).

> *I really don't know about smallpox, but there is nothing wrong in asking* Jizō *about these things. Simply, this is not the true meaning. This is the same as with* o-haka-mairi *(annual visit to the ancestor's graves, usually performed on* higan *or* o-bon): *of course, one can come to the graves, leave some offerings, clean up, but one should not forget about death anniversaries* (nenki). *I usually tell participants that for a Buddhist* Jizō *is, first of all, the example of how we all should be. Everyone should try to be compassionate, faithful, calm. It never prevents grannies from muttering "Please, grant me a long life!" though* [laughing]. (Interview on 24/04/2015)

Near the entrance to the cemetery, there is a *Mizuko Jizō* statue depicting *Jizō* in the *hanka-fuza* position,[19] with a *shakujō*, *nyoihōju*, and a baby, surrounded by toddlers (Fig. 21). This statue was purchased with the alms gathered from temple parishioners and erected in 1986. According to the abbot, it is mainly visited by parishioners during *o-haka-mairi*, and although the temple holds some occasional *Mizuko kuyō* at private request, there is no annual gathering or ritual connected to this statue (interview on 04/09/2014).

The most interesting case, however, is the temple's third *Jizō* statue. Here, the abbot's mother helped me greatly in clarifying the story, as she was the one who participated in the events and, hence, her knowledge was more accurate than her son's.

The statue is a very simple one. It is 130 cm high, with a *shakujō* and *nyoihōju* (Fig. 22), and was erected in 1971, although there is an inscription on the pedestal saying:

Erected by the 19th generation (of priests) of this temple.

This statue was erected to repose the soul of a young monk, who was executed for burning the temple 150 years ago.

Figure 21. Mizuko Jizō *statue. Photograph by the author, 26/09/2014.*

Figure 22. *Statue erected as a memorial for an executed monk. Photograph by the author, 26/09/2014.*

It seemed quite strange to me that someone had erected a statue of a monk executed so long ago, so I asked the abbot to clarify the story. He told me that as far as they knew, this young monk did not intend to burn the temple down. He simply fell asleep and left a candle burning, although this was enough for him to be executed as the nearly the entire temple had burned down. After the temple had been rebuilt, it was always subjected to misfortune. People started suspecting *tatari*, the vengeful spirit of the young monk, although no one tried to do anything about it. The temple had even been left without a single priest for a long time,[20] until the acting abbot's parents moved in.

Here the abbot's mother takes the lead.

> *I became worried because of the talk of* tatari*. How are we going to raise our children here? So we decided to pacify the spirit. We have searched for his grave, but those who were executed were not buried in the usual way. Nothing was left. We did not even have anything that had belonged to this poor boy. Eventually, we went to the place where this kind of execution used to take place, took some ground from there, brought it to the temple and erected this* Jizō*. I think it helped. Our baby grew up healthy, didn't he* [looks at the abbot with a smile]? (Interview on 04/09/2014)

At Temple C we see that the abbot and his family see *Jizō* in two ways. The *Enmei Jizō* and *Mizuko Jizō* are communal and are venerated by parishioners and the people living around the temple, and thus they (especially *Enmei Jizō*) give the abbot the chance to educate those who come to pray to them about the true Buddhist way. *Jizō-kō* becomes a space for parishioners and the abbot to gather not only for the ritual but for the more relaxed tea party with sweets and free talk. It is fully understandable that the abbot prefers to see this *Jizō* as "the example of how a Buddhist should behave" (interview on 04/09/2014), not as a miraculous statue that cures disease and grants long life. In fact, this is how he would prefer his parishioners to think about Japanese Buddhism: more as a moral way of life, less as a syncretic religion with all kinds of folk cults hidden inside.

The third *Jizō* statue of the temple is a 'private' *Jizō*. The temple's parishioners and occasional visitors do not know and do not care about the tragedy that happened at the temple 200 years ago. At the same time, this story is important for the abbot's family. Their bond to the temple started when they tried their best to set a suffering spirit to rest (something that no one of the temple's inhabitants had achieved before), and this statue symbolises their own victory, as well as a tragedy that happened long ago, but nevertheless became their tragedy too. Hence, this *Jizō* represents a privately held belief that is not meant to be shared.

TEMPLE D: UNIVERSAL SAVIOUR

Temple D was founded in 1532 and used to be a thriving place of worship according to the records but was abandoned during the Meiji restauration and stayed in this state until the 1970s, when a new family of priests took over. The temple was completely rebuilt in 1975 together with the territory around it (Izumi-shi-shi Hensan Iinkai 1986), so it still looks rather new.

In Temple D, I generally spoke with the former abbot – who still lives in the temple – as he was the one who erected, or allowed the erection of, the majority of statues.

In the *hondō*, there are two *Jizō* statues, 180 cm high wooden statues with a *shakujō* and *nyoihōju*, and a headless stone statue just 18 cm high, presumably very old.[21] The first of these statues had been purchased by the former abbot.

> *I wanted to have a big* Jizō *statue in the* hondō. Jizō *is a Bodhisattva who saves everyone. He's universal. Look at* Roku-Jizō – *every realm has a* Jizō *in charge of it. Wherever you go, you always find* Jizō. *Always around us, you see. This is why the Japanese feel attracted to* Jizō. *This one is big and beautiful, fits well in the* hondō. (Interview on 17/08/2014)

The small and headless one is almost a repeat of the story from Temple A, which is now stored in a *Jizō-dō*.

> *It came out of the ground when we were doing some construction work in the temple. You can see that this is definitely* Jizō. *I did not know where to put it, so I decided that it would be good for it to be placed at the feet of the big one*. (Interview on 17/08/2014)

The small statue is placed in the way that both statues share the offerings that are left for them every day by the abbot's wife and visitors.

There is a *Jizō* statue in the *ihaidō*, too. This is a 30-cm-high *Mizuko Jizō*, placed between the *ihai*[22]. Neither the abbot nor his wife could say how this statue happened to be in the *ihaidō*. It was obvious that it had been brought by a parishioner, but who and when remains a mystery (interview on 23/10/2014).

Outside, there is a *Mizuko Jizō* statue in front of the *hondō*, although it does not look much like *Mizuko Jizō*. It is a regular *Jizō* statue with a *shakujō* and *nyoihōju*, with nothing reminiscent of *Mizuko kuyō* in its image (Fig. 23).

The former abbot explains this:

> *This statue was erected in 1975, at the very beginning of* Mizuko kuyō. *It was a gift from a parishioner to commemorate his own child, but soon people started to bring offerings for* Mizuko *to this same statue. Of course, it does not look like a* Mizuko Jizō, *although it could be one. I told you,* Jizō *is universal*. (Interview on 17/08/2014)

Figure 23. Mizuko Jizō *statue. Photograph by the author, 17/08/2014.*

Figure 24. Roku Jizō. *Photograph by the author, 17/08/2014.*

Near this statue, *Roku-Jizō* stand in a row (Fig. 24). These are in the classical style: the first is holding a banner, the second a *nyoihōju*, while giving a *semuiin*

('do not fear') gesture with the right hand, the third holds an incense container, the fourth a rosary, the fifth is doing *gasshō*[23], and the last holds a *shakujō* and *nyoihōju*. These *Roku Jizō* are a present of gratitude from a parishioner who was struggling with his health and psychological problems and received frequent support from the former abbot of the temple.

