The Creation of National Holidays in Lithuania: The Aspect of Seasonality

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Abstract: This research covers six national holidays introduced in Lithuania between 1919 and 1991. These holidays are more or less related with the country's history and their dates cover the four seasons of the year. Based on fieldwork data as well as legal acts, memoirs of contemporaries, online sources and press publications, this article aims to analyse the links between national holidays and seasonality between 1918 and 1940, and between 1990 and 2019. The author concludes, that the seasonality of a festival – natural-climatic conditions, relations with agricultural work or the dominant vacation season, religious, ideological or other restrictions on the celebration – has limited possibilities to shape the festival by adjusting festive events. However, overt attempts to frame a holiday as 'celebrated during a particular season' or to replace one festive day with another were bound to fail. The vitality of a national holiday, is subject to its content, apprehensible to both the government structures and common citizens who observe the holiday. Throughout the period under consideration the Day of the Restoration of the State, celebrated on the 16th of February, best coincided with the aforementioned conditions. Although extremely unfavourable to public celebration, the birthday of the modern state of Lithuania is the only festival that retained the status of public holiday and non-working day both from 1919 to 1940 and after 1990, and surpasses in popularity other national holidays.

Keywords: national holidays, National Day, seasonality, ritual year, Lithuania

Introduction

As to the ritual year in a number of European countries, it can be stated that most calendar holidays in contemporary society are related to the Christian calendar. In this regard the ritual year is more or less global. However, the folk traditions

associated with the said holidays have retained certain local features that were determined by the natural and cultural environments and have little to do with the official religion. Lithuanian ethnologists have paid considerable attention to the research of calendar holidays. According to Libertas Klimka, the calendar is a very important attribute of ethnic culture. It reflects certain characteristics of the climate, peculiarities of agriculture and other sources of sustenance, social relations, and the distinctive features of spiritual culture (Klimka 1999: 179).

For example, when researching how the social activeness of young men and women in rural areas of Lithuania changed over the year in the late 19th-early 20th century, I arrived at the conclusion that these changes were subject to the rhythm of work and the perspective of the marriage season and measured up to the interests of an agricultural society. Changes in the activeness of different the sexes were usually related to one or other holiday and to the specific rituals performed either by men or women when rendering the holiday its particular features (Šaknys 2001). On the other hand, in modern society alongside the days dedicated to the commemoration of important events in Jesus', the Virgin Mary's, or other saints' lives, secular events of national importance are given the status of holiday and non-working day (Šaknys 2015: 103)[1].

The concept of a national holiday is a relatively new phenomenon. The political elite started creating them in the late 18th century for the sake of national solidarity (Hobsbawm 1983: 271–283), whereas in Eastern Europe they were introduced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when Eastern European countries started celebrating independence. These holidays were particularly important in the formation of national communities (Myerly, Hunt 2001: 198), and the system of national holidays, as an integral part of the nation-building process, played a critical role in the development and boosting of national identity (Anastasova 2011: 159). On the other hand, festive rituals reflect the society that generated them (Hornborg 2007: 83).

Therefore, the research of national holidays is important in order to understand a country's national culture. The structure of national holidays – official non-working days – in Lithuania is not yet firmly established and thus an object of continuous discussion. This means it is valid to analyse national holidays not only as rituals denoting a secular, ethnic or civic identity, but also from the point of view of seasonality, identifying their place in the structure of the ritual year.

From the first glance such research may seem impossible or at least irrational. Certain events of national importance (for example, declaration of independence, adoption of the constitution, etc.) are normally not coordinated in advance with dates favourable to their celebration. However, later, as the date of the event is turned into a holiday, it absorbs the value-related aspects of national identity and becomes more or less convenient for public celebration due to its position in the

annual cycle. During its 50 years of independence (1918–1940 and 1990–2018) Lithuania has had six national holidays, in addition to which Constitution Day was declared a non-working day for a short period and International Workers Day (1ˢᵗ of May)[2], which in Lithuania, contrary to some European countries, was not in any way associated with the traditional calendar, was from time to time celebrated as a public holiday.

Lithuanian National holidays

1919–1940, 1990–present: February 16, **The Day of the Restoration of the State**, associated with the declaration of Lithuania's independence in 1918.

1924–1928: May 15, **Day of Convening** *the* **Constituent Seimas** (Parliament) in 1920.

