

Foreword

The eleventh issue of the annual volume “The Ritual Year” is entitled “Traditions and Transformation.” We do not argue, however, that this topic is new for our SIEF Working Group, since changes in the tradition and the tradition as such have been touched upon from its very first academic steps both during the conferences and in discussions and publications.

This time we decided to fully concentrate on the correlation between tradition and transformation, to shed light on the preservation of archaic rituals and customs and the modifications they are going through. Festive culture demonstrates the age-old experience of peoples in the form of feasts, rituals and customs, but still it is a dynamic and evolving system. The modern world cannot be imagined without the collision and interpenetration of various cultures, due to globalised commercial processes, migration, cultural contacts, technical innovations, mass-media activity, Internet, and other forces. The festive culture of many peoples is being seriously modified, and the transformations can be traced not only in individual perceptions of celebration but in the structure of the festivals and the ritual year as a whole. Any festival is an aesthetic and social event which consists of a set of cultural elements that were designed in the course of a long history of the development of human beings and society to serve the ideological and religious (or atheistic) needs of the peoples and governments. This design is being cosmetically or drastically changed in accordance with the social environment and historical events. Periods of decline of some festive complexes are being followed by their peak popularity and vice versa.

During the last three decades, scholars have collected data on the ritual year in different regions and countries and in both urban and rural settings. The ideas the scholars in this field share take account of several anthropological, ethnological, folkloristic and interdisciplinary themes:

- The ethnicity of a holiday: from the local to the global
- A festival as an intercultural phenomenon
- Festival as a commercial brand and its role in the development of tourism

- The Ritual Year: traditions and novelties in academic investigation
- Collective and personal aspects of a holiday
- Authenticity—novelties—the imaginary
- The festive and everyday spheres
- Religious, patriotic, etc. feelings and emotions in the Ritual Year
- Transformation in the visual and verbal parts of a festival
- General and specific changes in calendric and life-cycle rituals.

These questions have been discussed in Kazan, Russian Federation, at the 11th International Conference of the WG “The Ritual Year” in June 2015. The locus of the annual gathering of the members of the WG gave rise to at least two novelties. First of all, many more (than usual) participants from Russia managed to come to the conference (and fewer non-Russians took part in it), and the methodology of Russian / Soviet classical humanitarian (ethnological, sociological, religious, folkloric, historical, etc.) was widely represented. Another novelty was that the very data presented and analysed exemplified mostly the multinational Republic of Tatarstan, of which Kazan is the capital, with its interesting mosaic of Christian and Muslim denominations. Discussion was not restricted to it, however, and other peoples and minorities (be they ethnic or religious) were also studied. The rituals and feasts of the ethno-local groups of the Volga regions were discussed in some detail, and special attention was given to Islamic rituals and rites in their present state.

The present volume is divided into two parts. The plenary papers are presented in the first part. The papers in the second part are arranged in alphabetical order, since the articles have so much in common regarding the problems and ideas applied to different ethnic groups that it was not possible to draw thematic divisions between them. This arrangement is also explained by the fact that a noticeable and important difference from previous issues of the annual “The Ritual Year” is the concentration of all the articles on the main theme of the book. So “Traditions and Transformation” have dominated in every single article.

Five articles comprise the plenary section. The article by **Rozalinda Musina** (Russia) *Muslim Family Ceremonies in the Life of Contemporary Tatars: Traditions and Innovations* opens the volume. The author demonstrates the increasing role of Muslim rituals in the daily life of the inhabitants of the Republic of Tatarstan. **Terry Gunnell** (Iceland)

with his paper *The Development and Role of the Fjallkona (Mountain Woman) in Icelandic National Day Celebrations and Other Contexts* and **Helena Ruotsala** (Finland) telling of *The Role and Meaning of Fictive Rituals in Cultural Tourism* concentrate on invented tradition. Professor Gunnell studies the personification of Iceland, the image of the Mountain Woman who is the permanent actor in the Icelandic National Day's festivities. The author traces its origin from the Romantic theatre on the one hand and the personages of Icelandic mythology on the other. Professor Ruotsala concentrates on the content of the newly developed rituals in the Far North of the Russian Federation, which aimed to meet the touristic demands for cultural curiosities. **Jonas Mardosa** (Lithuania) in his paper *Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (Žolinė) in the Ethnoconfessionally Mixed Environment of Modern Vilnius* compares how Catholics (Lithuanians and Poles) and Orthodox Christians (Russians) celebrate the Feast of the August 15, which was designated in Lithuania in 2000 as a state holiday and a day off work. **Ildikó Lehtinen** (Finland) in her paper *Mari Ritual Practices as Representation* gives her thoughts about the relevancy of regarding the contemporary feasts as elements of a continuous tradition. Analysing the case of the spring commemorative rituals of Mari people, the author shows how the ritual semantics moves away from authenticity and the festival itself becomes the cultural and ethnographic event.