> *When this person suggested presenting a statue to the temple, we agreed on* Roku Jizō. *It was a symbol:* Roku Jizō *help those who have lost their way, who are wandering around in all six realms without knowing what to do and where to go. This is how we all feel sometimes.* (Interview on 17/08/2014)

Near the entrance to the cemetery there is a group of ten *Jizō* statues (Fig. 25) that seem to be more than 100 years old,[24] all of different sizes and shapes. The abbot said that the scenery around the temple had changed considerably in the last thirty years, with many villages disappearing or being redeveloped into posh residential areas. This led the villagers to bring *Jizō* statues that had previously been worshiped in the village to the temple.

> *They just came and asked me if they can leave it here. It is so bad when* o-Jizō-san *is abandoned. I accepted them, collected them here, now everyone can come and pray to them. It is better than being abandoned, right?* (Interview on 17/08/2014)

Figure 25. *A group of* Jizō *statues, brought from local villages. Photograph by the author, 17/08/2014.*

Figure 26. Naki Jizō. *Photograph by the author, 17/08/2014.*

These *Jizō* statues are not the only ones at the entrance of the cemetery. At the other entrance, near the stairs, there is a human-size (165 cm), peculiar *Jizō* statue (Fig. 26). This statue depicts a sitting *Jizō* with a *shakujō* and *nyoihōju*, and an enormous, stylized head.

> *I erected him after the tsunami* [of 2011]. *I wanted to cheer up those who come to the cemetery, so I decided that this fun statue would do it. I was not thinking about it as an object of worship, I just wanted people to smile more after that horrible thing. But one day one of my parishioners told me:* "Oshō-san [respectful title for a priest], *this* Jizō *is crying! Why is that?" I went to look and yes, there were tears in his eyes! You can see now: his eyes are closed, so on rainy days it really looks as though* Jizō *is crying. I was thinking about it for a while, and then I found an answer. He is crying because he is happy to see us! Happy when someone comes for a visit. I said this to my parishioner, and soon the word spread. Now people call this statue* Naki Jizō (*crying* Jizō). (Interview on 17/08/2014)

Figure 27. Oyako Jizō. *Photograph by the author, 17/08/2014.*

Near *Naki Jizō*, there is another composition, a set of three smiling *Jizō* doing *gasshō* (Fig. 27).

> *They are called* Oyako Jizō *(parent and child* Jizō*). They symbolise the dead. Someone has lost his or her parents, there are people who have lost their children, too. I believe that* o-haka-mairi *should be a merry event. You come to visit your loved ones. They should be very happy to see you, shouldn't they? This is a day of reunion. Parents reunite with their children. This is what this* Oyako Jizō *is about. Being together*. (Interview on 17/08/2014)

The former abbot of Temple D values *Jizō*'s universality most of all. This is what helps him to fulfil the needs of his parishioners. *Jizō* can take care of *mizuko*, meet and cheer up those who come to the cemetery, be a symbol of the availability of spiritual help for those who are suffering alone, or become a substitute for the dead. All one needs to do is find the right design of statue.

Here we can see how parishioners respond to and influence the way the abbot sees his statues. The abbot and his parishioners decide together on erecting a statue. They simply bring their own statues to the temple believing they have to be accepted, and eventually parishioners give a new meaning to a statue by pointing out the fact that it looks as though it is crying.

CONCLUSIONS

The abbots of the four temples we examined here understand *Jizō*'s role very differently. They all seem to agree that *Jizō* is a universal Bodhisattva with many functions and roles, although every abbot emphasises some quality of *Jizō* that he likes the most. For the abbot of Temple A, *Jizō* is primarily a protector of children, living and dead. For the abbot of Temple B, *Jizō* is a fun creature who cares for the everyday lives of his adherents. For the abbot of Temple C, *Jizō* is an exemplary Buddhist, after whom his parishioners should take. At the same time there is another aspect of *Jizō*, mostly hidden from the outside world: the aspect of the statue that commemorates and pacifies a spirit that the family of the priest managed to subdue. And for the abbot of Temple D, *Jizō* is truly universal, taking on any role that is needed of him.

Although the images that these abbots have of *Jizō* are very different, there is one point that they all share: they all use the power of *Jizō* to maintain the way of operating a temple that they chose. *Jizō* statues are erected to transfer a message to temple visitors, and *Jizō-kō* become spaces to educate people about Buddhism in a lighter, friendlier atmosphere.

In Temples A and B, some of the statues were erected exclusively to decorate the temple's outer territory. The statues in Temple D (Fig. 26 & 27) are said to have no religious function, although they have important roles in reminding parishioners about the meaning of visiting the graves. They can be compared to colourful booklets that visitors frequently receive in Japanese Buddhist temples. They advertise temple Buddhism and educate people about its values, although these booklets can hardly be considered religious texts. In the same way, although these statues are usually more than just decorations, they are not supposed to be venerated.

There are not only the statues that the abbots have erected themselves, or those that were treasured in the temples for centuries. As we have seen, there are statues that simply appear in the temple, having been dug out of the ground or brought by a parishioner. There is a certain point of unease in these situations, although ultimately the statues are treated with respect, and, as we have seen in the case of Temple A, a place is found for such statues, an act that was not at all easy, as the abbot had to guess where and how the statue would have liked to be placed, as if it had a mind of its own.

Judging from the way the statues are treated, one can assume that the abbots have a certain freedom in building their image of *Jizō.* His universality and folk character make this Bodhisattva easier to deal with, but his popularity among Japanese people ensures that any *Jizō* statue will at least be noticed.

NOTES

[1] These sutras can be found in *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*. For a brief explanation of the *Jizō* sutras, see Manabe 1960: 73–154.

[2] The sutra can be found in *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*. According to Manabe Kōsai, it was written in Japan and mainly tells of the trials set by the Ten Kings of Hell, which everyone must undergo after death. Manabe writes that the sutra is actually a mixture of Buddhist and Daoist beliefs, as nine of the ten kings are Daoist deities. For a detailed description of the sutra, see Manabe 1960: 124–131. For more information about Japanese hell and *Jizō*'s role within it, see, e.g., Shimoizumi 2015: 79–132; Sawada 1968: 113–121; Ishida 1985: 236–255.

[3] Guidebooks on organising the family grave recommend a *Jizō* statue for the family's *mizuko*/children (see, e.g., Fukuhara 1988: 66).

[4] For *Jizō* posing as a substitute child or mother, see Harrison 1996.

[5] Hardacre notes that the concept of dead children as suffering innocent victims is completely new, having been created by *Mizuko kuyō*, and represents a significant change from traditional understandings.

[6] *Jizō* statues with infants were made before the spreading of *Mizuko kuyō*, although not in such great numbers. In addition, they were not always connected to *Sai-no kawara* or memorial rituals for dead children (see, e.g., Miyoshi 1975: 213).

[7] Reversed gates, meaning that the gates were located in a wrong way with their back facing the outside.

