

# **THE RITUAL YEAR 11**

## **TRADITIONS AND TRANSFORMATION**

Edited by Guzel Stolyarova, Irina Sedakova,  
and Nina Vlaskina

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**THE RITUAL YEAR 11: Traditions and Transformation.**  
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The eleventh volume in the series “The Ritual Year” is entitled “Traditions and Transformation”. These keywords define the principal areas explored in the issue—the preservation of archaic rituals and customs and the modifications that they are currently undergoing. The twenty-one articles by scholars from nine countries are based mainly on field research and demonstrate fundamental changes in the attitudes towards local traditions in their preserved, revived, or invented versions.

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## 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)

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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 Kuperjanov** (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

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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*

# Plenary



Rozalinda Musina

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## **Muslim Family Ceremonies in the Life of Contemporary Tatars: Traditions and Innovations**

**Abstract.** The last decades of sociopolitical transformation in Russia affected the intensification of ethnic and religious processes in the society. The revival of Islam among the Tatars caused a sharp increase of the number of religious communities and mosques, a strengthening of their religious consciousness, and an intensification of religious practices. Muslim family rituals such as *Nickah* (the religious wedding rite), *Isem qushu* (the rite of childrens' naming), *Sunnat* (the rite of circumcision), and different funerary and memorial rites are widely practiced among the Tatars and perceived as a significant part of the Tatars' festive culture.

Religious traditions in the family ceremonial culture of contemporary Tatars are being reanimated in new forms, as the traditions—innovations, that are formed under the influence of the process of reislamization of the Tatar society and the process of its modernization.

**Keywords:** innovation, Islam, Muslim rites, religion, religious revival, tradition.

The turn of the 20th and the 21st centuries marked the beginning of the religious revival in the regions of Russia, especially the revival of Islam. According to some estimates, the number of Muslims in Russia is about 18—20 million. Of that number, the Tatars are the most numerous Muslim ethnic community. Three-quarters of the Tatars live in the Volga river region, including the Republic of Tatarstan. It is necessary to stress that the Tatars are considerably urbanized: 70% of them reside in cities.

There are both external and internal indicators of the process of Islamic renaissance. External indicators include: a sharp increase in the number of religious communities and mosques (in 1960s there were only 12 mosques functioning in the republic; now there are about 1,500); wider usage of Muslim attributes and symbols in the household, including decorative items and style of clothing.

Internal indicators of the Islamic renaissance relate to mass consciousness.

In today's conditions of rapid sociopolitical transformation, of the intensification of ethnic and religious factors in society, it is important to understand the perceptions of religion at the mass level in different spheres of life.

The data of ethnosociological researches (mass surveys), which we have conducted in the Republic of Tatarstan for more than 20 years, show the strengthening trend of the religious component of the Tatars' mass consciousness and express positive dynamics of inter-related processes—the growth of the ethnic identity, the religious identity, the religious solidarity and the religious consciousness of the Tatars (Table 1). Even taking into account the relativity of the digital materials in such a delicate and deeply personal sphere like religion, the tendency of changes of the Tatars' religious consciousness was rather eloquently expressed.

*Table 1*

*The dynamics of growth of the Tatars' religious consciousness, confessional identity, confessional solidarity and actualized ethnic identity<sup>1</sup>, urban population of Tatarstan, %*

<b>Years of the researches</b>	<b>Religious consciousness</b>	<b>Confessional identity</b>	<b>Confessional solidarity</b>	<b>Actualized ethnic identity</b>
1990	34,0	—	—	—
1994	66,0	70,1	—	50,5
1997	81,0	92,4	—	—
1999	—	—	66,9	51,9
2002	83,3	93,5	93,9	61,2
2011	84,4	93,1	95,3	77,6
2013	84,3	84,3	89,5	78,3

By the beginning of the 2000s more than 84% of the respondents in the cities and 91% in rural areas of the republic self-identified as believers, and half of them perceived themselves as “believers who try to observe religious customs and rituals.” But the proportion of those who strictly fulfill all the requirements of Islam is rather small—no

more than 6—8% of the respondents. The religious behavior of the Tatars is characterized mostly by episodic religious practices, such as praying, visiting mosques, food fasting and some other practices (30—50%). Much more often religious practices among the Tatars are associated with the preservation of a festive religious culture and the rituals of the life cycle—from 70% to 90% of respondents try to fulfill them.

It should be noted that in the Soviet period, under the domination of atheistic ideology and total state control of religion in public life, Muslim identity was manifested mainly in the private sphere, in the fulfillment of the rites of the family cycle. The term *ritualism* (*obryadoverie*) reveals best the essence of the role of Islam in the Tatars' life during the Soviet years. Numerous ethnographic observations show that in the Soviet period the Tatars identified Muslim religious rituals of family cycle with the Tatar's national and folk rites.

Such family rituals as *Nickah* (the religious wedding rite), *Isem qushu* (the rite of childrens' naming), *Sunnat* (the rite of circumcision), and different funerary and memorial rites were widely practiced among the Tartars, especially if there were grandparents in the family. These family religious ceremonies, the main core of which is praying (reciting the verses of the Qur'an), are perceived as a significant part of the Tatars' festive culture. The preservation of these ceremonies was helped by the fact that they were traditionally held at home, and they could be held by any man who knows the relevant verses of the Qur'an. Those men often may not be, or have been, official mullahs but elderly neighbors or relatives.

According to the research conducted by the author in 1980 in Pestrechinsky and Menzelinsky districts, two rural districts of the republic, the *Nickah* was recorded in more than four-fifths of the families (85%). More than half (56%) of the families, in which there were the boys, carried out the rite of *Sunnat*. These ceremonies were often conducted in secret. Almost every fourth of the *Nickah* (18%) was performed by the parents of the newlyweds even without the participation of the bride and groom.

Table 2 summarizes the researcher's data of the last quarter of the 20th century, which shows a slight increase in the number of families

conducting religious rituals of the family cycle. The overall situation of recent years is close to that of the past, reflecting the deep roots of the Muslim family rites.

Conducting Muslim family rites, %

Table 2

Years	Nickah		Isem qushu		Sunnat	
	urban	rural	urban	rural	urban	rural
1989/1990	71,5	81,3	60,3	77,5	45,7	66,8
2013	76,5	87,9	66,8	86,9	43,8	70,6

Muslim family rituals are perceived by people as organic parts of their ethno-national culture, as an expression of ethnic traditions, and as a factor of ethnic identification. Not coincidentally, these ceremonies were performed not only by believers but also by those who called themselves unbelievers or atheists.

Religious family ceremonies now have undergone significant changes compared with traditional ceremonies. The changes relate to the form and the place of the rites, to the composition of the guests and the clothing, to the list of festive dishes, and so forth. Tatars' contemporary family rituals surprisingly combine religious and secular elements, both of the Soviet era and contemporary times. It is widely practiced to hold double rites—religious and secular—separately. The sequence of them may be different. The clothing of the participants, types of festive dishes and some other of the rite's components are also different. For instance, the religious marriage ritual Nickah is held a few days earlier than the wedding party. Notwithstanding the restrictions proscribed by Islam of the separation of men and women in these rituals, now they are invited to participate together. The hallmark of this ceremony is the absence of alcoholic drinks on the table and the obligatory presence of headgear: headscarf for women and skullcap (*tubeteyka*) for men. The mullah asks the newlyweds if they consented to the marriage; then he reads verses of the Qur'an and preaches for the bride and groom and their guests (Fig. 1, 2). After that the mullah hands newlyweds a nikah certificate (Fig. 3).

Though traditionally religious rituals were held at home, now more often (especially in the cities) the ceremonies of *Nickah*, *Isem qushu*



*Fig. 1. Nickah in the Kul Sharif Mosque, Kazan, 2002.  
Photo in possession of the Kul Sharif Mosque*



*Fig. 2. Nickah tue (Nikah party) at home, 2015. Photo: E. Sagdieva*

are carried out in mosques. This is quite a new phenomenon in the Tatars' festive culture. It is the author's hypothesis that this new trend is due to the growing role of Islam in the Tatars' life and to the



Fig. 3. The mullah hands a Nikah certificate, 2015. Photo: I. Mullin

impact of the neighboring Orthodox Russians, who hold their similar ceremonies—weddings and baptisms—in their churches.

Innovations appeared even in the most conservative rites—in funerary and memorial rites, with mandated mullahs reading the prayers and relevant verses of the Qur’an. The repasts of the third and the seventh days are held at home quite moderately. Only a few, generally elderly, men and women are invited to a funeral meal, alternating by gender: if men are invited to attend the repast of the third day, then women are invited for the repast of the seventh day and vice versa. The 40th day and one-year funeral repasts are held with a significant number of guests; as of the last few years, these repasts are, sometimes, carried out not only at home, but also in cafes and restaurants.

Looking closer at the ritual of naming, we find that the birth and the upbringing of children are the most important duties of the family. The Tatars usually say: “*Balaly i-bazar, balasyz i-mazar*” (“A house with children resembles a market; a house without children—a cemetery”). *Isem qushu* is one of the first rituals among those of the life cycle.



Fig. 4—5. Isem qushu (naming),  
2000. Photo: G. Ismagilov

The Tatars aim to perform this ritual within a few days of a child's birth: it is considered dangerous to leave the child without a name longer, as a child could be ill. Ordinarily, only men participate in this ceremony: the mullah and a few elderly men—relatives and neighbors. The ceremony consists of the following acts: a child is laid in front of a mullah on the pillow, the child's head pointing in the direction of the *qibla* (direction of the Kaaba, which Muslims turn to, while praying) (Figs. 4—5). The mullah prays, then speaks the name to the ears of the child three times (first to the right, then to the left, “*Let your name be so-and-so*” and then records it in the birth registration book. The naming ceremony is concluded with a feast for the male ceremony participants and later for the women among the relatives.

A great variety of names is quite typical for Tatars. There are names of Turkic origin, names of Arabian or Persian origin, a great number of western names (Alfred, Rafael, Robert, Kamilla), and also names connected to place names, stars and names of flowers (Mars, Nil, Venera, Rosa, Liliya). Tatar families traditionally try to give their children names in harmony with those of their brothers, sisters, or parents. Nowadays, all the names in a family often start with one common letter (Raif, Rais, Rawil, Raziya) or the same ending consonant (Khidiyat, Talgat, Rifkat). The tradition of giving names to sons and daughters with a common root is widespread (Farid / Farida, Danis / Daniya). During the last 20 years on the wave of ethnic and religious renaissance Turkic names (such as Ilnur ‘ray of homeland’, Aigul ‘moon’s flower’) and Muslim names (Mohammed, Gaysha, Madina, etc) have become more popular in Tatar families.

During the Soviet period, for the Tatars’ families, as well as for others, it has become a tradition to celebrate birthdays. After the legalization of religion in the post-Soviet decades, a new tradition has been added to the ritual life of the Tatars: elderly people began to celebrate their birthdays in the form of the *House Medjlises* with the invitation of a *mullah* or an *abystai*, with reading verses of the Qur’an, *munajats* and *baits* (forms of Muslim chants of folk art) (Fig. 6).

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In conclusion, the rites connected with the strengthening of Muslim identity, and the readoption of Islamic practices and its religious



Fig. 6. Qur'an ashy (*Medjlis*), 2008. Photo: M. Medvedev

traditions, are being integrated into the festive and ceremonial culture of contemporary Tatars. The festive culture of the Tatars during the post-Soviet period is characterized by the combination of elements including both religious practices and secular norms.

Religious traditions in the family ceremonial culture of contemporary Tatars are being reanimated in new forms, as the traditions-innovations, that are formed under the influence of the process of reislamization of the Tatar society and the process of its modernization.

### Notes

1. The level of religious consciousness was determined by the answer to the following questions: "Do you believe in God? Are you a believer?" The level of confessional identity was determined by the proportion of individuals who (when asked "Which confession do you belong to?") self identified as Muslim. The level of confessional solidarity was determined by the proportion of individuals who chose the answers "I feel pretty much" and "I feel to some extent" with regards to a certain sense of unity with people of their faith.

Terry Gunnell

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## **The Development and Role of the *Fjallkona* (Mountain Woman) in Icelandic National Day Celebrations and Other Contexts<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract.** In this paper, I will be examining an Icelandic invented tradition that has come to play a central role in Icelandic National Day ceremonies at home and abroad. Part of the movement to “create” Icelandic culture in the late nineteenth century, the figure of the “Mountain Woman” dressed in Icelandic national costume, who nowadays gives a speech every year on the Icelandic National Day (17th June), has her origin in 19th century romantic poetry as an image for Iceland (comparable to England’s Britannia and France’s Liberté). However, in visual terms, she took shape as an image in the frontispiece of the first English translation of Jón Árnason’s *Icelandic Folk Legends*, and as a flag-waving elf-woman in Indriði Einarsson’s national drama, *New Year’s Eve* (end of the 1860s). As time has gone on, this figure has maintained her role in annual National Day ceremonies, but also gained new aspects. For example, when Vigdís Finnbogadóttir became Iceland’s first female president, it is clear that she, directly or indirectly, played on the image.

**Keywords:** culture, Fjallkona, history, Iceland, mountain woman, national day, nature, theatre.

Ever since 1944, Iceland has celebrated its national day, *Lýðveldisdagurinn* (lit. the Day of the Republic), on 17th June (Árni Björnsson 1996: 148—156; 1995: 34—38). As in other countries, the various events associated with the national day, which is celebrated all around the country, are divided into formal activities and others which are less formal and focus essentially on entertainment and togetherness as the nation (along with thousands of visiting tourists) gathers on the streets to play, listen to music, partake in various cultural activities, buy food and refreshments, and generally “mingle”. Nowadays in Reykjavík, the capital of Iceland, the formal activities usually take place in the morning. After all the church bells in the city town have been rung at 9.55, a service takes place in the small

cathedral in the centre of the city. This is followed by a formal ceremony in the Austurvöllur square in front of the Parliament (*Alþingi*) building and cathedral, by the statue of Jón Sigurðsson (1811—1879), the man most associated with Iceland's peaceful struggle for independence from Denmark in the late nineteenth century. Here national songs are sung and/or played (*Yfir voru ættarlandi*;<sup>2</sup> *Ó Guð vors lands*;<sup>3</sup> *Hver á sér fegra föðurland*<sup>4</sup> and *Ég vil elska mitt land*<sup>5</sup>); the President lays a wreath at the foot of the statue; the Prime Minister makes a speech; and a young woman dressed in national costume from the nineteenth century (Sigrún Helgadóttir 2013; Aspelund 2015a) recites a poem.<sup>6</sup> This ceremony is followed by a procession to the old graveyard in the centre of the town, past the near unmarked grave of the designer of the aforementioned national costume, the painter Sigurður Guðmundsson (1833—1874), to the grave of the Jón Sigurðsson. Here another wreath is placed.

National ceremonies of this kind often give the impression of being the natural result of a long tradition. We often forget the degree to which they are deliberately created, for both practical and political purposes, and the degree to which they are deliberately arranged *performances*, not only in terms of setting, but also timing and structure. With regard to national days, Iceland had earlier celebrated 1st December, which was the date when the country ceased to be a colony of Denmark and became an individual monarchy under Danish rule in 1918 (Árni Björnsson 1996: 281—289; 1995: 64—66).<sup>7</sup> 1st December is nonetheless a rather cold and impractical day for a national holiday. Fortunately, Jón Sigurðsson's parents gave birth to him on 17th June, close to midsummer, the time when the old independent Icelandic parliament used to meet in the countryside at Þingvellir, from the ninth century onwards (Árni Björnsson 1996: 148, 160—161; 1995: 41). In 1944, when Iceland gained complete independence from Denmark (as a result of the war), the choice of Jón's birthday for the celebrations of a new national independence day was a natural move. The choice of setting for the formal activities in Austurvöllur, outside the Icelandic parliament, beside Jón Sigurðsson's statue was also natural. This is the Icelandic equivalent of the Red Square, Tiananmen Square, Taksin Square, and Tahrir Square, the place where all other formal and politically-related national gatherings take place, ranging from the opening of Parliament,

to the pot-and-pan, yoghurt-throwing protests against the government after the Icelandic financial crash in 2008, and the annual celebration of the Christmas tree gift from Norway. One also notes the careful choice of nationalistic music (designed to play off nationalist sensibilities).<sup>8</sup> Equally noteworthy is (what tends to be) the deliberate pairing of male politicians, usually dressed in suits and ties, representing power and politics, and speaking in prose; and the female figure who is always dressed in the same historic costume and speaks only in poetry, a figure who represents unchangeable cultural heritage, and ends the formal proceedings in the square.<sup>9</sup>

This paper will concentrate on the “invented tradition” (cf. Hobsbawm 1983) of the female figure in national dress, who is referred to in Iceland as “Fjallkonan,”<sup>10</sup> or “the Mountain Woman,” a figure who is deliberately nameless, but since 1947 has tended to be “acted” by an actress, something that is almost certainly not only related to the need to be able to read well, but also, I would argue, to the theatrical background of the figure, a feature that will be explained in more detail below.<sup>11</sup>

Various articles have been written about the development of the *Fjallkona*, many of which stress the rather contrived argument that the choice of a woman to represent the nation was essentially meant to underline a difference to the Danish idea of the “fatherland” (see, for example, Árni Björnsson 2007; Inga Dóra Björnsdóttir 1996; Brydon 1997; Halldór Gíslason n.d.<sup>12</sup>). I would argue that such an argument actually has little to do with the overall idea of the *Fjallkona*, which, while the expression “Fjallkona” certainly first appears in nationalistic Icelandic poetry from the eighteenth century onwards, the poetic image was no innovation, but draws on much older well known and well understood Nordic folklore and belief. The enacted *visual* image, meanwhile, has additional direct associations which link up closely with the earliest Icelandic folktale collections, the creation of a new Icelandic national costume, and the development of Icelandic national theatre. All of these came into being during a short, but highly intense period of national-culture creation in Iceland between 1858 and 1874, and centred around the earlier-noted Sigurður Guðmundsson, the man whose grave is annually walked by—and largely ignored—on Icelandic national days as

formal processions wend their way to the neighbouring grave of Jón Sigurðsson. Sigurður will be discussed in more detail below.

As noted above, there is little question that the name “Fjallkona” as a personification of Iceland, underlining a focus on the *nature* of the island, and not only the untamed mountainous wilderness but also the underlying power of glaciers and volcanoes, goes back to the Romanticism of the early nineteenth century, and most particularly to the poem “Íslandsminni” (A Toast to Iceland), written by the romantic poet Bjarni Thorarensen (1786—1841) when he was living in Denmark (Bjarni Thorarensen 1847: 1—2). Here the woman in question is not only called “fjallkonan”, but also directly referred to as “Ísafold”, a rewording of “Ísland” (the Icelandic name for Iceland).<sup>13</sup> Bjarni was strongly influenced by other key romantic figures such as Henrich Steffens (1773—1845), Adam Oehlenschläger (1779—1850) and Freidrich Schiller (1759—1805) (see further ERNIE 2015), all of whom had encouraged the development of local art and traditions which drew on local folklore and history. As Halldór Gíslason (n.d.), the Icelandic ethnologist, Árni Björnsson (2007), and others have noted, the idea of a female figure representing the nation was already widespread in other countries at this time, not least in figures such as the Greek Athena, the French Marianne, the British Britannia, the German Germania, the Danish Moder Danmark and the Swiss Helvetia.<sup>14</sup> The “idea” of Iceland as a woman had nonetheless been earlier envisioned by another influential Icelandic scholar, Eggert Ólafsson (1726—1768), both for his poem *Ísland* (Iceland)<sup>15</sup> and for a visual image that was meant to accompany another poem called *Ofsjónir við jarðaför Lóvísu drottningar 1752* (Visions at the Funeral of Queen Louisa (Eggert Ólafsson 1832: 107—109)). According to Eggert’s description, the image was supposed to depict a sad-faced woman dressed in rich clothes of the time with the word “Iceland” written above her head, sitting on a rock high up in a valley, close by a river, her head resting on her left hand as she stares up at the sky, watched by some nearby cattle. Perhaps Bjarni Thorarensen was deliberately drawing on this image in his poem. Nonetheless, as Árni notes (Árni Björnsson 2007), after Bjarni’s time, several other poets started using the expression “fjallkona” as a poetic name for Iceland, including Sigurður Breiðfjörð (1798—1846), Jón Thoroddsen (1819—1868), Jónas Hallgrímsson (1807—1845) and Gunnlaugur

Oddsson (1786—1835), the latter two of whom had started referring to the *Fjallkona* as wearing old coifed headwear like that drawn on by Sigurður Guðmundsson when he later designed a new national costume for women.<sup>16</sup>

Less commonly referred to is the likelihood that all of these men were also drawing on a much older image drawn from Old Norse poetry and the Icelandic sagas which had roots in a pre-Christian Nordic belief in powerful female spirits who protected both individuals and families, in other words, the so-called *dísir* and *valkyrjur* (also referred to as *fylgjur* or *hamingjur*<sup>17</sup> (Gunnell 2005; Murphy 2013)). Such beings, commonly depicted in early texts as wearing armour and even riding horses (sometimes across the sky), are regularly found in early Icelandic literature and were clearly widely known by the Icelanders. The beliefs in the *dísir* as family protectors appears most clearly in a short story called *Þiðranda þáttur ok Þórhalls* in which they take a human sacrifice (Óscar Halldórsson et al. 1987: 2254—2255; translated in Viðar Hreinsson et al. 1997: II, 460—461). One might also consider possible connections with the female *jötunn* figures like Jörð (lit. earth); and Gerðr (lit. field); and the goddesses Freyja and Gefjun, both connected with fertility in Old Norse mythology.

The first extant *visual* image of the *Fjallkona* as an image of Iceland, underlining the intertwining of the feminine, the natural, the national and the cultural, all of which are still reflected in her role on the Icelandic national day, appeared, interestingly enough, in the frontispiece of a folkloric work designed for foreign audiences called *Icelandic Legends* (Jón Árnason 1864—1866: II, frontispiece) in 1866. This work was the second volume of Eiríkur Magnússon and George E.J. Powell's English translation of stories taken from Jón Árnason's central key Icelandic folktale collection *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og æfintýri* (Jón Árnason 1862—1864). The cover engraving and its water colour original were made by the German illustrator of children's books, J.B. Zwecker (1814—1876), on the basis of a description given to him by Powell.<sup>18</sup> The fact that the image appears in a book of folktales reflects the ideas underlined by Jón Árnason, Magnús Grímsson and Jón Sigurðsson that the folk tales can be seen as “the poetic creation of the nation” (“skáldskapur þjóðarinnar”: Jón Árnason

and Magnús Grímsson 1852: 3<sup>19</sup>) and indeed can be regarded as representing the “uncorrupted opinion of the nation” (“sú rétta óspillta skoðun þjóðarinnar”: Jón Sigurðsson 1860: 196; see further Gunnell 2010 and 2012). There is little question that the image draws on the aforementioned ideas of the protecting goddess of ancient times, since she is equipped with a Viking sword and dressed in Viking-age costume. Also prominent are the manuscripts and what are probably supposed to be runic figures (relating to the sagas and eddic poems?) washing up on shore around her feet, and what appears to be one of the god Óðinn’s ravens sitting on her shoulder (probably the raven known as Muninn, or ‘Memory’). The fiery crown worn by the figure might reflect the northern lights, although the fact that she sits on a basalt throne also reminds us of the volcanic activity that typifies Iceland. The moon, stars and the blue colours found on the water-colour version of the image,<sup>20</sup> meanwhile, are reminiscent of images of the Virgin Mary. It was only a few years before the same image found itself used in another deliberately nationalistic context in Iceland when it was developed by the poet and artist Benedikt Gröndal (1826—1907) for the main commemorative poster for Iceland’s millennium celebrations in 1874.<sup>21</sup>

Many scholars have noted the fact that the idea of the *Fjallkona* appearing in person in Iceland has its origins in an annual competition held in the Icelandic emigrant settlement in Winnipeg, Canada, in 1924 (Árni Björnsson 2007; Brydon 1997). While this is strictly true, as I have argued elsewhere (Gunnell 2012: 317—323), one must also bear in mind the sturdy cultural bridge that existed between Winnipeg and the earlier-noted group of romantic nationalists that had not only produced the folk tales, the national museum, the national costume, but also the national anthem, the first national dramas, and the image of the woman in the front of the book of translated Icelandic legends. Under discussion here is a cultural, and apparently secret society in Reykjavík which operated between 1861 and 1874, and called itself *Leikfélag Andans* (the Theatre/Athletic<sup>22</sup> Society of the Soul), later *Kveldfélagið* (the Evening Society) (Lárus Sigurbjörnsson 1954: 55—93). One of the central figures of this society was the earlier-noted artist, Sigurður Guðmundsson (see, for example, Karl Aspelund 2015b; 2011; and Gunnell 2012). An impoverished, formally uneducated but well-read and highly influential thinker and idealist

who was referred to as *Siggi séni* (Siggi the genius) by his friends, Sigurður had spent nine years (1849—1858) in the thriving cultural centre of Copenhagen. He dreamt of an independent Iceland, but realised that no nation could imagine standing alongside other nations if it could not demonstrate that it had its own culture. His fellow society-members included the earlier-mentioned folktale collector and librarian, Jón Árnason; the translator Eiríkur Magnússon; the later national poet and playwright Matthías Jochumsson; and the author Jón Ólafsson (1850—1916), who later settled in Winnipeg and became the editor of the influential paper, *Lögberg*.<sup>23</sup> All of these men understood the key importance of producing unifying images which connected the past and the present. They also realised the potential that the theatre had for communicating these images and these ideas to the population in a living visual form. For Sigurður, local folk tales had the potential to “give poetic fiction clearer direction, and to encourage people to act,”<sup>24</sup> and were natural topics for new national dramas, just as they had been natural material for Shakespeare. Sigurður writes elsewhere that from the stage, it is possible to “educate the whole nation in literature, singing, and music, and show audiences how people lived at different times, both mentally and visibly, and thus strengthen our nationality more than by any other means...”<sup>25</sup>

It was such ideas that led to the appearance of a new play called *Nýársnóttin* (1872) (New Year’s Eve) written by one of Sigurður’s followers, the young Icelandic playwright Indriði Einarsson (1885—1939) (Indriði Einarsson 1872; 1907). Drawing deeply on the Icelandic folklore reflected in Jón Árnason’s collection of folk legends, this work was originally performed in Reykjavík, in December 1871, and came to be shown regularly not only in Iceland but also the Icelandic settlements in North America over the years that followed (albeit in slightly differing versions).<sup>26</sup> For obvious reasons, as a deliberately “national drama” of the kind Sigurður envisioned, it also came to be the first play to be performed at Iceland’s new National Theatre (*Þjóðleikhúsið*) when it eventually opened in Reykjavík in 1950.

The direct connection between this play and the later image of the *Fjallkona* can be seen immediately in a central figure of the play,

the powerful supernatural *álfkona* (lit. elf-woman) Áslaug who literally lives within the mountains of Iceland. Áslaug's key role is that of defending a pair of young lovers against the plans of a melodramatically evil merchant who has strong connections to Danish culture and the old Danish trading monopoly; and against an old *álfur* king (who rules the elven kingdom, and brings the ruling Danish crown directly to mind).<sup>27</sup> *Nýársnóttin* makes several references which point to the idea that close links exist between the *álfar* and the land itself, the singing *álfar* themselves pointing out that they have inhabited the land ever since Iceland first arose from the sea, in other words, long before the first settlers arrived (Indriði Einarsson 1872: 40—42). Considering the poetry later spoken by the *Fjallkona* on the modern national day, it is also worth noting that the *álfar* of the original play are shown to make use of the ancient Icelandic poetic forms that had roots in pagan times, thereby stressing their connection not only to the land, but also ancient Icelandic culture and the early pre-Christian Nordic religion (Indriði Einarsson 1872: 33—35).<sup>28</sup> This idea is also reflected in the way the *álfar* stress they have direct associations with the ancient pagan gods of the early Icelandic settlers, Þórr, Óðinn and Freyja, even though Áslaug herself is shown to be Christian (Indriði Einarsson 1872: 25, 32—44).

Áslaug's nationalistic characteristics, which were more implied rather than stated in the first version of the play from 1872, came to be amplified to the full in the re-written version of the play from 1907, where she appeared in the final scene holding an Icelandic flag (see photographs from Árni Björnsson 1996: 154; Eggert Þórr Bernharðsson and Þórunn Valdimarsdóttir 1997: 48, 99; Sveinn Einarsson 1996: 363—364, 389). In this version of the play, it is also stated that a revolution has taken place in the *álfur* world against the now directly-stated monarchy of the old *álfur* king, who is also shown to have close connections with the Scandinavian mainland (Indriði Einarsson 1907: 171). Particularly striking is the fact that Áslaug, in all versions of the play (see references to images above), seems to wear a version of the formal national costume earlier designed by Sigurður Guðmundsson for the women of the new Icelandic nation, his belief being that the national costume of a nation, with its roots in traditions of the past, was, like the folk tales, a field of nationality (“ein grein af þjóðerninu”) which reflected the nation's

way of thinking (“hugsunarhættir”) and could be viewed as a visual badge of honour (“heiðursmerki”) which linked the woman of the present to the saga foremothers of the past (Sigurður Guðmundsson 1857: 2).<sup>29</sup> Such ideas are directly reflected in Áslaug’s final words in this later version of the play, when she states that “*we álfar are the imagination of the nation / and have always lived in this country / ... we álfar are the hidden soul and life of the rocks and hills, / which the people create.*”<sup>30</sup> Here, in one moment, folk tale blends with national costume and national drama in the shape of a single feminine image. There is little question to my mind that Áslaug was meant to be a living stage-manifestation of the *Fjallkona* (even though that name is never directly used for her), in spite of the fact that the stage- and costume-designer Sigurður Guðmundsson originally dressed her in landscape green rather than the later national blue (Indriði Einarsson 1872: 103).

Further support for the growing popularity of the figure of the supernatural *Fjallkona*, her image as a representation of the close link between nature, history and culture, and her close connection with the theatrical world can be seen found in another play from the same period that is rarely referred to nowadays (see, however, Wawn 2007: 414—419), a play which Indriði may even have himself drawn on for his revised 1907 version of *Nýársnóttin*. Written in 1901 by the schoolteacher Halldór Bríem (1852—1929), *Ingimundur gamli* (Ingimundur the Old) was first performed in 1902. Set at the time of the Icelandic settlement in the tenth century, and based on *Vatnsdæla saga* (the Saga of the People of Vatnsdalur), the play includes three appearances of a very similar figure to Áslaug that is not mentioned the original saga, but is shown to be directly linked to the ancient pagan beliefs of female protecting spirits noted above. Speaking the prologue at the start of the play, dressed in white, lit brightly, and surrounded by a background of mountains and rocks that are meant to be associated with her, the figure is referred to as “*verndargyðja Vatnsdals*” (the protecting goddess of the Vatnsdalur valley). It might be noted that each occasion that she appears she speaks only in an Old Icelandic poetic metre (*fornyrðislag*). At the start, she describes the beauty of the land that she alone ruled for centuries until the first settlers came, bringing both culture and trouble with them (Halldór Bríem 1901: 1—2). The spirit reappears at the time

of the death of the main hero, now with a black cloak drawn over her white dress (Halldór Bríem 1901: 37—38); and once again at the very end of the play, when, greeted with trumpets, lit up and surrounded by “ljósálfar” (light *álfar*), and once again clad in white, she makes the final speech of the play, stressing how now, after the tragic events of the play, the land can return to peace under her protection (Halldór Bríem 1901: 61—63).

As noted above, there is no question that the figure of Áslaug had appeared on stage as a personification of the land in the Icelandic settlement of Winnipeg long before the first *Fjallkona* appeared there under that name in 1925.<sup>31</sup> There is thus good reason to assume that a clear line exists between all of the figures noted above (poetic and enacted), which eventually merge into the form of the national-costumed *Fjallkona* that made her first national-day performance in Reykjavík in 1947, and continues to appear annually, still acted by an actress (thereby underlining her long term connections with the theatre), and still speaking in poetry (just as her predecessors did in the plays noted above).<sup>32</sup>

As with those of her predecessors, the words spoken by the *Fjallkona* in front of the Parliament building in Reykjavík tend deliberately to connect land, nature, and culture, and the past with the present, the poems she recites usually being new works specially written for the occasion by nationally recognised poets.<sup>33</sup> An interesting break with tradition nonetheless occurred in 2009, the year following Iceland’s traumatic financial crash, when instead of presenting a new work, the *Fjallkona* suddenly reverted to the elegiac poetry of one of Iceland’s national cultural saints from the early nineteenth century, Jónas Hallgrímsson (1807—1845). She spoke of ridicule, loss and the need for continuing hope:

*“No one knows that the white island / Has had days when the beautiful / Sphere of freedom on mountains and passes / Threw bright sparkling rays; / No one knows that we in / Ancient centuries created cold catastrophe, / Lost our fame, enchained our hopes / So that our fatherland became a laughing stock.”*<sup>34</sup>

Arguably the worried *Fjallkona* could also be said to have manifested herself on another more international stage earlier that same year

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as part of one of the key events of the modern European ritual year, now taking the shape of Iceland's representative at Eurovision in Moscow. Here the debt-struck Icelandic nation nervously watched as Jóhanna Guðrún Jónsdóttir clad in a long blue dress, against blue lighting, stars and clouds, asked the entire world whether it was all over, and whether her nation had "thrown it all away".<sup>35</sup>

The *Fjallkona* as a figure in Iceland clearly is not limited to the national day. She can be drawn on in various ways, and can appear at different times of the year, not only times of national celebration or times of need. Arguably, she manifests herself every time Icelandic women put on one of Sigurður Guðmundsson's national costumes, thereby turning each of themselves into a symbol of the nation, and uniting themselves with the past, as Sigurður had intended. Perhaps the most interesting example of this was the way in which Iceland's first female president (1980—1996), Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, deliberately played on the image of the *Fjallkona*, something she had a special right to do not only as an independent single woman representing the nation, but also on the basis of her earlier role as head of the city theatre. Arguably this blend of cultural and national head, seen not only in Vigdís' occasional use of national costume, but also in the way she regularly deliberately made use of national imagery in her speeches,<sup>36</sup> helped give Vigdís as a person an enduring element of the supernatural and the symbolic which no other Icelandic president has yet attained.

Equally interesting is the fact that Iceland's first female Prime Minister (2009—2013), Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir never made use of the costume to the best of my knowledge, perhaps because, as a politician,<sup>37</sup> taking on the role of the *Fjallkona* might have been somewhat risky, and even presumptuous.<sup>38</sup> As noted at the start, the *Fjallkona* as a central figure in Icelandic national ritual is clearly meant to represent a *different* side of Icelandic nation to the political which, standing nearby in the ritual performative space, has tended to be male, dressed up in suits and ties, and is naturally closely bound up with the economic and the present.

Bearing in mind the poetic speeches given by the Icelandic "Mountain Woman" over time, it is interesting to note how quickly she got over

the apparent nervous breakdown and insecurity she experienced in 2009 when she desperately reached back into the distant cultural past for textual support. A year later, in 2010, she was clearly back to her earlier form, with a newly-created confident national poem about culture, nature and links to the past, and she has maintained this stance annually ever since. Arguably what this reflected was a realisation that whatever damage the Icelandic politicians and bankers had done to the Icelandic image in the present, the *Fjallkona*, as a representative of culture, history and nature, clad in a national costume that refers back to Viking tradition, could stand firm. One might indeed argue that the continuing appearance of the *Fjallkona* in front of the Icelandic Parliament on the Icelandic national day had become for people a reassuring sign of hope for the future of the Iceland, something that the politicians standing beside her have had more difficulty in offering the nation. While she may be invented, and may be old fashioned, the nationally dressed *Fjallkona* is, at least, seen as being trustworthy and enduring, as the best of traditions usually are. She has no reason to apologise.

### Notes

1. Part of this article appeared in a slightly different form and in a different context in Gunnell 2012. All translations from Icelandic are by the author. I would also like to express my enduring thanks to Karl Aspelund for reading over a draft of the article, for giving a number of very useful comments, for pointing out a number of important references that had escaped my attention, and not least for helping me find the coloured image of the *Fjallkona*. Thanks are also due to Olga Holownia and Emily Lyle for their careful proofreading.
2. Text by Steingrímur Thorsteinsson (1831—1913).
3. Text by Matthías Jochumsson (1835—1920).
4. Text by Hulda (1881—1946); composed to commemorate independence in 1944.
5. Text by Jón Trausti (1873—1918).
6. Programme for 17th of June 2016 celebrations in Reykjavík. Available at <http://17juni.is/english> (last accessed on December 3, 2016).
7. Since 1874, when Iceland received its own constitution, August 1st had been used for various national celebrations (Árni Björnsson 1996: 209—214; 1995: 50—51).
8. Both Steingrímur Thorsteinsson and Matthías Jochumsson are viewed as “national poets.” *Ó Guð vors lands* was written for the millennium celebrations of

Iceland's settlement in 1874; while *Hver á sér fegra föðurland* was one of two poems that won a competition related to Iceland's gaining of independence in 1944. *Ég vil elska mitt land* was dedicated to the members of the Icelandic parliament in 1901.

9. Exceptions to this general rule were the presence of Vigdís Finnbogadóttir as President between 1980 and 1996; and Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir as Prime Minister of a left-wing coalition government in 2009—2013 (following the financial crash). During these periods, women were clearly at the forefront of the formal national celebrations on Austurvöllur.

10. Note that in the following the form “Fjallkona”/“fjallkona” will be used when referring to a name used or a quote (capitals only being used when reference is made to the recognised national *Fjallkona*). Otherwise, the form will be given in italics (the *Fjallkona*). The form with the article (*Fjallkonan*/"Fjallkonan") is only used when that is part of a quote, in which case the English article is dropped.

11. For a list of names of those acting the *Fjallkona*, see Fjallkonan. Available at <http://17juni.is/fjallkonan> (last accessed on December 3, 2016). See also Klevenz Jónsson 1994.

12. It is worth noting that when the artist Elizabeth Jericho Baumann (1819—1881) painted a national image of Denmark in 1851, she too chose a female image (“Moder Danmark”): see Elisabeth Jerichau Baumann. Available at [https://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elisabeth\\_Jerichau\\_Baumann](https://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elisabeth_Jerichau_Baumann) (last accessed on December 3, 2016). At the same time, Icelandic national poets also used the idea of Iceland as a fatherland (“föðurland”), something clearly apparent in the national songs sung or played on the national day: see above. Note that Halldór Gíslason's article “Fjallkonan: Myndbirting hennar og rætur” used to be on his web site which was last accessed in 2008, <http://www.dorigislason.com/aglite/filevault/fjallkonanmyndbirting.pdf> but is unfortunately no longer available.

13. See further Halink 2014 with regard to the idea that one reason for stressing the mountain aspect was to underline the physical difference between Iceland and Denmark.

14. The idea of using the poetic image of a human figure to symbolise the nation was praised by Herder (von Herder 2004: 119—120) (written 1796).

15. See Eggert Ólafsson 1832: 9—29, see especially pp. 9 and 26—27. On the influence of this image on other poets of the time, see further: Fjallkona Eggerts og fjölnismenn. Available at <http://jonashallgrimsson.is/index.php?page=fjallkona-eggerts-og-fjoelnismenn> (last accessed on December 3, 2016).

16. The poetic image of the “Fjallkona” sitting beside “Saga” (History) on a throne and calling her sons to battle was also used by the Icelanders in Copenhagen in their “Kveðja Íslendinga í Höfn til Konugsfulltrúa og Alþingismanna, vorið 1849” (Greetings from the Icelanders in Copenhagen to the Royal Representatives and Members of Parliament, spring 1849): see *Norðurfari* 1849: 170—171.

17. The word *hamingja* (sing.) directly represents fortune or luck.

18. For the suggestion that the Powell originally designed the image for Zwecker, see Drawings and Water Colours / WD456. Iceland. Available at <http://museum.aber.ac.uk/object/WD456> (last accessed on December 3, 2016). See, however, Árni Björnsson 2007 and Árni Björnsson and Halldór Jónsson 1984, where Eiríkur is credited as designing the image. Here one can also see a letter written by Eiríkur to Jón Sigurðsson on 11th April 1866 in which Eiríkur comments on the symbolism of the image (the runestaves representing the nation's literature and history, the ocean representing time and history). With regard to the choice of Zwecker as an artist, it might be noted that Zwecker had earlier illustrated a translation of some works by Hans Christian Andersen. It is particularly interesting to compare this image with the image of "Die Sagen" drawn by the German artist Wilhelm von Kaulbach (1805—1874) for the 1865 edition of the Grimm's *Deutsche Sagen*, which depicts another woman in a very similar pose (sitting on a Stone Age grave, with birds about her head, a stave in her hand, and archaeological artefacts at her feet): see Grimm 1865 (frontispiece). The fact that both Kaulbach and Zwecker were educated in Dusseldorf; that Zwecker made an engraving of a drawing of "Alexis und Dora" by von Kaulbach (see The British Museum. Collection online. Alexis und Dora. Available at [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=1646197&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1646197&partId=1) (last accessed on December 3, 2016); and that both images refer to collections of folk tales (the original Icelandic collection having been dedicated to Jacob Grimm) suggests that this was no coincidence. Indeed as noted above, the two figures (Saga and the *Fjallkona*) were placed together in a poem in 1849.

19. This expression was also used with regard to the national costume by Sigurður Guðmundsson at a meeting of the so-called *Kveldfélag* society (see below). See Sigurður Guðmundsson málarí og menningarsköpun á Íslandi 1857—1874. Available at <https://sigurdurmalarí.hi.is/> (last accessed December 3, 2016) [Þjóðminjasafn (National Museum) MS Lbs 486\_4to, 091r].

20. Drawings and Water Colours / WD456. Iceland. Available at <http://museum.aber.ac.uk/object/WD456> (last accessed on December 3, 2016).

21. For black and white and coloured versions of Benedikt Gröndal's image, see Stock Photo—Benedikt Gröndal's millennial card 1874. Available at <http://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-benedikt-grndals-millennial-card-1874-54940042.html> (last accessed on December 3, 2016); and Gallerí Fold. Verk nr.36—Benedikt Gröndal (1826—1907). Available at <http://www.myndlist.is/auction/WebAuctionItems.aspx?ItemID=4024> (last accessed on December 3, 2016). See also *Fjallkonan*. 1907. Ágúst 9. Available at [http://timarit.is/view\\_page\\_init.jsp?issId=150340](http://timarit.is/view_page_init.jsp?issId=150340) (last accessed on December 3, 2016) for the image as it began to be used on the Reykjavík newspaper *Fjallkonan* in 1899.

22. The word *leikur* (lit. play) in Icelandic can refer to both theatre and sports.

23. See further the new Icelandic website on the activities of this group. Available at <https://sigurdurmalarí.hi.is/> (last accessed on December 3, 2016).

24. “að gefa skáldskapnum fullkomnari stefnu og eins til að spana men (sic) til að leika” (Lárus Sigurbjörnsson 1954: 31; Gunnell 2012: 311).

25. “menta þjóðina í skáldskap, söng, músík, sína mönnum alla helstu þjóðsiði á öllum öldum, bæði andlega og útvortis, og stirkja með því þjóðernið vort meira...” (Lárus Sigurbjörnsson 1954: 30; Gunnell 2012: 312).

26. According to Sveinn Einarsson (1991: 344), *Nýársnóttin* was first shown in the Icelandic settlement of Winnipeg in the 1880s.

27. As is stressed in Gunnell 2012, the idea of an “elven” kingdom is otherwise comparatively alien to Icelandic folklore.

28. Note the *Ljóðaháttur* verse forms here, and the direct references to the poem *Darraðarljóð* contained in the Icelandic family saga, *Njáls saga* (“sópum og sópum” [brush, brush], cf. “vindum vindum” [wind, wind] in the saga).

29. See also Sigurður’s poem “Faldafestir” from 1859 in Sigurður Guðmundsson and Guðrún Gísladóttir 1878: 15—23, in which the symbolic connections between the costume and the landscape are underlined. Similar ideas are reflected in a manuscript on the national costume written by Sigurður (Þjóðminjasafn MS SG:05:8 Um þjóðbúninga).

30. “Vjer álfar erum ímyndanir fólksins / og höfum ávalt lifað hjer á landi / ... Álfar eru hin leynda sál og líf í kletti og hólum/ sem fólkið skapar” (Indriði Einarsson 1907: 181—182).

31. As Sveinn Einarsson (1996: 299) notes, Halldór Briem’s play was also described in a Winnipeg journal when it first appeared in print. See also 1890. *Fyrstu leiksýningar Íslendinga í Vesturheimi*. Available at <http://www.leikminjasafn.is/greinar/1890/> (last accessed on December 3, 2016).

32. Interestingly enough, the first official Icelandic appearance of the *Fjallkona* “as” the *Fjallkona* was in 1939, when she appeared alongside a Miss America and a Miss Canada at a “Western Icelander” day held at Þingvellir in Iceland (the idea having been directly borrowed from Winnipeg by the politician Jónas Jónsson frá Hríflu): see Árni Björnsson 2007 and *Fálkinn* 1939.

33. *Fjallkonan*. Available at <http://17juni.is/fjallkonan> (last accessed on December 3, 2016).

34. “Veit þá engi að eyjan hvíta / átt hefir daga, þá er fagur / frelsisröðull á fjöll og hálsa / fagurleiftrandi geislum steypti; / veit þá engi að oss fyrir löngu / aldir stofnuðu bölið kalda, / frægðinni sviptu, framann heftu, / svo föðurláð vort er orðið að háði”. *Fjallkona* 2009. Available at [http://eldri.reykjavik.is/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-4516/7744\\_view-4654/](http://eldri.reykjavik.is/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-4516/7744_view-4654/) (last accessed on December 3, 2016); see also Jónas Hallgrímsson 1945: 57—58. The following verse stresses the continuing existence of hope, as long as people continue to trust in God: “Veit þá engi að eyjan hvíta/ á sér enn vor, ef fólkið þorir/ guði að treysta...”