1929: August 15, the **Assumption – the combination of all national and state holidays into one.**

1930–1940: September 8, **the Day of the Coronation of Lithuanian Grand Duke Vytautas** (1430).

1990–present: July 6, **State Day**, honours the coronation of the country's first and only king, Mindaugas, in 1253.

1991–present: March 11, the **Day of the Restoration of Independence**, associated with the restoration of Lithuania's independence by the democratically elected parliament in 1990.

The seasonality of Lithuanian national holidays has already been analysed in several of my articles. Between 1988 and 1991, I carried out field research to collect ethnographic material on young people's free time activities and celebrations. A question regarding the celebration of the 16ᵗʰ of February – the Restoration of the State Day – in independent Lithuania (1918–1940) was included in the questionnaire. The research revealed certain problems associated with the celebration of the 16ᵗʰ of February during Lent (Šaknys 1992: 12). In 2018, based on field research as well as legal acts, memoirs of contemporaries and press publications, I reviewed all national holidays celebrated between 1919 and 1940. The research revealed not only the hierarchy of festivals but also discussions in the press regarding the introduction of a national holiday that would be celebrated "on a convenient date" (Šaknys 2018: 129–154). I came to the conclusion that the formation of national holidays is a complex phenomenon that does not end with their formal validation and the introduction of public celebration. Choosing the right time for the holiday, its coupling with historical events or Christian celebrations, and promotion

in the press, schools, and via youth organisations, does not necessarily guarantee its popularity or longevity (Šaknys 2018: 147).

This conclusion encouraged me to continue the research chronologically. This article, based on the abovementioned sources and research of the situation between 1990 and 2018 carried out between 2013 and 2018, is aimed at analysing the links between national holidays and seasonality in the 1918–1940 period and between 1990 and 2018. The article does not cover the period from 1940 to 1989 when Lithuania was under Soviet and Nazi occupation[3].

National Holidays between 1918 and 1940

The list of festivals and public holidays, especially religious ones, was quite constant between 1920 and 1940. In 1920, Lithuanians celebrated New Year's Day (1st of January), the Feast of the Epiphany (6th of January), St Casimir's Day (4th of March), St Joseph's Day (18th of March), Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday, Easter Monday, Ascension Day, Corpus Christi, St John's Day (24th of June, observed only in 1920), the Feast of St Peter and Paul (29th of June), the Feast of the Assumption (15th of August), All Saints' Day (1st of November), the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (8th of December), Christmas Eve (24th of December), and Christmas (25th and 26th of December). In some years, Pentecost Monday was observed as well (Šaknys 2018: 151). This was not the case with state holidays, with the exception of the Day of the Restoration of the State of Lithuania (16th of February).

Development of modern national holidays in the newly restored Republic of Lithuania was not an easy task. In contrast to religious celebrations, which had been observed for centuries and some of which were listed in the official Russian Empire lists of holiday non-working days (ditto the German Empire in the case of Lithuania Minor)[4], national holidays in Lithuania, which had just regained its statehood, were a completely new cultural phenomenon. Similar to most European countries, the Republic of Lithuania declared the day of signing the Act of Independence, 16th of February 1918, a national holiday. This became National Day and was the first secular holiday that had no direct association with the Church. In 1919 the celebration of the first anniversary of Lithuania's independence, despite the unstable political situation and the ongoing hostilities (the government was even forced to move from Vilnius to Kaunas), was expected to be quite solemn. The official newspaper *Lietuva* published the "National Day Event Program". The celebration in Kaunas featured high Mass with the participation of representatives of the State Council, the Cabinet, and local public organizations, a military parade, meetings in three venues around the city "to explain the idea of independence", and a solemn meeting of the State Council and the Cabinet in Kaunas city theatre, followed by a performance and a gala concert (Šaknys 2018: 134).

Cold weather was often mentioned in the press publications dedicated to this celebration – the 16th of February was not the most convenient time for official celebrations.