[8] Taken from the kindergarten's official website.

[9] An invocation Namu Amida Butsu, which means "I take refuge in the Buddha Amitābha".

[10] In this context it means a service for the dead.

[11] *Khakkhara*, a staff topped with metal rings, used by monks to frighten away animals; used as a musical instrument and sometimes as a weapon.

[12] *Cintāmaṇi*, a wish-fulfilling jewel, sometimes held by Bodhisattvas.

[13] My daughter is enrolled at this kindergarten, and the first time I heard about the ritual of saying hello to *o-Jizō-sama*, it was from her. I started observing children coming to the kindergarten and saw that they follow the same pattern. The abbot confirmed that the children had probably adopted this ritual themselves, without his or teachers' influence. It is also possible that it was shown to one of the children by a parent.

[14] The main statue or image of the principal Buddha or Bodhisattva worshipped at a temple.

[15] Hall for memorial tablets of a temple's parishioners.

[16] This motif is very popular in paintings, although there are few statues depicting it.

[17] A Buddhist holiday dedicated to grave visiting.

[18] For more about *Jizō-kō* of Zenkyūin and other *Jizō-kō* of Sendai, see Donnere 2015.

[19] A position for meditation, in which one foot is down on the ground, usually indicating readiness to stand up and depart on a saving mission.

[20] The fact that Temple C was deserted for some time actually finds a proof in *Sendai-shi-shi* (Sendai-shi-shi henshū iinkai 1953); it states that in 1953 the temple was under a responsibility of a priest from Fukushōji (Setagaya, Tokyo). No reasons for this are named though.

[21] Unfortunately, photographs were not allowed.

[22] Memorial tablets of parishioners.

[23] A gesture used for greeting, with palms put together.

[24] Because of the condition of the statues it is impossible to read the date of erection (although I suspect that the majority of them were dated). On one of the statues I could just make out the characters 明治 (Meiji), but I was not able to read the numbers.

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FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

LEGENDS OF PLACES AS PART OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONS

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Abstract: Many newly established thematic routes and parks include narrative traditions to be experienced in their natural environment. Quality products of this kind are the result of well-developed concepts that follow expert guidelines and strategies and can be, as such, part of sustainable tourism, which strives to preserve ties with tradition to the greatest extent possible. This article includes some examples of different presentations of narrative tradition or local legends in places and discusses the problems with which such presentations cope. The article particularly discusses two examples of thematic trails that are based on professional folklore and ethnological research. The first case involves research activities that served as the foundation for thematic storytelling routes in the eastern part of the Alps – Pohorje above Slovenska Bistrica in Slovenia – and in central Istria in Croatia. The second example shows the influence of a thematic trail on the knowledge about local narrative tradition among schoolchildren in Bovec in the north-western part of Slovenia.

Keywords: cultural heritage, education, folklore, folktale trails, local legends, narrative culture, sustainable tourism

INTRODUCTION

Research into local narrative tradition connected with places in cultural landscapes is becoming an increasingly discussed subject in contemporary folklore studies. It is often used for the sustainable development of regions and for the enhancement of social, cultural, and economic situations. Narrative tradition

plays a vital role in preserving the identity and culture of local social communities; it increases the cultural level of the inhabitants and improves their quality of life (Mathisen 1993). Narrative tradition can also serve as a basis for various activities aimed at raising awareness and the preservation of the cultural identity of existing communities in a given local environment. At the same time – if it is well transmitted – it can also improve their cultural and economic standards. Folktales and legends of communities contain a great deal of information on the living conditions, beliefs, and world views of the people from the times in which these narratives came to be and were passed on; therefore, they can also be considered to be social and performative acts in time and space (e.g. Bird 2002; Cashman 2011 [2008]).

Folklore contents have a wider reach than it appears at first sight, because oral narrative patterns can survive in many ways: in fragments, in whole, or in completely new forms. They can be found in different contexts, and transmitted through different forms or genres of folklore (a story can become a saying, proverb, local phrase, etc.); they intermingle with literature and other forms of art and can be encountered in tourist and commercial services, as well as in the advertising industry. Traditional forms and contents of storytelling adapt to cultural and social changes; thus, new forms and genres arise, which are subjected to new means of transmission, and they consequently undertake new functions and roles (Kropej 2007; Ivančič Kutin 2017). Therefore, changes in oral folklore take place both at the diachronic and synchronic levels, because changes are strongly influenced by space and time, and the social environment in which folklore resides, as well as by the means or medium of transmission.

Traditional narrative genres and contents no longer depend solely on oral transmission; they can be recorded in graphic, audio, or video form; the audience can be reached through print, television, the internet, and social networks, which consequently alters their basic function. All this brings forth perfectly new forms of narrative culture, related to new means of transmission, which in turn allows for the internationalization and globalization of folklore. In this context, new research approaches and methods must be and are being implemented, as well as new guidelines and strategies for the preservation and dissemination of narrative cultural heritage.

Places obtain their meanings through cultural and historical dimensions, personal experiences, and local narratives. They store collective memories of the mythic past. Since the 1990s, researchers have become ever more interested in studying narratives connected with places. At that time a new concept emerged in Estonian folklore studies – *kohapärimus* (place-lore), which soon became a distinct field of study, the importance of which has only increased in the following years (Valk & Sävborg 2018: 9). The concept of place-lore has close

affinities with the notion of narratives in the environment, and transmits the web of meanings that come into being through the interaction between mobile humans and rural and urban landscapes (Valk & Sävborg 2018: 10).

Researchers' strategies for the preservation of local narrative tradition or intangible cultural heritage include documenting, keeping records, and studying. This type of research work is often included in projects with the aim of supporting the transmission and maintenance of local tradition in its original environment. Preservations and presentations require effective strategies based on the research that offers an overview of the sources, from the oldest to the most recent ones. This enables us to keep a record of the contents and changes in narrative culture over the course of time in relation to the motifs, genres, storytellers, and the past and present role of storytelling within a certain social group and region.

The research studies in question show that folklore not only reflects social changes but also successfully responds and adapts to them. However, the adaptation does not occur merely as a result of social and technological changes, but also due to the function or purpose of the presentations. This inevitably brings us to the following question: To what extent is folklore still folklore?

Many folklore studies have addressed this issue (Moser 1962; Köstlin 1970; Bausinger 1969; Bošković-Stulli 1971; Rihtman Auguštin 1978; etc.). Hans Moser introduced the term "folklorism" (folklorismus), which he used to describe as the second-hand presentation of culture. He identified three types of folklorism: the performance of traditionally and functionally determined elements of folk culture outside that culture's local or class community; playful imitations of folk motifs in another social stratum; and the purposeful invention and creation of "folklike" elements outside any tradition (Moser 1962: 190). According to his historical orientation, he also distinguished between folklorism of the past, which sought to represent the soul of the folk, and the folklorism of our time which is primarily commercially determined and deeply anchored in the tourism and entertainment industry (Bendix 1997: 176–178).