35. About Yohanna. Available at <http://www.eurovision.tv/page/history/year/participant-profile/?song=24716> (last accessed on December 3, 2016).

36. Vigdís Finnbogadóttir. Available at <http://english.forseti.is/FormerPresidents/VigdisFinnbogadottir/> (last accessed on December 3, 2016).

37. In Iceland, the role of the President is seen as being more cultural and symbolic than political.

38. Karl Aspelund also points out in the private communication noted earlier (2nd September 2015) that one should also consider the fact that the coifed national costume has many class connotations, and that Jóhanna's grandmother, Jóhanna Egilsdóttir, "was a very active anti-capitalist and advocate for workers' rights and known for wearing *peysuföt*, like many of the early twentieth century women who fought for workers and women" (*peysuföt* being a more common form of "national" dress. Jóhanna may thus have personally disliked the idea of wearing the coifed costume.

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## **The Role and Meaning of Fictive Rituals in Cultural Tourism**

**Abstract.** Tourism is an important and growing industry, which can serve as a relevant source of livelihood in small and remote communities. In some rural areas, it offers new possibilities, e.g. in the form of ethnic tourism and cultural tourism. Cultural tourism is a small branch of tourism that can offer new experiences and new ways to understand culture. When combined with other aspects of tourism, such as ecological tourism, it can provide the framework and opportunities for new understandings of the world that go far beyond the circle of the local community. What can small ethnic communities offer to international tourism groups? What part of their cultural heritage is “ready” to be shown to tourists? What of “invented rituals,” which some ethnic communities present to tourists, and which may seem authentic to the consumer, but are not, in fact, part of the traditional culture repertoire? This article is based on my experiences, notes, and photographs, of a journey I took along the Lena River in the Sakha Republic of Russia. I observed how the local Sakha and Evenki communities presented a particular ethnic programme for cruise tourists. I will discuss the function, role, and meaning of fictive rituals in tourism for the local community. Although they cannot be regarded as “authentic,” such rituals are important in terms of preserving the cultural heritage of the community.

**Keywords:** authenticity, cultural heritage, invented tradition, Lena River, rituals, Sakha Republic, tourism.

### **Introduction**

Cultural heritage is currently a key term in the field of ethnology, and has made its way into popular culture discourse. It is not difficult to see and experience how culture and one of its products, cultural heritage, are commodified. In European ethnology, culture is viewed as a part of the dynamic process that is constantly creating and recreating it. Scholars conceive of cultural heritage in several ways; my primary reference is the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Role of Heritage in Society from 2005, in which cultural heritage

is treated as a group of resources inherited from the past with which people identify, independent of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge, and traditions. This framework includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time.<sup>1</sup> Note that not everything described as culture is created or constructed as cultural heritage; it is always a question of process, of how something is valued, chosen, created, or constructed. Cultural heritage is used as a working tool, e.g. in tourism (Hieta, Hovi, and Ruotsala 2015: 313—316).

Tourism is an important and growing industry, which can serve as an important source of livelihood in small and remote indigenous communities. In some rural areas, it offers new possibilities, e.g. in the form of ethnic tourism and cultural tourism. Cultural tourism is a small branch of tourism that can offer new experiences and new ways to understand culture. When combined with other aspects of tourism, such as ecological tourism, it can provide the framework and opportunities for new understandings of the world that go far beyond the circle of the local community. In this article, my aim is to discuss what small ethnic communities can offer to international tourism groups. What part of their cultural heritage is “ready” to be shown to tourists? In some cases, ethnic communities present “invented rituals,” which may seem authentic to the consumer, but are not, in fact, part of the traditional culture repertoire

This article is based on my experiences, notes, and photographs from the summer of 2014 when I travelled for two weeks with an international tourist group along the Lena River from Yakutsk to Tiksi and back again. During the trip, we were introduced to, and shown, different folklore programmes, visited museums and exhibitions, enjoyed dance and music programmes, took part in different touristic acts, and so forth. For the most part, these moments were the only times when it was possible for the tourists to see and meet rural indigenous people. I will not here discuss the different lectures, concerts, and speeches that we took part in while on the ship; rather, I will focus only on the programmes offered us while on the shore and in the villages. We saw and participated in different rituals five times.

### **The importance of rituals in tourism**

Depending on where, and how, one spends one's holidays, it is possible to encounter a number of different cultural traditions and rituals, which are presented as though they are ancient, as well authentic and currently lived, traditions. While their apparent age and practice may be enticing, leading us to believe we are witnessing reflections of long-lived cultural repertoires, in many cases their origins were not in fact sanctioned as a result of being practiced for many centuries, but were invented comparatively recently under the impetus of a growing tourism industry that needed programmes for tourists. Many studies on cultural heritage engage with the topic of tourism in indigenous areas (for example see Bendix 2000). A prominent example is the cultural tourism developed around Sámi culture, where fictive rituals are performed for, and clothes resembling traditional Sámi costumes are sold to, tourists (see e.g. Ruotsala 2008: 41—53; Mathisen, 2010: 53). In one case, in a so-called Lappish baptism, which has nothing to do with the proper life, culture, and history of the Sámi people, the Sámi are portrayed as a dirty and funny people. This is an entertainment created for tourists, an entertainment that relies on problematic stereotypes. In this ritual of baptism, the man who gives the baptism is usually dressed in a dirty, supposedly, Sámi dress; his face is soiled with coal. There are different variations on this "Lappish" baptism routine. It is usual to alarm and tease the participants both verbally and physically. The ceremonial master puts an ice cube on the neck of the shamans or covers their eyes so they cannot see the place or ceremony. Other common elements, such as marking (scarring or disfiguring) and drinking can also be used as frightening or thrilling component. Some of the performers pretend they are willing to cut a mark on the ear with a big knife, as in branding a reindeer calf. The participants will get a mark with coal on their face. At the end of the ceremony, the tourists share a drink, which is said to be reindeer milk, but which often tastes bad, salty and acidic. This is all a performance created for the tourists, who, when it is over, get a diploma for participating in it. How the Sámi culture is exploited by the tourism industry has been the subject of many articles, websites, and, even, demonstrations.<sup>2</sup> The misuse, and misrepresentation, of indigenous culture and indigenous ways of dress in the tourism industry is an on-going dilemma.

In spite of these problems of misuse and misrepresentation, the rituals that we were shown during the cruise trip are important for the performers for several reasons. They are significant traces and indicators that can be used as evidence of important links to the past. They are also relevant as modern conceptions of nationalistic symbols, e.g. when there is a question of indigenous people or an ethnic group existing as a minority group among a majority population—as is the case in my example from the Sakha Republic. Rituals as well as cultural heritage are different from the perspective of the audience than for those making or creating the rituals or performances. They are also important in terms of preserving the cultural heritage of a community and passing it on to future generations. Issues and questions surrounding authenticity are ones that require much more space and time than this brief article provides, and would, indeed, require a detailed exploration of the history and culture of the people living along the Lena River and in the Sakha Republic to be juxtaposed with current practices and performances, and the detailed problematizing of how we, in the early 21st century, construct authenticity.

Still, I will give some general, background, information of the people who live in Sakha. The population of Sakha is quite diverse and reflects the history of Russia, or, at least, of the earlier Soviet Union. The almost one million inhabitants of the Sakha Republic are Yakuts or Sakha people (45.5%), Russians (more than 40%), Ukrainians (3.7%), Evenki (1.9%), Evens (approximately 1.2%), Tatars (1%), Buriats (less than 1%), and white Russians. Sakha was also part of the earlier archipelago of prisons and camps. In the villages, a significant percentage of the people are considered “mixed” in the sense that their parents or grandparents originally came from different ethnicities. All in all, it is estimated that Nordic indigenous peoples (Evenks, Evens, Yukagirs, Chukchis, Tsuvashes, and Dolgas) account for just over 2% of the population. According to the Information Center under the President of Sakha Republic, the religious demography is as follows: Russian Orthodox, 44.9%; shamanistic, 26.2%; non-religious, 23.0%; new religious movements, 2.4%; Islam, 1.2%; Buddhism, 1.0%; Protestant, 0.9%; Catholic, 0.4%. In spite of the religious diversity, all of the rituals that we saw were connected most closely to shamanism.<sup>3</sup>

### **The rituals we saw along the Lena river**

First, we arrived at Lena Pillars Nature Park, *Lenskie Pillars*, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. According to the leaflet<sup>4</sup> we received, “passengers are invited to the shore for a ceremonial traditional show by a Sakha shaman couple.” There, we took part in a purifying ceremony which was done by a Sakha couple and their daughter. We were told that the man was a shaman (Fig. 1). All three were dressed in Sakha costumes and were decorated with many jewels. They danced and performed the ritual, making the fire and conducting the cleansing ceremony. The tourists were divided so that the men were on one side of the fire and the women on the other side. At the end of the ceremony, all of the participants danced and shouted some phrases based on instructions from the shaman. In the end we all got a mark with coal on our forehead. When the show was over, people could admire the clothes and take more pictures with the couple.

We next witnessed a ceremony at the village of Zhigansk, north of the Arctic Circle, where we had to walk along the shore through a human gate while listening to an Evenki man play the drums while the others



*Fig. 1. At the purifying ceremony, 2014. Photo: Helena Ruotsala*

were singing. We were told that they were dressed as traditional Evenki. Then, we continued on our journey along the beach, where we met a fishing family; they were sitting on a reindeer fur, and one was “cleaning a fishing net” (Fig. 2). There, we could eat some fish soup and taste reindeer meat. In actuality, the people sitting there were the same ones who had been drumming and singing. After that, we continued our walk to the museum, where we were treated to a half-hour dance performance by Nordic indigenous people. The dances were introduced to us, along with the name of the cultural group and the particular dance. The dances were performed adeptly and were quite illustrative; for instance, a reindeer dance showed us a reindeer, and so forth. All villagers could perform, and the dancing show took quite a long time. Our leaflet told us (in somewhat awkward English) that, “you will be impressed by performance of local actors who will present a music of blowing snow and wind whistle, whisper of leaves and grass, water hush, rush of flying bird wings through improvised epic songs and charming accords of ritual dancing.” After the performance, we saw two exhibitions in the museum. Outside, in a Sakha summer house, we met a villager who made handicrafts



*Fig. 2. The fishing family at the beach, 2014. Photo: Helena Ruotsala*

out of mammoth bone. In terms of cultural tourism, we were able to enjoy a folk concert, meet local residents, sample local food, and buy souvenirs.

On the following days, we visited three other locations: Tiksi, a town on the Arctic Sea, and the villages of Kusur and Siktyakh. In all three places, we were invited to visit the local house of culture,<sup>5</sup> where local residents performed dances, songs, and recited poems for us. In Kusur, a chum<sup>6</sup> had also been erected in the garden, where we could buy some souvenirs. At the house of culture, there was an exhibition of traditional clothes and artefacts related to reindeer herding and river fishing. We read (again, not in the most fluent of English, given by the advertisers) the following about Kusur: "You will enjoy the hospitality of local residents, most of which are native hunters, reindeer farmers, and skillful crafters. You will have a chance to buy original handmade crafts and souvenirs here (embroidery, braiding, clothes made of deer skin, wood and mammoth tusk crafting items)."

At Tiksi, we saw several dances performed by adolescents and children. The music was in the playback style. After that, we were invited to visit a summer chum on the tundra. It had a gas stove where several old women prepared fish soup and some reindeer meat for us, after first lighting the fire and conducting a purifying ritual when we arrived at the camp (Fig. 3). Everything was made from scratch for us; one woman said they had been waiting for us for several hours. Of course, the scenery was breathtaking, the food was delicious, and the folk costumes of the women were beautiful.

The last place where we enjoyed local rituals was the village of Siktyakh. Once again, we participated in a purification ritual conducted by local villagers, who we were told were Evenki people, and we enjoyed dances at the local house of culture (Fig. 4). We also visited an old Evenki woman who had organised for us some local food to taste and some old artefacts to see outside the house. She told us that she had collected stories from the local people and wanted to publish them in a book.

In all the events we witnessed, the local people were reportedly dressed in traditional costumes. Some of them were dressed in festival attire (e.g. in dance costumes). These were also some of the only



*Fig. 3. The purifying ceremony, 2014. Photo: Helena Ruotsala*



*Fig. 4. Dances at the local house of culture, 2014. Photo: Helena Ruotsala*

times that we had the opportunity to taste local food; the ship's restaurant was Russian, and the food was made in the Moscow style cuisine (not local style). These were also some of the only times that we met local people and had the chance to speak a few words with them, and enjoy a local cultural programme. The programme guide stated again that, "You will have a chance to buy original handmade crafts and souvenirs here (embroidery, braiding, clothes made of deer skin, wood and mammoth tusk crafting items). You will enjoy the hospitality of local residents, most of which are native hunters, reindeer farmers, and skilful crafters." Nothing was told to us about the authenticity or origin of these rites, dances, and purifications rituals. We met with several ethnic groups, but the rituals, costumes, and programme were mixed up; it was difficult to make a distinction between the different ethnic groups.

### **Authentic culture or invented tradition?**

The key concern of my paper is to question the purpose and meaning of such tourist programmes for the performers. The function, role, and meaning of the fictive rituals—I suggest that they can also be fictional—in tourism are different for the local community. Although the rituals cannot be regarded as "authentic," they are important in terms of preserving the cultural heritage of the community. But, as I stated earlier, my aim is not to discuss here the authenticity of the cultural programmes performed for tourists.

The rituals that we saw could be regarded as fictional or invented traditions. Historian Eric Hobsbawm argues that many traditions that "appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented." He distinguished between the invention of traditions and starting or initiating a tradition that does not then claim to be old at all. The phenomenon is particularly clear in the development of the modern nation-state and nationalism. According to Hobsbawm, traditions can be invented, constructed or formally instituted. Invented traditions can refer to a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules, and rituals of a symbolic nature that seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour via repetition, which automatically imply continuity with the past. Each of the villages attempted to establish continuity with a suitable

historic past—at least for touristic purposes—in Hobsbawm’s sense of fictional or invented traditions. They formed a complex interaction between past and present (Hobsbawm 1983: 1–13).

Why are the rituals so important that they form an essential part of the show? They serve as important symptoms and, therefore, indicators of problems that might not otherwise be recognised. They are evidence. Their relation to the past is also important. In that sense, they are, according to Eric Hobsbawm, relevant to modern conceptions of nationalistic symbols, e.g. to nationalism, the nation-state, national symbols, and histories (Hobsbawm, 1983: 10–13). We must keep in mind that the meaning is different for those who are performing the rituals than for the spectators, who cannot understand the behind-the-scenes issues—i.e. what is not being told.

Invented traditions are essentially a process of formalisation and ritualisation characterised by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition (Hobsbawm, 1983: 1). But authenticity as cultural heritage is always a social or cultural construction. There can be no authenticity if nobody has labelled something as authentic. Another concept, that of heritage, is also very much a social and cultural construct, and, like authenticity, it is always a product of somebody or some group. Likewise, it is not heritage if no one has said that it is heritage (Bendix 2000: 38–42; Hovi 2014: 196).

As Barbara Kirchenblatt-Gimblett has stated, heritage is not something that is lost, found, or stolen and reclaimed; rather, it is a mode of cultural production (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 50). Tuomas Hovi, who has studied Dracula tourism in Romania, also points out that we have to bear in mind that heritage is constructed for a particular purpose, and, in that sense, it also shows importance. It is important because it must hold a special place within the cultural and historical understanding of the particular group in question (Hovi 2014: 196).

What we saw during the trip was important in terms of the performances; we do not need to think about its authenticity or genuineness as such. The meanings and functions of the programmes and rituals can be seen as cultural heritage, the task of which is also to construct and strengthen one’s identity. But when cultural heritage is

institutionalised, it is also in danger of losing its central purpose and disappearing. Both the heterogeneity and role of cultural heritage are important.

I refer once more to Hovi's study on Dracula tourism because there are many commonalities between it and the indigenous heritage on display in the Sakha Republic (Hovi 2014: 196). By showing us their important sites and culture, by presenting the people, their customs, costumes, art and culture, local artists and local heritage, the villagers showed us what is important for them, in the sense of how they are representing themselves to outsiders. It is also possible that these performances could constitute some form of opposition, but this was never directly told to us. It was difficult to interpret the dances and lyrics without knowing them better, and knowing what other dances and lyrics in other settings might be. In the act of the moment, the performances were framed for us, the tourists and consumers, as "the real thing."

All in all, the shows that we saw during the journey deepened our understanding of how the local people are framing their culture, and performing that culture as a commodity. The local people might also have shared something with us about their feelings as a nation, even if in some sort of opposition to an alternate point of view. The performances are a good business for them, allowing them to package aspects of their culture for outsiders. To the extent that such a business allows both the propagation of the packaged cultural performances, as well as the continuation of local life, it can be seen as supportive of cultural heritage preservation.

### **Acknowledgements**

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### **Notes**

1. Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society. Faro, 27.10.2005. Available at <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/Treaties/Html/199.htm> (last accessed on November 27, 2016).

2. See e.g. the Facebook page Daja II fake samegárvvuide—Say NO to Fake Sámi Costumes. Available at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/19862103008/> (last accessed on November 27, 2016).
3. See Information Center under the President of Sakha Republic. Available at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sakha\\_Republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sakha_Republic) (last accessed on November 27, 2016).
4. The leaflet refers to unprinted papers that we received from the travel agency. They were written in English and in Russian.
5. In Russia since the Soviet times in many towns and bigger village settlements there are buildings which are called the Club or the House of culture, where different cultural activities take place. House of culture was the key institution for cultural activities and implementation of state cultural policies in all socialist states. It was officially responsible for cultural enlightenment, moral edification, and personal cultivation. See more in Donahoe & Habeck 2011.
6. A *chum* is a temporary dwelling used by the nomadic Uralic reindeer herders of northwestern Siberia.

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## **Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (Žolinė) in the Ethnoconfessionally Mixed Environment of Modern Vilnius**

**Abstract.** The article is dedicated to the celebration of the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, also known as *Žolinė*, which has been observed as a nationwide public holiday in the Republic of Lithuania since 2000, in Vilnius. It investigates the importance of the liturgical, folk as well as national meaning of the feast in Lithuanian, Polish and Russian families residing in Vilnius. Ethnographical fieldwork shows that it is most commonly celebrated as a religious holiday in Polish families, less commonly in Lithuanian and least commonly in Russian families. In addition to traditional consecration of greenery in the church, Poles also mark the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary by a celebration in the family, whereas the majority of Russian and Lithuanian families neither celebrate it as a traditional nor as a public holiday. The article argues that apart from a secular relationship with the holidays of religious type, the aspect of citizenship is a significant argument for their celebration. What is more, the peculiar relationship of Russians with the holiday is also influenced by the differences in the religious calendar of the Catholic and the Orthodox churches.

**Keywords:** bouquet of greenery, Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, folk piety, public holiday, *Žolinė*.

### **Introduction**

Following the restoration of independence, a new calendar of public holidays was introduced in Lithuania at the end of the 20th century. Religious holidays, which were banned in the Soviet times, were revived; new holidays important to the state and the nation were added to the ritual calendar of the year. The Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (August 15), known by people as *Žolinė* (literally *Day of Herbs*), which was designated as a public holiday by the decision of the Seimas (Parliament) of the Republic of Lithuania in 2000, is one of such holidays which had no established tradition in political public life. Before gaining the status of a public holiday, it had been deeply rooted in the Christian holiday calendar. Therefore, by the decision taken by the hierarchs of the Lithuanian Catholic Church in 1996,

the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (August 15), *Žolinė*, was declared a holy day of obligation (Bažnyčios žinios 1996: 3) with its solemn nationwide celebration in Pivašiūnai town whose church is home to a miraculous painting of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Garsieji Žolinės atlaidai Pivašiūnuose 2000: 7). The designation of this as well as other Catholic holidays as public holidays brought the complexity of their celebration in the multinational and multiconfessional urban environment to the fore. The investigation of the celebration of *Žolinė* in Vilnius is especially relevant because it may reveal the theoretical and practical problems of celebration of public holidays coming from the Catholic ritual calendar in contemporary society. Therefore, the celebration of *Žolinė* in the city of Vilnius among Lithuanian, Polish and Russian residents has been selected as the research object in the article. They constitute the most numerous ethnic groups as well as the groups representing different confessions in the city. The goal is to determine how important the liturgical and folk meaning of the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary is to contemporary Vilnius residents of different confessions and what peculiarities describe the celebration of August 15 as the public holiday in the families of Vilnius residents.

The topic of *Žolinė* is rather important in research terms because this holiday has not been the object of more thorough ethnological research in Lithuania. The studies and articles of Lithuanian ethnologists addressing calendar holidays attempted to discuss the liturgical and especially folk meaning of the holiday in the traditional Lithuanian village (Vyšniauskaitė 1993: 105—107; Gutautas 1991: 79—80). The article by Jonas Mardosa is dedicated to the feast of *Žolinė* held at Pivašiūnai church (Mardosa 2004: 93—112). However, the celebration of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in the city has not been a focus of attention. Hence, the principal source of material for the article is the data from the ethnographical fieldwork carried out in Vilnius in 2012—2013 (for more on the study: Šaknys 2014: 106).

### **Christian and secular *Žolinė* content**

Eastern Christians have celebrated the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (Natale S. Mariae) since the 5th century. Byzantine Emperor Maurice selected August 15 as the date of the feast. Later, in

the 7th century, the feast also took root in Catholic European regions. Pope Leo IV instituted the celebration of the feast of the Assumption with an octave in 847 (Vaišnora 1958: 41). The consecration of greenery is a part of the feast's liturgy. Its origin is traced back to the legend according to which in place of Mary assumed into heaven, the apostles found flowers in her coffin (Čibiras 1942: 124). The first direct testimonies to such commemoration of this event date back to the 10th century which marks the first known prayers of the ritual of consecrating flowers. The prayers appeal to God to make the consecrated greenery beneficial to the healthy and the sick, people and animals. The tradition arrived in Lithuania with Christianity, and the first testimonies to such prayers are known from the third decade of the 17th century (Vaišnora 1958: 41—43). *Žolinė* as the name of the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Lithuania was first mentioned in the 17th century. According to Bishop Motiejus Valančius it was then known in Samogitia (Western Lithuania) as the Feast of Herbs (Lith. *Žolių šventė*) (Valančius 1972: 370). It should be noted that the Lithuanian folk name of this holiday, *Žolinė*, is akin to the names of the neighbouring regions and is directly taken from Poland.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the evident Christian origin of the feast, in Italy the consecration of greenery is associated with ancient agrarian rituals and harvesting festivals (Krasnovskaya 1978: 15). Elsewhere, for example in the Iberian Peninsula or according to German researchers, the rise of this liturgical tradition is traced back to pre-Christian times by associating it with harvesting rituals and cults (Serov, Tokarev 1978: 55; Filimonova 1978: 129). According to S.A. Tokarev, August 15 is connected with rye harvest-finishing customs which also meant the beginning of the autumn cycle in agriculture (Tokarev 1957: 140). In Lithuania, Libertas Klimka sees the relics of the ancient Lithuanian faith in the greenery of *Žolinė* and associates the present-day consecration of harvest with the giving of honour to the deity of the land (Klimka 2009: 91). However, the liturgy of the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary arrived in Lithuania in the established form together with the concept of the Christian feast. To promote a broader celebration of *Žolinė* after giving it the status of a public holiday, attempts were made to highlight the folk semantics of the origin of the feast at the end of the 20th century. However, the fact

that the feast, which was added into the system of Christian holidays in the first ages of Christianity, also manifests peculiar local customs in different regions does not support the argument for its non-Christian origin. The intertwining liturgy and folk customs are characteristic of folk religion and it is not contradictory to the teaching of the Church (Mardosa 2012: 18—22).

Hence, the celebration of the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary is deeply rooted in the Lithuanian ritual calendar. In 1929 the day was officially designated as a public holiday. However, the public-holiday status did not establish itself because, according to Žilvytis Šaknys, in addition to other circumstances, it interfered with a negative approach of the Protestant part of the Lithuanian population, which rejected the cult of the Virgin Mary altogether. Libertas Klimka argued that it was also prevented by political party disagreements at that time (Valstybinės kalendorinės šventės 2001: 9). However, for village residents, August 15 remained a festive day until the middle of the 20th century. Only city residents found it difficult to celebrate the feast which was a working day. Finally, after Lithuania was Sovietized in 1940, the holiday, like other religious holidays, disappeared from public discourse as a result of the bans imposed by the government; in place of August 15, the celebration of the Assumption in the church was moved from August 15 to the closest Sunday. What is more, like other religious holidays, in the second half of the 20th century the situation of the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary was influenced by the process of secularization and modernization of society. Thus, a complex of reasons determined that a political decision taken in 2000 to turn *Žolinė* into a public holiday resulted in a public debate, whereas the diversity of opinions was primarily concerned with the meaningfulness of a public celebration. Besides, considering a multinational situation in the city, a public status of *Žolinė*, as well as other Catholic holidays, also poses the problems of another type in the urban environment. For Russians, for instance, the difference between Orthodox and Catholic liturgical calendars makes August 15 a public holiday without any religious content, not to mention the believers of other confessions which do not in general have the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in their religious calendar.

It is not by accident that the fieldwork data reveal a failure by a number of respondents to understand the meaning of the feast, because non-believers are unaware of its religious content, making the motives of inclusion of the feast into the calendar of public holidays unclear. The fact that 26 % of Poles and 12 % of Lithuanians celebrate *Žolinė* by a festive dinner can only be explained by religious motives. The Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary is mostly celebrated among believers. *Žolinė* is predominantly celebrated in the church by Poles—59 % of the respondents. Meanwhile, liturgy is attended by 33 % of Lithuanians and 17 % of Russians. In fact, the latter follow the Orthodox calendar and go to the Orthodox church on August 28. What is more, 26 % of Russians indicated that they do not celebrate the public holiday at all. No such answers were recorded in the case of Lithuanians and Poles; however, 40 % of Russians, 42 % of Lithuanians and 27 % of Poles fail to understand the meaning of the feast. Therefore, we can see a rather high (though differentiated by the nationality of the respondents) number of residents in Vilnius who celebrate the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary but fail to understand the meaning of the feast. We can thus conclude that a large part of the population in Vilnius does not recognize the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary as a public holiday.

### **Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary as a public holiday**

Whereas *Žolinė* is also a public holiday, a question naturally arises how many Vilnius residents celebrating it mark this day as a religious holiday and how many celebrate it as a public holiday, as well as what part of the population finds both aspects important. However, the research data make it clear that to determine the ratio of the two components, special research is required. Despite the need for further research, we may nevertheless assume that the status of a public holiday is more important to Lithuanians. By assuming that the celebration of the public holiday is influenced by the citizenship of residents, we can hardly suppose that Poles who predominate among the residents celebrating the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary are most civic-minded. They bring the religious argument to the fore; Russians highlight the religious aspect as well because their feast-day does not coincide with the public holiday. Therefore, Russians, being the citizens of Lithuania, may recognize

the public status of *Žolinė* but in response to the question about their going to the church, they associate this action with the Orthodox liturgical calendar where the believers attend the festive rituals in the church on August 28. Therefore, they bring consecrated greenery home on the actual Orthodox holiday. An especially high percentage of non-celebrating residents among Lithuanians is an evident indicator of changes occurring in people's spiritual life, while reduced religiousness determines the scope of people's relationship with the church feast. It should be noted that while TV programmes remind Lithuanians of the aspect of the public holiday, Poles may partially skip them due to a language barrier. Television broadcasts are shown from Pivašiūnai, a pilgrimage site from the 19th century with a three-day feast which was not discontinued even in the period of Soviet repressions (Mardosa 2004: 93), whereas from 1988 the feast of the Assumption takes place 8 days in the town of Pivašiūnai (Vitunskas 2000: 35). However, the attempts made by the national television to make the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary more important as a public holiday do not yield the expected results. The survey shows that watching of the broadcast of the church service during the summertime does not fall into the day's celebration schedule among Vilnius residents.

### **The content of the consecrated bouquet**

*Žolinė* used to be an actively celebrated church holiday featuring folk piety elements in the first half of the 20th century. Today, Vilnius believers have partially maintained this aspect and those attending the sacred service bring greenery for consecration in the church. The consecration of greenery on the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary is a part of liturgy, but the observations in different Lithuanian churches show that definitely not all believers carry a bouquet of greenery into the sacred service. Nevertheless, Vilnius falls into the area of southeastern Lithuania where greenery consecration is an important part of the ritual behaviour of people who attend church services, primarily Polish believers. On the other hand, we can observe the weakening dimension of folk piety in comparison to sacramentals. The greenery, which is associated with sacredness on the broadest scale, is attributed a religious symbolic meaning, and Vilnius residents carry the bouquets with an extended aesthetic



*Fig. 1. The Assumption bouquets are the most popular symbols of the Feast, 2010, Vilnius. Photo: Jonas Mardosa*

value for consecration. For instance, 32 % of Lithuanians and 54 % of Polish families keep the greenery for consecration bought outside the church (few people carry a bouquet composed at home) in a vase on the table or next to holy paintings as a home decoration while Russian families traditionally keep them attached to holy paintings (9 %). Usually, the Assumption bouquets are kept at home until they dry out. Afterwards, they are burned in the manner identical to any other consecrated item.

Until the mid-20th century, there was a tradition in the whole of Lithuania, in particular in the Vilnius Region, to carry rye seed put into small bags to the church for consecration, hoping for a good yield from the consecrated rye the following year and God's protection for it. People would also bring a wreath marking the end of rye harvest or its ears for consecration. Grain consecration fitted well in the tradition of a broader geographical and ethnocultural region (Pūtys 1998: 107; Fisher 1934: 192; Znamierowska-Prüfferowa 2009: 196;

Lozka 2002: 165). A contemporary octave feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Pivašiūnai highlights an agrarian aspect; one of the days is even dedicated to farmers. Observations of the Assumption in Vilnius prompt a conclusion that even though the survey results do not show crop consecration, the bouquets for consecration sold outside the church also contain crop ears. However, it is only a reminiscence of the tradition without highlighting the agricultural meaning of the action (even though the farmers arriving from the district may also consecrate bouquets in Vilnius).

The bouquets sold at the approaches to the churches in Vilnius may also contain a handful of flax. Such bouquets (which are also known in the feast of Pivašiūnai) are not traditional, though. Today flax is added to other dried plants intended for consecration (Mardosa 2004: 100) or separate decorative bouquets are even composed. Southeastern Lithuania, Vilnius falling into it, also features the consecration of fruit and vegetables on the occasion of *Žolinė*. Crop consecration had also survived in the religious customs of residents from Grodno Region in Belarus in the second half of the 20th century; they used to have pears, carrots, cabbages, beetroots and other vegetables consecrated (Traditsijnaya mastatskaya kultura belarusav 2006: 233). Poland also has a surviving tradition of consecrating the goods from a fruit and vegetable garden (Uryga 2006: 299). Such attribution of sacredness to the crop as well as flax in Vilnius is more commonly encountered among Poles; 18 % of Poles and 3 % of Lithuanians specified them among the items brought for consecration. Hence, even though the crop consecration tradition is known among Lithuanians, it is essentially a phenomenon of Polish religious culture in modern Vilnius. Fieldwork data lead to a conclusion that even though Russians do not carry apples or vegetables to the sacred service of the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Vilnius, the Orthodox have apples consecrated on the occasion of the Feast of Transfiguration on August 19.

### **Consecrated greenery in the everyday life and in the custom of believers**

In the history of daily life, the traditional Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary was closely linked to the individual's personal

and family life. To that end, consecrated greenery was used for apotropaic and healing purposes in the traditional culture; thus, the bouquets contained the plants which were believed by people to have such properties. The plants that were believed to be sacred were thought to become even more effective. In contemporary practice, bouquets are not made by pilgrims themselves but are bought in the randomly formed markets outside the church and feature a diversity of plants. Blooming garden flowers are more commonly used for that matter. Despite the above, the greenery consecrated on *Žolinė* retains its traditional uses in burial customs. According to C. Boduen de Kurtenė-Erenkroicova, in the first half of the 20th century, Poles in Vilnius Voivodeship used to keep the consecrated greenery behind holy paintings; after the death of a family member they were put into the coffin or into the pillow under the head of the deceased (Boduen de Kurtenė-Erenkroicova 1992—1993: 191—192). Such a custom was more widely spread in Lithuania; according to the fieldwork data, it was also known in Belarus. A survey in Vilnius revealed that such a use of consecrated greenery has survived in the ritual practice of contemporary Vilnius residents. Therefore, the answers of 15 % of Lithuanians and 18 % of Poles include a statement that dried greenery are placed into the coffin. Such data are also supported by the survey of employees from Vilnius funeral establishments carried out by R. Garnevičiūtė as part of her study on contemporary Lithuanian funerals. It became clear that in addition to putting greenery under the pillow by people themselves, there are also cases when the medical staff preparing the dead for burial are asked to spread the greenery consecrated at the time of the Feast of the Assumption or on the Feast of Corpus Christi under the deceased in the coffin (Garnevičiūtė 2014: 53—54). Russians from Vilnius are only familiar with the placing of greenery into the coffin but they or their family members have not observed such a ritual.

Meanwhile, the use of consecrated greenery for healing purposes has survived to this day and is more commonly observed in the customary behaviour of Vilnius Poles. Lithuanians and Russians in particular remember such uses of greenery to a far lesser extent. For instance, the use of dried plants as a magical attribute in the case of illness is known by 22 % of older-generation Poles, 10 % of Lithuanians and 9 % of Russians. The attribution of magical properties

to consecrated greenery and the expectations associated with it are characteristic of Poles as well as Germans who used the consecrated items for various protective or fertility promoting purposes since the Middle Ages (Filimonova 1978: 129—130; Gantskaya 1978: 177—178). We can therefore conclude that the customs of the use of consecrated greenery encountered in modern-day Vilnius find a niche in the cross-European context of meanings, symbols and rituals of the feast. However, the attitude followed by contemporary Church towards such uses of consecrated greenery as well as other items which are considered sacred is rather ambiguous. By supporting folk piety traditions important to the nation, the Church disagrees with the practices of magic and rituals based on superstitious beliefs (Liaudiškojo pamaldumo ir liturgijos vadovas 2003: 18). Therefore, though greenery and even the fruits of farmers' labour are consecrated during the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, the Church does not vest them with prospective magical uses; such beliefs are nevertheless still viable in the practices of older-generation residents.

The material provided makes it clear that the liturgical continuity of celebration of the Assumption takes place in the custody of the Church. Such a form of the feast was observed before declaring August 15 a public holiday and such a form is observed by the believers to this day. In the meantime, an extra day-off provided an additional opportunity to attend the sacred service in the church and to celebrate this feast freely on an otherwise working day. However, in the circumstances of the city, the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary has its own specific characteristics. It is also typical of other calendar holidays based on folk piety. Most importantly, as indicated by ethnologist Birutė Imbrasienė, after several decades in the city, people grow apart from the context of rural holidays and folk customs are no longer that relevant. As a result, problems of the people's relationship with those holidays emerge (Imbrasienė 1992: 3). In fact, at the time of the Assumption, attempts are made to attract believers as well as secular residents to the feast based on folk customs through the press, television and radio. However, the survey shows that greenery is consecrated as a tradition of the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, and the Church as well as the believers understand *Žolinė* in a Christian way (Mardosa 2012: 22).

Thus, if the believers consider greenery a symbol of commemorating the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, its folk treatment does not become meaningful for non-believers as well as for secular residents detached from the peasant's way of life. A non-believer or a person detached from the Christian nature of the Assumption does not sense the importance of the public holiday; that is why, a considerable part of residents of the nationalities under discussion do not understand the inclusion of August 15 into the list of public holidays and they, like the Orthodox, consider it an additional day-off that does not fall into the concept of a holiday.

### **Conclusions**

Deeply rooted in church practice, the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary has retained its liturgical part featuring the tradition of consecration of greenery unchanged. The majority of city residents do not compose bouquets by themselves but purchase them outside the church. Therefore, the composition and looks of the bouquets being consecrated are determined by the supply which is also influenced by the demand. No evident principles of composition of the greenery bouquet were identified in the research; however, the observance of the tendencies of bouquet composition apparent in the region where Vilnius is located has been established among Catholic Poles and Lithuanians. The Polish tradition of consecration of greenery supplemented with fruit and vegetables is considered exceptional.

Fieldwork shows that as a religious holiday, *Žolinė* is mostly celebrated among Poles, less commonly among Lithuanians and least commonly among Russians. In addition to participation in the sacred service held in the church and the traditional consecration of greenery, it is more common among Poles to celebrate the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in the family. Believers attend the church irrespective of the secular status of the Assumption. They consider August 15 a religious feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary with its own liturgy and symbols. The majority of Vilnius residents treat the consecration of bouquets of greenery in the course of church rituals as a festive symbol deriving from the context of folk piety.

The majority of Russians and Lithuanians in Vilnius neither celebrate *Žolinė* as a traditional Christian nor as a public holiday. Whereas the

holiday of religious origin is not celebrated due to a secular relationship of society with it, the scope of celebration of *Žolinė* as a public holiday is associated with the citizenship of residents which is relevant to all groups of the population under discussion. In the case of Russians, the peculiar characteristics of the content of the celebration of the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary are determined by the specific religious calendar of the Orthodox.

### Notes

Poles call the feast *Matka Boska Zielna* (Poles from Vilnius Region also refer to it as *Zielna*). In Slovak the feast is known as *Maria Zelena*; in the Middle Ages Germans nicknamed it “a bouquet of women’s day” (Gratsianskaya 1978: 192; Gantskaya 1978: 177). In fact, next to other names, Belarusian Orthodox believers and Catholics also have the names *Zelyonaya*, *Zelnaya* (Lozka 2002: 159; 163).

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## **Mari Ritual Practices as Representation**

**Abstract.** This article focuses on festivals and rituals of the Mari people living in the economically depressed Volga region of Russia. The article focuses on women's activity during the Mari festivals and the ways in which this activity can be framed as a representation of the official power. The festivals organized by the local administration are compared to the rituals coordinated by the local people, mostly by the women. Based on field work done in 2002–2004, the purpose of the author is to find an answer to the following question: does the feast, the stage provided by the bustle of a festival, construct the strength of national identity, or do festivals just provide the binding force to the recurring rhythms of everyday life?

**Keywords:** clothing, festival, identity, Mari, Post-Soviet time, private life, ritual, women's activity.

### **Introduction**

In my paper, I am focus on three Mari village festivals and analyse two Mari practices, focusing at a festival as the representation of the official power, as well as the result of the activity of local people, who are mostly women.

The Mari people live in the Volga region in Russia in the Mari El Republic. Geographically, the Mari are divided into three groups. There are Mari living in the hilly south bank of the Volga, as well as in the meadow areas on the north bank. The third group consists of those Mari who moved to the Ufa district in the 16th century. Despite the influence exerted by the Orthodox Church, old religious beliefs and practices have been observed by the Mari from the 16th century up to the present. The Republic of Mari El was the part of the former Soviet Union, and now belongs to the Russian Federation. The majority of the Mari still live in the countryside.

The Mari agricultural rites were mostly calendrical, repeated regularly at given times of the year and involving the whole community.

The plough feast, the Midsummer Night and summer feasts were organised by priests. The Mari adopted elements of the church calendar and Soviet celebration days, as well.

In the Post-Soviet era, the Mari people revived the ritual year remembering the past. The agrarian cycle was reviewed, and it enhanced new feasts with traditional character, such as festivals involving traditional foods and dresses. The culture is not static; it is changing constantly, just as the ritual year and feasts are changing, and yet maintaining a continuity of practice.

In Finland, Anna-Leena Siikala studied the process and the meaning of Udmurt sacrificial rituals and how these rituals shifted from local and regional festivals to national festivals (Siikala & Ulyashev 2011). Paul Fryer (2001) and Ulrike Kahrs (2005) considered the Mari feasts in the Post-Soviet time, at the beginning of the 2000s, from the point of view of how people search for identity as an expression of an ethnic group or as part of a multicultural society. Sonja Christine Luehrmann (2011) studied the religious life and its transformation in the Mari Republic during different historical periods.

I began my fieldwork among the Mari people in Russia in 1981. Over several years, I spent approximately one month in the field on a yearly basis, mostly in the summer. Summer is the time for feasts, both official feasts and traditional ones. I studied Mari folk clothing, its traditional forms, and the re-invented and renewed forms, as well as aspects of everyday life, including feasts and festivals as a part of the Mari cultural heritage. I observed the Festival of Flowers in the following Mari villages: Bash-Shidy on June 20, 1991, Byrgynda on June 18, 1995, Tymbaevo on June 19, 1997, Morki on June 15, 2002, Uncho on June 16, 2002, and in Yoshkar-Ola, the capital of the Republic of Mari El, on June 20, 1993. I also took part in the traditional performances organized by the communities.

I focused on the feasts as a part of private life, particularly with regards to women's roles and participation. Traditionally, the home was the focus of women's activity. The women hold key positions as organisers of village events. According to Marjorie Balzer and Anna-Leena Siikala, the maintenance of traditions of beliefs and organisation of village feasts were the domain of women even before the 1917

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Revolution (Balzer 1999: 121—123; Siikala & Ulyashev 2011: 65—67).

I observed, and present here, three festivity cases and two models from the point of view of women's participation and activities.

### **Model 1. Flower Feast as a representation of the official power**

The Mari national festival is the Flower Feast, the “Peledesh pairem,” which is held in the middle of June. The festival was founded in 1920 in the city of Malmyzh replacing the sacrificial feasts for ancestors, the Semyk (Peledysh pairem 1928; Yoshkar Peledysh pairem 1930). According to Karen Petrone, this replacement of one festival by another was about the confrontation of religious tradition and practice with the new, secular, Soviet regime. The Soviet officials discredited the religion and replaced religious holidays with Soviet holidays (Petrone 2000: 10).

Sonja Luehrmann (2011), who studied the religious life in the Mari El Republic, notes that in the 1920s an important annual celebration of *kolkhoz*<sup>1</sup> farmers was organized in a new form, in which religious elements were deliberately played down. Firstly, it was named “Yoshkar peledesh pairem,” where the red (*yoshkar*) became the symbol of revolution. The public face of the Soviet Union changed profoundly during the 1930s; celebrations introduced new Soviet policies to the public. Stalin promoted a patriotic Soviet rhetoric. In the 1930s and 1940s, the official discussion of ethnic celebrations highlighted the importance of such gatherings as opportunities for transforming proletarian performances to Soviet-type festivals (Pechnikova 2010; Kalinina 2013: 278—279). In 1930, the Mari Flower Festival ceased to be a national festival. It was revived in 1965 as a festival of country people, of *kolkhozes*. Following this history, provides an opportunity for creating a model of the development of festivals that reveal their full dependence on the ideology of the ruling state and official powers that be.

**Case 1. The Flower Festival in the village of Uncho on June 16, 2002.** The Flower Festival in Uncho was held in the central field of the village, where a spring is located that is used by all the commu-

nity. The village committee cleaned the field at the eve of the festival. The main organizer of the festival was the cooperative, the collective farm, formerly identified as *kolkhoz*. The festival began very gently. The moderator August Romanov arrived from Yoshkar-Ola, the capital of the Mari Republic, and set the atmosphere by telling jokes. The program contained Mari pop songs incorporating elements of contemporary folk music. The public followed, and participated in, the songs and dances of the performers. After the program, the feast organized by the schoolteachers and the director of the culture house began. The children presented folk dances and songs. Games and sports events were held in the field. Families sat side by side in a great picnic. Women offered different types of pies, bread, and homemade mead (Fig. 1).



*Fig. 1. A family picnic during the Flower Festival in Uncho, 2002.  
Photo: Ildikó Lehtinen*

The festival included a show of folk dresses. The schoolchildren were dressed in national costumes; the teachers and young housewives wore dresses decorated with Mari embroidery. Some older women wore the traditional Mari dress. The Mari singer Shakirov wore a shirt embroidered with Mari motifs, but his young singer, Mizhana, had a contemporary, fashionable, glitter top and changed her top twice during the performance.

The most important feature of the feast appeared to be the opportunity for families to come together. Informants described it as the feast for families, mentioned the food, and the opportunity to be together. Families invited relatives from the cities, and the feast connected kin who might not see each other on a regular basis.

The official, the collective, part of the feast was very calm. The organizer, members of the cooperative, gave the financial support that provided for the Mari performance. The songs in Mari language, the Mari dresses, and the food, emphasized the Mari character of the feast, and highlighted a sense of Mari nationalism. The food reflected the traditional rural practices, and simultaneously made an accent on the role of women as the motor of national activities. The women prepared the food, and the women embroidered the dresses for their families. While the celebration preparation and practices were family centered, and in that way private, the feast was held in a collective field. This juxtaposition of elements extended to the day on which the festival was held, a Friday, which was the Mari traditional holy day in the Mari "pagan" religion.

### **Case 2. Flower Festival in the village of Morki on June 15, 2002.**

The Flower Festival in the city of Morki was held on a Saturday, June 15, 2002. The festival took place in a field on the outskirts of the city. People came from different directions, walking or driving through fields, bushes, and forests to arrive at the festival site. Along the road, there were tables with Mari national foods, some small exhibition of Mari handicrafts, and small shops stands offering international foods, *shashliks*,<sup>2</sup> Russian pies, cakes, Colas, sweets, and chocolates. In the middle of the field, there was a platform. Along the borders of the field were located a wrestling place, swings, and sports ground.