Fig. 1: Average monthly temperature in Vilnius between 1919 and 1929
(Žilinskas, Šulaitis, Čeikauskas 1932: 60)

Another problem was that more or less every three years this holiday fell during Lent. Lent was associated with fasting and limited entertainment and thus inconvenient for celebrations of such scale. It was not only the dominant Catholic Church that prohibited boisterous and merry celebrations during Lent, official legal acts also provided against them. Rules for the enforcement of the Law on Public Holidays and Non-working Days of 1930 prescribed that "concerts, performances and rehearsals thereof, public parties, dances, and other types of public entertainment" were forbidden during the first days of Lent (Švenčių ir poilsio įstatymui vykdyti taisyklės 1930: 4–5). On the 16th of February, however, such events were organised. Even in rural areas young people were at times allowed to have dance parties (Šaknys 1992: 12).

The creation of other national holidays followed shortly. On the 15th of May 1920 the Constituent Seimas was convened to consolidate Lithuania's independence. This date was made prominent nationwide. In 1924 this day was already referred to as the Day of the Nation's Freedom and hosted the solemnities that had been transferred from the 16th of February, whereas in 1925 it was validated as a holiday in the amended Law on Public Holidays and Non-working Days (Švenčių ir poilsio įstatymas 1925: 1). In 1925 the editorial of the official gazette *Lietuva* presented the holiday as consciously chosen:

> *The people have chosen the symbolic spring time – the most beautiful month of May – for its holiday, so that the rebirth of nature from the wasteland of winter and the bright blossoms and fresh greenery would make a perfect background for the expression of the nation's joy. Joy and the noble idea of life are incompatible*

with the nature of autumn and winter drifting towards death, but choose the time of the year when everything comes to life and manifests its will to live. The people celebrating a day in its spring life cannot get along without the charming sun and flowers (Tautos šventę švenčiant 1925: 1).

Although this was the day when the new Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania was adopted, the 15th of May gradually lost its significance (Šaknys 2018: 138). It would seem that after the coup d'état of 1926, the 16th of February yet again became the most important holiday in Lithuania as Antanas Smetona, who became president after the coup, was the signatory of the Act on the 16th of February 1918. However, following the death of Dr Jonas Basanavičius, one of the principal ideologists of independent Lithuania, on the 16th of February 1927, the holiday was shaded with mourning. The next 16th of February was also quite solemnly commemorated as 1928 marked the 10-year anniversary of independence. In 1929, however, an unexpected decision was made as part of the process of national holiday formation. On the 14th of August the daily *Lietuvos aidas* featured an article stating that "Tomorrow we are celebrating the National Day. Our state has incorporated all national and church holidays into one National Day and dedicated the 15th of August – a church holiday – for this occasion". In 1929, the Assumption of Virgin Mary was declared the National Day, explaining in the editorial of the *Lietuvos aidas* that it was more convenient to celebrate in summer than in winter on the 16th of February or on the 15th of May when spring work was in full swing. The most convenient date for the National Day was the 15th of August, which was already a church holiday, so there would be no need for an additional day off (Tautos šventė 1929: 1). Apparently, this was relevant in the context of the global economic crisis, however, "*the combination of all national and state holidays into one*" could hardly create a celebration ritual worthy of attention. On the other hand, it is difficult to understand how the Assumption of the Virgin Mary could satisfy the inhabitants of the recently annexed Klaipėda Region where the Evangelical Lutheran faith prevailed. In the rest of Lithuania August was also not a free from work as the majority of the country's population lived in rural areas. The relative intensity of agricultural work becomes obvious from the chart drawn up on the 12th of April 1922 indicating the number of working hours assigned to manor workers (Morkūnas 1977: 160).
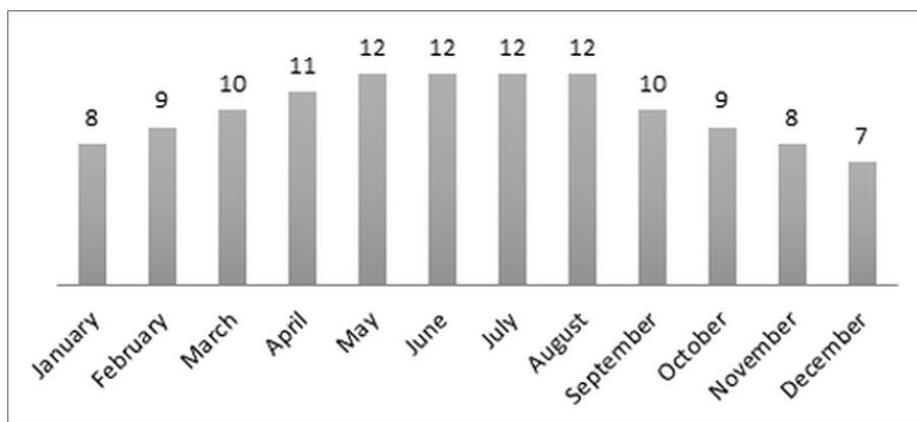
Fig. 2: Number of working hours per week, shown by month in 1922.
(Morkūnas 1977: 160)