Due to the understanding of folklore as a static phenomenon, some authors began to distinguish between "true, authentic" and "false, factitious" folklore, so in Europe folklorism, therefore as "false" folklore, has an almost exclusively negative connotation. In the USA, however, the notion of "fakelore" was established (Klaus 2014: 32, 33). However, as early as in the 1970s, Maja Bošković-Stulli pointed out that the folklorist's job is to attempt to understand and not to deprecate the phenomenon of folklorism (Bošković-Stulli 1971: 184–185). Dunja Rihtman Auguštin has stated that it is possible to retain a distinction between folklore and folklorism (as degraded folklore) with the focus on the process between two opposing poles rather than theoretical poles themselves (Rihtman Auguštin 1978).

The debate on folklorism in relation to folklore among folklorists has continued (e.g. Bendix 1997; Šmidchens 1999; Poljak Istenič 2011; March 2013; Klaus 2014). Most authors believe that the dividing line between folklore and folklorism is very blurred. Moreover, in a way, folklore and folklorism are one and the same or, if we can separate them at all, are strongly intertwined (Klaus 2014: 32).

We have to consider the dynamic dimension of folklore, which also includes *folklorismus* especially in connection with the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. In order to ensure the preservation of cultural identity in a specific environment, we have to think of ways that strongly connect it to tradition, while simultaneously ensuring the enhancement of the cultural level and quality of life.

Live storytelling, which we no longer have a chance to hear in private settings and as part of everyday life, is moving to the public space in the form of storytelling events, festivals, and folktale trails. Such events and performances are often contextually well developed and can follow the aim of preservation and dissemination of oral folklore among the target audience (local and interest groups). Certain storytelling festivals and events function by carefully selecting their repertoire, mostly from national or local narrative traditions (Ivančič Kutin 2010; Frlic 2016). In Slovenia, the most recognized festival of this kind is the storytelling festival *Pravljice danes* (Stories Today) in Ljubljana (Source 4). In contrast, these aims can be pursued by preparing well-thought-out thematic trails based on narrative folklore, which can be even more effective, since they can be experienced in their natural environment.

DIFFERENT CONCEPTS OF FOLKTALE TRAILS AND PRESENTATIONS OF LOCAL LEGENDS IN PLACES

Oral history is a social process that is, among other things, incorporated into the dynamics of the learning process and historical beliefs. Folklorists explore and analyse various impacts on narrative culture and its development. Regina Bendix has noted that tourism relies to a great extent on narration and narrative potential aiming to attract travellers who wish to learn something new and genuine about the sights (Bendix 2002: 473). Legends have served to preserve the knowledge of these places as well as the beliefs connected with them, even up to the present day (Valk & Sävborg 2018: 11). Contemporary researchers of narrative culture often focus on the role of the reconstructed narrative tradition in cultural and tourist services (Chittenden 2011; Goldstein & Gryder & Banks Thomas 2007); on folklore and storytelling events (Pöge-Alder 2010), and on

the revival of folktales in the press, on stages on the internet, and other media (Krawczyk-Wasilewska & Meder & Ross 2012; Kõiva 2009).

Many researchers (e.g. Chittenden 2011) note that the presentation of the narrative heritage of places by means of oral performance has a significant impact on sightseeing tours, and cultural and educational activities, since it helps the visitors and the audience to imagine the lifestyles of the past and the events of a particular area more easily, and to remember the traditions more vividly.

A so-called *site of memory* attracts people's attention more strongly: it enables them to memorize the message easily, while simultaneously encouraging them to become immersed into the story and space.

In Europe and the rest of the world, folktale trails and parks started to appear mostly in the second half of the twentieth century, but they vary in concepts and quality. The quality of these products – the level of their relation to the tradition and contribution to the preservation of the local/national identity – mostly depends on the level of the expert basis on which these products are founded, on the selection of material: folktales and their presentation. The purpose of these products is to offer the visitors a memorable experience, which helps them to remember the sights and narratives more vividly.

Until now different types of folktale trails have been developed, following various praxes and methods, such as:

1. information boards on which the narratives are presented;
2. tourist guides or teachers telling narratives along the trails;
3. brochures or booklets leading the way;
4. digital guides or applications guiding the route;
5. audio recordings of folktales on audio guides inserted throughout the locations;
6. sculptures or pictures which reveal the stories marking the places;
7. different events or performances taking place in certain locations in natural environments.

SOME EXAMPLES OF LEGEND TRIPPING

For over half a century, storytelling has been supported by the Scottish Storytelling Centre in Edinburgh (Source 1), which organizes many events, among them the Scottish International Storytelling Festival, with numerous accompanying events. The city's permanent tourist services present an array of themed trails. Folklore storytellers or even professional storytellers guide the visitors through various scenes related to the chosen trail (historic buildings, streets, parks, and also cemeteries, underground tunnels, and other scenes, which are out of reach

for an average tourist without the help of a guide) while narrating stories (educational, scary, humorous, etc.). The guides perform so-called legend tripping (Ellis 1996), and this praxis has become very popular in Western countries.

Estonia is also rich in thematic trails; the city of Pärnu, for example, offers a fairy-tale trail for children in the Lottemaa theme park (Source 2).

A good example of literary trails is the engaging trail around the Malbork Castle in Poland (Stokowski 2013), or the literary trail of Ljubljana based on anecdotes and other stories about the life and work of famous Slovenian writers: the *Literary Atlas of Ljubljana* (Dolgan & Fridl & Volk 2014), to name but two.

In the Austrian part of Carinthia, the cultural landscape is documented with folktales, which are often presented with images. They are inserted from the Tscheppaschlucht Waterfalls in Kärnten to Windisch Bleiberg above the Loibl Pass to Bodental, with the magical meadow Märchenwiese and a little round Lake Meerauge, which is a popular tourist attraction (Kropej 2003; Source 5).

Figure 1a, 1b. *Meerauge trail in Bodental above the Loibl Pass in Austria. Photograph by Monika Kropej 2003.*

Slovenian examples

One of Slovenia's first fairy-tale parks is *Koča pri čarovnici* (The Witch's Hut) in Olimje (Source 3; Ivančič Kutin & Marjanić 2015), established by Jože Brilej in 1993.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, these kinds of products became more numerous. In 2006, the fairy-tale trail in the Alpine area of Mount Triglav, *Rajže po poteh triglavskih pravljic* (Along the paths of Triglav fairy tales), was opened in Dovje near Mojstrana (Source 10). It was based on folktales published by Mirko Kunčič (Lesce 1899 – Buenos Aires 1984), who was a Slovenian children's author and poet. His collections of folktales (Kunčič 1940, 1944) were very popular.

Another folktale trail was designed in Kamnik and Motnik by Irena Cerar, who has also written a folktale guide (Cerar 2015) and sometimes leads visitors through the trail by narrating stories. She has also prepared other folktale trails, for example, *Zlatorogova pravljična pot* (Goldenhorn's fairy-tale trail) in Bohinj (Source 6), and is the author of the guidebook *Pravljične poti Slovenije* (Folktale routes of Slovenia) (Cerar Drašler 2004).

Figure 2. *The fairy-tale trail of the Alpine area in Dovje near Mojstrana in Slovenia. Photograph by Monika Kropej 2006.*

Children are guided through the mythical world of Velika Planina by the Wild Man (*dovji mož*). In Kranjska Gora, children and families can experience folktales about *Pehta*, *Bedanc*, and *Kosobrin* in *Kekec Land* (Source 7).