The program began with the folk dance of the folklore group from Bashkortostan. After the dance, the head of the administration gave greetings in Mari language, but the main speech was in Russian. He gave medals for the prospering work to Ruslan, the head of a working construction team, and to Alekseyeva, the dairymaid. After that, the flags of the Russian Federation and the Mari El Republic were hoisted. Following this opening introduction the official speeches came. Speakers included the head of the local administration, the representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, war veterans, city administrators, and the special invited guests, including the heads of the delegations of Bashkortostan and Chuvashia. During the speeches, the delegates gave gifts to the best workers as rewards for their work. Gifts included cutlery and china, coffee-machines, and televisions. All 15 winners were men.

The program continued with national dances of the folk group from Bashkortostan, and Chuvashian and Mari songs. The folk group and the singers wore standardized performance dresses. It rained, but the audience did not move and stayed intently focused on the performers and performances.

After the official program, the sports games began. Eating began and continued. The shashliks, Russian pies, and Pepsi-Cola were very popular. The men drank beer and, probably, vodka.

The organizer of the feast was the city of Morki's administration. This model of organization was similar to that of Soviet times. Karen Petrone emphasized that the Soviet holiday culture was a syncretic mixture of traditional and Soviet holiday practices. The Soviet holiday culture included three types of Russian parades that lent meaning to the Soviet demonstration: political demonstrations, military drills, and religious processions (Petrone 2000: 25). The Morki festival, organized by a branch of the government, also contained speeches with political references and reflected an international character.

The celebration followed the model of Soviet behavior and emphasized the Russian / Soviet identity, a patriotic allegiance to the motherland. The guests from Bashkortostan and Chuvashia supported the idea of the diversity of nations in the Russian Federation. The program was rigidly organized, thus showing the power of the

administration. The performance costumes appeared to be “modified” national costumes, approved by officials. The festival was the performance of collective life without any feature from the spontaneous Mari culture. The Flower Festival represented a chance to eat and drink rather than celebrate the Mari El Republic and the Mari identity. The invited guests were reminiscent of former Soviet propaganda and agendas, as a theme that wound through all of the activities was that of “friendship between peoples.”

**Model 2. Festivity as a result of the activity of local people:  
The day of commemoration of ancestors**

Lauri Honko, the Finnish researcher, said that three multifunctional categories of supernormal beings can be distinguished in Finno-Ugrian belief systems: the dead, spirits, and saints. The power of the ancestors over the means of subsistence, as well as the health and well-being of the family, has been recognized since ancient times (Honko 1993: 567). To this day, the Mari have a series of commemorative rituals (“kon parem”). The most important collective feasts are Easter and the Semyk, which is held on the Thursday before the Orthodox Whit Sunday, in late May through June, depending on the date of Easter. The Semyk is a typical feast of private life. Even though the (male) Mari priest heads the feast, and is the one who prays to the ancestors to give well-being and health to the family, the feast is based on the activity of women.

In the village of Uncho, I took part in this feast on two occasions, in 2002 and 2004. The first feast was supported by the cooperative. That support and organization meant that the head of the cooperative gave some products, such as honey, meat, sugar, rice, and biscuits, for the common meal. The timing of the feast coincided with the time of the local radio to switch in the early morning. The radio announcer broadcast the opening of the feast and invited people to take part in it.

The feast included a meal for the ancestors. The Mari priest set fire to kindle and prayed for the family well-being and blessings from the deceased. The priest and the members of the family took the meal and put it in the garden near to the gate. The gate is representative of the border between life and the afterlife (Fig. 2).



*Fig. 2. The priest and the members of the family put the meal for the ancestors in the garden near to the gate, which represents the border between life and afterlife.*

*Photo: Ildikó Lehtinen*



*Fig. 3. The meal for the ancestors includes some chicken meat, a piece of pancake, some sweets and fruites. Photo: Ildikó Lehtinen*

All the members of the family spent the feast this way as a private celebration. In the evening, after women's works was done, some women with children went to the village border, where birch trees grew. This place serves as a symbol of the sacrificial site. The women put bread, milk products, and drink around the tree. Many of the women wore local dress; the young and the children were dressed in modern fashion. The priest prayed with a candle and blessed the meal and the drink. The sun was shining, and some men made a mid-summer pyre. All people jumped over the bonfire for health and happiness. Spontaneously, participants started singing Mari songs and dancing during the night.

**Case 3. Ancestor's Feast on May 26—27, 2004.** During the Ancestor's Day, we did field research and got interviews with different families. All the families we interviewed prepared food for their ancestors. The priest blessed the food with a candle (Fig. 3). Following the initiative of our informants, the focus of our conversations concerned the ancestors and funeral traditions. In some houses, I noticed some clothing in the corner. The clothes symbolized the recently deceased, those who had died in the past year (Fig. 4).

In the evening, we met Roza, Anastasiya and Marusya. Marusya said, "We are going to celebrate ancestors to the festival field." The field was empty; it was very dark, but the nightingale was singing, and the air was full of waiting. We went to get some firewood to make a bonfire. We met some villagers. All the women began to wonder if the priest would come to bless the bonfire. We waited, but the priest did not come. Only women were present. There were approximately 10 of us. It was very cold; we wore jackets and trousers. A few women wore the Mari dress. We brought firewood, and, at last, one of Marusya's guests arrived, a man who was originally from the village, but had moved to the city. He set fire to the bonfire, and the women jumped over it. Anastasiya began to sing, but nobody sang along. It was dark. We talked about former feasts and the role of the priest. At midnight, we went to the center of the village. In the main street, some girls and boys were laughing. The sound of someone playing an accordion came through the night. Marusya was very disappointed: "Where is the priest? Would it be my duty to direct the feast and to bless the fire?" We think that without the head of the feast, the old



*Fig. 4. The clothing in the corner symbolizing the recently deceased, Uncho, 2004.  
Photo: Ildikó Lehtinen*

women celebrated the feast in their traditional way, but the young people just spent a Friday night out (Lehtinen 2004).

On Saturday, the villagers and the guests from the villages of Yoshkar-Ola neighborhoods spent the Ancestor's Day in the cemetery. The atmosphere was nice. The families had some meal to eat, and all the people invited each other to commemorate the deceased. We also met the priest, and Marusya began to question him about the previous night. The priest said that nobody had asked him to bless the fire.

The feast of commemoration is a hard one. In all the families, there are deceased. The day of commemoration is very hard. The atmosphere was very oppressive because the women remembered the past. For the women, the bonfire could be an event with blessing, but also with some music, because the songs help to ease and forget the sorrow. Without the blessing of the priest, the feast was without

meaning. Marusya repeated, "What about the ancestors?" "What is the opinion of the ancestors about this kind of feast and about us?"

For the villagers, the ancestors mean the continuity of their traditional life, which is the Mari identity. The spontaneous feast was the culmination of the social contacts and relations. It revived and reinforced the relationships between the villagers and relatives from different neighborhoods. The ritual stressed the role, contribution, and activity of women and the role of women in the preservation of the traditional culture. The importance of food emphasized the female element in the celebration of the Ancestor's Day.

### **Conclusions**

Why are the Mari women still active? How were the rituals of Mari performed at cultural festivals?

As multisensory, multifocal events, festivals may extend over days, weeks, or months. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett regards festivals as cultural performance par excellence (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 59, 61, 62). For example, the Mari Flower Festival in the summer is an event where people eat, take walks, meet friends and acquaintances, watch performances, and sing and dance. People participate with all their senses, including taste, smell, sight, hearing, and touch. The festival also entails a factor that unites a people or a local group—a heritage or folklore which is comparable to shared history or memory.

Stuart Hall points to the danger of an approach whereby tradition is regarded as if it were an historical and unchanging cultural form with an unchanging or stable meaning or value (Hall 1981: 234). The organizers of festivals thus have a great responsibility for defining their content and for what is meant by such concepts such as traditional or authentic. Could a festival, with its perpetuation of traditional practices, be compared to a living museum?

Anthony Giddens regards it as possible that customs that are remnants of traditional practices may develop towards a so-called living museum (Giddens 1991: 142). On the other hand, local customs are traditions arising from the initiative of the community and containing the seed of change. In the globalized world, artefacts associated

with major traditions, among which folklore festivals can be included, could readily become relicts. National costumes can be seen as a typical examples of how a local or regional artefact can be redefined and made static. At the events I have analysed, national costumes are like museum artefacts placed on view for everyone to see (Lehtinen 2006: 45). The festival, however, lives and changes, and is included in our activities in the postmodern era. In the 1980s, the Maris and other peoples began to stage various kinds of folklore events, which have become cultural and folkloristic events, which do not necessarily have any particular objectives, and include the oral or material heritage or both. Song and dance performances, along with demonstrations of crafts, as well as exhibitions of national costume, have been used to reinforce Mari identity.

There are various forms and expressions of identity. The cornerstones of national identity, which can be seen as both implicated with but distinct from ethnic identity, are numerous: language, shared history, shared memory, oral tradition, and cultural heritage, including food, familiar scents, and everyday practices and costumes; in other words, folk culture as a whole. National symbols, such as flags, coats of arms, and folk costume are visible symbols, with very different histories and sources. The spontaneous Mari rituals could be compared to the habits of everyday life, which are semi-automatic and often unconscious. These rituals, as part of the everyday life, are transferred from mother to daughter without much ado, unremarked in their everyday ordinariness. Cleanness, bathing in the sauna, washing clothes and cooking are included among these traits and virtues of the everyday and ordinary, including scents and tastes, and can be construed as intangible values. The habitual survives, being as stable as heritage, and, perhaps, even more substantial, preserving memories of parents, grandparents, and identity. Heritage events, offering feasts and folk celebrations operate visibly and symbolically, in the private sphere of the community and home, as well as in the public sphere of organized festivals which emphasize identity and proclaim a shared unity, in the same way that national flags and hymns call forth a created national identity.

## Notes

1. Kolkhoz 'a Russian collective farm'.
2. Shashliks 'meat grilled over charcoal'.

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# Articles



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## **Blood Libel Legend in Latgale: Types of Narratives**

**Abstract.** The article is based on the materials collected among the non-Jewish population of Latgale, that is, the southeastern region of Latvia. The accusation of Jews in the ritual murder of Christians has been widespread in Europe from the Middle Ages to the present. Usually, such narratives speak about a small Christian child who is murdered and whose blood is supposedly used in a ritual context, for example, added to the unleavened bread (*matza*), which Jews eat for Passover. The topic was subject to quite abundant research work during the last two centuries. The article presents the circulation of this myth in modern Latvia and discusses the types of the story, the topics of narratives and transformation. The theme of the blood libel is well known in this territory, and almost all our interviewees have heard that Jews used blood for some ritual purposes. Often these narratives were associated with calendar festivals, frequently with Pesach and the legend of the crucifixion of the Christ, but at present stories are transformed and have lost contact with the folk calendar.

**Keywords:** Blood libel, Latgale, matsa, Passover.

The accusation of Jews in the ritual murder of Christians has been widespread in Europe since the Middle Ages. In such narratives, it is usually a young Christian child who is murdered and whose blood is used in a ritual context, for example, by being added to the unleavened bread (*matza*), which Jews eat on Passover.

In the Thompson index, this type of narrative is classified as V 361: "Christian child killed to furnish blood for Jewish rite (Hugh of Lincoln)". Due to its long history and dissemination, this legend was subject to quite abundant research work (e.g. Dundes 1991; Buttaroni and Musial 2003; Biale 2007; Belova 2006; Lvov 2008 and others). What I would like to present here is the circulation of this legend in modern Latvia, and I shall discuss the types of the stories and the topics of the narratives.

### About the fieldwork

The paper is based on materials collected among the non-Jewish population of Latgale, that is, the southeastern region of Latvia, in 2011–2014. The main subject of our fieldwork is the image of Jews from the point of view of their non-Jewish neighbors. The expeditions were carried out in those towns where Jews represented a significant part of the pre-WWII population, and where they played an important role in the cultural and economic life: Preili, Kraslava, Daugavpils, Rezekne, and others. Nowadays, small Jewish communities exist only in Daugavpils and Rezekne, the majority of the Jewish population having perished during the Second World War. A large number of interviews were conducted with the senior representatives of the local population (Russians, Latvians (Latgalians), Belorussians and Poles).

We have recorded about 140 interviews. Most of our interviewees lived in the countryside and came to towns only to visit fairs or shops with their parents or, when they grew older, to go to school. These were the moments when a meeting with the “other” space and with neighbors of different ethnic backgrounds happened. An elderly Russian Old Believer woman told us:

*“... As we went, there were some Jewish houses. Here lived Latvians and Russians. They came to my aunt. In the town, there were stalls, and in each stall, there were cakes and painted sugar chicken. Now I don’t remember; so many years have passed...”* (Preili\_11\_06).

It is important to note that reminisces of the Jews played a significant role in the historical memory of the population in Latgale. We were surprised to discover that the “local texts” describing the histories of towns always included narratives about Jews. However, the younger the interviewees are, the less their narratives are filled with specific names, and the more “general” and stereotypical their information is. The topic of the blood libel is well known in this territory, and almost all our interviewees have heard that Jews used blood for some ritual purposes.

### Theoretical framework

When dealing with the types of stories, we can use the definitions of David Hufford and several other folklorists of “belief story” and

“disbelief story” (Hufford 1982: 47—56). In our material, “belief stories” are told when the narrator is sure that Jews killed Christians and used their blood, constructing his or her narrative based on this belief. Quite often the narrator sustains his confidence by the “facts” that he saw himself, or it happened to someone else: a neighbor, a sister, relatives, husband, etc. There is an indication of an important person.

The second story type is the disbelief story when the interviewee starts or finishes his narrative with the words “*I don’t believe*”, “*it is nonsense*” and so on. In other words, he stresses that he does not believe in what he is telling. All but one such disbelief stories were recorded from Jews, who are well acquainted with the folklore of their Christian neighbors.

What is interesting in our material is the third type of story, a very frequent one, which could be named a “doubt story”. In this case, the person narrating the story accompanies it with constant commentaries “*so, people say*”, either “*I don’t know if it is true or not.*” The number of details in the narratives usually does not depend on the type of story. However, those who believe and doubt give more details than those who reject the blood libel.

### **Emotional background**

All the stories about Jews that we have recorded were emotionally colored. The stories about the Blood libel also caused the strongest emotions. The historian Irena Salenietse from Daugavpils described the emotional background of the stories about the Jews in a case study, based on one interview with Latvians. She showed that Jews are divided into “us” and “them” and the stories about “our” Jews, that is, neighbors and friends, are brightly colored emotionally (Salenietse 2003: 226). But in our case, the stories about the blood libel had a vivid emotional dimension—usually fear, horror, etc. Our respondents told about this theme in a whisper or looking around or said to us: “turn off the recorder.”

### **Childhood fears**

Some collected narratives are based on childhood fears when the interviewees as children were told that Jews steal and kill children, and, therefore, one should not go far from home. In their perception,

this topic is a children's frightening story, but it does not mean that they stopped believing in it as adults. For example:

*"We liked the matsa. Jews gave us a lot, and we ate it. But after this somebody said "Don't eat this matsa, the blood of baptized people was added there. Once we went to Daugavpils, there are also many Jews, and people say that they would catch, kill, take blood by syringe and add it to matsa. My grandmother and I went to Daugavpils, entered a shop. Once the grandma entered a shop, and I remained alone, don't know where she went, I stood and cried. A woman came and said, "What happened?" I answered, "Grandma disappeared." She said: "Not good, Jews will kill you and take your blood." My God! I was so scared and started to shout" (Sub\_12\_13).*

The participants of the expeditions recorded two similar stories in Subate and Preili: a child comes to a city, goes with a grandmother or nanny through Jewish shops, gets lost, and then it is there is fear that Jews would take and kill him. Our interviewees speaking about killing stress that all those crimes took place in large cities, like Riga or Daugavpils, and not in the places of near or where they lived.

### **Blood libel in Kraslava**

A story recorded in Kraslava (a town on the border of Latvia and Belarus) deserves special attention. Almost all our interviewees told us a story which allegedly took place in the interwar period: a Christian housemaid, who worked in a Jewish house, disappeared and was later found in the cellar of this house, in a barrel with nails:

*"The Jews took a girl from a poor family... as a housemaid. They fed her well. And she always came home for the weekend. And suddenly she didn't come home for the weekend. This is what my grandmother told me once. So... And no... [Relatives] think about what happened; she got sick or what. She [mother] comes to this Jewish woman, she [Jewish woman] says, "No, she went home." She [mother] says, "She didn't come." She [mother] went to police. The police did an unexpected search. And it turned out that the Jewish woman had a cellar in the house. And she [girl-housemaid] was already dead. They [Jews] put them [Catholic people] in a barrel with metal nails. They need Catholic blood for their Passover" (Kras\_12\_03).*

One of the interviewees even showed us the house where the blood libel took place. According to all the stories, the Jews were able to bribe the police, and the crime was not investigated. Meantime it is not clear if this blood libel indeed took place in the interwar period or if it is an echo of the blood libel of 1885 in the nearby town of Lutsin (Ludza). In Lutsin, a Christian housemaid who worked in a Jewish house disappeared and was later found in the river. There was a big trial in St. Petersburg, and the Jews were acquitted. Parents or grandparents of our interviewees could have read reports about this case in newspapers or simply known about it from rumors. But the Polish researcher Jolanta Źyndul points out in the map that in Kraslava, there was a blood libel in 1912—1914 (Źyndul 2011: map 166); she was not right about it, and our sources do not contain information about blood libel in Kraslava. This is a theme for additional archival research.

### Repeated elements of narratives

Now, I would like to discuss elements which repeat in all stories about the blood libel. First of all, it is the use of Christian blood. Almost all our interviewees said that Jews need blood for production of special unleavened bread for Passover—*matsa*. Thus, the story appears usually in the context of Passover and *matsa*. This purpose is quoted most often in other regions as well. The second group of narratives says that Jews need Christian blood to make their blind newborn children regain their sight. For example:

*"Jews were born blind, and when a child is born, they spread blood on eyes in order that he could see"* (Preily\_11\_11).

This narrative might be influenced by similar ones that were well known in Poland in the 16th and 17th centuries. Until the late 18th century, Latgale was a part of the Polish Kingdom, and many Polish people live in Latgale nowadays.

The next point that all collected narratives have in common is the way of getting the blood. Almost all our interviewees in Latgale describe a barrel with nails inside, where the victim is placed. The theme of a barrel with nails is a general topic, recorded in all of Europe.

Only one story in Latgale mentions a murder on the cross: a ritual murder imitates the crucifixion of Christ. The connection of ritual

murder with crucifixion is the earliest one, recorded already at the first blood libel in Europe, namely the murder of William of Norwich in 1114. In Latgale, we also encountered this connection between the crucifixion and the Jewish need for blood. Thus, Christ is described as the first victim, and the ritual of his murder is constantly reproduced.

The majority of interviews in Latgale describe the murder of a victim while less violent ways of getting blood are seldom mentioned. Just a couple of records said that Jews used bandages with the remains of blood or took the blood of animals. In the latter case, the interviewee stressed that outside of his village, Jews indeed kill people, especially in large cities. Only one interviewee said that Jewish doctors could take blood without killing — the topic recorded already in the 16th and 17th centuries and widespread in other regions of Eastern and Central Europe. And we have similar narratives from Kurzeme (western part of Latvia):

*“Well, and in the Aizpute the manager of the pharmacy was connected to the Christian blood <...> She really practiced that, that lady. <...> And next to it a mini scissor — very neat and clean. And very accidentally, by mistake, she always happened to prick a customer. And then there was a bit of cotton wool quickly put on, “Oh, oh, oh! I’m sorry!” And like that, but she kept it” (Dinne 2012: 51).*

Thus, we see that it is the importance of murder that is overstressed, not the need for Christian blood per se. “Peaceful” ways of getting blood are missing in the Latgalian narrative. The image of a Jewish doctor is quite demonic, and instead of stealing blood from his patients, he tends to murder them.

The status of the victim is not less important. Usually, it is a child or a teenage girl, described as innocent. So, the significant Christian connotations are: innocence and martyrdom. The victim usually suffers from the enemies of Christianity because of his or her faith.

Researchers working on blood libels usually stress that a typical victim is a boy (Dundes 1991a: vii). In our case, however, all but one specific victim are young, unmarried girls; only in Preili, one story about a boy was recorded.

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## Conclusions

As for the causes of this legend's popularity, I agree with Alan Dundes that "in the case of majority-minority group relations, it is typically the minority group which is victimized by the majority group's stereotype or image of the minority group" (Dundes 1991b: 355). We can select three main types of stories about the blood libel in Latgale. The first and most common one says that Jews kill an innocent Christian person, a child or an unmarried girl. They usually do it with the help of a barrel spiked with nails. The second one describes Christians who voluntarily donate their blood to Jews, sometimes out of fraud. The third variant is the use of the blood given by the donors for medical purposes. The last two themes appear quite seldom in Latgale. There are only two purposes for obtaining blood: either preparation of matzas or the healing of blindness of newborn Jewish children. In general, Latgalian stories about the blood libel are similar to those in other regions of Eastern Europe, but have some particular features characteristic only for this area.

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## **Russia and the USSR in the Bulgarian National Ritual Year**

**Abstract.** Russia and the USSR have played a very important role in the Bulgarian national processes from the National Revival period (19th century) until nowadays. The image of Russia and the Russians was at the core of the processes of developing a national festive calendar—both before and after 1944, as well as after the democratic changes in 1989. Although Russia is no longer considered “the big brother”, “brother nation”, “matushka” or “bratushki” and the ideological focus of the Bulgarian national narrative has changed, 3 March—the date of Liberation—did not lose its central place in the centre of the national calendar (it is the date of signing the peace treaty between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in what came to be known in Bulgaria as the Liberation War of 1877—1878). The position of Russia and the Russians will be analysed in the paper from a historical perspective, as well as in view of the present debates and festive practices. The study is based on data collected by the author in the last four years.

**Keywords:** Bulgaria, national ritual year, nationalism, public rituals, Russia, USSR.

In recent years the tension between Russophilia and Russophobia in Bulgaria (which is not a new phenomenon—it is a trend that goes back to the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century) resurfaced with full force in connection with the international situation of the two states, particularly Russia’s economic interests in Bulgaria and Bulgaria’s membership in the EU and NATO. Even though the official relations between Bulgaria and Russia are not explicitly articulated by politicians, it is clear that Bulgarians could not put behind them the existence of this “Great Power” and should accept it not only because of its global significance but also because of its connections with the country’s history, culture, economics, and everyday life.

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In writing this article I was particularly inspired by *Mechanisms of Formation of Russia’s Positive Image in Post-Soviet Countries* (Bespalov

et al. 2007). Its authors argue that by means of mass culture and mass education the elites in the post-Soviet countries are building their new national festivity (and identity) mainly in opposition to Russia (Bespalov et al. 2007: 20). As regards Eastern European nationalism of the 19th and 20th century this would not come as a surprise; for Bulgaria, such an enemy is Turkey or the Ottoman Empire; the attitude toward Russia as a “significant other” in the processes of nation-building, however, is quite interesting.

Nationalism and its features, such as national festivities, are usually studied in two perspectives: as an independent system with its own historical grounds (in the established states of Western Europe) and as a response to the empires’ policies and foreign influences (in the “new” nations in Central and Eastern Europe). According to E. Hobsbawm, two more perspectives arise: from below, i.e., “in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests” of the society; and from above, i.e., from the viewpoint of “the governments and the spokesmen and activists of nationalist ... movements” (Hobsbawm 2004: 10—11). Although Hobsbawm criticizes E. Gellner for applying a “from above” approach, in Hobsbawm’s work there is no implication of an authentic grassroots, “banal” (Billing 1995) or everyday (Goode & Stroup 2015) nationalism either. I find it more fitting to study nationalism through the national festive system and collective conscience (Durkheim 1997), thus combining the two approaches—from above and from below—and at the same time not contradicting the constructivist approach. Furthermore, I base my work on the methodological propositions put forward in the book, *We Are What We Celebrate: Understanding Holidays and Rituals*, edited by A. Etzioni and J. Bloom (2004) who point out the methodological merits of holidays; for one thing, they provide indicators that help us identify the features of any large collectives. Therefore I claim that historical research of national holidays and rituals could offer a new understanding of the gap between the official political discourse and everyday political, social and cultural notions and trends.

There are five main reasons why it is important to study the image of Russia in Bulgarian national festivities during the last 130 years, i.e., the time of the so called Third Bulgarian State:

1) it is unusual to study nationalism from the perspective of a the foreign “positive” influence—i.e., not regarding Ottoman Empire / Turkey as “the national enemy”, but rather regarding Russia / USSR; or if we go back to Bespalov, it is interesting to change the viewpoint and consider nationalism not as a conflict but as a partnership;

2) this topic has not been studied at all; it has only been touched upon by two scholars (Simeonova 2007; Sedakova 2014);

3) it is a way to debunk some of the myths about the recent past: for instance, that Russia and Bulgaria have been closely bound up (economically, politically, and ideologically) only during the socialist period;

4) hence, I would also like to contribute to the discussion regarding the date of Bulgaria’s national holiday—3 March, the day a peace treaty was signed between two alien countries, vs. 6 September or 22 September, dates which evoke the nation’s inner powers, wills, and historical achievements;<sup>1</sup>

5) finally, I would like to inquire what further connotations the image of Russia offers from the perspective of national festivities: is it also a military power, a cultural inspiration, or an economic giant?

\* \* \*

In the present paper, my focus is the Bulgarian national festive calendar from 1878 until today—a period which encompasses three quite different social and political contexts—a monarchy, a totalitarian socialist republic, and a parliamentary democracy. These shifts have brought about many changes in the public rituals and the accompanying events. My research is based mainly on information gathered from the media (the press and television), the focal point being the image of Russia / USSR and the Russians. We could consider the media as a part of the public sphere, but I prefer to use it only as a source of empirical information concerning facts rather than opinions or notions. It is a very important remark, especially with regard to the press in the times of the monarchy when all newspapers were politically dependent, as well as with reference to the socialist period when the media were completely censored and not free. Even now we cannot rely on the alleged pluralism of the free and

independent media, bearing in mind not just the political but essentially the economic interests of the Bulgarian media companies. For the last few years, however, I have made my own observations and have collected documentation.

According to my initial hypothesis, regardless of the changes in the political circumstances, the image of Russia has not changed dramatically—only the dynamics between the official, semi-official, and non-official spheres have significantly shifted. We usually study festivities in their importance for the community or for the society that performs it—festivities are often used to exert influence not only on the nation but also in the field of international affairs. Official civic festivities and foreign affairs are tightly connected and the changes of the ritual system, which is usually quite conservative, provide good materials also for political studies. In the present article I describe briefly the trends in the processes of building the image of Russia and Russians by means of official festivities in Bulgaria, taking as a starting point the established historical periodization in our scholarly tradition. As outlined by the historians, the time period from Liberation in 1878 until nowadays can be divided into three main periods in political, economic, social, and cultural terms.

The first period spans from the Liberation of 1878 until 1944 when Bulgaria shifted from a monarchy to a socialist republic. This period was not homogeneous and smooth as concerns the relationships between the two countries—the attitude of the Bulgarian monarchs and governments often varied, and after the October Revolution (1917) in Russia the political and cultural interactions changed rapidly. In 1888, soon after Liberation, Prince Alexander of Battenberg proclaimed 3 March—the date of the San Stefano Peace Treaty between Russia and the Ottoman Empire (1878)—an official state holiday. This day was celebrated with fading solemnity until the end of 1940s. During the rule of Prince Alexander of Battenberg and King Ferdinand the two states enjoyed good relations, at times even excellent. However, after 1918 in the time of King Boris III, the bilateral relations gradually cooled, which affected the festivities as well. During the second period—from 1944 to 1989—when Bulgaria was a socialist country, as could be expected, the state had outstanding interactions with the USSR: politically, economically,

and culturally, the two countries were tightly connected. Because of the ideological changes 3 March was hardly celebrated—the only noticeable celebration was in 1978, marking the 100th anniversary of Liberation. The national holiday already was 9 September—the Liberty Day—the day of the so-called second or “real” liberation of the Bulgarians—from fascism. The day of the October Revolution, 7 November, was also celebrated in Bulgaria, as well as in the other socialist countries. After 1989, of course, 9 September and 7 November completely dropped off the calendar. In 1990, 3 March was re-established as a national holiday and restored to the official national calendar. At the same time, there is a holiday which has never stopped being celebrated and has always reflected Russian Slavic unity; this is 24 May, the Day of Bulgarian Education and Culture, and Slavonic Literature.

We can observe that the festivities politically and symbolically connected with Russia could be divided into three types—feasts of gratitude to Russia (3 March and 9 September), Russian (or Soviet) feasts celebrated in Bulgaria (7 November), and Slavic holidays in which Russia is indirectly implied (24 May). Here I should make two important remarks: first, there is no country other than Russia involved in such a way in Bulgarian official festivities—neither Turkey, nor any other; and second, Bulgaria has never been within the Russian Empire, the USSR, or the Russian Federation.

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In the post-Liberation period the festivity system in Bulgaria was highly developed and it was connected with both the church calendar and the personal holidays of the members of the royal family<sup>2</sup> whose birthdays and name days were celebrated by the nation as well. It was then that the basis of the national calendar was established and its ideology and principles were further elaborated through the years.

The Day of Bulgarian Education and Culture, and Slavonic Literature—the Ss. Cyril and Methodius Day was celebrated in Bulgaria even before Liberation. As in other Slavic countries, it has always been an expression of the kinship of the Slavic nations. Since its establishment it was mainly a civil ritual, later it included religious elements but they have never taken priority.



*Fig. 1. Students and teachers at a school celebration, 1930s, Sofia.  
Photo: online archive LostBulgaria.com*

Until 1944 it was celebrated together with the church holiday on 11 May; later, because of the change in the civic and the church calendars (add a note on Julian and Gregorian styles), two separate holidays appeared—a church one (11 May) and a civic one (24 May).

3 March turned to be one of the most solemn feasts in the country in that period. It was a civic holiday although it started with a memorial church service dedicated to the soldiers and volunteers who died in the Russian-Ottoman Liberation War. The scenario of the holiday did not change until 1912 when Bulgaria entered the First Balkan War. The service took place in the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral—this church was a present to Bulgaria by Russia and it was the main church of the Bulgarian Exarchate. The service was attended by the prime minister, ministers, deputies, foreign ambassadors, officials, military officers, and education and church representatives. If the prince, or respectively the king, was in the country, he was also among the official guests—however, according to the press materials, around the time of this holiday he was usually on a visit abroad. After the service a procession to the Monument of Tsar Liberator was organized—Tsar Liberator is the Russian Emperor Alexander II who

is given this name not only in Bulgaria. In front of the monument, which stands across from the Bulgarian Parliament and is close to other important buildings, speeches were given—usually these were talks by teachers or university professors. The event was attended not only by the elite, but also by many ordinary people. There were also cases, albeit rare, when the procession afterwards proceeded to the monarch's palace to greet the royal family. In the evening a reception for the diplomatic corps was held in an upscale restaurant. It can be assumed that the main places where the celebrations took place were explicitly connected with Russia—the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral and the Monument of Emperor Alexander II. According to the media data collected the Russian ambassador often played an important role in the celebrations, usually delivering a speech in front of the monument.

On the holidays themselves there were many events organized by the Slavic Community as well—concerts, lectures or official gatherings of its members. Furthermore, many annual competitions aiming to select an anthem dedicated to Liberation took place at the turn of the 20th century. The prize-winning work was usually played at the concerts—all these anthems reflected the gratitude of Bulgaria to Russia. Newspapers, of course, published many historical articles and veteran memories, as well as greetings from the Russian Emperor to the Bulgarian people. During the Balkan and the First World wars the celebrations, public rituals, and gatherings were not so crowded and lavishly organized. After 1917, the relations between Bulgaria and Russia changed, not only regarding the holiday; the scenario, however, did not change dramatically until the end of the 1940s.

After 1944, 3 March dropped out from the national calendar because there was a considerably greater liberation of the Bulgarians—liberation from fascism on 9 September. In the period until 1989 the fate of Bulgaria and practically all political and cultural decisions were connected with the USSR. The national holiday was 9 September but 7 November was very solemnly celebrated as well. 24 May remained in the calendar.

Most holidays in socialist Bulgaria were celebrated with a manifestation—a procession which included students and adults marching

in a military formation in front of the local party headquarters and greeting the party heads who were standing up on a balcony, or on a flight of stairs at least, i.e., above the people. In Sofia such a place was the mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov (similar to the mausoleum of the Soviet political leaders Lenin and Stalin in Moscow).<sup>3</sup> The organization of the ritual space was bright and vivid and included images of Soviet leaders—past and present, especially Lenin (his monument stood nearby) and Stalin until the mid-50s. Appeals for eternal friendship between the Bulgarian and the Soviet people could be read everywhere—on the posters held by the manifesting groups as well.

All feasts followed a similar scenario. On 24 May, it was mostly school and university students, teachers, professors, and scholars who took part in the manifestations. The procession ended with a cultural program—usually folk dances or gymnastic performances. In the mid-1950s, after Stalin's cult of personality was taken down and when Todor Zhivkov became head of state, the national element in the celebrations became more and more prominent—at first, in connection with the Slavic culture, since the USSR became the unifying center of all Slavs after the communist uprisings.<sup>4</sup> Reframing the holiday in view of eradicating its religious origin and erasing the national element because of the internationalism ideology actually resulted in enhancing the positive image and role of the USSR. 1 May underwent a similar process of reframing although it had been celebrated before 1944, even if not officially and mostly by the communists and the syndicates.

Although it was a national holiday, 9 September was largely dedicated to Bulgarian-Soviet friendship and to the Soviet Army that had liberated Bulgaria one more time. As on the other holidays, the USSR and its emblems had a visible place in the wasteful decoration of the public ritual space. In socialist times the practice of accompanying manifestations by an official—although anonymous—narrator's voice was initiated—it replaced the teachers' talks and was played through a loudspeaker; it was anonymous and at the same time collective. This narrator's voice pointed out the Bulgarian contribution to the partisan war and expressed gratitude to the Soviet people for liberating Bulgaria twice. Some pieces of music (the anthem and other solemn melodies) and slogans shouted by the crowds (for

instance, “Glory to 9 September!” or “Hurray!”) completed the sound landscape of the ritual. The 9 September Square (the capital’s central square), the Lenin Monument, the Soviet Army Monument (an imposing complex in the city center), and the so called Brothers’ Grave (a common grave) were among the important spaces where the manifestations took place. Such memorial complexes were built in all large towns in Bulgaria and they rapidly became the venues for the 9 September civic ritual.



*Fig. 2. A manifestation on 9 September, 1970, Sofia.*

*Photo: online archive LostBulgaria.com*

Although 7 November was a working day, it was always celebrated with a manifestation. I should underline that during the socialist times, 7 November, the Day of the Russian October Revolution, was considered important not only for the USSR but also for the entire communist world. This day was a festive one in other socialist countries too. The celebration of 7 November, logically, was dominated by expressions of gratitude to the Soviet people, appreciation of the October Revolution’s victory, and images of the Soviet leaders.

In summary, in the socialist times, holidays were celebrated mainly with manifestations which—as rituals—relied upon lavishly decorated

public space. They were organized at several significant places nominally connected with the socialist revolution and the USSR. Manifestations enunciated a simple public narrative but relied on the spontaneous efforts of particular groups to communicate its message in slogans. These slogans, of course, had been preapproved by local political elites.

Immediately after the democratic changes in 1989, 9 September and 7 November were removed from the national calendar. The celebrations of the rest of the holidays were purged of the communist ideology—and this was very important concerning 3 March. From an ideological point of view, this process was not so drastic because in the 1980s all public events acquired significant nationalist features. Much more drastic was the full termination of certain manifestations. Because new rituals were not invented rapidly, many holidays were not publicly celebrated at all for a long time.



*Fig. 3. A celebration at the Bulgarian Volunteer's Monument organized by the Russian Cultural Information Center on the occasion of 3 March, 2012. Photo: Lina Gergova*

3 March was restored to the point where it is now the national holiday of Bulgaria. Its celebration is similar to the celebration of 6 May—the Day of the Bulgarian Army. There is a ceremony in the

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morning at which state officials give speeches and lay flowers at the Monument of the Unknown Soldier;<sup>5</sup> then in the evening, a ritual roll call of honor is performed. Some attempts to restore manifestations on 24 May have been made; this holiday does not have a clear and stable scenario yet. Most feasts today are celebrated in a similar way: state officials present flowers to a monument and then speeches are given by them or by certain intellectuals. The memorial spaces are guarded and citizens are not allowed to get closer—they participate in the rituals only as an audience; the nation is not an actor in the national rituals.

It is important to mention that the image of Russia is visible only on 3 March, Liberation Day. The evening roll call of honor is organized in front of the Tsar Liberator Monument on Parliament Square. At the same time, the Russian Cultural Information Center in collaboration with several Russophile associations organizes a parallel celebration of 3 March at the Bulgarian Volunteer Monument in Sofia.<sup>6</sup> This celebration is not official and is not attended by any Bulgarian officials; however, it is quite visible and is silently supported by local authorities.

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I have tried here to combine the perspectives from below and from above in reference to public rituals which are organized by institutions (national and local) and public bodies (political, intellectual and cultural organizations) and which transmit national narratives, myths, images and heroes from the public sphere to the nation. These rituals, and partially their context (ritual space, side events, actors, etc.), could be reconstructed as a sequence of events using media materials. Even such a brief description of the history of Bulgarian civic holidays connected with Russia and the USSR confirms the hypothesis that the holiday and the public ritual are not only a social phenomenon but also a political instrument; in other words, we cannot firmly separate national calendar from national foreign politics. The turns of international affairs, however, are usually sharper and faster than the changes in public rituals; significant changes are possible only in totalitarian societies.

As we have observed, in the Bulgarian national festive system and public rituals, certain images of Russia and the USSR have been

stable through the years: Russia is considered to be “liberator and brother country”, Russians are brothers (“bratushki”), the Russian emperor—an emanation of Russia and the Russian Army—is our Liberator, the Russian leaders Lenin and Stalin were figures of global significance, and the Russian culture is a part of the common Slavic family. These notions have not always been part of the official messages but they appeared in the media (private media or media affiliated with certain political parties), or indications of their presence were seen in the ritual spaces—so, to some extent they compose the public sphere and form the collective conscience.

Still, what are the basic attributes of the processes of building the images of Russia and the USSR in Bulgarian national festivities in the last 12 to 13 decades? They include public spaces as ritual ones, public narratives, including media materials, public actors (and audience), and public rituals and side events. We cannot disregard the role of school education—in Bulgaria the generations that were educated during the socialist times are still active. Meanwhile, some artificially inserted references to Russia in national festivities have been naturally invalidated in the last 25 years—such as the pan-Slavic messages in the celebration of 24 May. In conclusion, I argue that the image of Russia at present is dynamic and not homogeneous; it remains important because it is implicated in the public debates regarding national holidays.

### Notes

1. On 6 September 1885, the unification of the Principality of Bulgaria and the then Ottoman province of Eastern Rumelia was proclaimed. On 22 September 1908, Bulgaria proclaimed its independence from the Ottoman Empire.
2. After the announcement of Bulgaria’s independence from the Ottoman Empire the “prince (*knyaz*) of Bulgaria” (Ferdinand at the time) proclaimed himself the “king (*tsar*) of the Bulgarians”.
3. Georgi Dimitrov (1882—1949) was the first communist leader of Bulgaria, from 1946 to 1949. After his death his body was embalmed and placed on display in a mausoleum in the center of Sofia.
4. Todor Zhivkov (1911—1998) was First Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party and head of state of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria for 35 years (1954—1989).

5. The Monument of the Unknown Soldier is a different from the Brothers' Grave. The socialist monument is a pylon on a small hill and was built in 1956—it is called the Brothers' Grave because the remains of the most important partisans were buried there. The older and newer monument (it was removed in 1944 and restored in 1981) is a sculpture of a lion on a sarcophagus at the base of the southern wall of St. Sofia Church; it was inaugurated in 1941.
6. For instance, the Bulgarian People's Voluntary Army (in Bulgarian *Opŭlchenie*) "Shipka"—an heir of the volunteer formations which took part in the Russian-Ottoman War in 1877—1878.

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## Transformation in the Polish Festival of Harvest

**Abstract.** The festival of harvest, called *dożynki*, is celebrated locally throughout Poland when all crops have been harvested from the fields, usually at the end of August or beginning of September. This tradition has been kept up for centuries in Poland, and although the core of the celebration has remained the same, there have been some changes of various kinds influenced by ideologies as well as technologies and global processes.

This article is a follow-up to my research on the celebration of *dożynki* in Poland in the 1950s, the results of which are presented in the publication *Politics, Feasts, Festivals* (2014). This time, I concentrate on the celebration of *dożynki* in recent years. I describe all parts of the celebration, indicating the changes that have occurred and comparing it to the celebration in the 19th century, each stage of which is described in detail by Zygmunt Gloger. The research is based on folklore sources, materials transmitted in the mass media, and my interviews with people who took part in such festivals, as well as on my own personal observations as a participant.

**Keywords:** bread, crops, *dożynki*, festival, harvest, parade, Poland, wreath.

### Description of the sources

The earliest folklore source that gives a fuller insight into the celebration of the festival of *dożynki*<sup>1</sup> belongs to the second half of the 19th century. It was delivered by the Polish folklorist Zygmunt Gloger (1845—1910). We find some references to the festival in Polish literature from before the 19th century, although there is no consensus among researchers on the reliability of this material (Krzyżanowski 1965: 87). They might not be dependable sources, therefore, for evaluating the exact course of *dożynki*. They might, however, be taken as proof that as far back as those times the festival was indeed celebrated in Poland, otherwise, how would the authors have known about it? One of these documents (*Pieśń świętojańska o Sobótce—*

St. John's song about Midsummer Day's bonfire) was written by Jan Kochanowski, a Polish poet from the 16th century. Although the title of the work would suggest a different type of festival, namely mid-summer, we do find references there to harvest time and the rituals typical for *dożynki* (Kochanowski 1955: 356—357). The oldest description of the festival of harvest in Poland is ascribed to the Polish writer Ignacy Krasicki, who placed it in his work, *Pan Podstoli* (Mr Podstoli),<sup>2</sup> written in the second half of the 18th century (Krasicki 1927: 90—91).<sup>3</sup>

The material for the celebration of the present-day festival of *dożynki* comes from my direct, personal observation. I participated in several festivals in various places. I also spoke with people who took part in such events. But still, this did not give me the full picture of the celebration of *dożynki* all over Poland. I hoped to find material, as rich as in the case of the festival celebrated in Poland in the 1950s, in newspapers. I looked through a range of five different newspapers in print. In one daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Electoral Gazette)<sup>4</sup> in the whole period 2012—2014 I found, only in one issue (2014), one mini poster with an invitation to and a short programme about *Dożynki* of the Province<sup>5</sup> of Małopolska. In another daily newspaper, *Gazeta Krakowska* (Cracower Gazette),<sup>6</sup> in 2014, again only in one issue, there was just a short note (*Gospodarze z Małopolski* 2014: 7) about *dożynki*, again in the same province, with a small coloured photo of a parade attached. In 2013, I found four notes—short reports about *dożynki* in this newspaper. They referred to *Dożynki* of the Gmina (Perfect w niedzielę 2013: 5), *Dożynki* of the Province (Satała 2013: 6; Małopolskie *dożynki* 2013: 6) and to the Presidential *Dożynki*<sup>7</sup> in the village of Spała (Province of Łódź). In 2012, I found in *Gazeta Krakowska* one short article and one note on *dożynki*. The note does not refer directly to *dożynki*, as it provides information about a competition to find “An idea for a local product 2012”, announced during *dożynki*. There is also information on a wreath contest and a parade led by a brass orchestra (Gmina Wieliczka 2012: 7). In the article, *dożynki* were used as an occasion to mention the financial problems faced by small gminas and farmers with small farms—such lands are not worth cultivating, as they are not financially viable (*Dożynki są jak zawsze* 2012: 7).<sup>8</sup>

The daily newspaper *Dziennik Polski* (*Polish Daily*)<sup>9</sup> has published much more information on *dożynki*, although mainly in the form of notes, as I noticed going through the publication for 2014. There were 19 notes and articles usually supplemented with a photo of *dożynki*. There is no word about *dożynki* in 2014 in the daily newspaper *Rzeczpospolita*<sup>10</sup> or in the weekly newspaper *Tygodnik Powszechny* (General Weekly).<sup>11</sup> It is surprising that there is no mention of the all-Poland *dożynki*<sup>12</sup> at the monastery on Jasna Góra in Częstochowa, the centre of the Marian cult in Poland, especially since the second newspaper is a Roman Catholic magazine.

It might be argued that nowadays more information can be placed online. However, when I ‘googled’ “Tygodnik Powszechny, dożynki”, I found only a few items. Generally, googling the term *dożynki* on the Internet will get you notes containing information on the place and time of the celebration of the festival, as well as a list of main accompanying events, sometimes also full programmes of the festival, but usually there are plenty of photos from the festival. More information, which varies from place to place, can be found on websites of local administrations and other organisations. However, it must be said that in small communities, news and information are spread in traditional, rather than electronic ways.

### ***Dożynki* in the 19th century as described by Zygmunt Gloger**

Although Gloger remarks that the customs he writes about concern the upper river region of Narew, he adds that these rituals are known all over the country, albeit they might vary slightly. During harvesting the most important person was the *postatnica*<sup>13</sup>—a female reaper who was the fastest person at work. It was her privilege to wear the wreath during the festival of harvest. The second fastest female reaper was called *postacianka*.