Based on this chart, work intensity in May and August was similar. It is no wonder that the celebration of the National Day on the 15th of August lasted for one year only. This suggests that the artificially formed seasonality of a holiday can hardly serve as the basis for success. On the other hand, this was the single most important National Day that had no relation to events important to the state. The historicity of the holiday, however, was framed by creating a new National Day. The year 1930 was declared the year of Vytautas the Great. The celebrations culminated on the 8th of September 1930, a particularly solemn commemoration of the 500th anniversary of Grand Duke Vytautas planned coronation[5]. However, unlike previous cases, this time the press focused on the holiday's links with the country's glorious past rather than on the convenience of the date to the celebration (Smetona 1990: 398).

The 1930 Law on Public Holidays and Non-working Days allowed two holidays to be introduced to commemorate events of state importance, namely Independence Day on the 16th of February, and the 8th of September, which became National Day (Švenčių ir poilsio įstatymas 1930: 2–3). Both the holidays were formalised in the 1938 Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania and were referred to as national holidays without singling any holiday out (Lietuvos konstitucija 1938: 1). However, on the eve of World War II the 16th of February once again became the most important national holiday. In 1938, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the state, the celebration was particularly solemn and when, in 1939, Lithuania regained its capital Vilnius, where on the 16th of February 1918 the Independence Act had been signed, the celebration was exceptional, despite the severely cold February of 1940. Unfortunately, shortly afterwards Lithuania lost its statehood and the Soviet occupation regime replaced the 16th of February, alongside other holidays observed between 1918 and 1940 (with the exception of New Year), with revolutionary Soviet celebrations.

National Holidays between 1990 and 2019

Unlike the period between 1919 and 1940, there were no changes in the validated list of national holidays between 1990 and 2019. After the restoration of the independent Republic of Lithuania on the 11th of March 1990, this date soon became the Day of the Restoration of Lithuania's Independence. Alongside New Year (1st of January), Easter Sunday and Monday, International Workers' Day (1st of May), Mother's Day (first Sunday in May), Assumption (15th of August), All Saints' Day (1st of November), and Christmas (25th and 26th of December)[6] the Law on Public Holidays, adopted by the Supreme Council Reconstituent Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on the 25th of October 1990, listed the 16th of February – Restoration of the State Day –, and the 6th of July – State Day (Day of King Mindaugas' Coronation) –, as public holidays and non-working days. Shortly afterwards the 11th of March – the Day of the Restoration of Lithuania's Independence –, was also declared a public holiday. Thereby events of national importance were simultaneously reflected in three holidays and, unlike in the inter-war period, none of them was singled out as more significant than the others.

Meanwhile, the Day of the Constituent Assembly of Lithuania (together with the International Day of Families) and the Day of the Coronation of Vytautas the Great (the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and from 1991 also Thanksgiving for Independence and Defending Lithuania's Freedom) only have the status of commemorative days[7]. Assumption, a public holiday, has not been observed as a National holiday (Šaknys 2018: 153–154).

The celebration of the 11th of March in pious Roman Catholic families is even more complicated than the celebration of the 16th of February, as the 11th of March in all cases falls on Lent. As a matter of fact, the number of religious people in the late 20th and early 21st centuries Lithuania has decreased. Not everyone observes Lent, and young people do not normally follow restrictions on entertainment. Moreover, unlike during the inter-war period, there is no law imposing restrictions on public events during Lent. On the 16th of February 2018, when the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the state fell on the first Friday of Lent, the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference officially released the congregation from fasting, i.e. the obligation to refrain from meat dishes (Vilniaus arkivyskupija). The mood of the latter celebration is also adjusted by its chronological proximity to Valentine's Day, which in Lithuania has been celebrated since around 1993–1995 (it was feared that Valentine's Day could overshadow Restoration of the State-related celebrations) and on some occasions even Mardi Gras, a merry celebration with traditional dressing up (in 1999 and 2010 Mardi Gras was celebrated on the 16th of February). The only holiday close to the 11th of March is International Women's Day, on the 8th of March, which has recently significantly decreased in popularity.