Professor of folklore studies, Mirjam Mencej, has, together with her students, collected tales, based on the local attractions of Kozjansko Regional Park, and published them in a booklet as a folktale guide (Mencej 2007).

Recently, a trail of narrative traditions related to the monuments of Ljubljana was also established (Kropej Telban 2019).

With their families, preschool children and children aged 6–9 years can enjoy adventures on the trail of *krivopete* (wild women with backward feet), where they can follow animal tracks and listen to the legends from the Trenta Valley (Source 8).

There are, of course, many more of these kinds of folktale trails in Slovenia, but we have presented only some as examples.

STRATEGIES FOR SAFEGUARDING NARRATIVE TRADITION IN PLACES

To a large extent, folk narrative traditions connected to or located in places or spaces – space is more universal in scope, and place merely particular (Casey 1996: 13) – are offered through various presentations, public performances, tourist and cultural events, mass media, also through new ways of transmission and dissemination, mostly via the internet and other electronic media. This calls for new research approaches, methods, and strategies for the preservation of narrative cultural heritage.

Preservation strategies are structured by numerous national and international conventions and laws: national laws on safeguarding and preservation of cultural goods, the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003 (Source 14), the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger (Source 11), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the Faro 2005 Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Source 12), and the Yamato Declaration on Integrated Approaches for Safeguarding Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage (Source 13).

International safeguarding documents of governmental and non-governmental organizations share a common ground, emphasizing the importance of cultural heritage for the collective memory of humankind, which plays a vital role in the development of individuals and society. These documents also draw attention to the accessibility, irreplaceability, and authenticity of heritage (Delak Koželj 2013: 205). In this regard, new professional standards and sustainable development, which do not hamper but promote regional authenticity, must be taken into consideration. Contemporary standards and modern ethnological criteria for identifying "good" and "bad" strategies of preservation, promotion, and utilization of cultural heritage are mainly the following:

1. Ethnographic criterion. It emphasizes the phenomena that are typical for the local community and/or the area in question, be it still-existing phenomena with a long tradition, or extinct phenomena that reappear in a new form within a local tradition.
2. Environmental criterion. The phenomena we wish to preserve should be in harmony with the features of the environment (including the historical structure of the settlement or landscape), and they should support the positive development of the area and its environment.
3. Cultural-historical criterion. It follows the historical aspects of culture, and focuses on the traditional phenomena that have existed for generations, as well as on the newly formed phenomena derived from traditions, and can potentially promote its continuation and the emergence of a new

tradition. The phenomena that are traditional in other regions, but have no historical roots in a given area, should be avoided.

4. Aesthetic criterion. The aesthetic function of the phenomena should be researched in view of the aesthetic criteria of the society and the times at which the phenomena appeared. The examples of aesthetically badly elaborated practices (e.g., traditional market with products from distant cultures, and presentation of aesthetically poorly manufactured products, i.e., kitsch) should be avoided.
5. Ethical criterion. Good practices should respect human rights, animal rights, dignity, ethics, hygiene, and similar factors.
6. Psychological criteria. The researched phenomena should pertain to the local, regional, or national identity, and should not oppose local values, consciousness or awareness (Ivančič Kutin & Kropej Telban 2018).

In order to preserve narrative culture, various experts from different disciplines working within this field must endeavour to find common ground and to cooperate, for this is the only way to adequately influence cultural policy. The process of safeguarding includes defining, identifying, documenting, and presenting particular cultural traditions and their practitioners (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 2006: 10). Through their work, ethnologists, culture, education, and tourism professionals, editors, radio and television journalists, and many others can draw the public's attention to the forgotten narrative culture and revive it.

The management and adaptation of the cultural heritage and its qualitative evaluation always reflect the relationship between the individuals or social groups who have the power to interpret it and those who create and transform it (Poljak Istenič 2013: 117–120; Slavec Gradišnik 2014: 10–11, 17). However, the latest ethnological research related to the role of cultural heritage within a wider cultural context shows that the revival of heritage often plays an important role in the preservation of local and other identities (e.g. Dolžan Eržen & Slavec Gradišnik & Valentinčič Furlan 2014). It connects people into groups and enhances the quality of life. In contrast, the popularization of cultural heritage can also cause the processes of "cultural economics" (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 2006: 3) and can easily be exploited.

Experts also need to be careful not to fall into the trap of so-called "salvation ethnology", anthropology, and ethnography, when they collect, document, and prepare material from different kinds of sources (archive notes, published material, current field records, etc.); the points, methods, and means of approaching traditional culture, as well as the choice of elements that need to be *salvaged* (documented, described, but perhaps also truly preserved) changed over time

and were differentiated, based on different theoretical starting points and areas of ethnological and folkloristic activities (Hameršak & Pleše 2018: 137, 138).

In practice, we have to take care that the exploitation of folklore does not completely lose touch with tradition when it is used for commercial purposes, because, in that case, it becomes distorted and turns merely into a means of gaining profit (Kropej 2014: 254; Ivančič Kutin 2017: 50).

RESEARCH AS A BASIS FOR A FOLKTALE TRAIL IN ISTRIA AND POHORJE

In 2017, the European project under the heading *Interreg Slovenia-Croatia: Living Magic* (2017–2019) started.[1] This project aimed to preserve narrative tradition in Pohorje (the Eastern Alps near Slovenska Bistrica in Slovenia) and in central Istria in Croatia. For this purpose, we prepared an appropriate methodology, which we based on theoretical findings and related practical experience, and we presented a programme for a better understanding, identification, and preservation of the intangible cultural heritage in the chosen areas. Our second objective was the preparation of a folktale trail through Slovenska Bistrica and its surrounding region as well as through central Istria. The accompanying products of the project are an illustrated book titled *Živa coprnija Pohorja in Istre* (Living Magic of Pohorje and Istria),[2] a digital guide, puppet shows, and a promotional video. While preparing the folktale trails, we collected stories within the context of the chosen places, and later located them in the district. Ten locations in Bistriško Pohorje and central Istria were chosen, all of which are significant from both the cultural-historical and natural science points of view. For each marked station on the trail, we attempted to provide as many related legends as possible. The archives, older and newer publications, and much of the material that was collected during our survey fieldwork were analysed. An illustrated book was prepared (Cunta 2019), which was based on ten selected stories and which can also serve as a guidebook, because the spatial and cultural context of the stories has been defined and the selected folktales have been converted into literary form by Slovenian writer Dušan Šarotar. The material is also available in a web application, in the form of a so-called digital guide. Among all the recorded legendary characters, we chose the typical ones – *rojenica* (the Fate) from Pohorje and *kresnik* (a supernatural solar being or a person with magic abilities) from Istria. Individuals, groups, and families can enjoy the trail independently, every time visiting a different marked site or location.