The main ceremony of *dożynki* began in the field with the singing by reapers of a long *dożynki* song, which consisted of two-line stanzas after each of which there was a refrain: *Plon niesiem, plon* (Crop we are carrying, crop). This was on the day when the wheat was finally reaped and the harvest was finished. The fourth line (*Do jegomości w dom*—To the landlord, to his house) appeared very rarely. The song referred to the harvest itself and anything and anybody related to it

in any way. While singing, the reapers formed a kind of parade to the manor, led by the *postatnica* and *postacianka*. The *postatnica* wore on her head a wreath, plaited by girls, from ears of rye and field or garden flowers. Sometimes viburnum berries, red apples and nuts were added, and a wheat cake or gingerbread placed on the top of the wreath. All these elements symbolised the abundance of all kinds of fruit from the fields, gardens, apiary and forest (Gloger 1972: 31). The *postacianka* held in her hand the *równianka*—a small sheaf of grain, the stalks of which were all cut to the same length (hence the name *równianka* from the verb ‘to equal’—Polish *równać*), so it looked like a small broom, or three bunches of grain tied up with straw at the end of the stalks, just before the ears begin. These would be sheaves or bunches of wheat if the wreath was made of rye, because both crops had to be used as a sign that the harvest of all the winter crops was finished. The *postatnica* had to be an unmarried girl. At the gate to the manor’s courtyard boys poured water on the *postatnica* and her wreath, in order to ensure enough rain for the next year’s crops and, as a result, their abundance.

In front of the porch, the crowd sang about the landlords and their children. Then, either the landlord took the wreath off the *postatnica*’s head or she gave it to him herself, wishing him and his wife good health in order to celebrate the next year’s harvest. In turn, she would receive a coin or some coins. The *postacianka* gave the landlord the *równianka*, for which she also received a coin.<sup>14</sup> The wreath and the *równianka* were hung in the manor and kept till the following year. The seeds from them were thrown into the soil at the time of the first sowing.

The reapers were invited by the landlords to have a meal at the tables arranged in the courtyard. The dinner was followed by a dancing party, which was opened with the first dance performed by the landlord together with the *postatnica*. Because the feast very often lasted till dawn, *dożynki* were organised on Saturdays. Gloger does not mention clergy blessing the crops, but it is highly probable that such a ritual was present. When Gloger wrote about *dożynki*, the ritual according to which a village administrator would offer best wishes to the landlords on behalf of the whole community was already disappearing (Gloger 1867: 275—285).

It is obvious that making the wreath and handing it over to the landlord was the most important ritual of the festival of harvest. The wreath was shaped like a crown. It was a symbol of the crops and the crowning of the farmer's whole year's work (Gloger 1972: 31). The feast marking the end of the harvest was also organised on the 15th of August—the day of 'Our Lady in Harvest', in Polish called the day of God's Mother of Herbs (The Assumption of the Virgin Mary).

### **Dożynki in the 21st century**

At present, *dożynki* can be celebrated at any level of the administration division.<sup>15</sup> Even if cities or towns happen to host them (they might choose a place for the festivities in the outskirts – as in the case of the Municipal *Dożynki* of Kraków in 2014, celebrated in the part of the city that once was a village, but which was incorporated into Kraków in the 1940s) the festivals will still retain their traditional, rural character. It should be added that *dożynki* might be celebrated in towns because of the administration division—villages are in the administration precincts of towns and their administrators (local governments) are modern equivalents of the landlords from earlier centuries, like the landlords from the above account by Gloger.

*Dożynki* at the higher administrative level are expected to gather more people,<sup>16</sup> but that does not necessarily mean that they are organised with greater splendour or are richer in tradition. *Dożynki* follow more or less the same pattern everywhere, although minor differences can be observed locally. The festival with its programme is always announced, mostly on posters and in the mass media, some time before it takes place. On the day of the festival, in response to a special order, a parade is formed in a certain place (e.g. at the headquarters of the local government). Usually, it is led by an orchestra (e.g. the brass band of a coal mine, depending on the local industry or tradition. After that comes a succession of different groups—standard-bearers (e.g. of fire-brigades, coal-miners, the Polish Peasants' Party, bee-keepers, hunters), officials (representatives of local governments, organisations and institutions, including sporting and cultural ones),<sup>17</sup> delegations from local rural organisations or folk groups with *dożynki* wreaths and bunches of cereals and field flowers, invited guests, riders on horse-back, ladder-like carts

with vegetables and fruits, agricultural machines, fire-engines, other representatives of local crafts, and miscellaneous other people. The most prominent place among the officials is taken by the *dożynki* foreman and forewoman, who are very often the best farmers in the area. They travel in the gigs or carriages. In the villages and small towns, they might ride in the ladder-like cart. The parade marches to the church or a site designed for the solemn field mass, which is very often concelebrated, with a leading priest who holds the position of dean of the district in which *dożynki* are taking place. In the church, the wreaths and sheaves of cereals, the fruits and vegetables, together with other products, such as butter, cheese and honey, are placed on and beside the main and side altars or at the podium on which the field mass is celebrated. Later on, all crops are blessed by the priest, who may be offered some “*dożynki* gifts”.

The people gathered in the church are welcomed by the priest, who in the homily gives thanks to God for “all fruits of labour”, as well as to those who worked to produce all those goods (farmers, gardeners, orchardists, beekeepers, owners of allotments and so on). In 2014, during the *dożynki* mass in the town of Brzeszcze (Province of Małopolska), the priest referred to the commonwealth, the division of labour and the sharing of the products of labour. During *Dożynki* of the Province of Małopolska, the bishop talked about the farmers’ attachment to the motherland. In the same year, during the *dożynki* mass in the village of Bestwina (Province of Śląsk), the dean talked about respect for “the everyday bread” which all may enjoy, thanks to the hard work of farmers, which is not rewarded appropriately, something which is reflected in the economic situation. The liturgy of the mass may be accompanied by a local folk group (Zużalek 2014), a local brass band and a choir (Dożynki to święto 2014). After the mass the parade, joined by clergy<sup>18</sup> and accompanied by a playing orchestra, marches to a site (e.g. a local stadium or recreational area), where the official and cultural/artistic parts of the festival take place.

The venue where the festivity takes place is always decorated properly for the occasion. There are elements associated with straw and crops, like figures and baskets of fruit (Małopolskie dożynki 2013: 6). In 2014 in the village of Krispinów, where *Dożynki* of the



Fig. 1. Dożynki in Brzeszcze, 2014. Photo: Bożena Gierek

Gmina of Liszki took place, straw figures and other *dożynki* decorations could be seen at almost every house on the road leading to the village (Chociaż rolnictwo 2014: B6). At the site of the festival, little ears of cereals pinned together with colourful ribbons are distributed among all guests. The officials take their seats in their appointed place. An organiser, moderator or compere invites the host<sup>19</sup>—usually a president or a mayor of the city, town or village—to open the festival. In 2014 during *Dożynki* of the Gmina of Bestwina, a member of the regional group officially opened the festival, speaking in the local dialect. After the formal opening and welcoming of guests, the “*dożynki* call”, a poem and/or *rota* (a type of oath) might be recited or sung. After that, the host introduces the *dożynki* foreman and forewoman. There are official speeches and the Polish national anthem might be sung. In 2014, during *Dożynki* of the Province of Małopolska, one of the officials read a letter from the President of Poland (*Dożynki to święto* 2014).

While the *dożynki* foreman and forewoman walk towards the host with *dożynki* bread, the traditional *dożynki* songs: *Otwórz gospodarzu szeroko wrota* (Host/Farmer open the gate widely) and *Plon niesiem, plon* (Crop we are carrying, crop) are sung. While the host divides the bread,<sup>20</sup> to which all participants of the festival are then treated, folk groups might sing the song *Dzielmy ten chleb* (Let's divide this bread). In 2014, during *Dożynki* of the Gmina of Osiek (Province of Święty Krzyż), after receiving *dożynki* bread the mayor gave a speech in which he reminded everyone of the meaning of the tradition of *dożynki*:

*“With great gratitude and respect, I receive this dożynki bread. It is a symbol of your hardship, your sweat and the work you have contributed, but also a significant symbol of love for the soil, and moreover, it is the reason for your pride, Dear Farmers! The beautiful Polish tradition requires the sharing of bread. This gesture is an expression of brotherhood, friendship and a willingness to offer support to others. I also want to share this bread with all the inhabitants of our gmina and the guests who came to us”* (Dożynki Gminne 2014 2014).<sup>21</sup>

The next important element of the festival is the presentation of *dożynki* wreaths and “singing and dancing around them”. Very often there is a competition for the most beautiful wreath. Usually, the jury evaluates originality and aesthetics. The most important thing should be the use of natural elements: cereals, flowers, vegetables. But in 2014 in Osiek (Province of Małopolska), there was a competition for the two best *dożynki* wreaths: traditional and modern (*Dożynki to święto* 2014). The wreaths and bunches of cereals are presented to the officials by the delegates of the groups that made them. In those gminas where cereal crops are not produced the usual wreaths are replaced by other crops cultivated there, for example by baskets of vegetables (*Nie wszędzie rolnicy* 2014: B8).

The official part can comprise a ceremony of giving awards (e.g. statuettes, badge of honour for “Meritorious for agriculture” conferred by the Minister for Agriculture and Countryside Development and diplomas for outstanding work—for the best farmer (a man and a woman), the best Circle of Women Farmers (*Małopolskie dożynki* 2013: 6; *Satała* 2013: 6; *Zużalek* 2014).



Fig. 2. Dożynki in Skidzin, 2009. Photo: Danuta Bielenin

The official part of the festival is followed by cultural events. On a specially decorated stage, folk songs and dances are presented, poems are recited and traditional harvest rituals are performed by folk groups. An interesting phenomenon that might occur is a modern adaptation of an old element. Gloger recorded that in the 19th century a crowd of reapers sang about the landlords and their children, and during *Dożynki* of the Gmina of Czernichów in Przegonia Narodowa farmer's wives composed and sang a song that was a kind of tribute to the village mayor for having laid down a pavement for them to jog on (Dożynki Gminy Czernichów 2014: B6).

There are exhibitions of various kinds (machines and crops, including vegetables and fruits, gardening, ceramics, knitting, painting, bee-keeping products etc.); stands with homemade cakes and traditional food, beverages and handicrafts are located at the site. In small towns and villages, it is common to make some food (e.g. *goulash* and stewed potatoes) on the bonfire at the site. In 2014, the biggest

culinary attraction in Osiek (Province of Małopolska) was the spicy carp soup prepared at the site by professional cooks (Dożynki to święto 2014). Stands with toys, fun-fairs and playgrounds for children might also be seen. In addition to folk concerts performances by famous pop stars and cabaret acts are becoming a part of the artistic programme of *dożynki*. Dancing parties are held late into the night. Various skills, such as a fire rescue, may be demonstrated during the festival and there are also firework displays.

Very often *dożynki* are an occasion to celebrate an anniversary, e.g.: 750 years of the village (Hołuj 2014: B7); 15 years of the Association of Women (Wspólne obchody dożynek i jubileuszu 2014: B6); 130 years of the local Agricultural Circle, 30 years of the local folk group.

There are also other new events during *dożynki*, like a competition for the biggest korpziel<sup>22</sup> and an exhibition entitled "From a seed to a korpziel" showing how the korpziel is grown (Dorośli zachęceni 2014: B7). Traditional *dożynki* are more often linked with or even replaced by another festival such as the "fruittaking" (*owocobranie*) festival or fairs dedicated to traditional local produce (Sadownicy i gospodynie 2013: 5). Local produce was always available during *dożynki*, but in this case we have separate events with their own names, like the Fair of Traditional and Regional Food, the Cistercian Fair with fruittaking (Jarmark cysterski 2013: 5), the Apple and Pear Festival with a competition for the best apple cake (Jabłkowe smakołyki 2014: B7), the Dried Plum Festival (Marcinkowski 2014: A6), the Days of Cabbage with a competition for the Cabbage Man and Woman of the Year (Uchto 2014: B8). But there are also places, where the old-style festival of *dożynki* has been revived, as in the village of Kryspinów, where in 2014, after a gap of 20 years, *dożynki* were organised once again (Chociaż rolnictwo 2014: B6).

## Conclusions

As we can see, *dożynki* are celebrated throughout Poland at the same time of year, i.e. after harvesting, as they were celebrated centuries ago, and retain, more or less, the same pattern and elements as recorded in the oldest Polish folklore materials.<sup>23</sup> It would be impossible today to start marching from the field with crops to call on the *dożynki* host, as there are now many different fields and many farmer-owners (unlike

the old days of a single landlord or land owner), even in the smallest village, where farmers also finish harvesting at different times. Of course, it could be done symbolically by choosing one field and one time after everybody has finished harvesting. In Gloger's description the singing crowd was led to the manor by the fastest female reapers, today the parade is led to the *dożynki* host, a chief official from the local government, by the best female and male farmers. The symbolism of the crops given by them to the host with their good wishes is still the same. The receiving of all kinds of rewards by the best farmers today can be seen as an equivalent of the coins received by the *postatnica* and *postacianka*. It is remarkable that the old *dożynki* song (*Plon niesiem, plon*) has survived right up to the present day. Some stage performances mimic aspects of harvest ritual, such as the ritual of pouring water over the girl leading the procession at the gate to the manor's courtyard. The difference is our belief that the latter example, unlike the first, was considered to be a magical act, although with elements of fun, while the first are only components of an artistic programme performed on the stage. However, it should be pointed out that the apparent lack of magical rituals during the modern festival of *dożynki* does not mean that farmers do not perform them individually in their homesteads. We can assume that the blessing of crops by clergy, as we know it today, although not mentioned by Gloger, also took place at the time he was describing the festival. Feasting, with the consumption of food and dancing, is an important element of the festival today as it was in earlier times.

It should be added that this tradition is unbroken at least from the 16th century if we consider Kochanowski's source as referring to *dożynki*. Certainly, the festival has been and still is influenced by the changes in epochs and ideologies, but this is inevitable, hence, for instance, concerts of pop stars that are there to "add splendour" to the feast. At least, this is how one might interpret it while reading the many announcements about *dożynki*, in which this information is exposed. Very often it looks as if those concerts are more important than the *dożynki* festival itself. The various exhibitions of agricultural, or in a wider sense, rural items, including those connected with horticulture, apiary and so on, are a very important element of present-day *dożynki*. These exhibitions show contemporary items connected with crops, implements and machinery, together with old

ones from various centuries. The latter, in particular, belong to the rural heritage and might be perceived as the embodiment of the continuity of the old tradition. An excellent example of the influence of ideology on the festival are the *dożynki* (without the participation of the Church<sup>24</sup>) used for communist propaganda and which were included in the ritualisation of political behaviours (Gierek 2014). Nowadays also *dożynki* can be used for propagating various ideologies, not necessarily political. Like any kind of mass gathering, they provide a forum for the expression of views on different current topics. For example, during *Dożynki* of the Province of Małopolska in 2014 the organisers announced that the festival was to popularise knowledge about environment protection and to form a pro-ecological attitude (*Dożynki to święto* 2014).

The programme and decorative aspects of the festival of *dożynki* depend on the people who are involved in its organisation. *Dożynki* organised on a bigger scale (like the Presidential *Dożynki* or all-Poland *dożynki* on Jasna Góra) might get better publicity in the nationwide mass media, but very often it is those smaller, local, Catholic communities that feel more motivated and engaged in it, and their festival is more traditional with less modern elements and artefacts.

I would like to stress once again that, despite all the changes in the present festival of *dożynki*, which is now celebrated also in towns and cities, it still retains its rural character. This is demonstrated not only by the old tradition with the crops themselves but also by the fact that these crops have been produced by the people who present them, applying the techniques and technologies shown at the festival. They might be marching in a parade in the city, but they are real farmers, producers, and just because the venue for the festival is different, it does not mean that its character is also different. The fact that the all-Poland *dożynki* are celebrated in the city of Częstochowa does not mean that they have an urban character. Farmers from all parts of the country come to Częstochowa to give thanks for their crops because the biggest site of the Marian cult, Jasna Góra, is located there. Of course, it may happen that in some cities the festival does not have anything or little to do with traditional *dożynki*, but these are exceptions. It is obvious that the external elements had to change, as the times have changed, but the core of the festival is still

the same. Despite all the changes in present-day Poland that have influenced agriculture<sup>25</sup>, in many ways very negatively, it does not look as if the festival of *dożynki* is going to die in the near future.

### Notes

1. The noun *dożynki* (pl.) comes from the verb *dożynać*—‘to reap up’ with a sickle—in this case, wheat and rye (winter cereals) (Gloger 1867: 286). As the final result of this action, it means ‘to finish harvest.’ On the term *dożynki*, its equivalents and the earliest folklore materials about the festival I write extensively in my article (Gierek 2014).

2. In past times, the *podstoli* was an administrator at the court. He was the assistant of the *stolnik* (the noun derives from *stół* ‘table’), who supervised the preparation and serving of the meal on the festive table. From the 14th—16th centuries he held the post of an honourable land administrator.

3. For more on these two literature sources see (Gierek 2014: 175—176).

4. A multi-section nationwide daily newspaper with its headquarters in Warsaw and with local editions; published since 1989 as a result of the Polish Round Table Agreement between the communist government and the Solidarity movement; circulation approx. 190 000.

5. By the term “province” I mean the Polish administration unit of the highest level called *województwo* (pl. *województwa*). A *województwo* consists of several *powiats* (pl. *powiaty*, sing. *powiat*) while a *powiat* is made up of a number of *gminy* (pl. *gminy*, sing. *gmina*). A *gmina* may contain a few towns and/or villages. The term “region” is used in Poland usually when referring to a geographical or historical part of the country.

6. A regional (Małopolska) daily newspaper, published since 1949. Between 1975–1980 it was known as *Gazeta Południowa* (Southern Gazette); circulation approx. 25 000.

7. For the first time, they were organised by President Ignacy Mościcki in 1927. Before they ceased with the outbreak of World War II, they took place in 1928, 1930 and 1933. They were restored by President Aleksander Kwaśniewski in 2000. In 2006–2008, they had only a regional character. Their presidential character was restored by President Lech Kaczyński in 2009. At present, they are celebrated for two days (e.g. 12—13.09.2015). As the presidential *dożynki*, they have a national dimension. Representatives of all the Polish provinces attend, bringing their wreaths and produce (Dobrzyńska 2013: 7).

8. The title of the article indicates its content (*Dożynki Are as Always, but There Are Less and Less Farmers*). The problem of a diminution in the number of cultivated fields and its effect on *dożynki* is also tackled in the articles: *Chociaż rolnictwo w gminie zanika, dożynkowa tradycja przetrwała* (Although Agriculture in Gmina Vanishes, Tradition of *dożynki* Has Survived) (2014: B6) and *Ziarno*

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*ładne i... tanie* (Grain is good and... cheap) (Gąciarz 2014: B8). The article *Żniwa obfite, ale trudne* (The harvest is abundant but difficult) (Ciryt 2014: B6) deals with other problems affecting farmers.

9. A regional (Małopolska) daily newspaper, published since 1945; circulation approx. 55 000.

10. A national daily (except Sundays) newspaper with its headquarters in Warsaw, first issued under this title in 1920; circulation approx. 94 000.

11. A nationwide Roman Catholic weekly newspaper with its headquarters in Kraków. Published since 1945, it covers social and political issues; circulation approx. 36 000.

12. Called *the Feast of Crops of Jasna Góra*. It has been organised since 1982 on the first Sunday of September. In 1989, the Polish Government stopped organising the national secular *dożynki* and took part in the feast on Jasna Góra instead. It is estimated that 100 000 people gather for this festival every year.

13. In other parts of Poland, she might be called *przodownica* ('leader'), *postawnica* (from the noun *postawa* 'posture') or *postadnica*.

14. Adam Fischer (1934: 194) noted that in the regions of Wielkopolska and Mazowsze instead of wreaths people brought landlords bunches of crops which they called *pęпки* (sing. *pępek*). In the districts of Sandomierz, Radom and Lublin the *postadnica* was called *sternica*. The noun *sternica* probably comes from the verb *sterować* ('to steer').

15. Described earlier.

16. For example, in 2013 *Dożynki* of the Province of Małopolska gathered approx. 2000 people (Satała 2013: 6).

17. In 2015 during *Dożynki* of the Town of Ustroń, the officials did not march in the parade; they sat in the bleachers at the end of the parade's route, admiring the representatives of various professions marching in the parade.

18. If the mass is held in an open space, the clergy joins the parade from the beginning.

19. Sometimes there can be more than one host. In this case, each of them receives *dożynki* bread.

20. During *Dożynki* of the Gmina of Liszki celebrated in the village of Kryspinów the bread was divided by the foreman and forewoman (Gąciarz 2014: B8).

21. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations are by the author of this article.

22. This is a local name for rutabaga, which is generally known as *brukiew*.

23. See Gloger's description (Gloger 1867).

24. Although they were kept locally, especially in villages.

25. The share of agriculture, along with forestry and fishing, in the gross domestic product of Poland in 2013 was 2,9% (Rocznik statystyczny 2014: 706).

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## **Village *Kurban* as the Constructing of Local Identity and the Ritual Process in Post-Socialist Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia**

**Abstract.** The paper deals with the specific use of collective rituals focused on the blood sacrifice among Orthodox Christians in the Balkans, known mostly as *kurban*. In studying a variety of *kurbans*, the analytical focus is on the collective feasts, which celebrates the small village community as a 'homeland', but also as a ritual community living under the protection of a patron saint. This paper pays particular attention to examples of the collective *kurban* in abandoned villages. *Kurban* is therefore understood as a ritual that helps produce and/or re-produce a group identity within a broader national framework, and also as a means of social cohesion for kinship-based and territory-based groups, beyond confessional attachment. In a selection of cases, the paper demonstrates how through a blood sacrifice, shared around a common table, as well as by the symbolic use of the saint-patron, the cohesion between the former members of a now deserted village is recreated. By concentrating on the celebrations of village communities that have been completely depopulated by the rural exodus, mainly due to socialist urbanization and industrialization, this article shows how every year, the mobilization of the symbolic capital of the community allows for the formation of its "real" or "virtual" boundaries.

**Keywords:** Balkans, cohesion, collective ritual, *Kurban*, Orthodox.

### **Introduction**

Over the last twenty-five years, ethnology in Southeast Europe has become a discipline focused upon traditional beliefs, rituals, and folklore, and has been interested in the century-long traditions of its own people. In recent times, this study has faced the challenges both of new social processes and cultural phenomena, and of intensive changes in its scientific priorities. Even though rituals are supposed to be among the main topics of ethnologic investigation, after two decades of rigorous research in different regions of Southeast

Europe, the ethnology of post-socialism still pays insufficient attention to the analysis of rituals within the region (Creed 2002: 57). Authors investigating the process of transition from socialism to democracy have studied in detail the shift from a planned to a market economy, the agricultural sector and the “revival of tradition” during a period of economic crisis, but they have shown less concern for the peculiarities of ritual practice during the last two decades of the 20th century. In this context, my research demonstrates how, using the contemporary ritual process (according to Victor Turner’s model), the village is constructing community cohesion and a “virtual” boundary.

In the Balkans, there is an important group of rituals associated with a blood sacrifice. These rituals express a certain social function, which even today serves to maintain identity within different social groups in the village (Assmann 1997: 143). Traditionally performed by different ethnic and confessional communities (both Orthodox Christians and Muslims), the ritual of blood sacrifice is well known among all Balkan populations (Albanians, Bulgarians, Greeks, Macedonians, Turks, Serbs, Gypsies) under the name of *kurban*.<sup>1</sup> The *kurban* is performed on different social levels: as an individual sacrificial offering and as a collective<sup>2</sup> sacrifice for a kinship-based or territory-based community. My analysis is focused on the social aspects of this village ritual of a sacrificial offering (*kurban*) as a feast, supporting its connection to the Orthodox Christian community and to its patron saint, but also as a ritual reproducing community identity and cohesion. This phenomenon is especially interesting in the post-socialist village, where some parts of the ritual process have been revived, while others have faded away. Even though the *kurban* is a basic ritual in the Balkan Muslim communities (Blagoev 2004), this research is limited to its social functions among the Orthodox Christian communities in both the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Bulgaria.

I observed this ritual in person during my fieldwork in the eastern regions of the Republic of Macedonia<sup>3</sup> during the autumn of 2001, as well as in the western part of the Republic of Bulgaria in the spring of 2003 and 2006.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, my notes have been corroborated by available descriptions and studies from other authors of the festive *kurbans* in the two countries.<sup>5</sup>

The collective *kurban* is inseparable from the *sabor* holiday, the most important feast of the ritual calendar of the village. Known under a variety of names: *sabor*, *sabor slava*, *sluzhba*, *panagjur*, *obrok*, *kurban*, the festive rituals are dedicated to the patron saints of the village, and are most often viewed in ethnology as being uniform, but performing various functions at different social levels within the social structure of the traditional village (Rheubottom 1976). I underline, that despite the sacred pretext, the function of the *sabor* is entirely a secular celebration (Rice 1980: 115). All authors on the subject point out that the South-Slavs' collective sacrifice rituals correspond to specific type of social community in the Balkan village.<sup>6</sup> Ethnographic research on this ritual process has emphasized the archaic origin of the village community feasts, as well as their integrative functions and significance as group markers for the different levels in the social structure.<sup>7</sup> Note that the term "village ritual" may refer to the ritual actions performed by all members of the village community (in a formal aspect), as well as to the ritual actions on behalf of the village as a whole unite (in its functional aspect) (Bandić 1978: 112, 117).

### The *kurban*

The village *kurbans*, in the above mentioned areas of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia, are examples of the integrative function of rituals: they exemplify a way of fostering community consciousness and cohesion through intense social communication. We are faced with a cultural phenomenon common to the Abrahamic religions<sup>8</sup> and widely spread throughout the Eastern Mediterranean region. In the 19th century, the dioceses of Eastern Orthodox churches in the geographical region of Macedonia<sup>9</sup> attempted to replace village *kurbans* with bloodless rituals of Christian communion, unambiguously related to the ritual template of the *Eucharist*. The rationale behind this action was the church's rejection of the remnants of paganism. It was successful in some regions (Kitevski 2002: 27), but as a whole the practice of *kurbans* at the Orthodox Christian village feast is "alive" even today. Collective *kurbans* were also the most important, and necessary element of many annual village feasts (*sabors*) in Bulgaria during the 20th century. In both countries during the 1990s—the decade of post-communist transition and deep

social and economic change—there was a revival of the *kurban* ritual practice in the village, as well as in some towns.<sup>10</sup>

The Macedonian villages studied in 2001 presented a picture of relative stability in the naming of the feast: the denominations of *sobor* / *sabor* and village *kurban* were used for various feasts and religious practices devoted to the patron saint of the local church, or a local monastery. Such religious feasts contain one or both of the following elements: a common table for the relatives in the house; and a shared *kurban* “for success, well-being and health” (*za zdravje, kŭsmet i bereket*), held in the churchyard for all who belong to the village or parochial community.<sup>11</sup> These common tables are different from those for the feast of the patron saint held in individual homes, the *kukna slava*, as noted by British anthropologist D.B. Rheubottom.<sup>12</sup>

The denomination *slava* is a relatively recent name for this local tradition: according to respondents, it was imposed by the Serbian Orthodox Church. Up to the mid-20th century, the most used names were *sluzhba* and *kurban*; all village religious feasts related to the patron saint of the local church, a monastery, or to a specially chosen patron saint of the village, were called *panagyur* or *sobor*. Similar names can be found in the regions of Southeast Serbia and Western Bulgaria.<sup>13</sup> Our respondents in Eastern Macedonia even use the term *sobor* today to denote every kind of village *kurban* held in the spring or summer and performed at the *obrochishte*—the village-wide sacred places marked with stone crosses.

Up until the mid-20th century, the ritual cycle of the village *kurbans* began on St. George’s Day,<sup>14</sup> when each household was supposed to offer a male lamb to the saint. The celebration of Saint George’s Day was the first community ritual, “opening” the seasonal period of the village *kurbans*, after the home feast (*slava*- or *sluzhba*-type) period.<sup>15</sup> *Kurbans* were performed simultaneously in the house and in the village — at the church (if there was one), at the monastery or at the village fountain in the center of the village. In some villages<sup>16</sup> all of the lambs for St. George’s *kurban* were brought together for consecration by the priest: upon which the sacrifice was performed at home, every lamb was roasted on a spit (*na rozhŭn*) and brought back to the place where the village celebration was to be

held, near a cross or around a “Saint George’s” sacred tree. Each extended family (*rod*) had its own ritual stone located near the cross and its members took their places on (or around) it, according to the family-kin principle; the same system of ranking and the same type of ritual was also observed in the villages from the Bulgarian-Serbian border regions (Hristov 2003: 249—268). After World War II, the socialist government of the Republic of Macedonia tried to ban these common village gatherings as a “religious anachronism,” so every household started offering a lamb to St. George at home, a practice which has continued to the present day.

On St. George’s feast day, a common table was arranged at the sacred stone cross (*obrochishte*) with a ritually prepared *kurban*. People shared the meal of the *kurban*, as well as taking part in the ritual drinking and the eating of ritual bread, prepared by every housewife. Although the common village table was organized according to lineages, men and women sat separately, even when both genders took part in the consumption of alcohol (*rakiya* and wine).<sup>17</sup> This village *kurban* model, best delineated in the celebration of St. George’s Day, applied to other village religious feasts that took place during the summer months. This principle was maintained until the 1960s, at which time industrialization and rural exodus led to depopulation in many mountain villages.

During the first half of the 20th century, *kurbans* also took place on the days devoted to St. Elijah the Prophet and the Holy Mother of God, in the villages included in the study in the Republic of Macedonia. Traditionally, St. Elijah’s Day is dedicated to the health of the cattle, so the sacrificial *kurban* meal on that day was “an animal with a big hoof”<sup>18</sup> (a bull calf or an ox.—*P.H.*); however, within the last decades of the 20th century, the traditional calf or ox was replaced by several lambs.<sup>19</sup> Most often the offering was done on the night before the feast at the cult place on the village’s lands, marked by a sacred tree or trees, which no one dared to cut. On the actual feast day, a common table for everyone in the village was laid; according to the respondents only people from the village were present there. The *kurban* (meat boiled with potatoes and beans) was distributed among the participants and some of it was taken to the sick and to old people at home, so that they could “taste it for health” (“*kusnat za zdravie*”).<sup>20</sup>

The collective village *kurbans* on St. Elijah's Day are known throughout Macedonia and in many places they are still practiced in the traditional manner, by sacrificing an ox.<sup>21</sup> Though abandoned after disasters in the village (including epidemics among people and cattle, as well as devastating hailstorms), the tradition of the kurban has been resumed with even greater zeal (for Yablanitsa, Struga region, see Filipović 1939: 111). In the last decade of the 20th century, these village *kurbans* have become an integral part of the celebration of St. Elijah's Day (*Ilinden*) as a national holiday of the Republic of Macedonia (related to the celebration of the *Ilinden* Uprising in 1903). The "use" of traditional feasts in the process of construction and consolidation of national identity has more or less been practiced in all East European countries, and was well attested during Socialist times when the state made efforts to homogenize and nationalize folk culture. As Gerald Creed notes, "the contemporary political potential of ritual is greatly influenced by former socialist practice". In this manner "the socialist emphasis on folklore enhanced the affiliation between ritual and national identity" (Creed 2002: 69—70). My field observations show that in the years of post-socialism, the *kurbans* on St. Elijah's Day are already an integral part of the national identification strategies for the population and part of the political vision in the Republic of Macedonia.

In the villages from the eastern regions of Macedonia, a big collective *kurban* was held also during the traditional celebration of the Assumption of the Holy Mother of God (15/28 August).<sup>22</sup> The common village *kurbans* on Assumption Day, as well as the cult to the Virgin, are especially popular among the Orthodox peoples in many parts of the Balkans, not only in Macedonia. In the villages of the Sandanski district (Southwestern Bulgaria), until the rural exodus in the 1960s, Assumption Day was the only day, apart from the patron saint's day when all village inhabitants organized a shared meal, for which every household brought its ritual food: the *kurban* (lamb soup) and bread. Adherence to the rule of the patrilineal base of the *kurban* and to the way seating was allocated at the village table was observed in this part of Bulgaria too: each *tayfa* (the local name for a patrilineal kin group or *rod*) took its place at its "own" sacred tree near the chapel or the cross devoted to the Virgin. The same rule governing seating arrangements at table is observed

to this day in these villages, at shared meals held to commemorate the dead (*zadushnitsa*).<sup>23</sup>

The patrilineal principle is also noted in the organization of shared village *kurbans* in Northeastern Greece: every kinship group has its own place (in some cases these are stone tables) in the church yard and its members sit there in accordance with their status and age (Georgoudi 1979: 286). Thus, the ritual practice and vocabulary relative to the *kurban* covers a broad area of the Balkans.<sup>24</sup> In Bulgaria and Macedonia, the feast honors the patron saint of the village church and is accompanied by a collective *kurban* and a shared meal for all of the villagers. Every household contributes (money, provisions, wheat) to the shared table; there is no fixed amount — everybody gives “as much as he wants to” (“*koy kolko miluye*”). These contributions are thought to be given for “the health and prosperity” of the whole village and its inhabitants. A specially elected group of men from the village (“*carkoven otbor*”) collects the gifts and prepares the *kurban*. They also call the priest who has to consecrate (“*da otpee*”) the sacrificial lamb, a service for which he is paid.<sup>25</sup> In many villages the representatives of the official church hierarchy have no decisive presence or participation in the common village feasts, except in the bigger monastery *kurbans*.

According to records from the end of the 19th century, in the past the priest not only consecrated the sacrificial animal, but also killed it with his own hands in order to keep its skin intact, since this traditionally belonged to him (Kitevski 2002: 26). However, in the last decade of the 20th century, in a number of villages in Eastern Macedonia (Piperovo and Ljuboten, Shtip region), the priest has not been invited even for the shrine feast. In some cases, the functions of the priest are performed by a man (*domakin* of the village feast) who is chosen by the organizers and who consecrates the sacrificial lambs. Before the sacrifice, he makes the sign of the cross with the knife over the lamb’s chest, because “*Orthodox people are going to eat it*” (Piperovo, Shtip region). In the village of Laskarevo (Sandanski region, Bulgaria) the sacrificial ram is killed in the early morning of Ascension Day in such a way that the blood spills on the eastern part of the shrine’s foundations (*temeli*) during the moment of sunrise. Everyone, villager or guest, gets a share of the festive *kurban* and

a loaf of the ritual bread. The shared consumption of ritual food, including the sacrifice, carries the meaning of communion and makes for the cohesion of the village community.

To summarize, the community feasts characteristic of the areas under study — and observed mainly at the village level—fall into two categories: the *sabor* and the *kurban*. The former illustrates the social function of the village as a birth place of local people, whose active life has drawn them elsewhere: this is why visits by emigrants, or relatives (and friends) from other places, is vitally important for the ritual. By participating every year in such celebrations, the villagers revitalize bonds with their native place and join in the symbolic wealth of their local community. In this sense, “the Macedonian *sabor* is a celebration in which the focus of interest is the village as a unit of social structure” (Rice 1980: 113). The latter, the village *kurban*, symbolizes local community as united through faith. Today, however, these two categories often intermingle: we find the feasts of monasteries (usually called *slava*, *sluzhba*) transformed into region-wide shared feasts with *kurbans*.

### Feast in the deserted village

The function of collective *kurbans* as rituals for sustaining the identity of the local community is perhaps most clear-cut in the so called *kurban in a dead village* (“*kurban na pustelo selo*”). The term describes the practice of giving a *kurban* on the patron saint’s day in a village, even if it is deserted and its church is either in ruins or is no longer functioning.

Starting at the end of the 20th century, this cultural phenomenon is quite recent, so it deserves special attention. I have encountered such cases during my fieldwork in both the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Bulgaria: for instance, natives from the village of Preseka (Kochani region), who left for Karaorman (Shtip region) during the 1960s, regularly return, even today, to their old village for the *kurban* given at the church on Holy Savior Day (*Spasovden*).<sup>26</sup> In the village of Badilen (Maleshevo district), people who have migrated to the region of Strumica return to their “old fireplaces” (“*stari ognishta*”) to offer a *kurban* to the Holy Mother of God. Nobody has lived in the village of Papavnitsa for more than 20 years, but every

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year on St. Constantine's Day (the former patronal feast day), the natives of the ghost village who have been scattered throughout different parts of the Republic of Macedonia gather for the saint's *kurban*.<sup>27</sup> The villagers of Darzhanovo (district of Sandanski in Bulgaria) who migrated in the late 1950s, after their cattle were taken away by force due to collectivization, regularly return to their native village for the *kurban* on Assumption Day. During the rest of the year these villages are deserted.

Scattered throughout (or even outside) the country, all those born in the village who have been forced or chose to emigrate and build their lives elsewhere, return once a year to perform the ritual of *kurban* and share a common meal. In this way, they reassert the village's existence in time: "Though we have no village, we make the *kurban* as if the village were there."<sup>28</sup> In the past, when the village was "alive", every family offered a *kurban* and received relatives and friends from other places in their houses. The migrants that are natives of the deserted villages turn the collective *kurban* into a community marker, a ritual that helps to restore the symbolic bonds with "their" patron saint, while at the same time strengthening the relationship among themselves, and thus establishing the symbolic "boundaries" of the community. Thus, the common village *kurban* may be viewed as a means for promoting and reasserting the ideology of the place of origin.

The village of Popovo, district of Pernik (Bulgaria), offers another excellent example of this category of rituals. In the 1950s, the village was submerged under the waters of the *Studena* dam. In the era of quickened industrialization in Socialist Bulgaria, the villagers were forcibly turned into metallurgists working in the city<sup>29</sup> (Pernik), and some of them were scattered all over the country. All the land surrounding the village was turned into a communist residence; it became a "no entry" zone. After the democratic transition of 1989, the land was returned to its former owners. They come back once every year for the village feast (*sūbor*), on Assumption Day, visiting their destroyed houses and gathering for a traditional collective sacrifice (*kurban*) on the bank of the reservoir. Everyone attending takes a share of the ritual food (*kurban*) to the foundations of his old house on the banks of the dam, where the family eats it together, "like

in the old times”, “to show to everyone that they are still there and this is theirs”<sup>30</sup>. Thus the former villagers restore the connection with their predecessors, their link with the past and with the common memory of the local community, which was turned into a “virtual” community during the socialist era. The personal vow, which is a part of the group ritual relationship with the patron saint of the village, is realized, nevertheless, despite the spatial parameters of the community.

“Giving away” some of the sacrificial food (*kurban*) is an important part of the ritual actions: “If you don’t give away some of the food to three houses, it is not a real *kurban*” (village of Laskarevo, Sandanski region in Bulgaria). Indicative is the example of a former villager from Papavnitsa, who now lives in Switzerland. Since he is not able to be present at the village *kurban* in his native village, he “takes it along” with him and every year makes his own *kurban* in Switzerland, giving away meat to three neighboring households (Botsev 2001: 117).

### Conclusion

Collective ritual sacrifices, known in the Balkans as *kurbans*, can be subject to ethnological analysis using different interpretational models. The *kurban* may be viewed as a “symbol of the gift exchange”, understood as “reciprocity” between this world and the beyond (Popova 2000: 91), and the sacrificial offering as a gift, tax or penalty, paid to God and the saints, or to demons. The sacred places of the sacrificial offerings could be interpreted as an “intermediary bridge”, which allows the individual from traditional society to establish a relationship with the world “beyond” (Leach 1976: 71, 83). It is possible to search for the mythological-ritual roots of sacrificial practice as an ancient tradition in the Balkans (Tsivyan 1989: 119—131). It is important that the common village *kurban* in the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Bulgaria represents a significant part of the ritual basis of collective communal consciousness, upon which local and national identity is built. In this way the ritual practice, conducted in the context of Orthodox Christianity, marks the boundaries (“real” or “virtual”) of the community even today. In any case, the tradition of collective sacrifice, common among all the Orthodox

people in the Balkans, is still alive and reproduces the local identity every year.

### Notes

1. The word *kurban* used in the Balkan languages is derived from Turkish, but its initial origin is in the Old Testament, from the Aramaic *korban* (in the Bible) (Rengstorf 1993: 860; Popova 1995: 145).

2. Sacrifices in the name of and with the participation of the entire community (see Tokarev 1983: 196—197).

3. The villages of Orashac (Kumanovo region), Dolno Gjulgantse (Sveti Nikole district), Ljuboten, Karaorman, Kozjak, Chardaklija (Shtip region), Kuchichino, Krupishte (Kochani district), Piperovo, Vrteshka, Gabrevci, (Radovish district). All materials are kept in the Archives of the Ethnographic Institute with Museum in Sofia, Bulgaria (AEIM № 513-III).

4. The villages of Laskarevo, Ladarevo and Ljubovka (Sandanski region, South-west part of Bulgaria) and Popovo, Kralev Dol and other villages in the region of Pernik (Mid-Western Bulgaria). The fieldwork was conducted together with Prof. Asia Popova from LACITO-CNRS in Paris and Tzvetana Manova from the History Museum in Pernik.

5. For Macedonia, see Nedeljković 1939: 5—9; Palikrusheva 1989: 57—62; Prokopek 1997: 229—244; Kotev 1999: 147—159; Botsev 1999: 76—85; Botsev 2001: 113—119; for Bulgaria cf. the bibliography in Hristov 2004: 53—73.

6. Cf. Pavković 1978: 54—56; Stamenova 1985: 154—158; Palikrusheva 1989: 57—58; Čapo Žmegač 1997: 69—82; Bajraktarović 1998: 37—41; Vlahović 1998: 23—32.

7. Regarding Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia see Obrembski 1977: 2—3; Stamenova 1985: 157; Čapo Žmegač 1997: 75; Bandić 1997: 254; regarding Greece cf. Georgoudi 1979: 287.

8. For Abraham's sacrifice as an ideological background, see Popova 1995: 146—147, who shows the link between the Balkan bloody *kurbans* and the bloodless sacrifices with the biblical ritual template; for the connection with the sacrifice in the Jerusalem Temple, see Katsis 2005: 158—186.

9. After the dissolution of the Archbishopric of Ohrid in 1767, the territory of Macedonia was consecutively under the ecclesiastical domination of the [Greek] Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Bulgarian Exarchate, and, after 1912, the Serbian Orthodox Church.

10. For earlier materials on Berovo and Pehchevo regions during the 1970s, see Palikrusheva 1989: 58—59.

11. Cf. Kotev 1999: 150, 154.

12. "In Skopska Crna Gora, [...] four different types of slava were celebrated. Only one of these, the household slava, could possibly symbolise common descent. The others — the village slava, church slava, and monastery slava — have no association with lineage and the notion of descent." (Rheubottom 1976: 19).
13. Here, I refer to my fieldwork in the areas of Zajechar and Pirot in Eastern Serbia and Godech in mid-Western Bulgaria, conducted in 2001 (see Hristov 2003: 249—268).
14. Hristov AEIM № 513-III. Today, in Bulgaria, St. George's Day is held on May 6 (according to the 'old style' or Julian calendar), even though the other fixed dates are celebrated according to the so-called "New" Julian calendar, synchronized with the Gregorian calendar. In the Republic of Macedonia, the Orthodox Church follows completely the Julian calendar.
15. In the winter period (in its traditional archaic understanding), it occurs between St. Petka's Day (October 14) and St. Athanasius "Zimni" Day (January 31).
16. Vrteshka, Radovish region; Preseka, Kochani region; Virche, Dramche and Kosevica, Delchevo region: data from fieldwork in 2001.
17. "Everyone drinks, in our region both men and women drink..." — respondent Vasil Jovevski, born in 1934 in Stantsi, region of Kriva Palanka (Hristov AEIM № 513-III).
18. Respondents: Vasil and Dobrina Jovevski, born in Stanci, region of Kriva Palanka, but moved to Chardaklija, Shtip region; respondent Lazar Dimov, born in 1939 in Piperovo, Shtip region (Hristov AEIM № 513-III).
19. These lambs must be male, "since St. Elijah has a male name".
20. Village of Gabrevci, Radovish region.
21. See Palikrusheva 1989: 59, for the Maleshevo area; Kotev 1999: 151—153, for the Strumitsa district in the 1990s. In Yablanitsa, Struga district, a kurban in St. Elijah's honor was celebrated during "Goljamata nedelja" in September: see Prokopek 1997: 237; Botsev 1999: 79; a kurban with an ox was held in Strumitsa region: see Kotev 1999: 151—152.
22. In 1977, 250 lambs were sacrificed for the kurban in honor of the Virgin Mary in Berovo for the 6000 people present (cf. Palikrusheva 1989: 59); in 1996, 190 lambs were sacrificed for the more than 15,000 people present, and after lightning struck in the middle of the celebration, in the following year "more than 8000 from Berovo, citizens of the neighboring villages, and visitors from other towns in Macedonia" were present (Kotev 1999: 155—156).
23. According to Evdokiya Hadzhieva, born in 1930 in Laskarevo district of Sandanski: "When the dead relatives come, they look for the person in their own place" (regarding the ritual table at the cemetery on zadushnica).
24. About the territory of contemporary Greece, see also Varvunis 2001: 177—178; about the Bulgarian-Serbian border regions, see Hristov 2003: 249—268.
25. The "fee" was about 50 Deutsche Marks during the 1990s.