In the main part of the volume, scholars from different countries present their view of the existence and development of traditional rituals and beliefs in different historical epochs and in a variety of natural and national environments. As in previous yearbooks, in this issue the contributors continue to analyse the various aspects of traditional culture in a good state of preservation referring to both archival records and their own field data. **Aleksandra Ippolitova** (Russia) studies the texts from the herbal book dating to the end of the 19th century and identifies the origins of the texts included and the motific connection of its elements. **Elena Iugai** (Russia) makes a textual analysis of the Russian funeral laments containing the verbal formula of the letter-message. **Svetlana Amosova** (Russia) considers the Latgalian legends about the blood libel, and **Andres Kuiperjanov** (Estonia) demonstrates the traditional Estonian ways of determining the time by the stars.

The spatial aspect of the transformation of festive traditions comes to the fore in two groups of articles, one analysing a rural context and the other an urban one. The article by **Tatiana Minniyakhmetova** (Russia) is devoted to the festivals of the Udmurts, and traditional forms of celebration are compared with those introduced during the Soviet era. **Marlene Hugoson** (Sweden) traces the development of the midwinter masking tradition in rural Sweden, while **Petko Hristov** (Bulgaria) analyses the transformation of the Kurban festivities in Bulgaria and Macedonia in conditions of the urbanisation and extinction of the villages. The transformation of festive traditions in the urban context was considered in the articles written by the authors from Vilnius, Krakow and Tartu. **Žilvytis Šaknys** (Lithuania) devotes his text to the celebration of the New Year by the different peoples populating modern Vilnius, and **Rasa Paukštytė-Šaknienė** (Lithuania) poses the question of the interpretation of the term 'tradition' by the different groups of Vilnius inhabitants. **Bożena Gierek** (Poland) shows the symbolic succession of the celebration of *dożynki* in the rural and urban populations of Poland. And **Mare Kõiva** (Estonia) draws attention to domestic animals as new key persons of the annual holidays.

Other contributors to the volume focus on the problem of interaction between ethnic and religious groups. **Elena Uzeneva** (Russia) analyses the data from her ethno-linguistic expedition revealing the influence of the Christian calendar on the content of the feasts of the Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks), and **Liisa Vesik** (Estonia) explores the evolution in the Estonian calendar of the celebration of Valentine's Day, which came from the Western European and American tradition and in the new country gained new features related to Estonian nature and traditional patterns of behaviour.

Researchers from the city of Kazan **Sergey Rychkov**, **Guzel Stolyarova** and **Alsu Enikeeva** demonstrate the main trend of cultural policy in the Republic of Tatarstan, focusing on the interaction of cultural institutions and tradition bearers. They show two processes of cultural development going on in parallel: while the secular government is working at giving equal opportunities in the cultural sphere to every ethnic group living in the republic, the religious Muslim leaders are gaining new followers, because of the religious renaissance and the

actualising of religious identity after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Thematically close to these articles is the work of the Bulgarian researcher **Lina Gergova** (Bulgaria) who shows the use of Bulgarian festivals and other public events as a political tool based on the influence which Russia / the USSR has had on Bulgarian history.

To sum up, the articles of this volume present the materials from different historical periods (from the 19th century up to the present), geographic spaces and countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Russia, Sweden), and peoples (Bulgarians, Estonians, Evenki, Icelanders, Jews, Latvians, Lithuanians, Macedonians, Mari, Poles, Russians, Swedish, Tatars, Udmurts, etc.). There is no doubt that the exploration of these topics will continue in the further publications of the Working Group “The Ritual Year”.

The editors would like to express their deep gratitude to the colleagues from Kazan, especially Sergey and Nadezhda Rychkovs, who did so much to organise the conference. Many thanks go also to the language editors, the members of the group who have given their time and skills to improve the language of the articles, and to the authors for their professional texts and readiness to cooperate.

We see this issue as valuable for readers in many ways. It shows the various methods of field research as well as the drastic changes in the attitudes towards local traditions and the new contexts of their existence. We hope that readers will find this volume interesting and inspiring.

The Editors



*Memories of the Kazan Conference of the SIEF Working Group "The Ritual Year."
Photos: Arūnas Vaicekauskas and Nadezhda Rychkova*