Figure 3. *Folktale trail in Pohorje: Črno jezero (black lake) with a puppet show performed by the Koruzno zrno Society. Photograph by Stanka Drnovšek, 11 June 2019.*

The folktale trails in Pohorje mostly include legends about people experiencing their natural environment and encountering the supernatural world. The legends tend to be somewhat frightening because apparitions often incite fear. The Pohorje trail starts in Slovenska Bistrica with its most prominent attraction, the Slovenska Bistrica Castle. Its previous owners were the counts of Attems, while today it is state-owned. The starting point in Istria is the settlement Gologorica in the municipality of Cerovo with its Roman Catholic Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In our endeavour to ensure the preservation and presentation of the mythical heritage in Pohorje and Istria, we used approaches and methodologies that would bring the optimum results.

For this purpose, the following was necessary:

1. We analysed the sources, and researched the field (survey fieldwork, interviews with the locals, and workshops were carried out), and selected the original local narrative tradition regarding its level of quality and authenticity.
2. Folk tales were selected, which were integrated into the environment by means of appropriate practices and solutions, also by puppet and theatre shows and story-telling festivals.

3. Products and activities were created in cooperation between researchers of different profiles and other experts, which would endeavour to ensure the preservation of intangible narrative heritage in Pohorje and Istria.
4. Scientific support in upgrading positive endeavours of the local people and individuals was offered.
5. Research institutes involved in this project offered assistance in achieving and presenting the final high-quality product.

This project aims to present the narrative heritage from a specific historical period by locating it in the modern world, in order to avoid repeating the stereotypical models connected to the past, or falling into the trap of artificial romanticism and noncritical modernization.

We wish to improve the recognition of narrative tradition by encouraging cooperation between the local communities and the groups that inherit the heritage through learning, identification, defining, performing, and transmission. We also popularized and promoted cultural heritage by educating people about the need for transferring knowledge and skills through seminars, workshops, as well as formal and non-formal education. The aim was to encourage the public to recognize and support the preservation of heritage. One of our main objectives was to reduce the risk of disappearance and devastation of the heritage, and its excessive commercialization.

The purpose of the overview and selection of narrative culture in Pohorje and Istria was to revitalize the narrative heritage, this way enriching the quality of the tourist and cultural services, and to broaden the horizons of spiritual creativity. In our endeavour to ensure the preservation of the narrative heritage in Pohorje and Istria, we attempted to weave the tradition into the present times while taking into consideration the quality of the results that are adapted to contemporary aesthetic and social values. We also had to reconsider the quality of the media by which the cultural heritage is transmitted.

FOLKTALE TRAIL IN BOVEC: DIDACTIC APPROACH AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LOCAL NARRATIVE TRADITION

The storytelling legacy, beginning with local stories, is crucial for the improvement of the knowledge of local narrative tradition. Within the strategies for improving and increasing the inter- and intracultural[3] dialogue, it serves as the foundation for the strengthening of the cultural consciousness and the cultural capital, which in turn serves as the basis for a strong sense of individual, national, and global identity (Blažić & Žbogar 2018: 229).

Because of the power of the empirical experience, thematic trails can also be welcome as a support mechanism for the instruction and teaching of folk narratives in schools. The didactic method, the so-called flipped learning / flipped classroom, where learning takes place by viewing or listening to recordings outside the school, while classes are intended for research, collaborative work, discussion, and similar activities (Žbogar 2019: 36, 37), can be very effective in teaching the local narrative tradition.

In the Bovec region in the western part of Slovenia, on the border between Slovenia and Italy, in recent decades people have witnessed a growing interest and effort for the greater recognition of the local storytelling tradition. This interest has roots in tourism and culture but has consequently affected primary school pupils as well. Thematic trails, audio and video presentations of storytellers and their stories in the Bovec museum called *Stergulčeva hiša* (Stergulc House) for its permanent collection, performances, projects, and similar, help to improve the knowledge of local narrative tradition.

In addition, an ethnological and historical trail that is equipped with information boards has also existed in Bovec for the last ten years. On the same trail, in cooperation with folklorists in 2013, the storytelling thematic route called "In the footsteps of the narrative tradition of Bovec" was also established. While strolling around Bovec and its surroundings, the visitors (individually or in a group) can stop at 14 points and, with the support of a GPS device, can listen to recordings of the narratives (Ivančič Kutin 2013). All stories are contextually related to the place in which the visitor is located. Slovenian versions of these stories are narrated in the local dialect, as it forms an essential part of local identity. The stories that were chosen are less known; they were in danger of falling into oblivion.

In the same year (2013), survey research was conducted among schoolchildren from the 6th to the 9th forms (ages 11 to 15), 74 pupils in total, who were asked to self-assess the degree of their familiarity with nine selected local narratives (four of the selected stories are also part of the folktale trail), the choice of answers being as follows:

1) I know it and I am able to narrate it;
2) I know it and I can make a short summary;
3) I have heard it but I cannot say what it is about;
4) I have never heard it.

The first two answers show active knowledge, the third one passive knowledge, and the fourth answer shows complete ignorance. The results reveal that pupils' familiarity with local folktales is quite poor. In that hope that this thematic route might improve the knowledge of the local folklore tradition, the Bovec elementary school was invited to integrate the thematic trail into the school

Figure 4. *Map of the thematic trail following the narrative tradition of Bovec from the brochure* Podeželski elektronski vodič *(Rural Electronic Guide) (2013).*

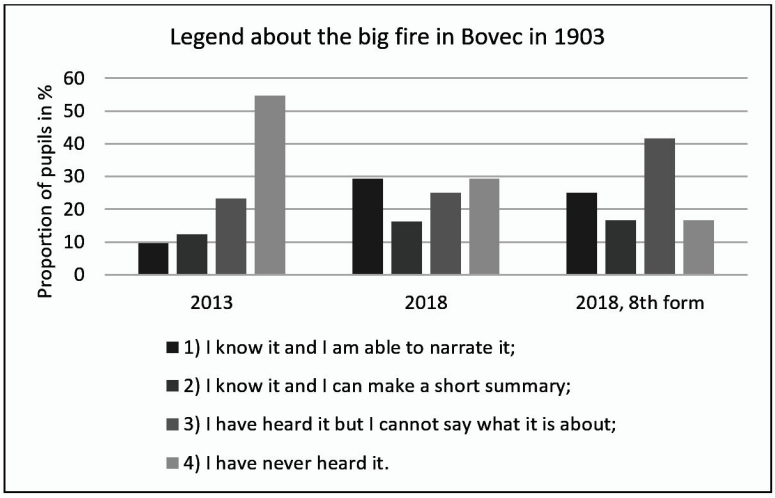

Figure 5. *Self-assessment of familiarity with the local stories about the big fire in Bovec in 1903 in a survey conducted in 2013 and in 2018. A special focus is on group 2018, the 8th form, which was guided along the thematic trail.*

curriculum and in this manner to enable schoolchildren to learn it well. After some years, in 2018, the same survey research was repeated in a new generation of pupils from the 6th to the 9th forms, 68 in total; the knowledge had noticeably increased, above all among the pupils who were guided along the thematic trail or via legend-tripping[4] within the framework of school activities (group 2018; 8th form).[5] For example, as can be seen in Figure 5, the proportion of pupils who have active knowledge of the historical "Legend about the big fire in Bovec in 1903" increased (see the first two columns) and the proportion of pupils who had never heard of this legend (last column) declined significantly (55 percent in 2013, 29 percent in 2018, and 17 percent in the observed group) (Ivančič Kutin 2019).