26. For the field work evidence, see Hristov AEIM № 513-III.
27. For Papavnica, see Botsev 2001: 115; see Kotev 1999: 153 for Badilen.
28. Recorded during the *kurban* in Papavnica; see Botsev 2001: 115.
29. The metallurgical factory “Vladimir Lenin” was built in 1953 on the plain near Pernik city. The first in Bulgaria, it was proclaimed as “a product of Soviet-Bulgarian friendship”.
30. Respondent: Georgi Lazarov, born in 1934 in Popovo, is now an inhabitant of Pernik.

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## Midwinter Masking Place and Identity in an Ironworks Community

**Abstract.** In the dead of winter on January 13th each year, an evening masking festival takes place in Gimo, a small rural ironwork community situated in the district of Uppland in central Sweden.

No one knows for certain how old this festival, which on the calendar day of St Knut marks the end of Christmas season, is, but one of the main functions of the festivity nowadays is the opportunity for the population of Gimo to reconnect with friends and neighbours. This is done both while preparing for the main event on January 13th and on the evening of that date when everyone reveals what they secretly have been working on for this year's festivity.

The traditional division of labour between the sexes during the preparations (for Swedish urban standards surprisingly) results in an exchange of work occurring; reaffirming ties between men and women, and of family and friendship within the community.

The main inspiration for dressing up is current events, and the choice of masking can be seen as a form of external monitoring, functioning both as individual expressions and statements of the community as a unity, illustrating political views, humour, and fears.

The research examples in this paper come from the fieldwork carried out during the winter seasons of 2012/2013—2014/2015 in three small rural ironwork communities in the district of Uppland in Sweden: Gimo, Österbybruk and Östhammar. The importance of the masking tradition is especially apparent in Gimo, which will be the main focus in this paper.

**Keywords:** carnival, external monitoring, masks, midwinter festivity, St Knut, Sweden.

### Historic background to the Knut festivities

In the dead of winter on January 13th each year, when the temperature hovers around  $-12^{\circ}$  Celsius, an evening carnival takes place in Gimo, and for one evening the community's population of a mere 2700 more than doubles to approximately 6000 people who attend the festival, drawing both locals and crowds from neighbouring communities and cities (DFU documentation).

It is said that Knut, the saint celebrated on January 13th, carries Christmas out, thus marking the end of the Christmas festivities. Before a new period of labour began however, the last remnants of the Christmas food were to be consumed (Liby 2001). No one knows for certain how old this midwinter masking tradition is, but the local oral tradition promoted in Gimo says it was brought to Sweden by Belgian ironsmith tradesmen in the 17th century—a tradition still kept alive by the community today, i.e. by the ironsmith's descendants (KM exhibit). In the historic sources there is however little proof of this, although what is known is the following:

The name of the festivity, *Knutmasso* or *Knutsmäss*, meaning Knut's mass, is celebrated on St Knut's Day (the name day when the name Knut is celebrated in Sweden). It is derived from two royal Danish saints who became martyrs in the early middle ages: the first saint being King Knut IV of Denmark, who according to the legend was murdered in the Saint Albani church in Odense in Denmark in 1086, and who after canonization came to be celebrated on January 19th in the Roman-Catholic tradition (Swahn 2002a).

In Sweden and Finland, however, the celebration originally took place on January 7th and was dedicated not to the King but to the second saint, the King's nephew, Prince Knut Lavard who was murdered in Haraldsted on January 7th in 1131. The date of his death is significant because the murder occurred at the very end of the Christmas Peace. The Christmas Peace began on St. Tomas Day on December 21st or on Christmas Eve and then stretched over 20 to 23 days. In medieval Swedish law, there was a greater penalty for crimes committed during this period, and this murder committed at the very end of the Christmas peace was therefore thought especially heinous (Swahn 2002a; Swahn 2002b).

In the late 17th century, the Christmas holy days were added to by the church, and the calendar day celebrating Knut was then brought forward in the almanac from January 7th to January 13th. This also meant the end of the Christmas Peace now coincided with a significant time of year: In the old Julian calendar used before 1753 in Sweden, the winter half of the year started with the night of October 14th, and January 13th would then correspond with the Nordic midwinter.

By then the cattle would have been kept in the barns for half the winter and the farmers would now know if their cattle feed would last until spring or not, which was of great significance for their household economies (Ordéus 1967; Bringéus 1976; Swahn 2002: 1).

Examples of Knut festivities can be found in more than one third of the 25 districts in Sweden (Halland, Hälsingland, Härjedalen, Gotland, Skåne, Uppland, Värmland, Västergötland and Östergötland), yet they are surprisingly unknown to the general public as they are commonly only found in small communities and not celebrated on a national level. Examples are also found in the neighbouring countries: Norway, Finland including Åland, and Estonia, pointing towards an originally widespread festivity (DFU documentation, Kulmanen 2007, Ekström & Österlund Pöttsch 2007).

It is likely that the Knut tradition is kin to *kringgång* (here in the meaning of youth wandering around the village, collecting contributions to their gatherings and dances), and bear similarities to the youth activities of other days of the year such as Shrove Tuesday, the evening of Lucia on December 13th, and Walpurgis Night among others. However, the secret planning and masking is also closely related to the practical jokes once played around Christmas in numerous parts of Sweden, where a figure of wood or hay could be left in someone's home with a note containing a rude message pinned to it. A *Knut* (a dressed up wooden log or man of hay) could also be left to signal that the household had no Christmas treats to offer, which was perceived as something shameful—yet for our understanding links the *kringgång* with the practical jokes (Ordéus 1967). People could also dress up as Knut men themselves and

*“secretly gather and mask themselves beyond recognition and then as Knut men go visiting in houses and farms at dusk on St Knut's Day <...> the purpose was to sweep out Christmas at the same time, as the interaction between the masked and their hosts was of great importance. Through conversation the masked Knut men's anonymity was to be kept by one part and revealed by the other. In a local society where everyone knew one another and the rules of behavior were set it could be of great significance to be allowed to appear anonymously”* (Liby 2001).

### **The Knut festivities today**

Although the historic origins of the festivity have been lost over time, especially after the transition from a Catholic to a Protestant country in the 16th century when the importance of saints diminished in Sweden, the festivities still continue (Montgomery 2002). One of the main functions of the festivity nowadays is the opportunity for the population of Gimo to reconnect with relatives, friends and neighbours—both while preparing for the festivity and on the evening of January 13th when everyone reveals what they secretly have been working on.

In the post-war years, the festival has changed fundamentally, from a mumming tradition where participants dressed up to go knocking on neighbours doors and where spirits were served, to a vivid street festival including carnival floats of various sizes, street vendors, and a midnight disco including a competitive element where the best masked groups are announced and awarded.

Simultaneously, the tradition of children knocking on doors has been more or less replaced by an activity planned by adults for the younger children (in the ages 2 to around 9), and held in the community square earlier in the day; “the children’s Knut” with ring dances around the town square Christmas tree, and award ceremony for the best costumes, and candy being given to all the participating children.

The technique of mask construction has also changed, and the traditional textile and papier-mâché built masks are now competing with modern material and electric tools involving foam rubber, modern felt textiles and hot glue guns. Mass-produced masks can of course also be bought from costume shops (DFU documentation).

### **Preparing for Carnival: female and male spheres**

In preparation for the carnival, groups of people get together to collaborate. There are different types of group constellations depending on age, gender, family and friend ties, for instance. Following two of these groups, or *gangs* (the term they themselves use), a surprisingly traditional division of labour between the sexes could be observed

(i.e. compared to the division of labour found in cities): people were more specialised but also rely on the other to help out if needed, resulting in an exchange of work, reaffirming ties between men and women, and of family and friendship within the community (DFU documentation).

The first gang I was invited to follow from December 2012 to January 2013 was a group of eight married or divorced women, who either worked together or were related to each other. Their work began with a first meeting where a theme was more or less democratically decided upon, which was then followed by subsequent gatherings to order materials, sew the costumes, and construct a small carnival



*Fig. 1. The female gang preparing for St Knut in Gimo, 2013. Photo: Marlene Hugoson. Copyright: Institute of Language and Folklore*

float. The female activity was well organised and took place in the warmth of someone's home and garage. The women took turns inviting the rest of the *gang* and to serve *fika* (i.e. to drink coffee or tea, often accompanied with pastries or sandwiches). The women drank alcohol on the first meeting while planning the event and on the night of the festivity itself, but not while working on the costumes and the float (Fig. 1). They were talkative, and used traditionally feminine materials such as textiles, and not very many machines or tools besides the screw driver, hammer, sewing machine and stereo for the music which was to be part of their act. Their theme for 2013 was poodles as one of the main expressions in politics in 2012 had been "att göra en pudel", 'to make a poodle,' i.e. to apologise. The music they chose to play on the carnival float was "Who let the dogs out" performed by the Baha Men, to which the *gang* sang along. The choice of dressing up as poodles also meant that the members of the group could act like dogs: barking and jumping up at people and in one instance walking up to a local Police officer and humping his leg—something the woman behind the poodle mask was unlikely to have done and got away with at any other time, but as this was the night of the carnival the ordinary rules and boundaries of acceptable social behaviour were off (DFU documentation 2012/2013).

The activity in the male *gang* was very different. I had the privilege of documenting a group of six married fathers and their children plus a few friends of the children (both boys and girls of different ages) during their preparations in January 2015. Their large *gang* worked in an industrial building on the outskirts of Gimo. It was cold, dirty and untidy. For the first gathering I attended, wooden planks with sharp nails lay on the floor, spiky side up. At another meeting two mice lay dead on the floor. However, the atmosphere was friendly and unfussy. The men did not talk much, and their work involved traditionally masculine materials such as wood, metal and stone, and they used a lot of tools (saws, screwdrivers, circular saws, blowtorch, and welder) and slightly more advanced technology than the women, including lights and a large stereo system which was mounted on their carnival float (Fig. 2). As younger men, they used to drink quite heavily at these meetings, but as married fathers with children present the gatherings had turned into sober affairs, although a few of the fathers who had older children did have a drink on the



Fig. 2. The male gang preparing for *St Knut* in Gimo, 2015.  
Photo: Marlene Hugoson. Copyright: Institute of Language and Folklore

evening of the 13th, i.e. the ones that were not the designated drivers for the evening. The *gang's* chosen theme in 2015 was cannibals, and although their work appeared more unstructured compared to the women's work, it resulted in a great and attention-grabbing carnival float, filled with cannibals cooking (pretend) human bodies over an open fire and in a huge metal pot (DFU documentation 2015).

### Midwinter masking

The main inspiration for dressing up is current events. For children, this is what is relevant in their world, mainly innocent and entertaining themes from television, music and movies (Disney, DreamWorks, Star Wars, or the televised Advent Calendar broadcasted just before

Christmas), but also sports and fairy tales including animals and animated objects, and of course, the seasonal inspiration of wintertime and the Christmas period that is coming to an end.

Television, music and movies are sources of inspiration for the adults as well (both in the shape of television adverts and popular movies such as *Pirates of the Caribbean* or *Bat Man*), but also the funny, scary or erotic – as there was some flirting going on both in the street and later at the midnight disco, another example of how masks and costumes allow for more daring behaviour (KM. DFU documentation).

### **Politics in Masking**

Among the masks in the carnival there were also masks that diverge from the purely entertaining ones, masks inspired by politics. The first set of examples has to do with the portrayal of politicians who have misbehaved on a local or national level:

In Österbybruk in 2014, a cage containing “the ghost of the council” was paraded around the community square to criticise one of their local politicians who had misbehaved (DFU documentation 2014).

In a show of solidarity, another group of men in Gimo dressed up as Sami people in 2015, stating: “We are Swedes too”. This was in response to a comment made by Björn Söder, party secretary for the Swedish Nationalist Party, saying the Sami were not Swedes, a comment many found offensive (DFU documentation 2015).

This ridiculing of people in power serves as a social instrument of conduct, illustrating limitations to what is seen as acceptable behaviour. It is also a display of democracy, as the targeted politicians can do nothing to stop this type of comedic criticism.

### **Defusing international conflicts**

The second set of examples is of representations involving situations of international conflict. At face level, the appearance of a “Russian submarine crew”, led by President Putin himself (in the form of a younger man wearing a papier-mâché head), and with a (wooden and papier-mâché constructed) submarine in tow (Fig. 3—4) is a humorous response to the increased political tension around the Baltic



*Fig. 3. What is the appearance of a "Russian submarine crew" in the small community of Gimo in 2015 an expression of? Photo: Marlene Hugoson. Copyright: Institute of Language and Folklore*



*Fig. 4. Stockholm archipelago, see you again, and "Still at large". Gimo, 2015. Photo: Marlene Hugoson. Copyright: Institute of Language and Folklore*

Sea, and the media reported incidents involving Russian submarines in the Swedish archipelago, but on a deeper level, you may find something more (DFU documentation 2015).

The background to understanding why a representation of a Russian submarine and also a Russian tank appears in this context is part current events, part historic. Talking to people who live along the Swedish coastline facing the Baltic Sea, you sometimes meet fear of a new Russian attack, even though more than three hundred years has passed since Russian imperial forces devastated the countryside and the iron works along the coast line of the district of Uppland, and more than two hundred years has passed since the Finnish war of 1808—1809 when troops of the Russian Empire were last seen on Swedish ground, and almost a hundred years has passed since the First World War when fear of the Communist revolution spread (SOFI documentation. Persson 2002. Karlsson 2002).

For decades, however, there have been reports of foreign submarines in Swedish waters including the archipelago surrounding the capitol of Stockholm, and when the Russian submarine S-363 (better known as U 137 in Sweden) ran around at Torhamnaskär in the archipelago outside Karlskrona in October 1981, it strengthened the Swedish suspicions and caused a diplomatic frenzy (Hellberg & Jörle 1984).

Then in 2014 and 2015, media coverage began to intensify once again with reports of Russian submarines in and near Swedish waters, Russian military planes in and close to Swedish airspace, and of Russian military ships disturbing both a Finnish research vessel carrying Finnish and Swedish scientists and the NordBalt operation laying a submarine power cable to increase trading between the Nordic and Baltic energy markets.

The Swedish evening newspapers *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen* and the daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* fed into the old fears of a Russian attack and initiated a media frenzy. This in turn opened the door to a debate on Swedish membership in NATO, something Swedes have traditionally been against as it goes against the idea of Swedish neutrality and freedom of alliance. It also opened a discussion on the Swedish Defence budget. The daily newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* gave somewhat more nuanced reports, and together with *Dagens*

*Nyheter* the paper dug more deeply into the roots of the sudden political tension, explaining the increased military activity as a Russian response to the intensified Swedish and Finnish cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization NATO (Appendix: sample of daily newspapers).

In Gimo, the younger generation gives a comedic response to the media coverage; perhaps they do not perceive an attack as a real threat, but feel that the world is smaller now and that we are all neighbours, or perhaps they do get apprehensive and even scared, but use humour to defuse the tension surrounding the issue by portraying that which they fear. Again it can also be interpreted as ridicule used as a social instrument of conduct, in this case condemning the trespassing on Swedish borders (DFU documentation 2015).

A previous example of a mask of this ‘defusing’ type can be found in the Knut themed museum in Gimo, where a traditional papier-mâché mask of Usama bin Laden is on display. It was made as a response to 9/11 in 2001 when al-Qaeda attacked the United States and the hunt for Usama bin Ladin ensued (KM exhibit). Seen in the light of world events following the Arab Spring and the rise of ISIS after 2010, however, the mere existence of such a mask in a public exhibit suddenly felt potentially dangerous for the museum and its staff, but then again it is a little-known museum dedicated to a little-known festivity in a little-known community.

### **Stereotypes versus political correctness**

At the same time as you get these politically inspired masks, there is a degree of political correctness and an awareness of the dangers of stereotyping, thus illustrating the limitations and boundaries in the choices of costume.

The group of fathers and children I documented in 2015 had chosen to dress up as cannibals using stereotypical representations of persons of African descent to do so (Fig. 5). Only two days before the carnival the group had suddenly realized that their choice of costume might be a problem. One of the fathers was upset by the situation and explained that their motive was never a racist one. In their minds cannibals, like Vikings (a previous year’s theme), appeared to



*Fig. 5. Fictional cannibals or stereotypical representations? Gimo, 2015.  
Photo: Marlene Hugoson. Copyright: Institute of Language and Folklore*

be more kindred to fictional characters than actual people. Had the carnival taken place in a city, like nearby Uppsala, the *gang* would almost certainly have found themselves in a world of trouble with the spectators, and would most likely have been both booed and reported to the Police for visual 'hate speech' for dressing up this way, but as this transgression transpired in the countryside, where the participants were known to be good family members and neighbours, their choice of costumes was interpreted as nothing more or less than the intended funny/scary cannibals (compare with the discussions during the 2009 Ritual Year conference in Kaunas, Lithuania, on the topics of Zwarte Piet in the Netherlands, 'Gypsy' carts in Southern France, and the Jewish and Romani masks used in Estonia and Lithuania, etcetera) (DFU documentation 2015).

## Conclusion

At the darkest and coldest time of the year the people of Gimo arrange a carnival to mark the end of Christmas. During the preparations, they reconnect with family, friends and neighbours in a united effort to entertain themselves and others. Within the *gangs*, the amusing secret of this year's theme is also kept until the night of the festivity when all is revealed.

The use of current events in the choice of masking can be seen as a form of external monitoring/analysis, an expression and reflection of what is happening in the world, and of what is relevant to the people in the community—either for its importance or its entertaining and comedic value in the carnival. It expresses ideas that people are pro or against; what makes them laugh, what makes them angry, and what makes them scared, and in this way gives expression to both individuality and functions as a statement of the community as a unity.

### Appendix. Sample of daily newspapers (in chronological order to illustrate the development)

Blix, Hans & Ekéus, Rolf & Hirdman, Sven. 2014. Går Sverige med i Nato ökar Rysslands misstro mot väst. [Russian Distrust of the West Increases if Sweden Joins NATO (in Swedish)]. *Dagens Nyheter*. January 25.

Theander, Martin. 2014. Färre svenskar vill se medlemskap i Nato. [(Official opinion poll among Swedes) Fewer Swedes Wants NATO Membership (in Swedish).] *Svenska Dagbladet*. March 14.

Lindberg, Johan. 2014. Rysk övning mot Sverige blev en väckarklocka. [Russian Exercise on Sweden a Wakeup Call (in Swedish).] *Svenska Dagbladet*. April 19.

Hansson, Wolfgang. 2014. Är Sverige smygvägen på väg in i Nato? [Is Sweden Sneaking into NATO? (in Swedish)] *Aftonbladet*. August 26.

Holmström, Mikael. 2014. Nato ger Sverige "guldkort". [NATO Gives Sweden "Gold Card" (in Swedish).] *Svenska Dagbladet*. September 2.

Granlund, John & Nilsson, Martin. 2014. Ryska stridsplan ska ha kränkt svenskt luftrum. [Russian Fighter Planes to Have Violated Swedish Airspace (in Swedish).] *Aftonbladet*. September 18.

Holmström, Mikael. 2014. Här jagar ryskt jaktplan svenskt FRA-flyg. [(Photo comment) Here a Russian Fighter Hunts a Swedish FRA-Plane (in Swedish).] *Svenska Dagbladet*. October 1.

- Holmström, Mikael. 2014. Skadad rysk ubåt söks i skärgården. [Wounded Russian Submarine Sought in the Archipelago (in Swedish).] *Svenska Dagbladet*. October 18.
- Lapidus, Arne. 2014. Fjärdarnas krig blossar upp igen. [The War of the Coastal Inlets Flares up Again (in Swedish).] *Expressen*. October 18.
- Mächs, Mattias & Thurfjell, Karin. 2014. Försvarsexperten: "Detta bekräftar att det är en rysk ubåt." [Defense Expert: "This Confirms It's a Russian Submarine" (in Swedish).] *Svenska Dagbladet*. October 19.
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- Kalvemark, Torsten. 2015. Träffsäkert nej till Nato. Veteraner försvarar den svenska alliansfriheten. [Assured No to NATO. Veterans Defends Swedish Freedom of Alliance (in Swedish).] *Aftonbladet*. February 3.
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- Holender, Robert. 2015. Ryska örlogsfartyg stör kabelläggning till Sverige. [Russian War Ships Disturbs Laying of Cable to Sweden (in Swedish).] *Dagens Nyheter*. May 2.
- de la Reguera, Erik. 2015. Jas-plan ingrep mot ryska bombplan. [Jas Plane Intervened Against Russian Bombers (in Swedish).] *Dagens Nyheter*. May 21.
- Karlsson, Pär & Dickson, Staffan. 2015. Sverige Tycker: Ja till Nato-medlemskap [(Opinion Pole among Aftonbladet's readers) Sweden Thinks: Yes to NATO Membership (in Swedish)]. *Aftonbladet*. May 27.

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## **Rituals of Herb-Gathering in M. Velyakov's Manuscript of the 1890s: Transformation of Tradition**

**Abstract.** This paper analyzes a manuscript from the 1890s ascribed to M. Velyakov. The manuscript contains a heterogeneous mix of botanical, medical, and household information: it includes several copies of herbals,<sup>1</sup> extracts from medical books, recipes, a catalogue of books on botany, household notes, and so forth. A section of Velyakov's manuscript concerns details of herb-gathering: "*Prayers regarding the collection of herbs and instructions on how to pick them*" (f. 134r—136r). It contains a list of canonical prayers, non-canonical prayers and charms ("*How to approach the herb,*" "*About picking herbs and digging up roots,*" "*An answer to the picking of herbs,*" "*A general prayer for herbs,*" "*A general charm for herbs*") as well as a description of the herb-picking rite on St. John's Day and "*Detailed instructions on how to gather herbs.*" Such sections were not typical of the Russian herbal tradition of the 17th—18th centuries. Therefore, the Velyakov manuscript data is here analyzed in the context of oral and written traditions.

**Keywords:** fern, herbal, herb-gathering, manuscript, oral tradition, prayer.

In the Manuscript Department of the Russian State Library (RSL 722—779), there is kept an unique manuscript in octavo (14,6 × 10,4 cm). Its details are as follow: 162 folios, cursive, with a leather embossed cover of the size bigger than the inner book; the beginning and the end of the manuscript are absent. There is an owner's record on the f. 118r: "*Bream fish movement on the 4th, 12th and 20th of May as noted by Ivan Dmitriev Mekhov in 1874 in the town of Rybinsk, and copied by M. Velyakov on June 26, 1890 in the town of Rybinsk.*" The whole manuscript and the text of this inscription are in the same hand. Thus, it can be inferred that a certain M. Velyakov who had been a resident or a visitor of Rybinsk (Yaroslavl Province) compiled and rewrote this miscellany.

The content of the manuscript is heterogeneous, but in general it contains botanical and household information: it includes several copies of herbals, medical recipes, household notes, a catalogue of books on botany, pharmacy prices, and so forth.

I analyzed the section of Velyakov's manuscript concerning details of herb-gathering: "*Prayers regarding the collection of herbs and instructions on how to pick them*" (f. 134r—136r). Such sections were not typical of the Russian herbal tradition of the 17th—19th centuries. Usually, instructions and verbal formulas following herb-gathering were included in the texts on particular herbs. Otherwise, the books of this type have a general formula to pick any herb. However, the herbals of the 19th century show a tendency to expand the lists of the prayers while gathering herbs. Verbal formulas following the process appear in these articles, where they did not exist before. Along with this, texts on some new herbs not mentioned previously emerged. They also contain spells for herb gathering. Velyakov's collection represents the highest point of this trend.

Here is the listing of features in the part of the manuscript describing the peculiarities of herb gathering:

- 1) List of canonical prayers.
- 2) Description of ritual herb gathering on the Feast of St. John.
- 3) Non-canonical prayer on "*How to begin herb gathering.*"
- 4) Spell for herb-gathering (Answer to the question, '*How does one pick herbs?*').
- 5) Description of ritual herb gathering: "*Detailed instruction on how to gather herbs.*"
- 6) Non-canonical prayer "*About picking herbs and digging up roots.*"
- 7) "*General prayer for herbs*" (a canonical prayer before starting anything).
- 8) Spell for herb gathering: "*A general spell for herbs.*"

Thus, this part of the manuscript contains a list of prayers (No. 1), the four texts of spells and prayers on herb gathering (Nos. 3, 4, 6, 8), one canonical prayer (No. 7), and two descriptions of the ritual herb gathering (Nos. 2, 5). These are the texts I will analyze.

**The list of canonical prayers** consists of the following texts:

- 
- The Morning Prayer (“*Through the prayers of our holy fathers, God, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, have mercy on us. Amen*”).<sup>2</sup>
  - Christ’s Prayer (“*Jesus Christ, the Son of God, have mercy on us*”).
  - The Trinitarian formula (“*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen*”).
  - Prayer to the Holy Trinity.
  - Lord’s Prayer.
  - Psalm 90—A Prayer of Moses, the Man of God.
  - Psalm 50.
  - The Symbol of Faith.
  - The Prayer before starting anything (Velyakov’s text No. 7 “*General prayer for herbs*” was compiled on the basis of this prayer).

As far as the author knows, herbals of the 17th—18th centuries did not include particular lists of prayers for herb gathering. Notes on certain canonical prayers are found only in the texts on peculiar herbs (see: Ippolitova 2008: 142—143), with the Lord’s Prayer, Prayer to the Holy Mother of God, Prayer to the Holy Spirit, “*Lord, have mercy,*” Psalm 50, The Symbol of Faith, the Trinitarian formula, Christ’s Prayer, the Troparion of the Annunciation, “*Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee.*” Psalms 90 and 108 (Lipinskaya, Leontyeva 1998: 427, 428, 436, 437), and the Trisagion (Strakhova 1988: 42), are mentioned in a few lists. A single text on the plant *adamova golova*<sup>3</sup> in a manuscript from the town of Tobolsk in the 18th century predicts the transformation of the herbal’s tradition. This manuscript prescribed saying the whole set of prayers before starting to gather herbs: Christ’s Prayer, “*Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee,*” Prayer to the Holy Spirit, Lord’s Prayer, “*Lord, have mercy*” (12 times), Psalm 50, The Symbol of Faith, “*Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee,*” etc. (Glinkina 2004: 115—116). This list has much in common with the set of Orthodox morning prayers (Pravoslavnyy molitvoslov 1993: 4—10). Thus, various herbals mention all the prayers from Velyakov’s list, except for the Morning Prayer and the prayer for good beginning. In this regard, it can be assumed that Velyakov’s list was created mainly on the basis of these herbals. At the same time, it includes the common prayers and psalms known to every Orthodox believer.

In addition, in the Slavic folk culture, canonical prayers were often used as a universal symbolic defense. The most popular prayers

were the Prayer to the Venerable Cross, Psalm 90, Lord's Prayer, and "Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee" (Belova, Levkievskaya 2004: 278).

**Non-canonical prayers and incantations.** This part of Velyakov's manuscript contains four texts of this type (non-canonical prayers and incantations); all of them are meant to be read while gathering any herb.

The structure of text No. 8 *A general spell for herbs* is both the most simple and traditional. It includes two formulas: 1) an appeal to God and Mother-Earth for a blessing, and 2) an appeal to the herb with a request that it be useful to the person and to all Christians. The incantation ends by tacking "Amen" and the direction that the text should be read three times.

Text No. 4 *Answer to the question 'How to pick herbs'* has a similar structure. It begins with a formula referring to the sacred persons and Mother-Earth for the blessing, followed by a remark about the need to read Psalm 90 while gathering herbs. Once again, there is an appeal to Mother Damp Earth with a request that Mother Damp Earth provide an herb "to help" a person. The text ends with the usual spell tack "A key and a padlock and ten angel seals to this deal." The innovation in this text of the herbal tradition is a list of the sacred persons: "Ivan and Maria, Ioakim and Anna, Adam and Eve."

While the second and third pairs are well known biblical characters, the names John and Mary, each going back to the name of the respective saint, in this case, are rather correlate with an herb wood cow-wheat (*ivan-da-marya* (literally *John-and-Mary*) in Russian) (see: Kolosova 2004; Kolosova 2009: 162—169).

Text No. 6 *About picking herbs and digging up roots* consists of the prayer introduction, the motif<sup>4</sup> of the world creation, and an appeal to sacred persons for a blessing in picking herbs and digging up roots.

This text has a more complicated structure, that includes an introduction consisting of two prayers ("In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen" and Christ's Prayer), as well

as a blessing formula that is repeated twice: firstly, it is addressed to St. Nicholas and then to the angels, Saints, and sanctifiers. *Amen* performs the function of the tack of the spell.

The text has a perfect analogy in the Herbal of the second half of the 18th century (Schuk. 1901), it is not a late innovation. The text of Schukin's Herbal is more complete; it continues with an appeal to Mother Earth and concludes with the brief Trinitarian formula (Schuk. 1901: 14).

Finally, the text of No. 3 *Prayer on how to come upon an herb* is the most extensive. It includes:

- The prayer introduction (“*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen*”),
- The motif of the world creation,
- Appeal to an herb with a request for a blessing to gather it (with a motif of herb's origin from earth and sky),
- Charming of the herb for the favor of the person,
- Motif of the herb's origin from the earth pillar, life-giving cross, God, earth,
- Appeal to Mother Earth for the blessing to gather herbs,
- Repeated charming of the herb for the favor of the person.

When comparing the structure of the texts one can see that the element they have in common is an appeal to the **sacred characters** and / or **Mother Earth** through asking for a blessing. This is not something new; this piece was characteristic of the herbals of the 18th—19th centuries and of the oral tradition (in a slightly different form) as well.

*“Gospodi, blagoslovi menya seyu dobroyu travoyu”* [“*God, bless me by this fine herb*”] (RSL. 722-521, 3r—3v)

*“Gospodi, blagoslovi, i ty, Mat-syraya-zemlya, blagoslovi siyu travu sorvati”* [“*God, bless, and you, Mother Damp Earth, bless me for taking this herb*”] (F.VI.16, 1).

*“Nebo—batka, Zemlya—matka. Matushka-Zemlya, otchego ty dobra? Imey polzu dlya menya”* [“*Sky is the father, Earth is the mother. Mother Earth, why are you so kind? Be useful for me*”] (Field:Lobova; Anikin 1998: 309).

In the texts Nos. 3 and 8, there is the motif of an **appeal to the herb** and **charming of the herb** for the favor of the person. It is typical both for the manuscript and the oral tradition.

*“Ty esi mat-trava travam vsem <...> soblyudi mya, raba Bozhiya imyarek, ot diyavolskogo mechtaniya, i pakosti, i vsekh zlokoznennykh navet ikh, i ot supostat moikh, zlo myslyaschikh na mya, cheloveka.”* [*“You are the mother-herb for all the herbs <...> protect me, servant of God, so-and-so, from the devilish desires and filth, all their insidious slanders, and from enemies having wicked thoughts about me as a human-being.”*] (RSL. 722-521, 2r—3, late 17th century).

*“A ty, mat-trava, ot Boga sotvorena, ot zemli rozhdena byt mne, rabu Bozhiyu, na polzu rabam i rabynyam”* [*“And you, mother-herb, created by God, born by earth to be for me, servant of God, useful for servants male and female”*] (V. 1896: 3).

*“Be you, silent herb, useful for all purposes”* (Toporkov 2010: 90, No. 1a).

*“Na chto ty ugodna, na chto prigodna, na to ya tebya i beru”* [*“What are you suitable for, what are you pleasing for, for that purpose, I take you”*] (Korovashko, Korepova 1997: 52, No. 214).

The motif of the **herb's origin** is found in both oral and manuscript sources. In both types of sources, this origin is associated with God and the earth:

*“Ty esi mat-trava travam vsem, ot Boga sotvorena i ot zemli rozhdena”* [*“You are the mother-herb for all the herbs, created by God, born by earth”*] (RSL. 722—521, 2v—3r, late 17th century).

*“Ot Boga zelie, ot zemli korenje”* [*“The potion is from God, the roots are from earth”*] (Vel. 26, 279v, second quarter of the 18th century).

*“Ot zemli trava, a ot Boga lekarstvo”* [*“The herb is from earth, the cure is from God”*] (F.VI.16, 1).

*“Ot boga travka, ot zemli koreshok, ot solnyshka tsvetok. Na chto ty ugodna, na chto prigodna, na to ya tebya i beru. Zemlya mati,*

*blagoslovi travku brati*” [“*The herb is from God, the root is from earth, the flower is from the sun. What are you suitable for, what are you pleasing for, for that purpose, I take you. Mother-earth, bless me for taking this herb*”] (Korovashko, Korepova 1997: 52. No. 214).

The mention of the “*earth pillar*” and “*life-giving cross*” is known only, so far, from text No. 3 of Velyakov’s manuscript.

The motif of the **world creation** in the text fragments describing herb gathering is known only by the abovementioned P.I. Schukin’s manuscript:

*“Osnovanie Bozhie, osnoval est Gospod Bog nebo i zemlyu vsyakim dobrym ugodiem”* [“*Foundation of God, Our Lord founded the heaven and the earth and fill them with good useful things*”] (Schuk. 1901: 14).

This motif can be found not only in text No. 6, but also in text No. 3, where it appears in a slightly different verbal expression:

*“Sam Gospodi, sam Iisuse Khristos sotvoril nebo i zemlyu, sotvoril more, vodu i vsyakiya veshchi”* [“*God himself, Jesus Christ himself created the heaven and the earth, created a sea, water and different stuff*”].

This fragment can be interpreted in two ways. One can suppose that the motif was either inserted in text No. 3 under the influence of text No. 6 or was derived from other sources. In general, the appearance of this motif is quite reasonable. All the herbs relate to the act of world creation, and, because of it, the very fact of their existence is sanctified by the divine presence.

Thus, Velyakov’s manuscript contains extensive texts compiled on the basis of the verbal formulas inherent to herbals.

**Instructions on how and when to gather herbs.** Velyakov’s manuscript includes two detailed instructions on how to gather herbs. The first one (see No. 2) apparently compiles descriptions of ritual actions from the herbals concerning different species. The following quotation is typical:

*"i kotoraya trava chem brat, sama yasno v svoey opisi pishet, a ne vsyakaya brat so vsem vyshepisannym"* ["and how to pick each herb is described by the same herb in its description, but one shouldn't pick any herb with all instructions abovementioned"].

Certain motifs derived from Velyakov's text under analysis have direct analogies in other herbals.

For example, St. John's Day (June 24) and the Day of Saint Agrippina (in Russian tradition it has the vernacular name of Agrafena Kupal'nitsa (the Bather), June 23) are mentioned in herbals as the proper days for gathering about 30 plant species. The association of herb gathering to the time of day is typical for more than 20 plants mentioned in herbalists (Ippolitova 2008: 131—132).

The herbals plainly state about the plant *plakun*:<sup>5</sup>

*"bes toya travy inyya nikakiya travy ne rvuttsa, a khosha i vyrvesh, pomochi net"* ["Without that herb, no other herb may be picked up. Even if it would be gathered, it will not help"] (Muz. 10927, 7v., No. 11).

The ritual actions of when a person should encircle an herb with a chalk line or a line of seeds before digging it out or dragging it through some holed object are also described in different herbals (Ippolitova 2008: 154—161; Ippolitova 2015).

Various herbals include some other motifs similar to ones from Velyakov's manuscript:

– To dig out roots sunwise:

*"A terebit tu travu, stav protiv solntsa litsem"* ["And pick this herb facing the sun"] (an herb *oreshik*,<sup>6</sup> the end of the 18th century, Muz. 4492, 51v., No. 87).

– To make sure that a plant is not shadowed when a person picks it up:

*"A kak eya stanesh imat, ot solntsa steni ne navodi"* ["When you will gather it do not hide it in the shadow of the Sun"] (a herb *tsemravnaya*, the end of the 17th century, Uvar. 114, 6v.).

– To gather luminous herbs at night:

*“Est trava, imya ey levuppa, soboyu mala, v den eya ne naydesh, iskat eya v nochi, na ney dva tsveta: odin zheltoy, drugoy krasnoy—v nochi, chto sveschi, goryat”* [“There is an herb named levuppa, it is small, you cannot find it in the daytime, seek it out at night. It has two colors: one is yellow, the other is red; they shine at night as candles”] (the end of the 18th century, Muz. 4492, 13v., No. 26).

– To use some precious fabric while herb-gathering (however, this does not necessarily include aquatic plants, like in Velyakov’s manuscript). For example, the herb *polotaya niva*<sup>7</sup> should be gathered with clean hands, washed in clean water, and wrapped in clean cloth. The root of the herb named *verba*<sup>8</sup> should be winded round with silk and “*scorlat*<sup>9</sup> or *aksamit*<sup>10</sup> rag or something golden, and be carried with a rag of velvet, atlas or kamka”<sup>11</sup> over it (“*skorlatnym loskutkom, ili aksamitom, ili zolotnym kakim, i nest loskutom barkhatnym, ili otlasnym, ili kamchazhnym*”) (17th century, RSL. 722-521, 3).

– To be clean (Ippolitova 2008: 137).

– Herbals include recommendations on how to roll some herbs in wax:

*“A nosit tot tsvet v chistom vosku s soboyu”* [“And carry this flower in clean wax”] (an herb *sirindarkh kheruz*, Q.VI.33, 3, No. 6); *“Kto tsvet ego nosit pri sobe s voskom v chistote, togo cheloveka stanut vsyakiya lyudi lyubit i pokaryatisya emu”* [“Who carries its flower clean in the wax that man would be loved by everybody, and everybody will bow to him”] (*adamova golova*, 33.14.11, 33, No. 71).

The only motif that has no analogies in herbals of the 17th—18th centuries is the recommendation to gather herbs with a candle or fire. This motif will be considered further because the second of Velyakov’s instructions on how to gather herbs also includes it.

This second text is entitled *Detailed instruction on how to gather herbs* (see No. 5). It is of great interest in the context of the manuscript tradition of the 17th—18th centuries because the latter does not include descriptions of such length nor of such detail.

Here is a description of a magical ritual gathering of special, magical plants, the ones *"kotoryya dnem ne mozhno videt, a v noshchi, kak svecha gorit"* [*"that could not be seen in the daytime and flame as a candle at night"*]. Possibly, the use of the names of these plants was deliberately forbidden in the text.

This instruction can be divided into two parts: preliminary magical actions at Easter and the ritual itself on the Eve of the Day of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist. Preparations for the ritual begin on Holy Saturday, when it is necessary to take a candle and go to the church service. The behavior of the person making the ritual should fulfill certain conditions: he should not look back, should talk with no one, stand in the service *"with fear and awe,"* think of nothing but have *"the prayer in his mouth and zeal for the Lord."* During the burial rite one should light a candle and make sure that it has not been extinguished during the entire service. The next day, with the same candle, one should go by the beginning of the Easter service and before the procession around the church begins, light a candle again and make sure that it does not go out. Then, he has to go back to the church and stand in the same place where he had stood before with the implementation of the same conditions as on Saturday. After the service, he should bring a candle home and hide.

The next stage of the ritual begins on St. John's Day. One should wake up at midnight, take three magical objects (a lighted candle from the Easter service, an aspen stick with bark peeled off, and a clean towel) and go to the place for herb gathering. When the necessary herbs are found, one should endure the *"fear and horror,"* do not look back and do not move. When the fear passes, one needs to kneel down facing the east and pick off the leaves from the herb in turn from the bottom up *"sunwise."* While picking leaves up, one should squeeze each leaf by a separate finger, one leaf by one finger of his right hand. Then, the towel should be spread out with the leaves put on it. At the end, a towel should be folded and knots made for the number of leaves. The text of the instruction ends with this, and it seems to be incomplete or defective. We can only guess how an aspen stick and a candle should be used. The further implementation of the herb gathered with so many difficulties also remains unknown.

Similar (but not complete) instructions began to appear in herbals and medical manuals starting with the 19th century. We know three examples of this kind, all of which come from fern descriptions.<sup>12</sup>

The herbal by Ivan Biryukov (the 2nd quarter of the 19th century) tells about the herb named *paporat chornaya*.<sup>13</sup> It recommends going to the forest on June 24 (i.e. on the Day of John the Baptist), finding the *paporat*, encircling around it, laying the white linen beneath it, and keeping this grass very tightly bound. When it blossoms, one should cut off the flower and put it into wax. This time can be very scary, but a person should endure the fear, and not move, until the first cock-crowling. Only *paporat* blossoms have 12 leaves; its flower is under a leaf and is similar to the flower of a bird cherry. When it sheds its blossoms, there will be something dustlike in their place. This plant was recommended for use in treasure-hunting (F.VI.16, 10, No. 89).

In the old-Believer herbal from the collection of P.V. Maltsev, from the end of the 19th century, there is a description of the plant named *paport* with the “red flower, when it shines small sparkles or candles flame on the top.” This *paport* blossoms for 33 minutes visibly and 3 minutes invisibly. The one who possesses this flower would know everything, all the hidden treasures would be open to him, he would listen to thoughts of all the people, understand all languages, the characteristics of all animals and plants. One should go to gather the *paport* with a crucifix, the Gospel or Psalter and a root of the *plakun* herb. After coming to the place one should encircle with a cross for 3 steps around, read certain prayers, put the crucifix and the Gospel by both sides of the plant, sit near it inside of the circle, and look at it constantly in order not to miss the bloom when three flowers blossom like a candle. When it sheds its blossoms, one should make a sign of the cross over the flowers, say the prayers and “Amen” and tie the flowers to the root of the *plakun* herb. After that, a person should wait for “white light or the daylight” and then come out of the circle (Malts. 792, 2v—3v).

In 1861, A.N. Afanasyev published selected texts from a medical manual of the 19th century. One of them was a text about the magical plant *chornaya paporot*, which blossoms on the Eve of John the Baptist’s Day, at midnight and “*flames and burns as fire.*” In order to get

the flower of this plant, one should take a sliver burnt at both ends on the Eve of St. Basil's Day (December 31), a candle-end that was used by a priest during the festive service and wax or a candle-end from the Altar icon of the Mother of God at Easter.<sup>14</sup> A person should take these objects and go for the herb *paporot*, lay clean paper or linen beneath, encircle with a sliver and wait for the bloom, overcoming fear. After blossoming, the flower will fall to the linen; it should be swept away with a feather and closed with it in wax, otherwise devils would carry it away. While picking up the flower, a person should read prayers, not talk to anybody and not look back. The possessor of the flower will know where the treasures are hidden, will gain honor, and the possibility of becoming invisible, etc. (Afanasyev 1861: 72—74).

In my opinion, the authors of these texts have not borrowed from each other, though they may have several motifs in common. Their subjects, in contrast to the first instruction on how to gather herbs, are not connected to the manuscript tradition but rather to the oral one. Most likely, each of these texts is based on the oral transmissions about the fern known to the compilers of these manuscripts (Velyakov's collection, Biryukov's and Maltsev's herbals, the manuscript possessed by A. Afanasyev). A more detailed comparison of these manuscripts with folk records on blossoming fern could make it possible to trace the local traditions each of these texts dates back to.

In summation, my study points to the list of canonical prayers from Velyakov's manuscript being based mainly on data from herbals and including mostly well-known prayers and psalms. The non-canonical prayers and spells from Velyakov's collection are compiled on the basis of traditional herbal formulas, but are more extensive. One instruction on how to gather herbs compiles descriptions of the ritual actions originated from the herbals' texts about different plants. The other one is not typical of the herbals and goes back to the oral beliefs on fern blossoming and gathering.

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## Notes

1. Hereafter, the word *herbal* is used to designate 'a book describing and listing the properties of plants.'
2. Hereafter, the author provides a literal translation of the analyzed text.
3. The literal translation of *adamova golova* from Russian is *Adam's Head*. Hereafter, unless otherwise specified in the further footnotes, the botanical name and / or English equivalent of the Russian name of the plant is not provided due to the insufficient data provided by manuscript sources.
4. Hereafter, the word *motif* is used to designate a formulaic unit of narration, an elementary structure within the rituals and prayers.
5. This vernacular name of a plant is a derivative of the Russian verb *plakat* 'to weep.'
6. From the Russian word *oreh* 'nut.'
7. Literal translation of *polotaya niva* from Russian is 'weeded field.'
8. Literal translation of *verba* from Russian is 'pussy willow,' but the described plant is not a species of the genus *Salix*.
9. Old Russian word *scorlat* stands for a sort of French cloth red-colored initially.
10. Old Russian word *aksamit* stands for precious fabric with golden and silver threads in warp, thick and nappy as velvet.
11. Old Russian word *kamka* stands for silk, colored, inwrought fabric.
12. These texts describe different species of fern, but all of them refer to the folklore image of this herb.
13. In Russian, *chornaya* means 'black,' and *paporat* is a vernacular name of a fern.
14. Recall the Velyakov's instruction, which mentions the candle taken at Easter.

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## **“From This Place You Cannot Hear Speech. From This Place You Cannot Receive a Letter”: The Letter-Message in Russian Funeral Lamentations**

**Abstract.** The article is devoted to the use of verbal formulas in funeral and commemoration lamentations. The article consists of two parts: in part one there are some comments about lamenting and the existence of the texts in rites, while part two contains a text analysis of one particular verbal formula (the letter-message). This formula can be found in the lamentations of different cultures, but the Russian texts are the focus of this research.

**Keywords:** commemoration, formula, funeral, lamentation, letter, poetics, Russian folklore.

*Dedicated to the memory of Giorgia Bernardele.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **The publication and study of Russian lamentations**

The lamentation (*prichitanie/plach/prichet'* etc.) as a folk genre exists in many cultures, in one form or another. It occupies the same place in the ritual practices of various peoples, but the similarity is not limited to the actional code. Some verbal images, for example, are repeated from one culture to another. In Russia, laments were first mentioned in the early chronicles, such as the 10th century *Tale of Bygone Years*, and nowadays can still be heard in some remote villages. In general, lamenting is an action which produces a poetic text and which is performed in a special way.