The commemoration of Lithuania's two restoration dates (16th of February 1918 and 11th of March 1990) was supplemented with the coronation day of Mindaugas, the first King of Lithuania. This day is related to the establishment of the state of Lithuania following Mindaugas' elevation to King of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in July of 1253. The exact date of the event is unknown; therefore, the date of the holiday was chosen from four possible options (the coronation took place on a Sunday in July). Theoretically the 6th of July should be an ideal day for celebration, particularly among urban dwellers whose means of sustenance are not directly related to agriculture. There are no chronologically close holidays that might overshadow the 6th of July (the closest important celebration is St John's Day on the 24th of June).

As suggested by Laima Anglickienė and her colleagues' assessment, what makes it different from other national holidays is fewer official events and the increasing popularity of various entertaining public events related to Lithuania's history and culture. For example, the Days of Live Archaeology in Kernavė, the ancient capital of Lithuania, or the events of Culture Night in Vilnius Old Town are always swarming with visitors. There is also a beautiful unique tradition originating from a public initiative of singing the national anthem – V. Kudirka's "Tautiška giesmė" – at 9 pm on the 6th of July at a pre-arranged place or at home together with all Lithuanians in the motherland and around the world. Mindaugas' Coronation Day is also distinguished by the abundance of concerts, and cultural and sports events (Anglickienė *et al.* 2014: 168–169). However, based on public opinion poll data this holiday is not particularly popular. Results derived by sociologist Jolanta Kuznecovienė in 2005, regarding the situation around all Lithuania, are as follows: 31.6% of respondents attributed the 16th of February to the five most important public holidays, 22.4% indicated that the 11th of March should also be on this list, and only 7.5% chose the 6th of July (Kuznecovienė 2008: 83). This study is seconded by the ethnological research carried out in 2012–2013 in the city of Vilnius which suggested that the 6th of July, being a non-working day, was not ranked among the 12 most popular recently observed family celebrations (Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2016: 13). Comparison of the two independence days revealed a slight preference for the 16th of February (Mardosa 2016: 111–112). The research suggests that the popularity of public holidays has little to do with seasonality. This is again confirmed by my research on the attitude of young Vilnius residents to calendar and national holidays, carried out between 2013 and 2016 (40 respondents were asked to indicate where they celebrated a particular holiday last time). Most respondents indicated that they celebrated the 16th of February and the 11th of March in Vilnius, while on the 6th of July they were visiting other towns.

Holiday	Celebrated with family	Celebrated with friends	Celebrated with co-workers	Not celebrated at all	Celebrated as one of the three most important holidays with friends
Restoration of the State Day	8	11	5	17	3
Restoration of Lithuania's Independence Day	5	11	4	20	0
Mindaugas' Coronation Day	4	7	6	23	2

Table 1. National Holidays in Vilnius (2013–2016)

A similar situation is reflected in my research in the Vilnius region conducted in 2017–2018. In fact, the popularity of the 6th of July might be higher in those towns which host major events, for example Kernavė. As Laurent Sébastien Fournier has observed, not all people view festivals as an opposition between work and play (Fournier 2019: 15). For those involved in their organisation it is usually a hard-working day when, according to them, "there is no time for celebration" because "it is the hardest day in the year". On the other hand, it is also an occasion when one can be visited by guests and have a joint celebration. Field research data suggest that national holidays are not particularly popular in towns and villages outside Vilnius, especially the 6th of July, which, due to its informal character, could theoretically be an important celebration among young people. It would seem that July is the perfect time for public events in Lithuania. Most of the celebrations that take place on that day could hardly be organised on the 16th of February or the 11th of March because of the weather, and because of Lent. In addition, at that time Catholics have no restrictions on their choice of food or merrymaking. However, the celebration of the 6th of July in Lithuania has not yet acquired a scope similar to the celebration of the 4th of July in the United States. This is already the period of the holidays in Lithuania and schools, colleges, and universities are closed. Few people remain in the largest cities, so apparently it is more difficult to attract people to the previously mentioned events than in winter or spring.