CONCLUSION

Narrative folklore is changing, even faster than previously, due to the rapid advancement of technology, electronics, and virtual communication. Furthermore, heritage is bound to change, as Valdimar Hafstein has put it: "Don't let all the talk about preservation fool you: all heritage is change" (Hafstein 2007: 75). At the same time also completely new forms of narrative culture are arising, which are related to new ways of transmission and dissemination, mostly via festivals, storytelling events, and through the creation of "legendary landscapes".

Narrative tradition may be considered a resource that can serve as a basis for diverse activities aimed at preserving the cultural identity and cultural heritage of the existing social groups in a given local environment. Traditional narrative genres and contents today no longer depend solely on oral transmission, given the existence of multiple media – from print and television to social networks – which in turn also allow for internationalization and globalization. In this context, the function of narrative tradition has changed and can also be part of the social or cultural development of the region. It can be either part of sustainable tourism or, if not well thought out, of the heritage industry.

As can be seen from the examples discussed in this article, the preservation of the narrative heritage is based on the fact that the concept of heritage refers to the past, although it is deeply rooted in the present, and selectively used for contemporary purposes and needs. When selecting narrative units which are always removed from their original context, it is important to focus on the criteria and strategies with which we can thoughtfully incorporate narrative folklore or local legends – with the aid of experts – into the local cultural and tourist environment. It is necessary to prevent the danger that the local stories would be translated and re-interpreted within the framework of commercial guidelines and applied to produce some "legendary fiction-land" as Cristina Bacchilega

has noted in the case of Hawaii, where folklore genres were applied and staged for the Western visitors (Bacchilega 2007). In contrast, the so-called intangible cultural heritage can lead to rivalries between local communities (Noyes 2006: 41; Tauschek 2010), which is also one of the problems of heritage preservation.

Because of the power of the empiric effect, thematic trails can also be effective as a support mechanism when teaching folk narratives in schools, and for improving sustainable tourism. However, they can soon become a part of the heritage industry which today is a modern economic factor in societies, but unfortunately often not well conceived.

Nevertheless, many criteria must be considered as parts of the process for the presentation of local legends *in situ*. It is true that elements of cultural heritage are no longer part of the active processes of tradition (Kockel 2007: 29), but since the transmission of the tradition causes the creation of new forms, the revitalization of tradition and preservation of heritage can often be the mainspring of local tourism and culture. Heritage and tradition are products of modernization processes; outside of this context, they seem non-existent. Heritage creates so-called present pasts, which always reflect the views of the past from the viewpoint of today and cannot avoid the claws of ideology or political interests. In recent times, this is clearly seen in emphasizing the important aspect of narrative heritage for cultural identity, as well as economic and social growth.

Even though the presentation of place-lore in situ can be problematic, it cannot be overlooked that genius loci is overcoming boundaries of time and gives a certain character to places (Kropej 2003: 78). However, regardless of different ways in which such heritage is preserved and presented, it has become clear that the permanent factors in its preservation are the people and the places; the outside factors in this process, in contrast, are more or less changeable.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

[1] For more detailed description see Source 9.

[2] Cunta, Miljana (ed.). *Živa coprnija Pohorja in Istre. Izleti po poteh pripovednega izročila*. Ljubljana: Beletrina 2019 (also published in the English and Croatian languages).

[3] The importance, methods, and goals of cultural and intercultural connections in the teaching of literature were discussed at the Congress of the Slavic Society of Slovenia (see Žele 2015).

[4] Though this term can have a negative connotation (Kinsella 2011), it is used in this connection in a positive sense for the legend trails.

[5] Full results of the analysis are published in Ivančič Kutin 2019.

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Source 3: http://carovnica.si/, last accessed on 8 September 2020.
Source 4: http://www.pravljicedanes.si/; https://pripovedovalskifestival.si/, both last accessed on 3 September 2020.
Source 5: https://www.outdooractive.com/de/wanderung/carnica-region rosental/familienwanderung-zur-maerchenwiese/1524442/, last accessed on 3 September 2020.
Source 6: https://www.bohinj.si/dozivetja/zlatorogova-pravljicna-pot/, last accessed on 8 September 2020.
Source 7: https://www.kranjska-gora.si/sl/aktivnosti/druzinske-pocitnice/pravljicne-dezele/kekceva-dezela, last accessed on 8 September 2020.
Source 8: https://www.tnp.si/sl/obiscite/nepozabna-dozivetja/programi-za-sole/, last accessed on 8 September 2020.
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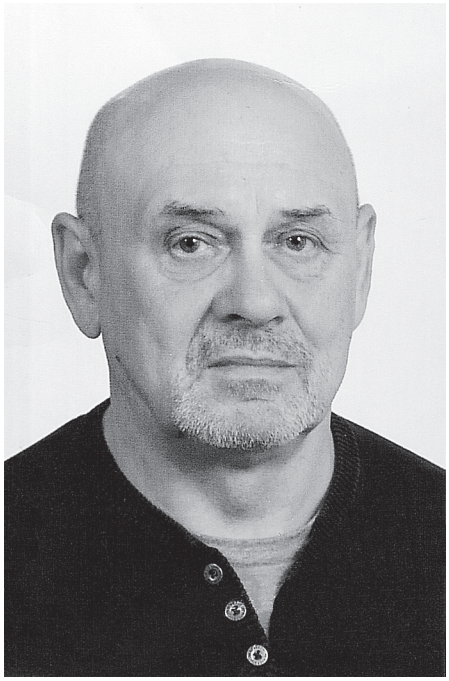
NEWS IN BRIEF

PAVEL LIMEROV DEFENDED HIS DOCTORAL DISSERTATION



On 3 February 2021, Pavel Limerov, a well-known Komi folklorist, defended his doctoral dissertation "Narratives of Christianization in the Formation of the Komi Literary Tradition in the Context of the Russian Written Word (14th Century – Early 20th Century)" at the M. Gorky Institute of World Literature. His 500-page dissertation includes an introduction, four chapters divided into fifteen subchapters, and a summary, followed by a list of sources and 384 titles of references.

P. Limerov's work builds on the observation of the dialogue between Christianization and Komi paganism, taking into account the influence of N. Kuratov's and K. Zhakov's literary works, but also the results of research work of the 1990s in analysing Komi Christian motifs (O. Uljashev, G, Yushkov, A. Tomin, and others). The 1990s brought a new wave of interest in mythology, the content of religious motifs, and especially folklore influenced by biblical literature in Russian folklore. In almost thirty years, numerous research results and commented text collections have been published and an impressive school has emerged. The dissertation of P. Limerov, a mature and well-known researcher, also falls within this framework. However, his approach is different, namely he looks at the unique processes that have taken place in the Komi Republic and compares them with the wider Slavic material. A good opportunity for this is provided by the powerful figure of Stephen of Perm, who, in addition to the Christianization of the Komi, was the creator of the original Komi written word and an important church figure. Over the centuries, layers of legends have formed around his personality and an interesting process of mythologization has taken place. However, the genesis of the Komi written word and literary tradition, based on the synthesis of various sources (hagiographies, biographies of saints, historical sources, literature, documents, folklore) is important.