Russian lamentations have been collected by serious scholars and amateurs since the 19th century. Some examples were published in magazines and newspapers, such as the *Ethnographic Review* and *Olonetc Gazette*. Elpidifor Barsov's collection of laments (1872)

is the most well-known, containing texts provided by the singer or performer of laments Irina Fedosova from the Russian province of Olonets as well as other laments performed by several other talented lament-singers. However, the lamentations of Olonets are not representative of all Russian traditional lamentations. Indeed, Fedosova, Bogdanova and Pashkova (Barsov's informants), whose laments were very long and rich, were not ordinary lament-singers. In order to get a more in-depth understanding of the tradition, a large corpus of other smaller texts must be analyzed. Fortunately, there are other collections of Russian lamentations. There are, for example texts from the Novgorod Region (Berdyayeva 2015), from the South Urals (Rozhkova & Moiseeva 2008) and many others. Lamentations from the Eastern part of the Vologda region were collected and published twice, in Efimenkova's *The North Russian Lamentation* (1980) and Iugai's *Cannot Moor nor Stick to Any Shore: Funeral Lamentations of the Vologda Region* (2011).

Research interest in lamentations starts to evolve in the 20th century, beginning with Mark Azadovsky's introductory article to his collection of lamentations from the Lena-river region in Siberia, first published in 1922 (Azadovsky 1960). A major role in the study of lamentations belongs to Kirill Chistov (see, for example, Chistov 1960, 1982). Different aspects of the folklore lament were researched in the late 20th—beginning of the 21st century. Lidia Nevskaya (1997) conducted a reconstruction of the semantic and rhythmic structure of the archaic Eastern Slavic lamentation. The ritual purpose of the lament was elucidated by Svetlana Tolstaya in her articles of 1999 and 2015. The vocabulary of lamentations was researched in the works of Olga Sedakova (2004). Svetlana Adonyeva (2004) focused on the pragmatics of lamentation, offering the theory that the rite of lamenting could be understood as a form of initiation of the bereaved into the state of orphanhood. Mikhail Alekseevsky viewed lamentation in the light of the ritual feast (2005). In addition, there are some works about lamentations in which they are regarded as a part of art history (Konyreva 2003, Altshuler 2007, Baluevskaya 2013). The complex analysis of laments from the Eastern part of Vologda province from the point of view of musicology was first conducted by Bronislava Efimenkova (Efimenkova 1980). The construction of a system for the images

used in lamentations was the focus of my own dissertation (Iugai 2011a).

The present article concentrates on the text analysis of one particular verbal formula: the letter-message.

### **Lamentation in the funeral ritual complex**

In pre-revolutionary Russia, vernacular lamentations were an obligatory part of the funeral ritual complex. There were different types of lamentations applicable at different stages of funerals. However, over the years, this genre has lost its role as a necessary funeral element.

Funeral lamentations are one of four types of lament, the other three being wedding, recruiting and occasional laments. Funeral lamentations are the most ancient and their pattern serves as the base for the other types. Among funeral lamentations there are some that correspond to specific parts of the funeral ritual, such as the washing of the deceased, the ceremony of parting from the deceased in the house, or the journey to the cemetery (see the operative classifications in the following collections of texts: Azadovsky 1960, Efimenkova 1980, Kruglov 2000, Iugai 2011a, etc.). In the vernacular we find definitions for laments performed at particular times such as: *When he is lying on the bench*, *When they carry the coffin*, *In the cemetery*, etc. The expression “*in the cemetery*” can also refer to a variety of different lamentations, such as lamentation on digging the grave, lamentation at the anniversary commemoration of the death and lamentation during visits to the cemetery on Trinity (*Troitsa*) Saturday.

Lamenting on the day of the funeral consists of several stages. In the beginning, the relatives lament in the house of the deceased, while the guests are lamenting on their way to the house. The content of the lamentation is a narrative about the search for the deceased. The performer of the lament depicts in traditional poetic expressions how he or she wakes up, washes, searches for the deceased and cannot find him/her “either in the yard or in the house”. Eventually she does find him/her lying in the ‘beautiful’ corner (*krasnyi ugol*)<sup>1</sup> and approaches his silence, asking why he feels angry and doesn't want

to talk. When the funeral helpers are closing the coffin the lament-singer again laments, asking them not to close it. The full lamentation known as *The parting ceremony in the house* can have hundreds of lines. The lamentation *On the way to the cemetery* includes a farewell formula addressed to the world of the living. Special figures of speech are used, such as the cumulative expansion of images. The deceased is supposed to say farewell first to his house, then to the street, the village, the nearby forests, and, finally, to the entire world. The lamentation known as *In the cemetery* is used to soothe the deceased and encourage him/her not to feel fear, since his dead relatives are waiting for him. Finally, there is the lamentation *On the way from the cemetery*.

On days of commemoration there is another special group of laments about the dead. Informants distinguish these from the funeral laments. As far as the poetics of the texts are concerned, commemoration laments are more symbolical, less improvisational and closer to lyrical songs. It is possible to classify commemoration lamentations in two ways, firstly according to the day it is performed. Lamentations can occur 1) within the first 39 days after the funeral (and specifically on the ninth or the twentieth days), 2) on the fortieth day after the funeral, 3) on the anniversary of the funeral, 4) on feast days, and 5) on any day. It is also possible to classify commemoration lamentations by their function. All relatives of the dead person gather at the commemoration feast. According to folk-belief, the soul of the dead person/ deceased comes too. In some Vologda villages people set a special table for the souls:

*"And then the day of ancestors [roditelskiy den] comes, so I lay the table. <...> I hang out a clean towel so they can come and wash their hands. And I always put cups, I pour tea. I put some gingerbread, some sweets, put something on the table. Chairs are placed. So I go into the street and say: 'Dear guests come to visit! We are waiting' "* (Iugai 2016: 10).

The souls are invited by the lamentation known as *Invitation to the Commemoration Feast*: *"All the relatives are gathered by that tune, including all the relatives who were killed and died in the war"* (Iugai 2016: 24). The invitation to the commemoration feast is a widespread phenomenon. In such lamentations the wailer asks the

deceased to wake up, open his eyes and stand up. Alekseevsky in his article *The Motive of Revival of the Dead in North Russian Funeral Laments* (2007) links it with the feast for the souls. The lamentations containing this motif are specific and can be heard on the ninth, twentieth, and fortieth days after the death, on the Troitsa Day and on some other memorial occasions. Additionally, people prepare a bath (*banya*) for the deceased. In the west of the Vologda region there is a lamentation known as *The invitation to the bath*. In the east Vologda villages although the rite itself exists there are no special lamentations associated with it. Finally, there is a lament called *Seeing off the soul*.

Nowadays, it is common for an informant to know just one lament, consisting of a certain set of verbal formulas, and she would use it for both commemoration and funerals. Such lamentations are stable and not very long, but they make use of the traditional formulas.

As for the letter-message image, it can be found in almost all types of laments: funeral (first after death, No. 35 in Efimenkova 1980, No. Bab.28 in Iugai 2011b) and commemoration (No.13 in Efimenkova 1980, No. Tot.11 in Iugai 2011b). It also exists in the short lamentations, which are the last fragments preserved in the informants' memory.

### **Some notes about the textual structure of lamentation**

The main motif of lamentation correlate with the ritual acts. Nevertheless, the texts are complete and independent from the perspective of imagery, poetic organization and structure.

Russian lamentations have strophic organization, rhythm and line breaks. The rhythmic and phonetic side of the texts has been very little studied, with the exception of some articles by James Bailey (2001). The main aim of textual research has been to show the function of the lament within the ritual and the use of poetic metaphors.

The ritual goal of these lamentations is to make the time the border between life and death when it is open more secure. The researchers usually argue that use of metaphors is a means of providing this security. The theory of metaphoric substitutions is rooted in the observations of Chistov (1960) and was developed in works by Alexandra Stepanova on material from Karelia (1985).

Among the most typical metaphoric substitutions are vocatives, addressing an orphan or the deceased by substituting objects from the world of nature. The majority of them take the form of a noun phrase consisting of two words (adjective + noun, noun + noun), like “sweet dove” or “letter-message”. In addition to vocatives set phrases are used to describe the underworld, the world of living beings, the border. In general such phrases are folklore formulas, i.e. stable combinations of words with a symbolic meaning, and they perform an organizational function in the lamentation texts. Improvisation takes place in the choosing of and combining of the formulas as well as in their phonetic representation.

Using such formulas is a means for traditional culture to comprehend and adjust to existential and cultural changes. Lamentation is an improvisational poetic text which follows specific rules and contains certain formulas. *The letter-message* between the world of the living and the underworld is one such formula.

### THE LETTER-MESSAGE VERBAL FORMULA

#### The letter-message in the lamentations of other cultures

*The letter-message* is a widespread phenomenon in lamentations. The similarity of extra-textual factors affecting lamentation in different cultures is natural, but textual parallels are especially interesting. Let us take the example of two cultures—the Romanian in a country far distant from Russia and the Finno-Ugric in territory close to and with cultural contacts with the Russian North.

The motif ‘letters or messages from the underworld’ or ‘out of this world into the underworld’ can often be found in lamentations in the Romanian culture. Mourners mention the letter to emphasize the “impossibility” of correspondence after the soul of the deceased has irrevocably departed. In other cases, mourners beg the dead to send them some “news” from the underworld. In yet other cases, they refer to the deceased as a mediator or a messenger, who can deliver a message or congratulations to other deceased, whom he or she will meet in heaven. For example:

*Ka să ne mai zi' de dor.  
Frate dragă și măi dragă.*

*[My dear and darling brother,  
Why are you going so far away,*

<p><i>Kă te duș, frate, departe, Nu-s putiem trimite karte, Nu ne poți trimite karte, Kă nu-i kolo niș hîrtie, Niș černeală, să po' skrie; Nu ie trin, niče motor</i> (Brăiloiu 1981: 173).<sup>2</sup></p>	<p><i>We cannot send letters, You cannot send letters, There is no paper, No ink to write with, No train, no motor To come, if you feel bored.]</i></p>
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The letter-message lamentation formula is also present in the Baltic-Finnish (specifically Karelian) context, which is geographically and culturally close to northern Russia. There are two specific formulas discussed in the *Dictionary of Metaphorical Substitutions of Karelian Laments* by Alexandra Stepanova (2004: 116), *graamottakirjaset*—letter-message and *kirjalistabumuagazet*—paper / written sheets-letters, where one part (*gazet*) of the complex word is a borrowing from the Russian language (i.e. *gazeta* / newspaper).

Eila Stepanova (2015: 186) gives the following example in her article on 'self-lamentation' (i.e. in which the lamenter comments on her own death?): "... Savelyeva asks her nephew to notify relatives about her death by telegram". The *loci communes* typical of such lamentations are 'sent by postal sheets-letters', 'light little telegram with stamps', etc., where 'small telegrams' or 'sheets-letters' are the semantic core of the formula, and the choice of additional components can depend, for example, on alliteration in the stanza or the length of the musical phrase" (Stepanova 2015: 192).

As Zhukova's research has shown, in lamentations of the Finnic Vepian people there are 'letters about death' which may be referred to either as *kibed kirjeine*, which means 'a letter bringing pain and the news of the death', or *kibed kirjaine* 'a bitter letter that brings pain' (Zhukova 2009: 120, 121). In most cases these are letters written from within the world of living, letter-notifications about a death.

### **Papers and letters in the Russian lamentations of the 19th—beginning of the 20th century**

The *paper sheet* or *stamped paper* (*list-bumazhen'ka* <*gerbovaya*>) motif as it appears in the collection of Barsov has two main themes. The first is distress over a missing picture of the deceased. Such

a motif is found in Fedosova's lament *The widow's lament for her husband* (Barsov 1872: 5—6). The second concerns a letter to the underworld, written by a widow's neighbor to the widow's deceased husband (so that he in turn can pass it on to the neighbor's deceased husband) (Barsov 1872: 15). Sending greetings and respects (lit. bows / *poklony*) to the underworld is one of the most common motifs of lamentations. Fedosova begins *The lamentation over her cousin* with a message about the death conveyed in the letter form (Barsov 1872: 187).

As for the other regional traditions, there are 19th century records from central Russia. However, the images found in those laments are not as expressive or as well developed. Eight lamentations from Tula and the Tula province (in the Northeast of the modern Tula region) were recorded by Uspensky at the end of the 19th century. Here, one finds the the following lines:

<i>Teper my tebya ne uvidim,</i>	<i>[Now we shall not see you,</i>
<i>Golosochka tvoego</i>	<i>We shall not hear your</i>
<i>ne uslyshim.</i>	<i>little voice.</i>
<i>Ni pisma, ni bumazhki,</i>	<i>Neither letter nor paper,</i>
<i>Nichego ot tebya ne budet!</i>	<i>Nothing will we get from you!]</i>

(Uspensky 1892: 110)

As one can see in this extract, the word *paper* (*bumazhka*) was dominant in the 19th century. It could be used to mean a portrait or a letter. Both types of letter (the notification of the death within the world of the living and the communication with the underworld) can be found in the Olonets lamentation of Fedosova. The second type may frequently be found in 19th century laments from the Tula region.

### Letters in the lamentations of the 20th century

In the first half of the 20th century lamentations were not in the forefront of folklore research. Although they were collected the main focus of attention was on other genres of folklore (with the exception of the so-called “lyric-epic novelties”), lamentations about the Soviet leaders—see Kozlova 2011). But the late 20th century was remarkable for its series of publications of the genre, starting with the publication of laments collected during World War II

(Bazanov 1962). Regarding the Russian tradition at the end of the 20th century, the letter motif was recorded at least in the Vologda, Novgorod, Ural, Perm, and Vyatka (Kirov) regions.

In the Internet project on Novgorodian folklore, the second part of which is entitled *Lamentation as a Part of Funeral Ritual* there are two fragments of different lamentations, where the lack of a letter from the underworld is noted:

*Ne poluchu ya ot tebya nikogda  
Ni pismetsa, ni vestochki,  
U nas otpushcheno-to i provozheno  
I vo dalnyuyu-to put dorozhenku  
I net pisma-to, bey gramoty  
(Berdyaeva).*

*[I will never not get from you  
A single letter or any news.  
We have bid him farewell and have released him  
To his long-long journey,  
And there's no letter, no note on white paper.]*

Kastrov's publication of Kirov (Lalskie) lamentations (1999) includes 15 recorded in 1991—1992. Kirov region is the territory which borders with the Eastern part of the Vologda region. In these texts we find the following lines:

*Da mne uzh(i) v etoy-to dorozhenki  
Da net pisma da net ne vestonki  
Da net pisma da mne, ne gramotki  
Da ne poklonu perenosnova  
(Kastrov 1999: 383, 397).*

*[And on that little road  
And there is no letter, no news  
And there is no letter, no news to me,  
And no greeting has been sent.]*

In this case the reference is to a letter from the underworld. Eltyshev and Koroleva (2011) report on the existence of the formula in some areas of the North Prikamie (Permsky Region).

In the lamentations of the Ural region, the mother laments to her son:

<i>Pishu-to ya k tebe, synushko,</i>	<i>[I write to you, my dear son</i>
<i>Ya so vsemi lyudmi dobrymi</i>	<i>With all the good people</i>
<i>Tebe pismy-gramotki &lt;...&gt;</i>	<i>Letters-messages to you &lt;...&gt;</i>
<i>Ne perom, ne chernilami,</i>	<i>Neither with pen nor ink,</i>
<i>A svoimi goryuchimi slezmi</i>	<i>But with bitter tears I write.]</i>

(Rozhkova & Moiseeva 2008: 29).

As for Siberia, the motif of writing a letter (*lamentation about a brother*) is found specifically in the Irkutsk region. Several operations are performed with the letter in such lamentations, which include not only taking the paper and writing, but also sealing the letter up before sending. The description pattern represents the negation of common letter materials and its parallels between the manifestations of human sorrow.

*Sokolchik moy, rodimyy bratets,*  
*A napishu ya s toboy pismo-gramotku*  
*A ko lebedushke ko rodimoy matushke,*  
*A ne perom-to ya budu pisat, ne chernilami,*  
*A svoim-to goryuchim slezam.*  
*A zapechatayu ya etu pishmu-gramotku*  
*Svoey toskoy-kruchinushkoy,*  
*Otoshlyu ya s toboyu, gorka sirotochka,*  
*Ya k lebedushke rodimoy matushke.*  
*A pereday moe pishmo rodimoy matushke*  
*Ne vozhmet li ona v ruchki belyya,*  
*Ne prichitat li etu pismo-gramotku,*  
*A ne sozhalet li menya, gorku sirotochku?*  
 (Potanina et al. 2002: 360)

*[My little falcon, my dear brother,*  
*I will write a letter-message for you to take*  
*To my sweet swan, to my darling mother,*  
*And not with a pen, not with (an) ink,*  
*But with bitter tears I will write,*  
*And I will seal up this letter-message*  
*With my anguish, my little sorrow,*  
*I will send it with you, a wretched orphan*

*To my sweet swan, to my darling mother,  
And give the letter to my darling mother  
Will she not take it into her white hands,  
Will she not read this letter-message,  
And take pity on me, a wretched orphan?]*

In the Vologda region there are different terms (which denote the image of) used to describe the letter: *zapisochka*, *nakazanyitse*, *chelobitnoe*, *poklon* ('a little note', 'a mandate', 'a petition', 'a bow'). There are also two types of letters in the lamentation world: the letter-notification, which could be a real letter and the specific letter to the underworld, which is a special case of passing on somebody's regards.

The real letter can be represented by a telegram from the military front:

*Oy, ya dozhdalasya, rozho... (noe)  
Oy, ya vestochkyu nevese... (luyu)  
Oy, ya telegrammu pecha... (lnuyu)  
Oy, ya poluchila, rozho... (noe) <...>  
Oy, pogib, moe ty rozho... (noe)  
Oy, uzh ty v ryadakh Krasnoy A... (rmii)  
(Efimenkova 1980: 124)*

*[Oh, I have got, my dear child,  
Oh, the gloomy news,  
Oh, the sad telegram,  
Oh, I have got it, my dear child, <...>  
Oh, you perished, my dear child,  
In the ranks of the Red Army]*

<i>Rasskazhu-ka ya, mamenka,</i>	<i>[I will tell you, my dear mother,</i>
<i>Poluchila, goryushitsa,</i>	<i>I, a poor little soul, received</i>
<i>Da, ne veseluyu vestochku,</i>	<i>Some gloomy news,</i>
<i>Ot rodimogo ladushki,</i>	<i>From my sweet beloved,</i>
<i>Da stenovuyu kartinochku</i>	<i>And his picture</i>
<i>(Iugai 2011b: 89).</i>	<i>to go on the wall]</i>

The first one describes the receiving of a real telegram from the war, written by people, but it turns to contain information on death

(the bad news). The addressee and addresser of the second lamentation are both living people (the mother and the wife of the deceased), and they are talking about the letter, from which they discovered that their relative had been killed.

In this case the letter-news means not only a textual letter, but also an actual picture.

Some texts refer to a letter written in tears and sent to the other world. Thus, the letter is a material image and a symbol of communication with the deceased.

<i>Dak nakazhu nakazanyitse,</i>	[ <i>So, I will have a note sent,</i>
<i>Poshlyu poklon-chelobitnitso,</i>	<i>I'll send a greeting-salutation</i>
<i>Ya svoim-to roditelyam,</i>	<i>To my sweet father and my</i>
<i>Batyushku da i matushke,</i>	<i>sweet mother,</i>
<i>Dak napishu ya zapisochku,</i>	<i>So I'll write a little note,</i>
<i>Dak ne perom, ne chernilami,</i>	<i>Neither with a pen nor with ink,</i>
<i>Dak ya slezami-to gorkimi,</i>	<i>But with bitter tears I will write,</i>
<i>Gde-nibud da uvidisse,</i>	<i>Somewhere you will surely</i>
<i>Ne na pischey bumazhenke,</i>	<i>meet them.</i>
<i>A na tonkom polotenyshke,</i>	<i>not on a little sheet of writing-paper,</i>
<i>Gde-nibud da uvidisse.</i>	<i>But on a thin little towel,</i>
(Iugai 2011b: 49)	<i>Somewhere you will surely</i>
	<i>meet them].</i>

Communication in such laments is always one-sided, as a mourner “sends a letter” but does not receive a response from the underworld. In fact in some texts it is clearly stated that no letter will ever be sent from there.

*Oy toshneshenko, da ne poshlet da im batyushko,*  
*Oy toshneshenko, im ni pisma da ni gramotki—*  
*Oy toshneshenko, da so togo svetu belongo,*  
*Oy toshneshenko, nikto ne prinosit zho vestochki,*  
*Oy toshneshenko, moim serdechnym-to detonkam!*  
 (Efimenkova 1980: 134)

[*Oh, how sick I feel, father will not send to them,*  
*Oh, how sick I feel, neither a letter nor a message,*  
*Oh, how sick I feel, from the fair underworld,*

*Oh, how sick I feel, no one brings any news  
Oh, how sick I feel, to my dearly-loved children!]*

The lack of letters from the underworld turns to be one of the defining characteristics of the genre?:

*Ottol ved rechi ne slyshattse,  
Ottol uzh pisma ne pishuttse  
(Iugai 2011b: 83).*

*[From that place no voice can be heard.  
From that place no-one will write you a letter.]*

So, the content of the motif is the giving of a message-letter to the deceased or, in some cases, a message to an old deceased with the new one. No letter is sent in response, however. As it was shown in the above examples, the images of letter, paper and ink are usually duplicated by images of the towel (used as a handkerchief) and tears, as markers of human sorrow.

### **Messages, packages and the towel in funeral ritual**

Although lamentation texts are usually self-sufficient, some of the objects verbally present in lamentations, are also physically present as necessary elements of funeral ritual.

It is common to send something to the underworld with a newly-deceased person. For example, someone who has already passed away may come in a dream and ask for something to be sent to him. So the relatives put the requested object into the coffin of someone awaiting burial: “*A packet of cigarettes is placed <in a coffin>, a box of matches too. If you have a close relative — send candies! For instance, my <husband> is dead, and you pass candy...*” (Archive Cherepovets: record 97, No. 24). Passing on one’s regards to dead relatives is one of the most common motifs of lamentations. It may be found even in short fragments of lamentations, where the narrators remember only a couple of lines from the whole lament.

The need to inform the dead about news of their living relatives also goes beyond the lamentation. The same content is natural for common talks on cemeteries and also for commemorative narratives

(about conversations with the dead in the Vytegra area of the Volgda region — see Ilyina 2008).

The paper for the writing of letters mentioned in lamentations is paralleled by the towel (used as a handkerchief by the grieving person), the message on which could be written in tears. The towel is a material object used in funeral ritual in many different ways. A white towel could be hung up near the icon corner during the first forty days after the death for the soul to dry itself after washing. In earlier times in some regions a lament-singer would cover her face with a towel or a handkerchief. Like virtually everything in vernacular culture, a towel has a symbolic meaning; it may allude to a road, a path, which is also a key metaphor of the funeral as a rite of passage. So, the material objects, which find their place in the texts, are often correspond with the very ritual. In the texts such objects obtain poetic, metric and metaphoric structure.

### Verbal form

The verbal formula of a letter-message has several formal features. It consists of two words, traditionally perceived as synonyms. In Fedosova's laments (Barsov 1872) the words are usually *sheet-paper*, while in other laments, we find different combinations of three elements: *news*, *message*, and *letter*. Also the word *telegram* (the second part of which in Russian sounds similar to *message*/i.e. *gramota*) is used.

The verbal formalization of the formula does not depend on the type of communication, whether the letter is addressed to the deceased or this is a letter from a an alive person to another living person). In Fedosova's lamentation "*The lamentation over her cousine*" there is a letter-notification, "*written in tears*". By contrast, the word *telegram* can be used to describefrom the underworld. It is following the rules of the impossibility formula, i.e. the metaphoric verbal formula, which describes the impossibility of an event or a situation. The word is given in the diminutive form:

*I-oy, dak-y ne napishot on pi,*  
*Oy, da pisima g(y)ramotki.*  
*I-oy, dak-y ne posh(y)let i nam da te,*

*Oy, da telegramushki*  
(Archive Cherepovets: record 098, No. 09).

[*And-oh, he would never write a le...*  
*Oh, a letter-message.*  
*And-oh, he will never send a te...*  
*Oh, a little telegram.*]

In the lamentation of Fedosova the fragment depicting a letter takes up approximately fifty lines and contains a narrative with the lament-singer as the actor. In the modern lamentation the average fragment length is four lines (in addition to a lexical complex describing the letter it includes the verbs *send* or *get*, an actor, an object, and the circumstances of place). In detailed fragments there is the description of the writing process. Overall, action is more typical of folklore than inertia, making description of writing and sending more important than the notion of a physical object.

### Conclusions

The lament had great significance for funeral ritual in the past. It is not only an expression of grief, but also an illustration of religious belief in the post-mortem existence. As was pointed out by Tolstaya (1999), vernacular bans on lamentations in wrong time and place indicate the importance and indispensability of lamentations as a part of the funeral ritual. "Sometimes the folk tradition directly links the need for weeping with the expectation of the patronage of the dead relative. ... The need for weeping is also connected with the fact that unlamented dead, according to folk beliefs, will not receive the remission of sins, because 'tears wash away the sins' " (Tolstaya 1999: 136). Untimely or excessive lamentation can upset the deceased. So, weeping is a form of lamentation that has an independent value. The weeper's voice shows the way to the soul of the deceased person. Being halfway between tangible and intangible, it serves as a bridge between the two worlds: "The voice sounds here on earth, but its destination is far beyond this world" (Ibid.: 145).

The lamentation is a way of communicating with the dead. According to the metaphor of the lamentation text it can be said that the letter as it occurs in lamentations is one written with tears on a thin

towel (used as a handkerchief). The association of the towel and the face (Levkievskaya 2004) allows us to consider this letter as an act of mourning. In reality, it is the orphan's face that is used as a 'paper' for the letter. The letter is a way to establish contact with a distant, invisible world, with which direct communication is impossible. The analogy of the funeral and the notion of departure to a foreign country is one way to euphemize the death. According to the world of folklore and mythology, lamentations themselves are viewed as a way of communicating with the inaccessible world where the mourners' voice and the tears of orphans form a channel of contact.

Almost all verbal formulas concern the different ways of making contact, opening and closing the border (see e.g. the many metaphors involving birds, roads, locks and so on). A letter, which sometimes serves as a link within the world of living beings, also serves as a metaphor connecting the living with the underworld. The letter-message is the symbol of a form of communication, which is neither direct nor easy. The lament-singers sent their laments to the deceased having hope but no guarantee that they would reach the addressee. The letter in laments has a stable verbal form and is one feature which helps to define the genre.

When someone is going to visit a rural cemetery, their neighbors may say: "Best regards to everyone!" This is an action, reflecting what would be normal in everyday speech in everyday life. The distinguishing feature of lamentation is in the use of metaphoric images and a precise rhythmic structure to communicate with the underworld.

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### Notes

1. The eastern inner corner of the house, where the icons are kept.
2. Giorgia Bernardele found and translated the Romanian texts for this article in 2015.

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## **The Ritual Year of Domestic Animals: Zoofolkloristic Aspects**

**Abstract.** This article focuses on changes in human-animal relationships and strives to characterise the ritual year traditions in modern society, where attitudes and relationships with pets are developing towards greater equality. The custom of greeting and wishing animals well during celebrations of the ritual year has undergone major changes, while the almost fully normative traditions of agrarian communities has been on the decline. In modern urban environments, pets receive gifts, similarly to other family members. Many families celebrate special occasions in an animal's life (such as birthdays and family get-togethers). The last part of this article describes the public celebration of the first birthday of Laura, the dog in a state institution. All cases characterise, and are part of the continuum in, the evolution of human-pets relations.

**Keywords:** birthday, gifts, human-animal relations, pet culture, ritual year traditions.

*Dedicated to the generations of cats who were and are  
our friends and lived, or live, with us.*

### **Introduction**

Changes in contemporary urban society concern humans and non-humans both on macro and micro levels. In contrast to the past, miniature narratives indicate that ethical attitudes are equalizing both groups. Pets have become friends, relatives, and more. The increasing number of humans who treat their pets as family members, as well as the multilevel social bonds between humans and their pets, draws attention to the field of human-animal relationships.

This article focuses on human-animal relationships in the following areas, relying on methods employed in folklore/zoofolkloristic studies:

- giving special expressions of love and kindness to animals during celebrations of the ritual year in the earlier agrarian tradition;
- celebrations of the ritual year in modern urban environment during which pets receive gifts, similarly to other family members;
- celebrating special occasions in an animal's life (birthdays, family get-togethers);
- description of an individual case: public celebration of the first birthday of Laura the dog in a state institution.<sup>1</sup>

This article provides an overview of a number of behavioural tendencies associated with wild animals and birds. This paper draws on data gathered from a survey conducted in 2007 among school children in which one question about spending leisure time concerned pets (see also Vesik 2011, Kõiva 2015) as well as on information obtained by the Department of Folklore Studies through interviews, as well as from the internet and social media. As for earlier periods, a 2002 internet study (Jaago & Kõiva 2002) and digitalised hand-written materials from folklore archives (Skriptoorium 2014) were used. The respondents were from various geographical regions in Estonia and represent the average pet or animal owner.

This article is intended to characterise traditions popular in modern society and their development dynamics, drawing on folklore sources. This article also is intended to describe how humans influence an animal's life. Additionally, there is reflection on how an ethnic group, especially city people, coexist with their pet animals and include them in rights and customs traditionally reserved for humans.

### **Theoretical background**

Social anthropologist Tim Ingold has characterised the evolution of complex relations between human animals and nonhuman animals, highlighting three major attitudes toward animals:

- domestic animal, pet—anthropomorphised, sentimentalised, a named creature;
- animals as living creatures with certain attributes, properties that allow their classification—animals have been rendered anonymous and are considered objects;

– animals as evolving and changing creatures, so we are dealing with a process where the central tenet is *being alive* (Ingold 2011: 174).

Ingold also argued on the topic of culture and humanness and stressed the opinion that “[i]n modern Western societies to have a name is to be human. The fact that we often give names to domestic animals or to animated characters in children’s stories only lends support to this presumption. <...> Our tendency is to treat certain animals *as if* they are the humans, or they are commonly understood as humans” (Ingold 2011: 166). The second possibility is “<...> they are quasi-human companions” (Ingold 2011: 167). In conclusion Ingold proposes that “[O]utside the domestic domain animals are ‘living things’” (Ingold 2011: 166).

Contemporary scientific and ethic (bioethics) positions, however, emphasise new lines of social and cultural behaviour. In the 1990s and later, several researchers demonstrated that animals are an inseparable part of culture (Serpell 1994; 1996; Arluke & Sanders 1996; Podberscek, Paul & Serpell 2005). Certain more recent approaches also look for commonalities between the nonhuman-animal and human-animal culture as well as for similar features characterising their memory and communication (for example, Thompson 2010; Haraway 2008). Over the last decades, animal populations that have adapted to living in a city or have accepted urban areas as their natural habitat (for example, water fowl, mallards, foxes, hedgehogs, and others) are on the rise. What is more, the number of animals patronized by people, coexisting with humans in their domestic domain, and synanthropic species have also increased. As a result, attempts have been made to analyse the essence and motivational aspects of such relationships as well as to gain insight into the age, social status, and economic situation of pet and animal owners. For the purposes of this article it is vital to keep in mind that human-animal relationships in various regions are characterised by an unprecedented level of closeness. According to Bonas, McNicolas and Collis (2005: 212), since the early 1980s in the United States and Great Britain, a high proportion of households have regarded their companion animals as family members, ranging from 70 per cent to 99 per cent. According to Australian researcher Steven White (2009: 856) “[a] major 2006 report by BIS Shrapnel prepared for the Australian Companion

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Animal Council Inc asserted that “[p]ets today are being treated more like one of the family than in any previous generation.” Reports from Japan also indicate an increased closeness between humans and pets (Hansen 2013).

### **Animals during celebrations of the ritual year in the agrarian tradition**

Archived materials from the 19th century and monuments in manor compounds point to a clear division between the traditions of the elite (the upper and middle class of Baltic German and Russian origin) and peasant culture (the lower class of farmers and craftsmen of Estonian origin). Pets of the elite class were allowed to stay indoors, and they received special treatment. Gravestones and burial monuments were erected for favourite horses and dogs. For example, there is a monument dedicated to a horse at Sangaste Castle and Tākusammas (the Stallion’s Monument) on Valgehobusemägi (White Horse Hill) at Mõdriku Manor. According to a legend, the latter monument was erected in honour of the manor owner’s white horse who carried his injured master away from a battlefield.

In the agrarian tradition, farm animals were predominantly kept for subsistence purposes. According to data from folklore archives, specific protection and prevention rituals were carried out at the start of important periods (in spring when livestock was let out to pasture for the first time, St. George’s Day, Holy Week, and Midsummer’s Day) as well as when large domestic animals were giving birth or fell ill. As for special occasions in spring, ceremonial rites and offering a symbolic piece of food coincided with the animals leaving the domestic sphere. Rituals were performed to protect animals from dangers, such as wild animals, in the external domain. Rituals observed at the end of the same half-year were inspired by such factors as the desire to protect the animals and increase fertility and productivity.

Animals kept for subsistence purposes also received special treatment during celebrations important to people. From 1880—1939, domestic animals were given food at Christmas and New Year’s Eve. Cattle and horses got choice food – bread with salt; some of the feast bread was saved for later. When giving bread to animals, the master or lady of the house called out to them with the following words:

*"Christmas has arrived, and the holidays have begun!"* Sometimes a greeting was followed by a brief prayer. If possible, livestock were given better hay and sheep whisks made in summer, better food was given to poultry, and dogs and cats enjoyed morsels from the holiday table; in this way, all farm animals received special treatment and some received celebratory food. In a similar manner, animals were greeted and given choice morsels on New Year's Eve and during the Easter period. *"At [E]aster time animals were given special treats"* (E 82354).<sup>2</sup>

Although in some far-off regions the custom of greeting animals was kept alive even in the early 20th century, the answers of young respondents in M.J. Eisen's survey<sup>2</sup> indicate a shift in attitudes. In the 1920s, pupils reported that feeding domestic animals on farms during Christmas Eve was old-fashioned and that this tradition should be abandoned because it was not appropriate for the modern times. There are no references to this tradition in the following decades. It is most likely that the tradition died out due to modernisation efforts, World War II, and the restructuring and forced collectivization of farms that took place in the post-war period. These developments brought along a number of economic, social, and emotional effects as well as the emergence of factory farms in which the human-animal relationship underwent dramatic changes.

As for wild animals, symbolic treats were given to wild birds during the Christmas and New Year's period. Whisks of cereal crops were offered to forest birds, placed on the rooftops, or in a forest clearing during the same period. This custom is directly associated with the need to protect the coming year's crops. In areas where Orthodoxy prevailed, the Day of the Forty Martyrs (9 March) conveyed the same message: small loaves of bread (locally known as *paistekakk* or *vatsk*) were made for birds and laid out on higher spots, magic rituals were performed, and spells were said to keep the birds away from crops and berries for the whole year.

Another significant phenomenon was the ban on hunting and fishing during Christmas, New Year's Eve, and church services. This ban was further upheld by various superstitions which served as a warning about punishments that would befall those who dared to ignore

the custom. Traditions of the 20th century included declaring symbolic peace to wild animals during Christmas, when hunting was stopped, as well as hunting societies and city people bringing hay, corn, and the like, for wild animals and birds living in forests. Awareness campaigns in schools urged students to pay attention to wild animals who had a hard time getting food in winter, and people were encouraged to put food in birdhouses to help birds in their neighbourhood survive the cold season.

It follows from a discussion inspired by the section “Man and animals” (Jaago and Kõiva 2002) that urbanised Estonians and people living on farms in rural areas still differ as to their behaviour with this regard: rural areas, where dog and cats are kept first and foremost for a specific purpose, represent a more utilitarian relationship to these animals.

### **Gifts during calendar celebrations**

New trends appearing in the 20th century are hard to determine. There are families where pets daily join the family at the table with their personal plate. There have also been cases where the tolerance of the local authorities has been tested – the invited guests have taken a dog along and demanded that it have a spot at the celebration table (Interview 2012).

According to archival records, the tradition of giving Christmas and New Year gifts to pets dates back to the 1970s and 1980s. Back then, better food or special treats were given to all animals in the household (from dogs to mice). The difference was that there were no pet departments in general stores, let alone specialised pet shops, during the Soviet period. This meant that animals received homemade gifts or were given squeaky rubber toys, balls, or other suitable things purchased from toy stores as presents. Gifts included food items, such as meat, liver, or canned food meant for human consumption.

Home videos recorded in the early 1990s capture the structure of holiday celebrations as well as their atmosphere and emotions. A home video of the Christmas celebrations of a family in Tartu shows how gifts are given to all family members and the cat: the cat shows keen

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interest in all gifts and their unwrapping, and has to sit pretty to get its gift (Joala family).

The same tendency can be found in many families: pets receive gifts because they seem to be interested in them and appear to expect to get one. Whether as part of cause or effect, people appear to feel the need to treat their family pets as equals (Kõiva 2010):

*“Our small dachshund was the first one waiting for presents by the Christmas tree. It keeps waiting keenly and when several people have already received their gifts, it starts to fidget and tug on my clothes, as if asking, ‘Where is my gift?’ It is on cloud nine when the gift finally arrives. You just cannot keep yourself from smiling when looking at it. What a lively boy, so happy and pleased with himself.”* (Interview 2016).

Celebrating Christmas or New Year’s Eve with friends usually involves exchanging gifts; pets, as family members, are not excluded from gift giving. The smaller the pet (e.g., turtles, fish, mice), the less comprehensible the feedback given in return for a gift, and thus gifts are usually something practical: pet food, a running wheel, a climbing tube, a scratching post, a nest, a cage or something similar. There is always the question of whether to give something homemade or store-bought. Although do-it-yourself culture prevailed during the Soviet era (nest boxes and bird houses were typically made at home) despite the fact that similar items were commercially available (for example, some purchased animal cages and aquariums from stores while others made them at home), the last decade seems to indicate a preference for store-bought items.<sup>3</sup> Still, irrespective of the era, an empty cardboard box makes for a cosy nest, and sticks and stumps, homemade pillows and leftover pieces of synthetic carpeting, are excellent for sharpening one’s nails.

### **Celebrating the special occasions in a pet’s life**

The previous section refers to a number of typical—and multifunctional – gifts. Birthday parties for pets and giving gifts to them were popular during the last, approximately, forty years. These parties were for family, or for family and friends, or for the family and relatives of the pet and pet owners. This list indicates that it is relatives

and friends or, for example, the pet's relatives, or acquaintances who have a dog of the same breed that get invited to such birthday parties. Celebrating a pet's birthday differs from celebrating a child birthday only in details. The difference lies primarily in the fact that while current social norms regard celebrating a child's birthday as a must, celebrating a pet's birthday is seen as voluntary. Statistical data gathered by White demonstrates that some 20 % of pet owners follow the practice.

According to social media pages and websites, birthdays of dogs are celebrated most often and those of cats and other small pets are mentioned considerably less frequently (for example, Dog people of Estonia, Cats and friends, Hansen 2013). The tradition of birthday celebrations emphasises the social connection between humans and animals. In other words, it indicates the extent to which time and emotional, as well as material, resources are invested in a pet, the degree to which a family pet is seen as an equal to humans, and the place it has in the family hierarchy. It is only logical that a high place in the family hierarchy and a deep emotional connection with family members are a guarantee for well-being and equal treatment, the latter including birthday celebrations. Regarding these celebrations, social media data seem to indicate that people view as significant the opportunity these occasions provide to express their creativity as well as the fun and satisfaction derived from organising such events.

Generally, the first birthday in a pet's life is often celebrated as a significant milestone: dogs and cats have become young grown-ups, while small pets have passed the one-third mark of their life. The subsequent birthdays mark how long they have held the status of family member. For example, one dog owner describes birthday celebrations as follows:

*"11-year-old German shepherd: our family has the tradition to celebrate the dog's birthday with special cake and a birthday party on the sea shore"* (social media, personal page 1).

In addition to customary elements determined by humans, another special feature is a customised birthday cake (for dogs) and gifts. As a rule, the cake is savoury and made of ingredients palatable for

the animal, although sometimes store-bought savoury cakes for human consumption are also used (savoury sandwich cakes with meat-based or fish-based filling and garnish). Another important feature is a home-made or special-order cake which tends to underline the closeness of such a relationship as well as the pet's higher status. Pet birthday cake recipes are published in printed and electronic media as well as in social media, in particular in specialised groups, such as Dog people of Estonia, United dogs, etc. It is worth mentioning that recipes for and information on organising pet parties is published in mainstream media as well.

A birthday cake may be decorated with an image (depicting a simple scene, a stylised cartoon character or the birthday animal). A cake may be customised with the name of a birthday dog/cat or birthday wishes (for example, a birthday cake for a dog with the following writing: Bosse 5 yrs). Sometimes a cake comes with candles, but that is a risky practice because inquisitive pets may end up with burnt whiskers as a consequence.

The following example illustrates the fact that birthday celebrations for pets are dictated by their owners who like to draw special attention to the event:

*“To celebrate this special occasion, we made a cake for Betty. We used canned food, cheese and pasta. Betty has not eaten the cake yet. We wanted to give it to her in the morning, but our digital camera batteries were dead and so we decided to wait until the evening to be able to take photos and upload them to kutsu.ee! The birthday girl loved the cake! She put her paws on the table immediately (which she never does)”* (social media, personal page 2).

Dog birthdays are sometimes celebrated in nature, for example, in parks, by the seaside, or elsewhere outdoors, all excellent opportunities to go for a hike or a picnic. A hike in nature brings great enjoyment for all present—humans and animals alike can move around freely, enjoy the company of their kind, and relish food prepared specially for them.<sup>4</sup>

Another type of birthday celebration, slightly different from that described above, is family re-union parties with a pet's relatives, father

or mother, uncles and aunts, brothers and sisters, etc., present. This custom is rooted in a close relationship between the pet's first caretaker and current owner who are connected as relatives or friends of the pet.

*"One of my greatest hobbies is having a dog. Two years ago I got a dachshund we called Sofi. She is very dear to me and I like being with her. Sometimes we visit a good friend of mine who also has a dachshund, called Betty, or another friend whose dachshund is called Pille. But sometimes Sofi's mother Kupi and brother Juss come to visit us"* (EFA, KP 13, 169/70 (1c)).

A community of friends may be formed of people who all own animals of the same breed (Siberian huskies, Alaskan malamutes, Labrador retrievers, Newfoundland dogs, etc.). In this case, it is the activities that dog owners with pets of the same breed—all individuals probably brought the dogs from different countries—enjoy together rather than family ties between their pets which are seen as a connecting factor. This kind of hike or get-together was common as early as during the Soviet era among the members of informal and formal associations for owners of pedigree dogs and play a significant role in traditions of the later period as well.

### **Case study: the birthday party of Laura the dog**

The following is a case study: the celebration of the birthday of Laura the dog in a state institution with 120 employees of whom about 25 are pet owners. Dogs and cats have temporarily stayed in their owners' work premises when waiting to be taken for a vet appointment during the working hours of the institution or in connection with other necessary errands. For some time, the institution has been headed by a person who does not tolerate the presence of pets on institution premises and has repeatedly ordered them to be sent off. However, there are two dogs who used to accompany their owners to work in this institution.

One of the dogs who accompanies its owners to work is a small, bravehearted dog whose owner works in a separate office, and the other one is Laura. Laura's owner started taking the puppy along to work because she did not dare leave her home alone and did not want

to make home visits in order to feed and care for the puppy during the day. The puppy accompanied her owner to work until one year old. After that, she did not accompany her on a daily basis.

Laura's owner kept a diary to record the puppy's development and milestone life events. Following are a few excerpts from the diary, provided with the kind permission of Laura's owner. We will see that a number of minor celebrations were held before Laura turned one year old, as is customary for human babies who have not reached their first birthday yet.

*"Now we have lived together for more than 1 week and have celebrated her 2-month birthday. EQ [= Edgar, my brother] and Kristofer [son of my brother] visited us and brought a gift—candies for cats. [smile]"*

*"Yesterday we celebrated Laura's birthday at work as well. Actually, we celebrated the birthdays of Laura and Rutt [a colleague]—Laura is 2 months old, Rutt a bit older."<sup>5</sup>*

The first year birthday is an important milestone and Laura's owner decided to take a major step towards introducing her pet beyond her department, that is, to the entire institution. The diary provides an overview of how the idea came to be. The author's notes seem to indicate that unspoken rules or potential dislike of animals could not dampen her determination.

*"Today is an important day—Laura's birthday! 1 year old! Congratulations to all of us! [smile] After thinking carefully what would be the best gift for Laura I found—a birthday party! It's not important how many gifts there will be or what will be on the table. The most important thing is that there will be a lot of people.*

*In conclusion—at my workplace will be a huge birthday party for Laura.*

*I am planning to go home during lunch time and bring Laura back with me. After that we will visit all the offices in the building and ask people to the birthday party. It is good plan—Laura can greet all the people in the building twice—when inviting them to the birthday party and then when they come to the party."*

The invitation included the director and administrative staff. No-one declined or refused, and the dog was not sent home (as had happened previously with animals taken to work). Then, a festive birthday party was held, complete with cake, presents, and invited guests. The majority of guests were from the so-called home department, but some people from other departments of the institution showed up as well. The dog was entertained and fed. The cake was a special order, displaying the puppy's name, with one burning birthday candle.