What is the difference between these three holidays? Let us compare the official scenarios of the three festivals in 2019 as posted on Vilnius events website. The official ceremony of the commemoration of the 101st anniversary of Lithuania's independence on the 16th of February 2019 opened with the honouring of the signatories of the Independence Act signed on the 16th of February 1918 at Rasos cemetery, followed by a patriotic young people's walk given the name Following the Road of Statehood, a flag raising ceremony involving the flags of the three

Baltic States on Simonas Daukantas Square, high Mass at Vilnius Cathedral, and a ceremony outside the House of Signatories (where the Act was signed in 1918). In addition, events related to the anti-Soviet movement were planned, including a ceremony on the square outside the Ministry of Defence near the monument to General Jonas Žemaitis-Vytautas, Chairman of the Union of Lithuanian Freedom Fighters and signatory of the declaration of the 16th of February 1949[8]. To commemorate the 70th anniversary of the declaration, 70 bonfires were lit along Gediminas avenue and a pop concert dedicated to the 16th of February was organised on Cathedral Square (Vilnius kviečia vasario 16-ąją švęsti kartu (Renginių programa)). The official commemoration of the 29th anniversary of the restoration of Lithuania's independence, on the 11th of March 2019, consisted of the flag raising ceremony of the three Baltic States on Independence square, a walk carrying the 400-metre-long flag of Lithuania, Doors Open Day at the Seimas and other locations, free excursions around Vilnius, and high Mass at Vilnius Cathedral. In the Town Hall the youngest citizens of Vilnius received well-deserved awards in the spheres of science, culture and art, sport, and voluntary work. Students of the Military Academy of Lithuania lit bonfires on Stalo hill in Vilnius. In addition, a walk to Medininkai castle and the memorial to Lithuanian customs officers killed on the night of the 31st of July 1991 was organised, various sports competitions, quiz programs, and other educational activities were planned. The Church of St Johns and the Teachers' House hosted festive concerts (Ką veikti kovo 11-ąją Vilniuje? (renginių kalendorius)).

According to the scenario presented in advance to Vilnius residents, the commemoration of the 766th anniversary of the coronation of King Mindaugas, on the 6th of July 2019, included a picknick on Lukiškės square, festive events in the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania (exhibitions, lectures, documentaries, concerts, sports events, cultural studies), a jubilee run around the Green Lakes outside Vilnius, and a celebration on the Hill of Angels in Trakai district. This celebration included the participation of the Lithuanian Armed Forces Band followed by the singing of the national anthem and waving of a 60-metre national flag. The national anthem was also to be sung in Akropolis, one of the largest shopping malls in Vilnius, and in Lentvaris on the outskirts of the capital (following a concert by the choir of political prisoners and exiles). Vilnius University Botanical Gardens (located in Kairėnai just outside Vilnius) organised a flower exhibition entitled Lilies for King Mindaugas' Crown. Kernavė hosted one of the most important events on the occasion, the 20th festival of experimental archaeology, titled the Days of Live Archaeology in Kernavė, dedicated to the 740th anniversary of the first mention of Kernavė and the 40th anniversary of archaeological research. The three-day festival offered its guests the possibility to listen to Baltic music, observing ancient crafts, outfits, and warfare and an opportunity to try to make something with their own

hands (Kur švęsti Liepos 6 d. Vilniuje? (Lietuvos Karaliaus Mindaugo karūnavimo dienos renginių gidas 2019)). Despite the similar programs, the summer festival exploited the possibility of covering a greater variety of events and expand the space of the celebration in Vilnius from the city centre (on the 16th of February), to the surrounding hills and to the town of Medininkai in the Vilnius district (on the 11th of March), to the surroundings of Trakai outside Vilnius district, and to the first capital of Lithuania, Kernavė, in Širvintos district (on the 6th of July). However, according to the research of both ethnologists and sociologists, the seasonality of the festival cannot be coupled with its popularity, while the action-packed program does not necessarily make the festival the model of success for a national holiday. This helps explain why the 16th of February, which is least suitable for celebration from the point of view of seasonality, has retained its status as the most popular national holiday between 1919 and 1940, during the occupations, and after 1990.