Two chapters of the dissertation deal with various mythological narratives and beliefs, including well-known narratives about the Chudes, human creation, and much more. The proportion of the Apocrypha and ecclesiastical literature has always been observed in folk myths. Once again, Limerov has paid attention to the folk versions of the Christianization of the Komi, the intertwining of history and folklore connected with the figure of Stephen of Perm, or Stephen-Baptist.

The second and third chapter are especially interesting for the researchers of religious material. The second chapter, "Scenes and Characters of the Pre-Christian Komi Myths", provides an overview of Komi mythology research, and a closer look at the image of the Mother Goddess, Komi eschatological motifs, and dualistic legends. The results are as could be expected: God and Devil work together in creation stories, and the symbioses of legends, spiritual verses, and beliefs occur in eschatology tradition; however, above all, these chapters are valuable as a complement to comparative religious research.

The following chapter also discusses universal ancient motifs: the subject of saints and sorcerers, Stephen the Wonderworker's journeys (sailing on a rock along a river, naming places, his prophecies), the fate of the Chudes, their treasures, self-burials, and other motifs that have been offered many explanations during the 20th century, including exciting debates on the ethnicity of the white-eyed (Beloglazye) Chudes are under examination.

Quite an interesting view is provided by insights into the scholarly and literary work published on Stephen of Perm and, of course, studies concerning him that have been published in different periods of the 20th century, including studies from the 1970s and 1980s. It is here that we see the influences of different schools, the motivators of authors and researchers in shaping their work, as well as the influence of ideology, or rather politicization, on researchers and and the results of their work.

Undoubtedly, the study will significantly increase the awareness of Komi folklore and research positions among Russian-speaking researchers and thus assist the international scholarship of the humanities.

Mare Kõiva

BOOK REVIEWS

MISSION POSSIBLE: ONLINE BOOK PRESENTATION

Tatsiana Valodzina, Mare Kõiva (comps.) 2020. *Missiia vypolnima-2: Perspektivy izucheniia fol'klora: vzgliad iz Belarusi i Estonii*. Minsk: Belaruskaia navuka. 402 pp. In Russian.

On 25 January 2021, Belarusian and Estonian folklorists held an online presentation of the recently published volume titled *Missiia vypolnima-2: Perspektivy izucheniia fol'klora: vzgliad iz Belarusi i Estonii* (Mission Possible-2: Prospects for Studying Folklore: Belarusian and Estonian Perspective). The volume's compilers, Tatsiana Valodzina (National Academy of Sciences of Belarus) and Mare Kõiva (Estonian Literary Museum), have provided an overview of the joint Estonian and Belarusian projects, seminars, and publications. Tatsiana Valodzina emphasized the importance of studying older forms of folklore and described the joint endeavours of Estonian and Belarusian scholars in this field. Mare Kõiva focused on the multitude of joint projects and introduced ideas for further collaboration.

The presentation featured short discussions by the authors of the articles in the collection. Several of them were based mostly on the archival materials and earlier fieldwork data. The authors provided a new look on the traditional folk genres. In her presentation Tatsiana Valodzina not only gave an overview of her paper on Belarusian spells, but also revealed the source for her inspiration to work with this topic – her research questions emerged during one of the earlier Estonian-Belarusian seminars. Siarhei Hruntou talked about Belarusian rural cemeteries. He (re)negotiated their marginal status and suggested that their interpretations should adopt a complex perspective on their various elements. Eda Kalmre presented her paper on imaginary death which has been a popular component both in old and contemporary folklore. She provided a historical context for the popularity of this folk motif and pointed to the generic diversity of folk narratives about imaginary death. The article by Mare Kalda discussed legends on treasures in Estonian folklore. In her talk she presented a classification of these folk narratives based on their connection (or lack thereof) between the legends and real events. Yuri Patsyupo adopted a multidisciplinary approach to folk songs and analysed them from the perspectives of folkloristics and poetry studies. He also underscored the

necessity to make a distinction between poetry recitations and singing in the studies of folk music. Andres Kuperjanov created a statistical representation of etiological legends about trees that are related to the life of Jesus Christ. His presentation shed light on the popularity of the aspen in these legends and brought numerous examples illustrating how different tree types can feature in these texts. Piret Voolaid showed how colours are used in Estonian riddles. In her presentation she discussed what colours are recalled most frequently in the classical riddles and how colours can be used to create metaphors and symbolic meanings in folklore.

A number of presentations touched upon the most recent folklore and covered not only theory but also practical aspects of vernacular heritage. Tatsiana Marmysh warned about the possible dangers in Belarusian intangible heritage preservation. She argued that the inclusion of the elements of folklore into the UNESCO intangible heritage list might not only help its preservation but can also pose a threat to their authenticity. Elena Pavlova outlined the most common rituals and traditions of Belarusians living in Estonia. She mentioned her fieldwork in several Estonian cities and said that she keeps in touch with her research participants and has plans for further collaborative projects with them. Mare Kõiva presented one of her most recent studies which analyses the life on Saaremaa Island during the first wave of COVID-19 pandemic and discusses Heidi Hanso's quarantine blog.

As the article collection features scholarly works by both Estonian and Belarusian researchers, it comes as no surprise that some of the presentations explicitly compare Estonian and Belarusian folklore. Elena Boganeva and Mare Kõiva presented their comparative study on mythical pharaohs in Belarusian and Estonian folklore, which covers a wide variety of subtopics, including pharaohs' appearance, their communication with people, and their connections with other folklore characters. Irina Smirnova drew parallels between Belarusian candle transfer ritual and worshipping of the Seto agricultural deity Peko. The work was inspired by her work at the folklore archives of the Estonian Literary Museum. The paper by Liisi Laineste, Anastasiya Fiadotava, and Tõnno Jonuks compared clergy jokes in Estonian and Belarusian folklore. The authors argued that such jokes cannot be regarded as an attack on religion, but rather ridicule the clergy because they belonged to a higher social class.

Along with the authors' talks the book presentation included the volume reviewer Mikalai Antropau's analytical overview. He discussed the dynamics of Estonian and Belarusian academic cooperation and expressed his hope for future edited volumes, with a particular focus on further comparative studies into Finno-Ugric and Slavic folklore. The participants of the online presentation

also discussed plans for future volumes in the series "Mission Possible" and invited each other to take part in joint academic conferences and seminars.

Although the online format of the book presentation lacked the immediacy and materiality of face-to-face gatherings, the authors and listeners still had a chance to discuss each other's work, share their latest research findings, and just engage in informal conversations with long-time colleagues and friends.

Anastasiya Fiadotava

vol. 81 http://www.folklore.ee/folklore


Die Vorzeit Liefflands.
Ein Denkmahl des Pfaffen- und Rittergeistes.
Von
G. Merkel.
Erster Band.

On the cover: Garlieb Helwig Merkel. *Die Vorzeit Liefflands: ein Denkmal des Pfaffen- und Rittergeistes*. Band I. Berlin: Voss, 1798.

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