Later, in the offices, heated discussions arose on the topic of whether a pet needs an institutional birthday. Discussions were held in private, among closed groups of colleagues and friends; highly contradictory opinions were voiced. The latter reflected serious as well as humorous responses to this novel approach and to carrying the tradition of birthday celebrations from the human realm over to that of animals. Mostly, the case was approached with humour, but some people were strongly against it (in this case, birthday celebrations were viewed as an event strictly for humans and as one that should not be transferred to non-human beings). Several people did not reveal their stance but announced that they **would not discuss** this question. Resolute answers in the latter vein indicate that the matter is too sensitive for a public discussion and that people prefer not to reveal their personal opinion to avoid being drawn into fierce disputes over conflicting perspectives.

These discussions gave rise to a series of legitimate arguments for and against pet birthdays, with the aim to come up with a definitive answer. Animal anniversaries and animals as equal family members – are they a part of an acceptable future? What is the level of equality people are willing to accept? Which aspects and rights of human life are shared with animals, and which are not? Can we publicly display our relationship with our pet animals, or are these issues for the family and inner circle? Is raising children / puppies an institutional or family concern? Others focused on the ethical aspect: Does everyone need to be involved: those who are allergic to animals, the dog haters and cat lovers, the animal haters? Aren't we, human creatures, endowed with a measure of free will as well as responsibility for both ourselves and animals? Without providing an overview

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of conflicting opinions and arguments due to the limited length of this article, I would like to underline that pets are often allowed a considerable measure of freedom in the inner family circle.

### **Conclusions**

Source materials used in this article do not uniformly uphold the ideas of Tim Ingold. Attitudes towards animals are undergoing major changes: researchers are expected to adhere to stringent restrictions when performing tests on animals; animal protection associations and citizens' initiatives have taken a closer look at the exploitation and catching and selling of wild animals; and conditions in factory farms are disputed. It appears during this shift that attitudes towards and relationships with pets are developing towards greater equality between human and non-human animals. Still, it is an area where conflicting opinions abound and deeply rooted stereotypes are common; coming to an agreement poses a real challenge.

The custom of greeting and wishing animals well during celebrations of the ritual year has undergone major changes: in the early 20th century, this almost fully normative tradition, widely practised in the inner family circle of agrarian communities, was on the decline or had already died out.

As for pets, the overall relationship pattern and their closeness with owners has been taken to an entirely new level in many cultural areas. Unlike before, pets today are not viewed as gifts, but in a changed gift-making culture it is they who have every right to receive toys and presents on a daily basis as well as on special occasions, such as holiday and birthday celebrations.

Public rituals and signs of a liberalisation tendency are increasingly common in Europe, including Estonia. Aire-Piret Pärn, member of the board of NGO Society for Estonian Dog Owners, explained: "Previously, we have voted for the Most Dog-Friendly Deed of the Year, but this time we decided to draw attention to and recognise dogs as full members of our society" (Männi 2014).

An entirely new trend is dog shows and show-competitions where purebred dogs are displayed side by side with mixed-breed mongrels.

Such events are held to collect donations for dog rescue shelters. In addition, a number of public positions have been established which rely on potential benefits which certain characteristics of a specific species can bring. For example, dog-assisted programmes for providing emotional support to people with reading difficulties have been set up in some public libraries (Randoja 2014).

As for Laura, the dog, her birthday is celebrated outside of the institution as well as within the institution because her closest “human relatives” are pet lovers. By now, Laura has become a fully accepted member of the institution and has even celebrated her second birthday in the same formal setting. Last Christmas she also showed off her tricks and skills, participating in an amateur play – as such, she is as much a civil servant as anyone else employed by the institution. However, the main contribution of this small dog girl to the institution’s development is liberalising its policy toward animals and triggering a discussion on the matter.

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### Notes

1. The article does not discuss such topics as death, burial, or commemoration of animals, or associated cemetery culture.
2. In the 1920s, M. J. Eisen carried out nation-wide polls to gather information about major calendar celebrations.
3. Generalisation from social media.
4. At this point, the article does not discuss the menu of humans at such occasions, also more festive or suitable for an outing.
5. A well-known literary scholar in her 60s.

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## The Relationship Between the Folk Calendar and Folk Astronomy Heritage

**Abstract.** Time can be determined by observation of astronomical objects. For determination of time, various phenological signs as well as the position of the heavenly bodies were used.

To tell the time of the day (or night), the most useful constellations were the Great and Little Wain (Big and Little Dipper), Orion and the Sieve. The North Star (*Põhjaneel*—the Northern Nail) was the centre of the clock and due to its immobility, an important landmark. The best known time teller was the Wain, also used for fortune telling and meteorological forecasts. Orion and the Sieve were the winter-time time-telling constellations, providers of omens and marked the start of various types of work on the agricultural calendar.

To this end, the Sieve's position was observed on a number of days dedicated to different saints.

This article is based on materials from the manuscripts of the Estonian archives, digitised and analysed by the Department of Folkloristics of the Estonian Literary Museum.

**Keywords:** celestial clock, folk-astronomy, time.

### Introduction

For timekeeping purposes, a variety of phenological events (patterns and sounds occurring in nature throughout its yearly and daily cycle) as well as other phenomena associated with the movement of celestial bodies, for example, changes in the direction and length of shadows, have been relied on. The most important ones among periodic events determined by celestial bodies were the movement of the sun and the moon, and the latter's phases. In addition, archive records make references to determining times and seasons on the basis of astronomical objects in the night sky. What follows is an interesting description from the late 19th century from Tõstamaa Parish on traditional timekeeping methods.

### How people once used to tell time

*“In olden times, there were no clocks or watches to tell what time of the day it was. Instead, people back then relied on other methods and measures for their timekeeping needs. In the morning when the master wanted to wake up his workfolk, he first stepped outside to make sure of the exact position of the Wolf’s Wain, the Sieve and the Rods. He took a look at each of the most important stars whose location had been carefully taken note of, where the stars were and where they were not. When stars were in their known position, he knew what time of the day it was. He knew whether he had to wake up the servants or whether he could let them sleep a little more because he knew the stars and could tell the time as if he were looking at a clock.*

*But when the sky was cloudy and stars could not be seen, people paid attention to roosters crowing. They carefully listened to this sound over and over again and then they could tell what time it was. In the late morning, people observed the position, height and path of the sun.. Or some stood up and measured the length of their shadow in steps. When a shadow measured eight feet, or three steps in length, it was late morning, the time to take a break! The same was done around noon to see how far the day had progressed. This shadow was also measured in steps, but now their number was smaller! When a shadow measured two steps, it was noon, time to go and have lunch! In the evening, there was still work to be done. Later, people stepped outside to observe stars, to take note of their position and whether it was time to go to bed.*

*Sometimes the sky was thickly overcast with clouds and it was impossible to tell whether it was already late evening or whether the sun had set. At once, a fire was made to see whether its flames were white or red. Red flames meant that the sun had not set yet, while white ones showed that the sun had set and it was late in the evening” (E 20980/1 (3)).*

This record describes precisely the use of astronomical observations for the purposes of timekeeping (a person went outside to see what the position of certain stars was in relation to well-known objects and determined the approximate time of the day on the basis of his

observations). Another characteristic feature was measuring the colour temperature of light using a flame. True, in blueish daylight flames appear red, while in reddish light around the time of the sunset their colour temperature is closer to that of natural light and they appear white.

Yelena Popova has conducted in-depth research about various time-keeping practices among the Bessermans and Udmurts, and because many of those methods were used in Estonia, too (Popova 2006), they will not be touched upon in this paper in greater detail for the purposes of saving space.

For us humans, time is a smoothly flowing variable. To be able to measure it in one way or another, we can rely exclusively on periodic changes occurring at fixed intervals. The apparent movement of the sun divides the 24-hour day into day and night, while the cyclical phases of the moon have given rise to the unit of 'month', which is approximately 29.5 twenty-four hour days in length. The period it takes the earth to complete its orbit once around the sun is one year, and the tilt of the earth's axis causes the seasons to change. It is likely that in earlier times the practice of keeping a calendar was not simply a rigorous practice of counting individual days, but rather a more prolonged, fluid process. Jakob Hurt, the initiator of the grand campaign for collecting Estonian folklore and author of the first monograph on Estonian folk astronomy, explains in his "Eesti astronoomia" that the word *year* is a shortened form of *ajastaig* (from time to time), which basically means 'periodic time' (Hurt 1899).

People used to divide time into shorter periods—weeks—on the basis of lunar phases. Currently, we use a solar calendar in which a month has four weeks and a week has seven days, associated with the seven planets known in antiquity. The system includes the four major phases of the moon. However, several written sources seem to indicate that a calendar month consisting of 30 days and divided into six weeks of five days was once used. It is possible that Winter Peak Day, when the Milky Way is in its highest position in the sky, was used to link the lunar calendar to the solar calendar (Eelsalu 1981, 1979), and that early chronological systems included a 13th month, characteristic of the lunisolar calendar, to be able to combine

a calendar which was based on the cycles of the moon with one that relies on the earth's revolving around the sun.

Shield clocks were used in Estonia as early as in the 19th century and calendars were put into circulation in the first quarter of the 18th century. Although these developments had rendered traditional timekeeping methods obsolete and marginal by the time enthusiasts started to form folklore collections, hand-written archive materials still contain bits and pieces of relevant information. These describe a few major constellations as well as how stars were observed and used to predict weather, yield, and the future. There is a description of the personal experience of Daniel Pruhl (1840—1912) from Northern Estonia, who had established a library association in his home village of Metsiku.

*"It is said that ancient Estonians knew a lot about stars, and I believe that because traces of it have survived to this day, although lately this knowledge is fading into oblivion.*

*When I was a boy, my father used to take me outside on clear nights to watch the stars. He told me much about the stars and showed me different ones. The North Star was the one he used to keep track of the movement of stars. These were the Rods, the Wain and then the Sieves. He used them to measure time. He always knew, looking at the stars, what time of the day it was (for about fifty years, he had worked as a beer brewer at Palmse Manor and it was there that he learned to determine time. Nobody kept track of the times of the day in the parish). When he was far from home and the night was clear, he knew exactly what time it was and in which direction our home was. He used to predict the weather by the stars. He said that when stars were running, there would be a strong wind. A white circle around a big star meant clouds and snowfall" (E 25036/7).*

One of the most common methods used to keep track of time was to watch how shadows changed. One had to pay attention to the shadow's length as well as the direction in which it was cast. Archive sources indicate that simple sundials were built. Those tending to livestock in pastures had to be able to determine when midday and the time to bring the animals home were. Herding livestock was

typically the responsibility of older children. These children had no clocks or watches. They measured time using the shadow cast by the sun as described in the following excerpt.

*“Children herding livestock measured the shadow cast by the sun to determine what time of the day it was. On sunny days, they marked out their own shadow and measured it in feet. Around 12 o’clock the shadow was four feet long, while at 11 o’clock it was five feet long. The length of the shadow was measured constantly to determine when the midday break time was for livestock.*

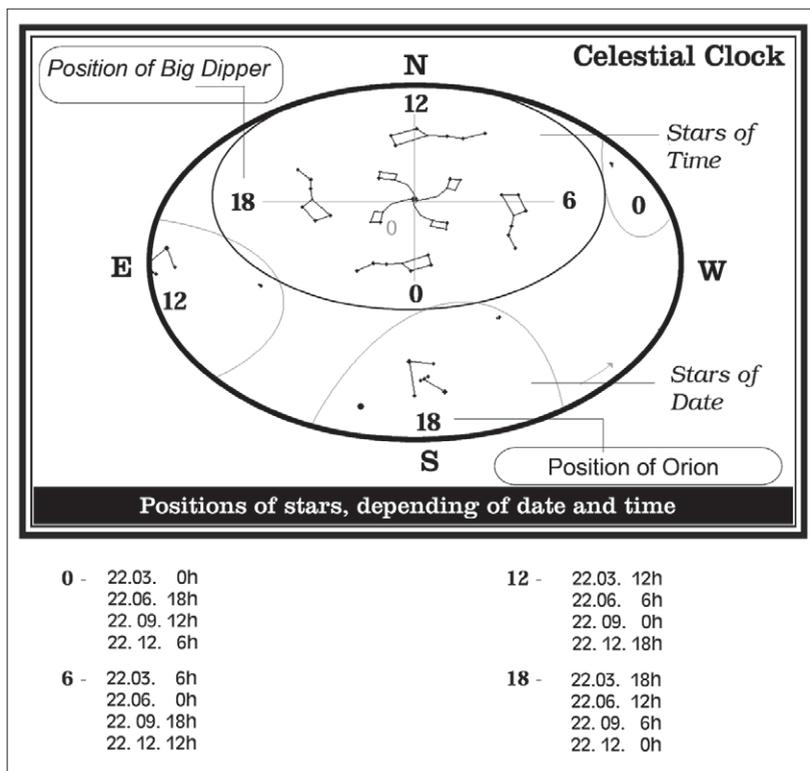
*As early as in the last century, all children herding livestock in Iisaku Parish knew how to keep track of time by measuring the length of their shadow” (RKM II 415, 135/6 (8)).*

### **Telling time by the stars**

The stars typically used for telling time were the so-called clock stars—the Great Wain (Big Dipper) and the North Star. In a 24-hour period, all the stars in the sky complete approximately a full circle around the North Star. In the equatorial coordinate system used in astronomy, one of the coordinates is determined by a star’s distance from the Vernal Equinox. Similarly, it is possible to tell time by the position of the Great Wain in the sky, keeping in mind that this “clock” becomes fast by four minutes every day, which means that more precise timekeeping using this method is a rather experimental procedure. It is vital to use a fixed observation point as well as specific landmarks (a roof’s edge, a large tree growing at a distance, etc.) to be able to correctly measure the movement of stars and determine their position in relation to these objects.

In addition to the clock stars, which could be used for the purpose of timekeeping all year round (the Great Wain and North Star), there were also the so-called calendar stars (used to tell time as well as determine a longer period of time), or winter-time clock stars. Among the most important ones were Orion and the Sieve (the Pleiades stars). Next follows an image of the dial of a star clock.

The North Star is the brightest star in the Lesser Wain. It is in the centre of the dial and a vital landmark because of its fixed position.



The traditional method for finding the somewhat brighter North Star in the sky is to draw a line between the pointer stars of the Great Wain and extend it about five times. Another passage describing how stars were taught about was recorded by Martin Luu from Central Estonia, a local parish secretary, who described how the Great Wain was used to tell time.

*“Next time, when Karel was once again watching stars and I was with him, I had him explain to me about the North Star and the North Sieve. Because I had memorized his instructions, he said: “He positively knows!” He showed me the position of the Great Wain in the sky. While the pole of the Great Wain revolves, changing its position after a certain time, the Lesser Wain revolves differently, ending up in another position” (RKM II 223, 25/31 (1)).*

A similar timekeeping method was recorded in Kodavere (a parish by Lake Peipus, Eastern Estonia).

*“In olden times, people had no clocks, so they determined whether it was morning or not by listening to the rooster’s crowing and observing the stars in the sky. Each star was named differently. The Wain [was watched], whether its one end pointed to the north and the other to the south. Like that, one could tell time right away. I remember that when my father was alive, there was no clock in the house, but they knew how to keep track of time. My father was also working on the lake. This means that they went out to the lake around three o’clock in the morning”* (RKM II 211, 258/9 (6)).

In winter, the Sieve, Orion and Sirius were also used to keep track of time and organise various types of work that needed to be done on a farm.

*“Back in the old days when people had no clocks, time was told by winter stars: when the Sieve was low in the sky, people used to say that soon it would be light outside, but when the Sieve was high in the sky, people used to say that there was still much time until it gets light outside. Similarly, they observed the Rods (Orion) which were said to look like flails used for rye threshing”* (H II 16, 591/2 (2)).

*“When the Sieve and the Flail were at a certain height in the sky, it was time to start with threshing”* (E X 34 (156)).

The Great and Little Cross (Cygnus and Delphinus) were described for the first time in the 6th century by St. Gregorius from Tours.

His *De cursu stellarum* from the year 573 gave instruction for monks how to observe the sky and determine the correct prayer times. These constellation names are widely spread throughout European folk astronomy, but I couldn’t find this particular use for them in the Estonian case.

### **Calendar stars**

In addition to keeping track of time, such winter-time constellations as the Sieve and Orion were used to keep the agricultural calendar. Vestring’s dictionary from the early 18th century includes the following

saying: *When the Sieve rises at dawn, oxen are sent out to plough.* According to Heino Eelsalu's interpretation, this saying dates back more than a couple of thousand years (Eelsalu 1985), provided that it is an accurate definition typical of early astronomy, because currently this event occurs in the middle of the summer period. However, there are other similar statements that can be traced back to significantly more recent periods, and the saying has been used as a proverb in media oriented at farmers even in the late 20th century. Elsewhere the saying appears in a slightly different form and has been modified, for example, to *When the Sieve sets at dawn on St. Andrew's Day* (30 November), *oxen are sent out to plough on St. George's Day* (23 April) EKS 4° 5, 824 (8) or *When the Sieve sets at dawn on St. Martin's Day and the weather is mild, the new year brings cold and snow, and oxen are sent out to plough on the Ploughing Day* (ERA II 178, 484/5 (52)).

Also, the Sieve was relied on for meteorological forecasts.

*"The Sieve appears in October, rarely in the last days of September. [The Sieve rises from the east and moves to the west.] When the Sieve disappears into red afterglow by 25 March according to the old [calendar], spring will be warm. When the Sieve goes by red afterglow, taking a higher northern route, spring will be cold"* (RKM II 254, 426/9 (5)).

The movement of the Sieve stars as well as their rising and setting was carefully observed because this information was relied on to determine the start of the period for agricultural activities and to predict yield.

*"When the Sieve disappears at dawn on St. Catherine's Day, it will appear at dusk on St. Mary's Day, and this means a fat year"* (E 34812 (1)).

"When the Sieve appears at dusk on St. Mary's Day, this means a year with a good crop. In the evening, around dusk, when stars start to appear in the sky, right away the Sieve cluster and how far it has come on its long winter journey can be seen. In late autumn-early winter, the Sieve cluster appears in the early morning sky, to 11 o'clock. It is used to tell time and the height at which the sun is around 11 o'clock in the summer.

*"It is not every year that the Sieve cluster appears at dusk in spring, that is, by St. Mary's Day. An afterglow can be seen two hours after the sun has set. The height of the afterglow measures in the direction of the sunset some ten fathoms from the horizon. When the afterglow is light, the light is violet. When the weather is clear, the light appears yellowish"* (RKM II 133, 517/8 (a)).

The previous description is similar to the following one.

*"In olden times people said about the Sieve in the sky that when the Sieve appears at dawn by St. Mary's Day, spring will be early. But it seems that every year it tends to coincide with dawn and spring is still the same"* (KKI 39, 312/3 (33)).

Another important event for hunters and fishers was the appearance of the moon and the Sieve side by side. In highly favourable years the moon may even overlap with the Sieve. This marked the high period for preparing traps and guns for the hunting season.

*"Fishing nets are prepared when the moon and Sieve are side by side"* (E, StK 30, 125 (5)).

This favourable period is mentioned even in the 19th century. This is the period for making decoy birds as well as fixing hunting and fishing gear. These activities probably featured elements originating from earlier practices of ritual magic.

*"When the moon and the Sieve stars happen to appear side by side, clean and fix your gun and hunting gear, grouse decoys and fishing hooks, tip-up strings and laces. And adjust and repair your basket traps, fishing nets and other things because this will help you catch many fish and wild birds"* (H II 40, 320 (1376)).

### **The Milky Way**

The Milky Way and the winter peak: In the old timekeeping system, the Milky Way was primarily a sign of the end and beginning of the year. In the Estonian folk calendar Winter Peak Day (Feb. 12) should fall on the date when winter has reached its peak and is retreating—the weather starts to become warmer and the arrival of spring approaches.

Today the real peak of winter has shifted, due to the precession of the spring point to the end of January or beginning of February (dated as January 14 on the calendar, while August Wilhelm Hupel and Ferdinand Johann Wiedemann, for example, have erroneously dated it to March 12). The winter peak used to be an important marker in the old calendar system, a sign by which the lunar calendar could be synchronised with the real year.

It is not unnecessary to reiterate that the motif of cutting down the world tree has often been connected with the winter peak (Kuperjanov 2002).

### Other stars used for timekeeping

Several stars and constellations mentioned by name in sources from various Estonian archives were used for the purposes of timekeeping. Following is a short list of them.

*Agu, Aotäht, Ehatäht, Koidutäht*—Venus appears as a bright star in the morning or evening sky, and fits the description of the Rooster's Star. The light at dawn or dusk was not considered to be good for health and was feared to a certain extent.

*Jõulutähed*—the Christmas Stars, Stars of the Auriga constellation (Hurt), sometimes Cassiopeia.

*Jõulutäht*—the Christmas Star, Capella

*Jõulusõel*—the Christmas Sieve (Livlõnder), probably St. Catherine's Sieve— $\chi$ /h Persei

*Kadrisõel*—St. Catherine's Sieve,  $\chi$ /h Persei

These constellations associated with Christmas are positioned high up in the sky during the holiday period.

*Koot and Reha, Vardad, Koodid*—the Flail and the Rake, the Rod Stars, Orion. The name refers to rye threshing in late autumn. Due to relatively cool, short summers, there was not enough time for rye crops to become fully dry and ripe. As such, harvested crops were dried in a threshing barn, and grains were separated from their husks only

later. The Orion constellation marks the suitable period for this farm work, and its traditional name refers to agricultural tools used for this task.

*Kuketäht, Kikkatäht*—the Rooster’s Star, the brightest star visible in the morning sky after the rooster’s crowing at midnight. Likely any star that appears brightest in the morning sky.

*Koivalge täht*—a star visible at dawn or dusk, probably Mercury.

*Kuusulane*—a bright star or rather a planet close to the moon, used for making predictions and forecasts.

*Küünlakuu täht*—the Candlemonth Star, Deneb,  $\alpha$  Cygni (Wiedemann). During this period, is positioned in the far north.

*Küünlapäevatähed*—the Candlemass Stars—Stars of the constellation Perseus.

*Näiritähd*—the New Year’s Star, Cassiopeia (Wiedemann), consists of three Christmas Stars and one New Year’s Star. During these celebrations, the Candlemas Stars and the New Year’s Star are high up in the sky.

*Orjatäht*—the Slave’s Star, or Sirius, but it could be any other bright star upon the appearance of which slaves undertaking corvée labour were allowed to return to their homes.

*Paastumaarja täht*—Albireo  $\beta$  Cygni, an ancient celebration dedicated to women, and in more modern rituals associated with the 25th of March.

*Paastutähd*—the Fast Stars—Cygnus constellation (Wiedemann, Hurt). In March, the Cygnus constellation rises straight from the north.

*Puhtetäht*—a star with a reddish hue, rising some three hours before it gets light outside. Possibly Mars or Jupiter appearing in the morning sky.

*Vastlatähd*—Cassiopeia, marks the day prior to the great fast, a pagan festival celebrating fertility.

## Conclusions

Religious movements drawing on motions of the moon and sun and their effect started to emerge in the early 20th century. Many groups in the present New Age movement rely on the phases of the moon or worship the sun. Also, planting calendars, highly popular among people, are based on lunar phases. It was believed that the moon and sun play a major role in healing rituals and prophylactic magic, both still practised. Constellations and stars were used for timekeeping as well as for making predictions and forecasts.

Regular observations of the Sieve, especially during certain days in the autumn and winter period, dedicated to different saints, was one of the most widely accepted methods for making weather forecasts and predictions about the ploughing period.

The naming of several constellations after various calendar celebrations was inspired by their position in the sky during these events. For example, the Fast Stars, or the Cygnos constellation, rise straight from the north in March; the Candlemas Stars and the New Year's Star are high up in the sky during celebrations of the same name; Orion is associated with rye threshing in late autumn, being named, in Estonian, after tools used for this work. Written records from the 19th and 20th century indicate that people relied heavily on constellations in planning the fishing and hunting season or various agricultural work in making various forecasts and predictions as well as in determining the correct time for various celebration and festivities.

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## **Sacred Rituals and Calendar Festivities in the Annual Cycle of Udmurts**

**Abstract.** This article examines the interaction between Udmurt traditional rituals and newly imposed Soviet festivities. Udmurt sacred religious rituals have been modified during the Soviet period and official events have absorbed traditional elements. The author concentrates on the peculiarities of transformation from one status of the festivals to another and considers the reasons for transformation and the methods of transitions. The author also examines the origin of new types of festive activities, which developed their internal structure under persistent external influences.

**Keywords:** calendar events, culture, sacred rituals, Soviet period, the Day of the October Socialist Revolution, tradition, Udmurts, winter solstice.

### **Introduction**

The changing role of religion, modern social processes, and rituals which have been invented and modified to fit with the present time all incorporate a renewal of ritual significance. The question is whether during this period of incorporation religious values truly have been replaced by the new secular values.

I begin with a short review of some rituals of the southern Udmurt diaspora groups. This review includes an interpretation of the ritual life of the rural inhabitants and an overview of the calendar rituals and customs that have always permeated and are still permeating the values of their way of life. Among these diaspora groups there are also those who have left their villages during the last decades and are living now in urban areas. These people remain deeply engaged with the ritual life of their native villages.

This article is based on long-term field research as well as several short interviews of the diaspora members during the summer of 2015.

It is well known that life in the countryside is more conservative and that villagers preserve traditional culture better than urbanites. The case of the southern Udmurt diaspora confirms this thesis.<sup>1</sup> Various modernizing processes were carried out during the Soviet period, having touched all Russian provinces, including small villages and ethnic groups. The elaboration of the new ideology in Soviet Russia did not develop naturally. New historical events, rituals, and customs were introduced in the life of all the Soviet citizens, and many of them were created as part of the modernization process. People felt that they needed to be tolerant towards the new ideology and to accept almost all the innovations, since the Soviet system had been fighting for it and persecuted those who did not conform. However, the extent of the implementation of new ideas though was not the same everywhere. This meant, first, that not all innovations were entirely accepted, adopted and thus resulted in real change. Second, several parallel inventive initiatives appeared; they were working towards a merging of the old values with new trends. As a result, it may be better to say that Udmurt people neither adopted nor rejected entirely the innovations introduced by the Soviet propaganda, plans, and programs; they instead created a multifaceted festive system.

Most of significant events of the new system coincided with the main Udmurtian traditional religious and ritual undertakings. It was impossible to give up all aspects of the familiar feasts and rituals and turn immediately to new festive days and practices. New ways of coming out from those exceptional circumstances were being invented, and these ways would not be overtly opposed to the new rules and at the same time would not exclude old traditions. Beginning in the 1930s, one of the tasks of the Udmurt traditional society was to preserve the old festivals and to include the Soviet innovations.

I will consider here two types of festive events: (1) traditional sacred rituals linked with specific dates, which co-existed with the newly introduced Soviet model of celebration (autumn commemorative rituals and the October Day), and (2) new festive days, which were introduced during the Soviet period and acquired their own symbolic meaning. I will reveal the motives of cultural transformations, the methods of transitions, and the process of forming new festive events.

### Autumn festivals: interaction of official and traditional features

The first type of festival event, the most important one in the new Soviet official calendar, is the October Revolution Day or the October feast on the 7th of November.<sup>2</sup>

In the past, this was the time of the autumn ritual prayers, followed by a festive meal. Kinship groups celebrated the end of the harvest (*juon* or *jumshan*), and it was organized as follows: every family prepared food and beverages, and they gathered in the sacred sanctuary (*Kuala*) by the oldest kinship member to pray and to worship the kinship protector-progenitor. Afterwards the relatives ate and drank, and the gathering was accompanied by music, dances, and songs.

One group celebrated for a few hours with a definite family, and then all of the guests and participants moved to the next house, to another kinship member's family. Eating and drinking, music, and entertainment continued the same way, so that the feast moved from one house to another throughout the night, lasting until the morning. If there were many kinship families, the celebration continued the following evening with the same sequence of eating and drinking, music, and entertainment.

This festival experienced significant changes during the Soviet period. It partly merged with the new festive actions of November 7. (For much of the 20th century it was a national holiday—a day off.) At the very beginning, when the Soviet life style was first incorporated and the *village clubs* (*selskiy klub* in Russian; *shudon / jumshan korka / jurt* in Udmurt) or the *houses of culture* (*dom kulturny* in Russian) were built up, new events were arranged in new public places. As I have already mentioned, many new events coincided in time with the traditional rituals, and the authorities worried that people would not attend the official celebrations. Nonetheless, perhaps by the habitual way to participate together in the common rituals or being forced and obliged by the Soviet authorities, almost all villagers took part in the Soviet festivals. The detailed scenario of this October celebration had been developed by the 1930s. In the evening, a political lecture and report of the *kolkhoz* leaders

on the work plan was organized.<sup>3</sup> Afterwards there was a concert of amateur theatricals or folklore groups, which was much more favourable part of the event.

When this Soviet-sponsored event was accomplished, traditional folk acting (*shudon*) started right there: villagers participated in folk dancing and singing in the *houses of culture*. A festive meal was prepared in the first half of the day, in advance, in people's homes. Thus, villagers could easily turn from one action to another. After this common part of the festivity, each kinship group went to celebrate *juon / jumshan* in their families. The feasts in the houses continued during whole night and ended in the next morning, as they had in former times. But the first religious part of this ritual with prayers was not performed anymore; it was organized beforehand secretly in the family of the oldest kinship member and the ritual food was divided among all relatives, including the children.

Interestingly, here we have two conflicting parts of the same old ritual. Due to the fact that they were forbidden, the religious customs became concealed. Hence another part of this ritual developed and was in progress. Furthermore, the gathering of all people in the village club raised the spirits of the community members and inspired them emotionally. This was no longer a religious event, yet the villagers came together as they had for the traditional rituals. Thus, the Soviet event did not disrupt the traditional feast completely.

One should take into account the fact that the Soviet October Day and the *juon / jumshan* feasts were not celebrated together with children. In the middle of the twentieth century, the celebration of the October feast among the schoolchildren and the celebration for adults were held separately. For the children it might be organized at schools as well as in the village clubs on the eve of the actual holiday, and the Soviet event for adults was held on the following day, as described above.

As time went by, in the 1950—1960s, the autumn prayer and the *juon / jumshan* feast were again modified. Some days or even weeks before the October Day, the religious ritual was conducted secretly by the kinship group in one of the families. The dates for the second part of the autumn traditional festival *juon / jumshan*—feast, food,

and entertainment—were moved to the October Revolution Day. At this time, it was not only celebrated religiously and exclusively for the kinship groups; there now could be some friends and colleagues present at the feast.

The next obvious changes began in the 1980s. They are explained by migration processes of the villagers to urban areas. The migrants maintained relations with the so-called “small homeland” and actively participated in the ritual life of their home villages. These “urbanized” Udmurts could not go home any time they wanted or when it would be suitable and necessary for the villagers. Certainly, they would visit their families in the village and keep doing it now. Since their visits have been irregular and most of the times occasional, this affected the traditional ritual calendar and contributed to the formation of the new one. This new calendar is used not only by the urbanized Udmurts but also by the villagers, who also have to adapt to the new situation.

Ceremonial events dedicated to the deceased and public commemorations became the focal point of the Udmurt calendar, where the influence of the urbanized style of life is very explicit. These are the most conservative aspects of the culture and also most prominent and well-established within the traditional Udmurt calendar. These commemorative events take place strictly in autumn and spring periods, and they now are firmly established in the new festive system. For the emigrants, the best opportunity to go home and pray for the dead and commemorate them was during the October revolution feast, which allowed for some days off. The urbanized relatives came to their kinsfolk to visit a cemetery and ritually “feed” the ancestors. Most of the villagers tried to avoid performing the commemoration ritual two times (once with the family and once again with the visitors). They had to wait for the relatives to arrive from the cities and organize the ritual with them. Thus the date of this ritual merged gradually with the date of the October revolution.

### **Transformation of the winter solstice celebration**

The next example is the ritual transformation within the period of the winter solstice. According to Udmurt traditions, this was the time when the great winter prayer ceremonies with special offerings

were held; the ritual was named *the winter praying* (*tol vös*) or some variation thereof (*uram vös, mör vös*), and it lasted for a week (being in line with the solar calendar). Udmurt sacred places usually are situated far from any settlements, and in winter they are beyond reach because of the abundant snow. Therefore, winter praying took place in the streets. In the past, Udmurts made animal sacrifices, cooked meat and soup or cereal, and all the dwellers of a village and its neighbourhood prayed together. When the religious part of the festivity was finished, people would dance and sing at small special places in the streets. By the end of the Soviet era, this worship had greatly diminished. People could no longer pray in the streets. This was possible only in some small villages consisting of one kinship group, where its members had no reason to fear that anybody would report their religious activity to the authorities.

Also by the end of the Soviet era, the New Year was celebrated according to the Gregorian calendar, and people used this opportunity for their own purposes. Beforehand they had prayed in their sacred sanctuaries (*Kuala*) or in houses; and afterwards they celebrated the New Year according to the Soviet rules (Minniakhmetova 2014: 232). In its revived form the usual New Year celebration named “in a new fashion” (*vyl sjamen*) received some sacred features: people used the ritual food and behaved in the traditional manner, appropriate for this kind of situation. In the last decades, a new trend in celebrating the New Year developed: after praying and eating the sacred food at home, the youth gathered and celebrated it separately, without their parents and other adults. Recently, some efforts were made to conduct the ritual of winter solstice according to the old calendar and not to unify it with the celebration of the New Year according to the official calendar.

### Conclusions

What do these two cases reveal? In the first case, both the traditional and official parts of the festive day were represented as celebrating of the October anniversary and were not persecuted. Celebration of the October Revolution Day in the Soviet style and the traditional *juon / jumshan* feast occurred on the same day, but these two events differed one from another. Hence, they could assimilate and assume a new identity. Although they each have undergone changes, these

traditional rituals still keep their names and the traditional ritual actions have managed to survive, at least partly.

The sacred ritual on the winter solstice represents a different situation. Being a purely religious event, it had to be completely destroyed and abolished by the atheistic Soviet regime. Despite all fights against it, people tried to find any surviving rituals and adapt themselves to the changed situation. The New Year celebration from the night from the 31st of December to the 1st of January was a new custom, but it was taken seriously and thus gained importance. Even sacred food from the previous ritual was allowed to be used during this new event. If people prepared new food expressly for this event, they still prayed in their houses for the successful New Year and afterwards ate and drank. This is a case of sacralisation of the official event; it included the elements of the traditional ritual of celebrating the great day that is considered as the beginning of the New Year.

There might be various reasons for the transformations, innovations, and preservation of the tradition. The main reasons were the fear of losing customs and responsibility for the tradition, and these reasons guided and inspired people's actions. Fear for the future and the belief that the universal order will be destroyed if old rules would not be fulfilled are still valid beliefs today.<sup>4</sup>

In the present article, I considered the cultural phenomenon that originated on the border of two types of culture: the traditional, collective culture, on the one hand, and the ideologically oriented, invented culture, on the other hand. I tried to show that ancestral and communal relations are the most topical and meaningful elements of the Udmurt culture, and that traditional culture penetrates the present-day reality as its organic component.

### **Acknowledgments**

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### **Notes**

1. The sacred rituals of the Udmurts were explored by many scholars, f.e. Vereschagin 1886; Pervukhin 1888; Smirnov 1890; Wichmann 1894; Harva 1914;

Vladykin 1994; Khristolyubova 1995; Sadikov 2012. Their studies are used in the present research as a basis for revealing elements of archaic customs, still existing.

2. The name of the festival refers to the anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, celebrated on October 25, according to the Julian calendar, and November 7, according to the Gregorian calendar, which was introduced in the Soviet Russia in 1918.

3. *Kolkhoz* is the Russian abbreviation for the collective farming organization.

4. I would like to illustrate this thesis with an example. In 1996, young people appeared at the ritual *Yshiyak Vös* held in the sacred place without appropriate clothes; the villagers regarded it as the irresponsible behaviour, which could destroy the ideals and lead to the situation when the prayer would not be successful. Perhaps this kind of the ritual behaviour evaluation is rooted in mythology. Udmurts have an etiologic myth concerning the origin of the world. The earth and the sky were very close to each other. Once, a woman laid the stained dirty napkins by her child on the sky to get them dried. The sky was insulted by this action and thus it decided to move away from the earth. As claimed by the myth, one can see that unclean things played a significant role in the creation of the world. Uncleanliness destroys the world order; this notion is reflected in many ritual regulations of Udmurts.

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## **The Family and the Ritual Year in the Modern Lithuanian City**

**Abstract.** Using the results of fieldwork conducted in Vilnius in 2011—2014, the author of the article aims to present tradition as perceived by a present-day Vilnius citizen and to analyse which festivals of the life- and year- cycles are viewed as traditional. How tradition is observed when making preparations for the most important celebration of the year, Christmas, is another issue touched upon. The author reaches the conclusion that the concept of tradition is contextual. Its content can be seen in a different way not only by an ethnologist and a person distant from the academic sphere respectively, but also by the informant himself or herself as they seek to define the concept of tradition, when speaking about traditions observed by their own family and when singling out the festivals which are traditionally observed.

**Keywords:** family, Lithuania, ritual year, town, tradition.

### **Introduction**

The concept of tradition, which in ethnology is at times referred to as a synonym for culture, as related to the transfer and transmission of culture plays an important role in most branches of the humanities and social sciences (Seymour-Smith 1986: 280), or at least is perceived as a phenomenon performing a series of culture-enhancement-related functions. These functions are: introducing the adoption of cultures; acting as a vehicle for the storage of information and cultural values and for their transfer from generation to generation: being a means of people's socialization and enculturation, thus carrying out the selection of morals and values endorsed by the community (Sadokhin 2002: 148). Some ethnologists also use the concept of traditional culture which mostly encompasses cultural content and values passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth or on a territorial basis (Dobrowolski 1987: 261—277).

However, problems faced by present-day society in the sphere of knowledge transfer indicate that in times of rapid and significant changes, the transfer of culture from generation to generation is becoming increasingly complex (Eriksen 2004), whereas from the point of view of present-day ethnologists, tradition, regarded as a process encompassing cultural actors, always implies the possibility of modification of what has already been transferred through time and space (Kockel 2006: 100). Frequently scholars no longer associate this concept with opposition to modernity (Anttonen 2005: 27–40). “Socialistic”, “communistic” or even “new life traditions” initiated in Lithuania in Soviet times, were intended to replace old rituals of religious origin (Černeckis 1961) and the concept of tradition itself.

The academic research of historians, folklorists and ethnologists of the past few decades is mostly dominated by “invented”, “modern”, “changing” and even “instant” concepts of tradition (cf. Hobsbawm, Ranger 1983; Hatanaka 2002, Anttonen 2005; Hugoson 2006; Jonutyte 2011), which partially or fully dismiss the semantics of the Latin word *traditio*. On the other hand, the concept of tradition is important to both the researcher and the subject of his or her research. However, today it often loses the sense of a long-standing phenomenon which is passed down from generation to generation, while the status of tradition as a value is brought to the fore. The researcher of modern rituals, Catherine Bell, claims that a ritual which is not in any way associated with tradition is perceived as being abnormal, inauthentic and unappealing to the majority of people (Bell 1997: 45). Traditions also create the sense of bonding, just like those of dependence and restriction, and help members of a society perceive the value of unity in communal life (Hatanaka 2002: 68).

In this article I make an attempt to present tradition as perceived by a present-day Vilnius citizen and to analyse which festivals of the life- and yearcycles are viewed as traditional, and how tradition is observed when making preparations for the most important celebration of the year—Christmas. The article covers several inquiries based on ethnographic materials drawn from field research in the city of Vilnius in 2011–2014 based on self-designed questionnaires on the subjects of *Tradition in the 21st Century* and *December Presents and Festive Food*. Young Vilnius dwellers in the 20–30-year

old age group answered questions from the first questionnaire in semi-structured interviews, whereas the latter questionnaire was also offered to representatives of the older generation, in an attempt to disclose the historical perspective.

### **Cultural peculiarities of the city of Vilnius**

Inquiries into urban culture in Lithuanian ethnology have not yet been frequent or intense. The country's largest cities in particular have attracted very little attention from ethnographers. Comparative research carried out by the author in 2015 in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, and in Vilnius revealed that the festive life of present-day Vilnius is unusual and, in contrast to that of Sofia, manifests no citified particularity.<sup>1</sup>

Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa, who analysed the situation in the city in the first half of the 20th century, wrote that “Vilnius has old traditions which are inseparable from rural life and which have been for years on end passed down from father to sons and grandsons and from mother to daughters... Vilnius is located near the route from West to East and therefore finds itself on the crossroads of important powers, with emerging new layers and declining old ones, and alongside them indigenous, natural elements exist as a unique imprint—languages, forms and colours which emerge in each separate environment”. The ancestors of Vilnius citizens “brought their own elements of tradition which melted here into a colourful ball rolling smoothly with unusual rites through all the seasons of the year” (Znamierowska-Prüfferowa 2009: 137). However, from the historical perspective, it is impossible today to identify stable and unchanged traditions in the calendar and cycle-of-life rituals observed by Vilnius citizens and passed down from generation to generation. Most inhabitants of the city can only indicate one or two generations of their ancestors who lived in Vilnius. During the last century the ethnic composition of Vilnius citizens has been subject to constant change. Although the majority of the population of Vilnius are ethnic Lithuanians,<sup>2</sup> in the past the city was an important cultural centre of Polish, Jewish, Belarusian and Russian people. Even today, as Yves Plasseraud has noticed, the citizens of Vilnius have not long ago re-located to the city from rural areas (Plasseraud 2006: 125—126),

therefore the attitude towards tradition, which is subjected to analysis, in a way reflects the situation nationwide.

### **The modern concept of tradition as perceived by young citizens of Vilnius**

In 1989 Anne Eriksen, investigating the perception of tradition in Norway, surveyed two groups of respondents—those born before 1915 and those born after 1960. There were significant differences in respondents' answers. Older respondents viewed tradition as a superior value uniting the individual with society, whereas the younger generation perceived tradition as a positive value more on a private and personal level (Eriksen 1994: 14—15). This research prompted the analysis of how young people today interpret tradition in Lithuania. They had to answer the question, whether the processes of intense combatting of religious tradition in Soviet times and even framed meanings of *negative tradition* have had any impact on the notion of modern tradition. With a view to disclosing the notion of tradition as perceived by the young people of Lithuania, respondents were asked to compare the concepts of *custom* and *tradition*, express their opinion on the size of the social communities which support them and, in addition, consider the value of customs and traditions and their continuity in the perspective of time.

The research uncovered the distinction between the scientific idea and the opinion expressed by young people which is obvious in present-day culture. It also revealed different definitions of customs and traditions. There are also differences in the explanations as to the size of the social community behind them. In the answers submitted by young people family- and nation-related interpretations of traditions can be distinguished. For most respondents traditions are first and foremost coupled with the moral imperatives inherited from their parents and grandparents. A few young Vilnius citizens are apt to associate traditions with the nation and state, claiming that traditions unite the nation and make it stand out from other nations. This is reminiscent of the concepts of the great and little tradition coined by Robert Redfield, where the great tradition is perceived as an elite one passed down in the written form, whereas the little tradition is viewed as a folk one passed down by word of mouth.

The interaction and mutual influence of these traditions is undisputed (Redfield 1956).

Analysis of the perception of the continuity of traditions over a period of time revealed much less diversity of opinions. Most respondents take the view inherited from their grandparents and parents with regard to the stability of a tradition or a custom in the perspective of time and the majority of respondents make no doubt about the fact that both traditions and customs are passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth or by observing and participating in or being involved in the activity. In all cases the family is the primary environment where the process is taking place. As distinguished by the respondents, there are several ways of tradition transfer within a family. They include: 1) grandparents—parents—children; 2) parents—children; 3) grandparents—grandchildren; 4) involving the extended family, and 5) wider circle of people—the society. Hence, it has become obvious that a family custom or tradition could be understood as being more archaic, yet on the other hand, less stable than a national tradition observed in a wider social environment. Nonetheless, in most cases a custom or a tradition is associated with its continuity in time, and very few methods of introduction of new traditions are indicated. The overall majority of respondents believe that a custom or a tradition is verbally passed down from generation to generation within a family. The Internet and the rest of mass media have only been indicated as an auxiliary source of information. Hence, it could be stated that although scholars have modified their standpoint as regards traditions and perceive them as dynamic and ever-changing values, the attitude of young people towards traditions in the perspective of time has remained rather stable (Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2012: 206—217).

### **Tradition in the contexts of contemporary calendric and life cycle festivals**

Attempting to verify the rather unexpected results obtained in the survey of young people, the author set out to identify which traditions of the cycle of the year and family festivals are taken over from parents and grandparents or other sources, which festivals young people consider most important and which criteria determine

the degree of importance of a festival. In the course of the survey young people were asked to indicate the festivals that they learned about from their grandparents, parents, books and the Internet. They were also asked to name the festivals whose traditions they observe. The research revealed that for the most part citizens of Vilnius perceived tradition as a particular festival passed down from generation to generation and observed by themselves. Analysis of the gathered data evidenced that traditions of observing Christmas Eve, Christmas and Easter taken over from grandparents and parents and at times also celebration of the New Year passed down by parents together with observance of All Souls' Day taken over from grandparents and parents prevail among the respondents. Midsummer Day and the Feast of the Assumption, usually taken over from grandparents, are among rarely observed festivals. Shrove traditions, though in most cases "created", are popular among young people. They believe that books and the Internet have little influence on the changes that calendar festivals undergo. Mostly people resort to books and the Internet to search for information on Halloween, pagan (neo-pagan), Lithuanian state (The Restoration of Independence Day, The State Holiday) and foreign festivals. However, these festivals are not referred to as traditional.