Conclusions

The research aimed to compare six national holidays introduced in Lithuania between 1919 and 1991 and their manifestations between 1919 and 2019. These holidays are more or less related with the country's history, with their dates covering the four seasons of the year. The research revealed that the seasonality of a festival – natural and climatic conditions, relations with agricultural work or the dominant holiday season, religious, ideological or other restrictions on the celebration – has limited possibilities to shape the festival by adjusting festive events. However, overt attempts to frame a holiday as 'celebrated during a particular season' or to replace one festive day with another were bound to fail. The vitality of a national holiday is, subject to its content, apprehensible to both the government structures and common citizens who observe the holiday. Throughout the period under consideration the Day of the Restoration of the State, celebrated on the 16th of February, best complied with the abovementioned conditions. Although extremely unfavourable to public celebration, the birthday of the modern state of Lithuania is the only festival that retained the status of public holiday and non-working day both from 1919 to 1940 and after 1990, and surpasses in popularity other national holidays.

Notes

[1] Until 1918 most of the territory of present-day Lithuania was part of the Russian Empire and until 1923 the western part of the country belonged to the German Empire. Secular holidays related to certain events in the emperors and their family members' lives were celebrated.

[2] The concept of the national holiday will be used to denote political rituals that have no religious background and were developed in the Modern Age to nurture loyalty to the nation

and the state (Hobsbawm 1983: 271; Bell 1997: 128–137), therefore International Workers' Day is not listed among such holidays. On the 8th of September 1920, the Lithuanian government approved the list of public authorities' non-working days which, alongside "church celebrations" and other "public holidays", included two national holidays, i.e. the 16th of February, the Day of the Declaration of Lithuania's Independence, and the 1st of May, Workers' Solidarity Day. However, according to Vladas Sirutavičius, the 1st of May, though being a non-working day, was never actually officially celebrated until 1930 (Sirutavičius 2001: 137). Later, the revival of this festival came with the Soviet and Nazi occupations of Lithuania. Following the declaration of independence in 1990, this festival was in the list of non-working days, however, was soon removed. In 1996, the 1st of May regained its status as a non-working day. In 2004, on this day Lithuania joined the European Union, so for a few years in a row there were attempts to mark this occasion, but the celebrations did not gain ground. To date, the holiday has not been celebrated in any particular way and there are discussions regarding its removal from the list of non-working days.

[3] Alongside Soviet and Nazi holidays, festivals typical only of Lithuania were celebrated. By the order of the Presidium of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic Supreme Council of the 11th of October 1940, the 21st of July – the declaration of Lithuania as a Soviet republic – was declared a public holiday, whereas in the years of Nazi occupation the 22nd of June – the Day of Lithuania's "Liberation" – became a public holiday by the Commissioner General's order of the 6th of April 1943 (Laukaitytė 2010: 123).

[4] Until World War I the western part of Lithuania, the so-called Klaipėda region, was part of the German Empire and was attached to Lithuania only in 1923. The rest of Lithuania was part of the Russian Empire from 1795.

[5] The coronation of Vytautas the Great (1350–1430), the Grand Duke of Lithuania, was scheduled for the 8th of September 1430, however, for political reasons the coronation never took place.

[6] In 2004 St John's Day was added to the list of non-working days, and in 2006 the list was supplemented with the 1st of May (which after 1990 was removed from the list) and in 2012 with Christmas Eve.

[7] The Law on Commemorative Days of the Republic of Lithuania adopted on the 3rd of July 1997 validated the list of commemorative days, filled with important historical and political events. The commemorative day is defined as an important day related to the most important facts and/or events in the development or establishment of Lithuania's statehood, promotion of universal values, preservation of memory culture and living history. Today, there are 69 commemorative days on the list (Lietuvos Respublikos Atmintinų dienų įstatymas).

[8] The Declaration, together with other documents adopted at the Congress of Lithuanian Partisan Commanders provided legal and political bases for armed resistance, rendered a new format for the struggle for freedom, and legitimised the Union of Lithuanian Freedom Fighters as an organisation of the universal organised armed resistance against the Soviet occupation and its Council as the sole legitimate authority in the territory of occupied Lithuania. At the Congress of Lithuanian Partisan Commanders that took place in February 1949 J. Žemaitis (15th of March 1909–26th of November 1954) was elected Chairman of the Council of the Union of Lithuanian Freedom Fighters and was the acting Chief of the Defence Forces (Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimų centras).

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