With a view to finding out which festivals the respondents did not regard as traditional, they were asked to enumerate all calendar and family festivals that they had recently been observing. In the category of calendar festivals Christmas Eve and Christmas, Easter, New Year, and Midsummer Day proved to be among those which were most widely celebrated. Easter and Christmas were on numerous occasions indicated as family celebrations. Birthdays dominated in the category of cycle of life festivals leaving weddings and baptisms far behind. Christmas Eve and Christmas were indicated as the most loved festivals, with the New Year<sup>3</sup> as second best; whereas family celebrations were dominated by birthdays<sup>4</sup> and Christmas.

When the respondents were asked to indicate their favourite celebrations among all the festivals that they observe (both calendar and family), traditional festivals again were given significant prominence. The absolute majority of the surveyed people named Christmas Eve and Christmas, fewer indicated the New Year and still

fewer—birthdays. Generalizing on the criteria accountable for the choice of the celebration, the following groups can be distinguished: 1) related to the choice of company for celebration; 2) related to the satisfaction of personal needs; 3) related to the observation of traditions characteristic of that particular festival.

As respondents define the importance of a celebration, the boundaries between ancient festivals and celebrations dating back to the 19th—mid-20th century merge. Christmas Eve, Christmas and birthdays are indicated as traditional, most celebrated and favourite festivals. Young people most frequently define the concept of *tradition* as the celebration of a particular festival which has been taken over from the previous generation and is observed by themselves, whereas traditional festivals according to them are those which they celebrate, fully or partially, together with their families rather than friends.

A female respondent born in 1990 states:

*“Christmas is my favourite festival as it is a family celebration with a special atmosphere, people sharing kindness, delicious dishes, the fragrance of the Christmas tree, and the spirit of Santa Claus. We start Christmas preparations a week in advance, decorate the house, and buy the Christmas tree. Then from early morning my dad and I usually decorate the Christmas tree, my mom spends the day cooking, we wrap presents, work all day, in the evening decorate the table and get ready for the arrival of relatives. When they come, we start sharing kalėdaičiai (Christmas wafers), eat, chat and then start looking for presents under the Christmas tree. The celebration, however, does not end here as then we go to my grandma’s where the ritual is repeated”* (Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2013a: 313).

On the other hand, the prominence that young people give to the rather newly introduced celebration of the New Year or birthdays and to fundamental changes in wedding customs suggests that the attitude of young people towards tradition as a value passed down from generation to generation is undergoing certain changes. Although they sustain their attachment to a tradition taken over from previous generations, realise its value and are apt to continue it, young people reserve the right to choose the celebration and modify or reject certain

elements (for further reading see Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2013a: 303—322). A more dynamic attitude has been revealed which differs from the findings of preceding research and encourages us to take a closer look at the peculiarities of the preparation for Christmas which, in the respondents' opinion, is the most important celebration of the year.

### **Christmas and the tradition of gift giving**

In 2011 John Helsloot published his article "Stress and Ritual. December Family Traditions in the Netherlands of Today" where he analysed December festivals observed in the Netherlands coupling them with the stress sustained while preparing for and participating in the celebrations (Helsloot 2011: 143—157). Encouraged by the invitation of the Dutch scholar to examine the manifestations of ritual stress in other countries, I carried out a field research exercise in the city of Vilnius by means of questioning respondents of various age groups.

Holiday gifts in the rural areas of Lithuania is a rather belated phenomenon.<sup>5</sup> There was no tradition of spoiling children by giving them presents on holidays. At Easter children would receive decorated eggs, and on Whit Sunday they were given additional food or at times even money for working as shepherds. On Christmas Eve children were visited by Santa Clause dressed in a fur coat turned wrong side out who would bring dainties and presents, which sometimes included store-bought toys (Pliuraitė-Andriejaviienė 2012: 29—31). Gift (non-food) giving has for the most part been associated with the spread of Christmas trees<sup>6</sup> and the presents for children placed underneath them. Adults started exchanging presents even later (Kudirka 1993: 53—57, 215). Hand-made presents prevailed in the early 20th century. However, in the second half of the century they were mostly substituted with store-bought gifts. Only children continued producing hand-made gifts.

The newly framed traditions of gift giving at Christmas soon underwent modifications. In the years of the Soviet occupation (1940—1941 and 1944—1989) an active campaign against religious customs was underway. In the said period the mass media was fully engaged in promoting the framing of the stereotypes of the New Year

as the festival embodying the symbolism of a marginal “transitional” holiday, thus abandoning Christmas traditions (Šaknys 2014: 107). Particular attention was bestowed on the promotion of the New Year celebration among children (Senvaitytė 2013: 114—115). Cartoons for children, Father Frost’s gifts and holiday trees were expected to ensure the future of the festival. And to some extent this was successful (Šaknys 2014: 107). The period of gift-giving in some families was extended towards the New Year. As of 1990, with the restoration of Lithuania’s independence, the situation shifted. In the absence of atheistic propaganda and with the allocation of two days off work at Christmas,<sup>7</sup> the tradition of gift-giving as well as numerous other New Year customs were, in most cases, relocated back to Christmas time.

Inquiry into the present-day situation in families of Vilnius citizens revealed an entrenched tradition of present-giving at Christmas time and the fact that emotional tension is sustained in the pre-festive season. Gift-giving is perceived as an indispensable ritual of the celebration the thought of which going wrong causes tension to most respondents, although few referred to this tension as “stress”. Respondents’ comments reveal a striving to avoid stress or decrease it by resorting to individual measures, e.g. producing hand-made presents, extending the time allocated for gift purchasing, involving husband and children in the household chores or in some other way adjusting the experience of preparation for celebrations taken over from the parents. Younger respondents have a more rational view of the holiday situation, are able to overcome challenges and make a good celebration for themselves and those close to them. Hence, representatives of the younger generation opt for their own methods of tradition interpretation which involve modification of festival preparation-related traditions or revival of forgotten ones by, say, producing self-made presents. It appears that they are not only capable of creating their own traditions, but are also able to revive those forgotten by their parents. This corroborates Carole Lemée Gonçalves’ concept of “jumping over a generation” in passing down memories (Lemée Gonçalves 2003: 61—77) as a means of reverting to traditional observance of festivals, rejecting traditions imposed in (the) Soviet times, and relying on the experience of older people, reviving the tradition of hand-made presents, for example, and withstanding

the temptations of commercial celebrations which have been increasingly intensifying over the last decades (Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2013b: 316—327).

### Conclusions

As Gerald Pocius has observed, people whom we survey often create their own traditions which meet their primary needs, yet at times are completely different from those which academic researchers consider right or authentic. *Tradition* is a relative concept which changes with each generation and in accordance with the historical context (Pocius 1999: 20, 22). To complement the findings of the Canadian ethnologist, the author could state that the concept of tradition is contextual. Its content can be perceived in a different way not only by an ethnologist and a person distant from the academic sphere respectively, but also by one and the same person seeking, on the one hand, to define the concept of tradition, when speaking about traditions observed by their own family, and, on the other, when singling out festivals observed by tradition.

In the late 20th—early 21st century the concept of revived tradition where cultural information is passed down by skipping a generation was given prominence in Lithuania, but, in addition, the moral attitude towards tradition has also undergone certain changes. As in Norway (as Anne Eriksen's data suggest), the younger generation in Lithuania perceives tradition, not as binding the individual in respect of society, but as a value on a private and personal scale. However, changes in the attitude towards traditions in Lithuania lagged behind for a few decades.

### Notes

1. There is public celebration of state holidays such as Liberation Day, Bulgarian Education and Culture and Slavonic Literature Day, Unification Day, Independence Day and others in Sofia, whereas traditional calendar festivals are observed either within the family (for example Christmas, Easter and St. George's Day) or by travelling to rural areas (for example St. Lazarus' Day (*Лазаровден*), Shrove (*Сирни заговезни*) or St. John's Day (*Еньовден*)). In Sofia, there are no masked processions or ritual fires during traditional festivals as there are in Vilnius (Project of the Lithuanian Institute of History and the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences "Contemporary Festivity

in Bulgaria and Lithuania – from Traditional Culture to Post-Modern Transformations” (2015–2017)).

2. Data from the population census of 2011 suggest that the population of Vilnius at that time was 535,631, making up 17.6% of the country’s total population. 63.2% of the inhabitants of the city were ethnic Lithuanians, 16.5% Polish, and 12% Russians. Numbers of people of other nationalities were significantly smaller (Lietuvos gyventojai 2012: 23).

3. Liudvikas Adomas Jucevičius was the first to offer data on the folk customs of the New Year celebration in his book published in 1842 (Jucevičius 1959: 453–454). However, ethnologist Juozas Kudirka claims that prior to WWI there were no settled customs relating to the New Year celebration in the greater part of the country, with the exception of a dinner similar to that held on Christmas Eve (Kudirka 1993: 243–248).

4. The notion of birthday is a rather belated cultural phenomenon in the Vilnius region; as data from Ž. Šaknys’ cartographic research suggest, in the period 1920–1940 birthdays were not celebrated in most rural areas of East Lithuania (Šaknys 2008: 21, 27). In the towns, however, celebration of birthdays started much earlier (Laučkaitė 2009: 134–150).

5. Holiday gifts in a Lithuanian city of the 19th—first half of the 20th century have not previously been the subject of research. But as research into toys as holiday gifts shows, this phenomenon began in the city before it became established in villages (Pliuraitė-Andriejaviienė 2012).

6. The Christmas tree was a belated cultural phenomenon in Lithuania, not mentioned until 1853. In the late 19th—early 20th century Christmas trees spread nationwide (Kudirka 1993: 53–57).

7. In 1990; as of 2011 Christmas Eve is also a holiday.

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## **Transformation of Festive Culture of the Russian Rural Population: Regional Dimension**

**Abstract.** In this article various dimensions of the festival of Russian folklore *Karavon* are considered in the context of the general ethnic situation in Republic of Tatarstan (RT), which is defined on the basis of official statistics and the state policy description in the sphere of interethnic cooperation. The place of *Karavon* among other ethnic fests of the region is shown. The fest is considered in terms of the concept of “cultural nests” and also as the tool of symbolic political techniques of demonstrating state power.

**Keywords:** cultural nest, festive culture, *Karavon*, the Republic of Tatarstan, Russian rural settlements.

### **Introduction**

The topicality of the theme is defined by:

- the necessity of preservation and use of ethno-cultural potential of Russian rural settlements of the region so as to reduce the possibility of conflicts, to form sustainable favorable living conditions for people, preserve and develop the ethno-cultural heritage, and improve the tourist attractiveness of the places;
- the opportunities to be gained from researching regional projects, including the benefit of further development of the cultural environment of Tatarstan through such projects as the restoration of cultural-historical objects in Bolgar and Svijazhsk;
- the special status of Russian rural settlements in the Middle-Volga region. They, in comparison with settlements of the titular ethnic groups, are characterized by more unfavorable demographic processes in the form of population decrease. A detailed historical and statistical analysis of the demographic state of the Russian rural settlements with prognosis for the future is necessary;

– the very important cultural role of the rural settlements. Of all the negative phenomena inherent in Russian settlements, the village in new formats often remains the generator and the keeper of ethnically marked forms of folk spiritual and material culture. Research of the ethno-cultural landscape provides opportunities to study how transformations of forms of ethnic culture and interethnic cooperation support life in the settlements nowadays and what kind of trends exist in these transformations;

– lack of ethno-cultural research of Russians, against a background of large-scale research of the titular ethnic groups conducted in the national republics of Ural-Volga region during the last decades.

### Statistical review

On 01.01.2015, the population of the Republic of Tatarstan was 3 855 037 people including urban population—2 939 724, rural population—915 313 (23,74 % from total population).<sup>1</sup> Rural settlements—3073, their numbers are being gradually reduced. According to available data, there are about 740 Russian rural settlements. In 2010, the Russian rural population was 21,2 % of all country people in RT.

The ethnic structure of the population of the Republic is given in table 1.

Table 1.

*Ethnic structure of population of the Republic of Tatarstan<sup>2</sup>  
(The data of population censuses in % of those who indicated their national identity)*

<b>Nationalities</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2010</b>
Tatars	48,5	52,9	53,2
Russians	43,3	39,5	39,7
Chuvashs	3,7	3,4	3,1
Udmurts	0,7	0,6	0,6
Mordvins	0,8	0,6	0,5
Maris	0,5	0,5	0,5
Ukrainians	0,9	0,6	0,5
Bashkirs	0,5	0,4	0,4
Azerbaijanians	0,1	0,3	0,3
Other nationalities	1,0	1,2	1,2

### The state regional policy in ethno-cultural sphere

In the 2000s, the tendency of consolidation of Russian society was firmly outlined. Ideas of integration began to prevail in the official federal documents on ethno-confessional and ethno-cultural subject matter. The leaders of the state very often spoke about the formation of a united Russian nation. Under these conditions, regional leaders, particularly in national republics, began to adjust the regional policy in the ethno-cultural sphere.

In the Republic of Tatarstan, this period was characterized by a policy on parity of the development of Tatar and Russian, Muslim and Orthodox cultures. It was shown in approving some regional programs and documents aimed at restoring and opening architectural monuments and giving the official status to a number of national festivals, and similar kinds of actions. Multiculturalism has been recognized as a fundamental principle of the official policy of the RT (Makarova 2010).

The Republic of Tatarstan is one of the most socially and economically developed regions of the Russian Federation. There is a compelling notion that there is a versatile causation between the attractiveness of social and economic sectors and a competent national policy in the region, as well as involving the level of interethnic cooperation in its territory (Drobizheva 2012: 9).

Festivals (about 30), holidays (about 20) and contests (about 15) are the most widespread forms of conducting national creativity events in the Republic of Tatarstan. Among the traditional festivals of Tatar people consolidated in Republic one is particularly prominent: *Sabantuy* is held annually after the spring sowing campaign in all the cities and rural areas of Republic of the Tatarstan, as well as in the regions of dense population clusters of Tatars in the Russian Federation. On June 6, 2015 *Sabantuy* was widely celebrated by Crimean Tatars in Simferopol for the first time. *Navruz* has been annually celebrated since 1991–1993 and is mainly held in cities, regional centers, 30% in rural areas; *Nardugan* has been actively celebrated since 1992 and has become a part of republican festive calendar in 25% of the Tatar areas, cities, villages and settlements; *Sombel* has been actively celebrated since 1990 and is held in September in each

district and city of the RT, where it is considered the Crop festival. *Kaz omese* has been enacted for the past 15 years. It is held everywhere in October—November.

Nowadays, along with the following festivals, other festivals have been given republican status, each of them associated with a particular nation living in Tatarstan: the Russian festival *Karavon*, Chuvash feasts *Ujav* and *Uchuk*, the Mari fest *Semyk*, Udmurt festival *Gyronbydton*, Mordovian *Baltai*, Ukrainian *Ivan Kupala*, Kryashen's *Pitrau* and others.

In RT, over the last ten years great attention has been paid to the Russian folk culture. In 2003, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the decree *On conducting the Republican festival of Russian folklore Karavon*. The Pancake week symbolizing the beginning of spring is more actively celebrated. In 2004, in Kazan the first folk and ethnographic festival *Kuzminki* was organized. The church bell festival has been held in Alekseevsky village. Since 2007, youth ethno-cultural festivals *Oberezie* and *Krutushka* have been organized. The system of secondary schools with a Russian ethno-cultural component has been opened. The subprogram *Preservation and use of historical and architectural heritage* includes a number of architectural monuments connected with Orthodoxy such as the Annunciation Cathedral in the Kazan Kremlin, many Christian churches in different cities and areas of the republic, Russian manors. The Chamber of crafts and craftsmen's associations are becoming more active popularizing national Russian crafts.

### ***Karavon* as a festival of Russian folklore**

Annually in the Russian Nikolsky village of the Laishevo district, during the festival of Russian national folk groups, a festival *Karavon*, established in 1992, is held. Its sources are centuries old. According to the old chronicles it is known that in the middle of the 16th century guests from all over the country gathered in the Russian Nikolsky village to celebrate the day of the prelate and miracle-worker St. Nikolas. People prayed and sang songs and danced in a special ring called *Karavon*. Hence, it appears the name of the holiday absorbed all the richness of the Russian spirit and ancient beliefs (Davletshina 2011: 13; Minikhanov 2011: 86). *Karavon* has turned into a unique and

inimitable festival, a uniquely Russian festival in its folklore, which at first was local and then became regional.

In the old days the patronal feast of Nikolsky village was celebrated for three days: having begun with the church service, it passed to family festive feasts, and then to the street where festivities and a special round dance, the *Karavon*, were performed, danced, and enacted. In this round dance, all the participants, young and old alike, join with little fingers and dance with special *Karavon* steps in several lines. In 1955, all folk festivals in rural settlements were banned by a special resolution of the USSR Government. In the 1980s, the enthusiasts of the local House of Culture, along with popular support, revived this festival which achieved Republican status in 1993. Unlike in past times, the core of participants now are folk groups rather than villagers. At first, only 7 folk groups from cities, towns, and districts of the Republic of Tatarstan took part in it. In 2015, this festival included 160 folk groups (Shafigullina 2013: 5).

The result of acquiring a new status was transformation of this festival into the official event with active participation of administrative representatives. 23th all-Russian festival of Russian folklore *Karavon-2015* took place on May 23, 2015. The acting President of the Republic of Tatarstan, Rustam Minnikhanov, the main federal inspector on RT, Renat Timerzjanov, the chief of the President of RT staff, Asgat Safarov, the minister of culture of RT, Airat Sibagatullin, and other officials became guests of honor of this festival.

At the entrance to the festive ground, girls in folk costumes with *chak-chak* (national Tatarian sweets), and bread and salt, met guests. The official delegation, headed by Rustam Minnikhanov, walked among the participants of the festival to the folk craft alley where craftsmen presented their products, all the while accompanied by traditional Russian folk songs.

On the main scene, the grand opening of the festival, with the dramatized prologue “Treasury of national spirituality—Nicholas festival *Karavon!*” took place. It was devoted to the 70th Victory in the Second World War anniversary. At the ending of the prologue, in honor of the anniversary, 70 white balloons were released to the sky in memory of the fallen in the Great Patriotic War. The festival

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continued with a magnificent concert of original folk groups and talented performers.

Presenting a rural backyard, and a Russian log house (*izba*), a town of craftsmen were traditionally presented at the festival. The main guests of *Karavon-2015* were members of the Russian song choir *Golden Ring* with the soloist Nadezhda Kadysheva, and the Russian folk band *Slavic Tunes*. The festival concluded with general round dance on the traditional round dance ground.

As we see, this shift of the festival to the republican level determined the presence of elements of Tatar culture at the Russian festival and also merging of the festive occasions (the Day of St. Nickolas and the Victory Day).

### **Functions of *Karavon***

Nowadays, the world, national, and regional ruling elite have worked out excellent means of management of interethnic cooperation in multicultural societies. The usage of ethno-cultural symbols has become one of the effective tools of this kind of management. In Tatarstan, tools of symbolical political technologies are ethnic and religious symbols:

- the facts of ethnic history of the republic (1000th anniversary of Kazan, 900th anniversary of Elabuga);
- monuments and historical sites (Bulgar site of ancient settlement and Svijazhsk monastery, Kul-Sharif mosque);
- individual municipalities and villages;
- Christian icons (Kazan God's Mother icon);
- elements of traditional and religious culture—festivals (Tatar *Sabantuy*, Russian *Karavon*, Kryashen *Pitrau*, Chuvash *Ujav*, Spasskaya fair, etc.);
- myths and legends about holy places and springs.

Tatarstan's experiment shows that a combination of qualitatively different symbols (ethnic, religious, cultural, social) and their use in the united strategy of the development of the region can give evidence of the considerable potential of pragmatism. The fund of multiculturalism is becoming a unique resource for the development

of the region and Russia as a whole. Tourism growth, enterprise initiative, strengthening of identities that stimulates creative actions, and improving the image of Russia as a state possessing culture and science of global significance, are the dividends of symbolical management having national importance. In addition, the use of symbols increases the social and interethnic stability of Tatarstan by means of regional identity formation among representatives of different social and ethnic groups and religions.

Scholars of various fields of research actively develop models of images of regions and locations, as well as methods and ways for their research. In this activity, one can mark out various theoretical and cultural-historical dimensions. In connection with the latter, the reference to the concept “cultural nest” offered in the first decades of the 20th century by the Russian scholars and regionalists is prominent. The concept “cultural nest” was introduced for the first time by N.K. Pikanov in the 1920s.

The conceptual metaphor “cultural nest” is understood as a way of describing the cooperation, and interconnection, of all areas of cultural life of a province in the period of its prosperity, during such period when this province is not becoming indifferent to the centre it gravitates to.

The study of the cultural processes through “cultural nests” is carried out in a three-dimensional coordinate system: “country—province—region.” Using this method takes into consideration common processes of the country’s development; levels of cultural process characterizing specific features for all provinces; specificity and the level of development of culture of a province studied.

N.K. Pikanov lists the following basic signs of sustainable territorial-cultural formation (“nest”):

- presence of a well-established circle of leaders—cultural workers;
- permanent activity;
- continuity support (mentoring of young people by seniors).

According to another scheme, we can mark out “cultural nests” of the rural type corresponding to peasant, monastic, and lordly cultures

respectively. One can point to the ethnographic nature of peasant “cultural nests” as distinctive features and in this sense the *Karavon* festival is a typical example (Hutorova 2009: 68—69).

It is important to pay particular attention to another dimension of socio-cultural significance of *Karavon*, specifically the importance of religious factors in the spiritual revival of the people. In this sense the historical tradition of the festival, the St. Nicholas Church in the Russian village Nikolsky was originally a sacred centre. The establishing of *Karavon* as a local and republican festival gives a second life to this religious architectural monument, providing the backdrop to the restoration of the nebulous connections between material and spiritual, earthly and heavenly, festive and daily basis in people’s lives. The above example fits well with the concept of event marketing of places, a trend evident not only in modern Russia but in Western Europe as well (Dijk 2013).

The list of scientific publications analyzing this festival is, at most a few dozen titles. Of these publications and the research described, most are limited to the Republic of Tatarstan. The content of these publications regarding *Karavon* to date has been primarily descriptive in nature. The revival process of the cultural-historical traditions of the Russian rural population of the Tatarstan and the Volga region as a whole, and in the long term probably of Russia, is still waiting for its researcher.

### **Brief conclusion**

*Karavon*, as the festival reviving old Russian traditions, exemplifies the function of the “cultural nest.” At the same time *Karavon* is one of the tools of a symbolical political strategy of the regional state power in the Republic of Tatarstan.

### **Acknowledgements**

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## Notes

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## **Modern Folk Festivals in Tatarstan: The Paths of Development and Their Specific Features**

**Abstract.** Contemporary festive rituals among the peoples of Tatarstan are being established in two different ways. Firstly, they are offered “from below,” as a popular initiative on the part of individuals and groups who seek to follow a tradition and to take part in the festive activities “as their soul commands.” Secondly, there is development “from above,” when festivals are initiated by various state and public structures, whose activities have their own goals and organisational means for their implementation. Specialized educational institutions also contribute to the development and maintenance of folk traditions. Based on the authors’ field-work materials and publications, the paper examines the specific ways in which festivals are conducted in Tatarstan by Russians and Tatars respectively, with a special attention to the two mentioned above tendencies. The case of the pagan festival *Uchuk* of the Chuvashs is also analysed in detail.

**Keywords:** folk festivals, history, modernity, peoples of Tatarstan, transformation.

### **Brief introduction to the Volga region peoples’ festivals and their development**

Tatarstan (Republic of Tatarstan, RT) is a multiethnic republic and a part of the Russian Federation. According to population censuses, the representatives of 180 ethnic groups of Russia and the world live in RT. The Tatars (the titular ethnos of the Republic; 53,2 % of the population, 2010) and the Russians (39,7 %, 2010) belong to the ethnic majority. Among other ethnic groups of the all Volga region there are other (local) peoples—Chuvashs, Udmurts, Mordvinians, Maris, and Bashkirs who are substantially represented, as well as other peoples of Russia and neighbouring countries. Some ethnic communities have centuries-old history in the territory of Tatarstan; those

with a long history include the local people as well as Ukrainians, Armenians, Jews, Russian Germans,<sup>1</sup> and others. During the Post-Soviet period the number of migrants from Central Asian and Caucasian regions has increased considerably.

The festive culture of Tatarstan peoples developed in a variety of ways. The representatives of diasporas have brought, and are bringing, ready forms of folk festivals from their native places, and seeking to preserve these folks festivals in stable and consistent forms in the new environment. Festive cycles of Volga region peoples have been formed in similar natural-geographical and socio-economic environments, in conditions of extensive interethnic contacts, cooperation, and cultural interchange. As a result the folk festival cycles of various ethnic groups of Volga region, closely connected with similar economic activities in the past, are akin in many respects. In the beginning of the agricultural year, all these peoples have special rituals to see the winter off and to welcome the spring: Pancake week (*Maslenitsa*) typical for the Russians, Mordvinians, Maris (*Uyarnya*), Udmurts (*Voidyr*), Chuvashs (*Çävarni*); Crow porridge among Tatars (*Karga Botkasy*) and Bashkir (*Karga Tyi*). The plow festival (festival of a plow and arable land) is practiced among the Tatar and Bashkir *Sabantuy*; Chuvash *Akatuy*; Udmurt *Gyron Bydton*; Maris *Aga Pairem* and Mordovian *Baltai*. This festival marks the end of spring agricultural works. The above-listed calendar festivals of Volga region peoples are similar in meaning and form, even when the names of the festivals differ. There are many parallels similar to in other festive calendar seasonal cycles. Folk festivals are closely connected with the religious traditions of the region. Volga region peoples mainly belong to either Christian Orthodoxy (the Russians, Chuvashs, Mordvinians, Maris, Udmurts, Tatars-Kryashens<sup>2</sup>), or to Islam (the Kazan Tatars, Tatars-mishars<sup>3</sup> and Bashkirs); some people from the ethnic groups of Chuvashs, Maris and Udmurts still follow their traditional folk religions (paganism, Pre-Christians).

The history of the development of the festive culture of Tatarstan peoples has gone through various processes. Up to the revolution of 1917, folk festivals were characterized by considerable stability and inertia, with little development and variations. It was supported by the firm position of the main public institution—the rural

community. Confessional distinctiveness of a group determined in general the nature of its culture which, however, did not interfere with the peaceful coexistence of various traditions, as well as their intensive interaction. Since the 18th century, Russian scholars and local experts have proclaimed that the fruitful dialogue of genetically diverse cultures was a distinctive feature of the region (Georgi, 1799; Lepekhin, 1780; Miller, 1791). Since then this tendency of co-existence and cooperation has only strengthened. It is especially important for understanding of ethnocultural, interethnic and inter-confessional processes in Tatarstan.

During the Soviet period (1917—1991), the festive culture in Tatarstan went through significant transformations. The separation of the Church from the state led to the disenfranchisement of many forms of vital activity, one way or another connected with religious tradition. New Soviet public holidays appeared—the New Year; International Women’s Day on March 8th; the Day of the International Workers’ Solidarity on May 1st; anniversary of 1917 revolution on November 7th; the Constitution Day; numerous professional holidays, completely secular (non-religious) and international (supra-ethnic). The main ideological function of new forms of festivities served to not only replace old forms and symbols, but to displace people’s allegiance to older, more traditional, as well as religious, ways. For the majority of the adult population of the country, this transition from the traditional ritual year to a new one turned out to be very difficult and frustrating: they formally participated in the Soviet festivals, but, secretly, occasionally even without hiding their activities, they continued to celebrate traditional ceremonies. Underscoring this practice are documents of the State Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan that show that in the 1930s—1950s even the leaders of local party organizations took part in religious ceremonies which accompanied folk festivals. Our field materials confirm that, up to the 1990s, the religious folk tradition in various forms survived everywhere.

The post-Soviet period (since 1991 up to the present) marked a new round in the development of festive culture. Religious institutions regained their status, while folk festivals received legitimacy. Some of the folk festivals were listed in the official holiday calendar. As example of this new adoption can be seen in Tatarstan where public

holidays are marked as Christian Orthodox Christmas and Easter; Muslim Kurban-bajram and the Eid al-Fitr.

In Tatarstan, in the development of festive ceremonial rites of Post-Soviet time, two periods are clearly distinguishable. During the first period (in the 1990s), the renaissance of religious national holidays occurred spontaneously, massively and without any coordination from any religious or state institution. The faithfulness of the details of the festival to pre-Soviet era practices depended on the degree of the preservation of the rituals and the availability, and existence, of those who could perform it, as well as transmitters. Most of the Christian Orthodox feasts (Christmas, Easter, the Trinity, patronal village festivals) and Muslim (Kurban-bajram, Uraza-gaet, Maulid) were well remembered and preserved, and could be supported by the senior generation. In the beginning of the 1990s, there was a revival of sorts during which it became fashionable to be religious, and to be involved with festive practices, which led to an increased involvement of youth in these festive events.

An important change in festive culture occurred when a broad range of cultural organizations, through the decision of the First Congress of Peoples of Tatarstan (May, 1992), united into the Association of National-Cultural Societies of Republic of Tatarstan (ANKO PT; since 2007—the Assembly of the Peoples of Tatarstan; now it includes 85 national associations representing 35 peoples), see the Portal of the Assembly of People of Tatarstan. Since the establishment of the Assembly and unification of all the national organisations under one overseeing body, the Assembly's main task has been to oversee the revival and popularization of folk festivals.

By the turn of the 21st century, the tendency of state regulation of the festive activity in Tatarstan began to be exhibited in distinct ways. The second period of development of festivals is characterized by their scripting and preliminary planned character, as well as use of officially approved scenarios. This trend started after the folk festival *Sabantuy* was granted the status of the state festival (1992). In 1993, Chuvash *Ujav* received a similar, official state-sanctioned, status; Other such state sanctionings of festivals followed: in 1995—Mordovian *Baltai*; in 1996—the Ukrainian *Ivan Kupala*; in 1998—Udmurt

*Gyron Bydton* and *Mari Semyk*; in 1999—*Kryashen-Tatar Pitrau*; in 2003—*Russian Karavon*.<sup>4</sup> Later some institutions were assigned to supervise republican festivals. Among these institutions are the administration on the implementation of the national policy of Tatarstan Presidential Department for internal policy; some structural units of the Ministry of culture of RT and the Ministry of education of RT. Much attention is given to this area of activity: for instance, the Chairman of the Council of the Assembly of People of Tatarstan is *Farid Mukhametshin*, who is, also and at the same time, the Chairman of the State Council (the Supreme body of legislative power of RT). While these actions are clearly a public relations move, the Republic authorities position it as a positive example of ethnic and religious tolerance. This alignment of the state with folk and religious has resulted in broad coverage by local media. Thus, the main focus has become the significance of each holiday in strengthening friendship and mutual understanding between the peoples of Tatarstan. As previously noted, however, there is a lot of historical truth in this perception of the holidays as an occasion for strengthening friendship and understanding.

### **The case of *Uchuk***

Meanwhile, the state interference in the run of the festive year in Tatarstan has changed the festivals a lot. Across the range of different festivals, the changes are similar. As such, we are using as an example one of the main festivals of the Chuvashs-pagans of RT *Uchuk* (or *Udjuk*, a sacrificial spring holiday) which has been preserved in its unmodified traditional form for a long time. In RT there are 31 settlements with pagan Chuvash population; in all of European Russia there are 42 settlements.

A universally recognized center of the Chuvash paganism in the Volga-Ural Region is the settlement *Old Surkino*<sup>5</sup> in *Almetyevsk* district of RT (South-West of the Republic) (*Yagafova*, 2010: 44). It is inhabited by the descendants of the migrants who moved there from the territory of modern Chuvashia not later than the beginning of the 18th century, due to the threat of forced baptism. In the new ethnic environment (mainly the Tatars), the Chuvashs have adopted some cultural elements and, to a great extent, kept their own culture

and identity, the social and family rituals based on the traditional public belief (Stolyarova, 2006).

Up to the beginning of 2000s *Uchuk* (the sacrifice ceremony or the prayer to the field) was conducted after the end of the spring field work, according to centuries old practices. The elderly women who had authority, and were respected in the village, alerted all the residents about the time and place of the festival. Residents from every street collected money for the sacrificial calf and the food items for cooking a special cereal. The sacrificial calf was brought to a special place near a water spring. Residents splashed water on it with prayer and the men slaughtered the calf. A number of magic actions were observed in the process: it was necessary to bury all blood that came from the animal (otherwise one could step on it, and it would be a terrible sin); skin, hoofs, and entrails of the animal, and later bones from the eaten animal, were buried into the ground with the words: "And this is for you, eat it!" The head and sometimes the skin were hung on a tree. Thus, having butchered the carcass of the sacrificial animal, it was given to women who cooked the meat in a special pot. More pots were put out for cooking hot cereal from several ingredients: cereals (buckwheat and pearl-barley), potatoes, and oil.

The main population of the community arrived to the place of celebration by noon. Women usually wore traditional folk costumes; as a rule, for the elderly women, it was a wedding dress which later was kept on as the final attire for their funeral. Relatives of the local residents who lived in other regions also came to the festival. When everybody would meet up at the place of the ritual, the traditional praying began. The elderly women took part in praying, holding men's caps under their arms and slipping a man's jacket over their shoulders, as an accommodation from earlier strictures in which only men were allowed to offer prayers. Nowadays, there are only elderly women who are the keepers of the traditions. One of them, called a wise woman, would say a prayer addressed to a deity Tura (the Supreme deity); she asked her to grant favors (that harvest would be good and everyone would be alive and healthy, and to avoid disease, hurricane, etc.). When a prayer would come to an end, all the women participating in praying would start to dance in a ring

and sing folk songs. The festival ended with a joint meal and pouring water around as an invocation for enough rain.

Since 2007, the festival *Uchuk* has obtained the official status of a republican holiday and became known as the Open festival of Chuvashs of Zakamje region. In the process, the festival has been considerably changed. First of all, the initiative of holding festivals has passed from ordinary inhabitants to the local administration, which, in its turn, is guided by an official calendar of festive events approved by the republican authorities. All the costs have become centralized and are paid from the local (village and district) budgets. Participation by officials in the festival became obligatory: the highest statesmen of the Assembly of Peoples of RT; district administration; representatives of the mass-media. The official design of festivals has been drastically intensified: national flags of Russia and Tatarstan appeared; the decorated meeting place of honorable guests (Fig. 1); a registration table; badges and certificates of honorable participants; specially made symbols of the festival (booklets, charms, other souvenirs), etc.



*Fig. 1. Meeting the guests of honor. Tatarstan, Old Surkino, holiday Uchuk. 2013.  
Photo: Guzel Stolyarova*

All the local residents involved in the festival (from the head of the settlement to younger schoolchildren) have to wear specially designed clothing decorated with national ornamentation. Authentic traditional pieces of clothing nowadays can be found only on the elderly women, who wear aprons with hand embroidery. The form of ritual glade has been cardinally changed: if traditionally, the food and the prayers were located in the center, now there is the main official performance is carried out (Fig. 2); along the periphery there are tents for selling souvenirs, various grocery and industrial goods as well as for exhibition of products of folk crafts appeared.



*Fig. 2. Performance by the folk ensemble of Old Surkino village.  
Holiday Uchuk, 2013. Photo: Guzel Stolyarova*

The scenario includes official congratulations and giving awards to the best workers, the heroes of the day, the best pupils and compatriots from abroad, etc. The organizers aim to use the festival platform to promote the folk culture. Members of local amateur performing groups present different adaptations for stage related to the traditional Chuvash way of life, legends and tales of the Chuvash, traditional beliefs, etc. Traditional praying *Uchuk* still remains in the structure of the festival. The elderly women carry out this ritual



*Fig. 3. Traditional prayer. Tatarstan, Old Surkino village, holiday Uchuk, 2013. Photo: Guzel Stolyarova*

complex in compliance with all prescribed rites (Fig. 3), but this activity has lost its central place in the whole activity. Prayers are read on the periphery of the festival without participation of the general public. Ritual cereals are given to all the visitors but you cannot call it a collective meal. Many of the participants continue watching the performances. By the time that the meals of cereal were served, the state officials overseeing the festival had already left. Analogues of the described changes can be found in the festivals of other peoples of Tatarstan and outside it.

### **Conclusions**

As with so many other kinds of change, the transformations of festive life and participation in this region have had both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, financial and administrative support helps to perpetuate and prolong the life of traditional festivals, increasing the scale and public response. Our field materials

show the expansion of the numbers of participants in the festivals and the audience members, as well as the active aspiration of local leaders to preserve ethnic specificity. The use of native language, folk costumes, songs, dances, folk games, etc., has great consolidating value for local groups of people of Tatarstan including the younger generation. Simultaneously the international character of festivals plays its positive role for strengthening inter-ethnic relations. However, while innovations and promotion help to sustain festivals, they also threaten the authenticity of the festivals and the particular, and specific, individual ethnic contributions. For the most part, the majority of the population, in particular those actively participating in the preparation of the rituals and conducting them, are increasingly turning into passive spectators and becoming less competent in the essence of the matter. There is a concern that in the process of reducing the external support of festive activities, this lessened support could lead to the disappearance of the festivals and rites, as it may be difficult to explain to the younger generation what is the reason for this or that particular rite to be carried out. It seems that the academic community can play an important role in preserving that part of the ethno-cultural heritage which is still functioning today, through the careful study and distribution analytical materials to different audience and, in the first place, among the bearers of culture i.e. those who perceive them best and to whom they have intimate relevance.

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### Notes

1. In Tatarstan, there lives a compact group of local ethnic Germans, who are descendants of the colonists of 18th—19th centuries.
2. Kryashens are an ethnoconfessional Christian group of Tatars.
3. Mishars are a Tatars' sub-ethnos.
4. As historical chronicles tell, from the middle of 16th century people from all over the region would come to the village of Russkoe Nikolskoe to worship

St. Nicholas. The people would pray, sing songs and dance a special circle dance karavon.

5. The field materials for this article have been collected by Guzel Stolyarova during ethnographic expeditions in the Old Surkino in 2000—2003, 2005—2007, 2009—2011, 2013.

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## **Ethnic and Confessional Aspects of a Holiday in the City of Vilnius**

**Abstract.** This article analyzes ethnic and confessional aspects of the New Year festival in Vilnius city. It is based on fieldwork data collected through semistructured interviews, freeform conversations, published sources, and is grounded on the historicalcomparative method. The author shows that a celebration of the same festival among different ethnic and confessional groups of people living in one city, viewed historically, can create symbolic boundaries of otherness or, in some instances, reduce such boundaries.

**Keywords:** ethnicity, Holidays in Vilnius, Karaims, Lithuanians, New Year, religion, Polish, Russians.

### **Introduction**

This article is intended to analyze ethnic and confessional aspects of annual festivals in the city of Vilnius. In order to shed light on the present day situation, I apply historical perspectives, which according to Orvar Löfgren, allow an analytical possibility which is one of the virtues of European Ethnology (Löfgren 2001: 89). The New Year celebration is well suited to this purpose. The New Year is the only festival which maintained its status of a public holiday when Lithuania was part of the Russian Empire, during the inter-war period when it was the independent Republic of Lithuania (in Vilnius district in 1920—1939 as part of Poland), as well as during the years of Soviet and Nazi occupation, and after restoration of the independent State of Lithuania.

The New Year is one of the most universally celebrated events in society, both ancient and modern. Although dates and rituals vary according to culture, country, or religion, the New Year represents a turning point. This turning point is traditionally a time of celebration, renewal, and rebirth (Salamone 2004: 92).

As compared to ethnologists in neighbouring countries, ethnologists in Lithuania addressed the subject of calendar festivals quite late. The first book with some general conclusions was published in 1979 (Dundulienė 1979). During the Soviet occupation, research into customs of traditional festivals was not tolerated (Šaknys 2011: 17–18; Šaknys 2014b: 92–105),<sup>1</sup> and the few publications on such festivals did not, and could not, mention the religion of the people participating in celebrations. Ethnographic studies of calendar customs of the 20th century were focused on the experience of the oldest population in order to reconstruct the past as far back as possible, to discover the origins of the festivals which existed in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, to describe ritual functions of the rites and customs associated with such festivals, including their ties with the pre-Christian culture (Mardosa 2001: 119–144). Despite abundant publications on annual festivals after 1990, no major studies have been devoted to the New Year festival. Only the monograph of the ethnologist Juozas Kudirka can be singled out since it contains a separate chapter discussing the New Year. According to the ethnologist (who described the situation in the late 19th century and early 20th century), the Christmas Eve dinner was repeated on New Year's Eve everywhere, except Suvalkija Region (the south-western part of Lithuania) before the First World War, but there were no well-established customs of welcoming the New Year, except in some areas of Aukštaitija region (the central, northern and north-eastern part of Lithuania) (Kudirka 1993: 243–248).

There were no more detailed publications analysing ethnic and confessional aspects of calendar festivals at that time. The studies of poly-ethnic and poly-confessional eastern and south-eastern Lithuania do not distinguish descriptions of similar customs practiced by the Poles and Lithuanians or in some cases by Russians as well. Ethnic aspects were highlighted to a greater degree only in the research into Lithuanian communities in Latvia, Poland and Belarus. When conducting a study in the localities of Gerviaty (western part of Belarus) in 2011–2012,<sup>2</sup> the author of this article attempted to analyse peculiar ethnic characteristics of the ritual year. The answer of respondents was quite unambiguous: only the customs of Orthodox Russians are different, and those of Lithuanians and Polish are the same, i.e. Catholic customs. The greatest differences originate from varying

calendars of festivals (Šaknys In press). On 15 October 1582, the Gregorian Calendar was introduced by the papal bull of Pope Gregory XIII, and it was put into use in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania by 1586. In 1795, the greater part of current Lithuania was incorporated in the Russian Empire, and in 1800 it had to go back to the old calendar—the so-called Julian Calendar—which was in effect until 1915 (Vyšniauskaitė 1993: 6). Given the circumstances, the concept of the New Year itself should not have been very stable. It did not become stable after the Gregorian Calendar was introduced in the territory of Lithuania in 1915. Although Russia, after the October Revolution, employed the Gregorian Calendar, the Orthodox Church of Russia has been adhering to the Julian Calendar since the October Revolution to this day. As a result, for the past hundred years, Christmas is celebrated after the New Year (January 7th), and the other New Year referred to as the *Old New Year* is welcomed after another week (January 13th) (Volovikova, Tikhomirova, Borisova 2003: 89).

Both studies of customs related to annual festivals of Lithuania in the 20th century and those written in the early 21st century were focused on traditional Lithuanian customs. Ethnological studies of customs of the multi-ethnic cities of Lithuania were undertaken only in the 21st century. One of the few exceptions is the book by Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa (Znamierowska-Prüfferowa 2009)<sup>3</sup> where calendar customs of Vilnius residents of various confessions, as practiced before 1945, were described, including the New Year celebrations. My previously published article also concerns New Year celebrations and describes how the New Year was welcomed by Vilnius residents of different nationalities in 2012—2013 (Šaknys 2014: 105—117). In addition, in 2015, I did research into the customs of the ethnic-confessional group of Karaimes residing in Vilnius and other cities of Lithuania. One of the subjects covered by my research was the celebration of the Karaimes' New Year, i.e. *Jyl Bašy*, and the official New Year's Day (January 1st) (Šaknys 2015: 99—128). Such studies provide the opportunity of discerning and discussing the ethnic and confessional aspects of the festival of the New Year. The present article is merely the beginning of an extensive work and is not intended to provide a conclusive final picture. It is a work in progress.

### **Festival in Vilnius in the first half of the 20th century**

As noted by Lina Petrošienė, who researched Shrove Tuesday traditions in the city of the early 20th century, urban festivals differed from those celebrated in the country in terms of form, content, and functions (Petrošienė 2013: 21). A similar situation may be discerned in the analysis of the New Year in Vilnius. Customs practiced in Vilnius during the early 20th century (when it was a part of the Russian Empire) were described by Laima Laučkaitė who noted that routs with dances used to be held at the mansion of the Governor-General on the New Year's Eve. All major halls of the city were used for dancing parties, theme fancy-balls, and masquerades. These activities were part of events organised by Polish, Russian, Jewish, Lithuanian, and Belarusian societies (Laučkaitė 2008: 473). This special occasion was celebrated not only in public, but in the close family circle as well. In family celebrations, confessional traits of festival were prior. M. Znamierowska-Prüfferowa attempted to describe the culture of Vilnius in the first half of the 20th century and identified an apparent distribution of festival in terms of a confessional aspect. According to M. Znamierowska-Prüfferowa, the Catholic New Year's Eve, or Saint Sylvester's night, was referred to as the "Fat Christmas Eve." On that day people would break (share) Christmas wafers for the second time, "Some people would again make *kissel*<sup>4</sup> with honey, fat pancakes, and poppy milk, also fry sausage and eat it with boiled or raw cabbage, pray for God's blessing and welcome the New Year." In the morning people would congratulate one another and forecast the weather. When describing the Orthodox customs, M. Znamierowska-Prüfferowa mentions fortune-telling about marriage and festive meal (the pig's head) on Saint Basil's Day. Members of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, "a small group of Germans—dominated by intellectuals—have retained some of the German customs in addition to the German language," would serve a lean dinner on the New Year's Eve; "the Christmas tree would be lit up again, and people would eat donuts *Berlinerpfannkuchen*, and would welcome the New Year at midnight drinking hot *Glühwein*—the red mulled wine" (Znamierowska-Prüfferowa 2009: 145—146, 214, 221—222).

It should be noted that the date of the New Year's Day in Vilnius was not only January 1st. The Jewish New Year *Rosh Hashanah* was

celebrated in September—October as the day of concentration and reflection. On its eve, Jews would not go to bed so as not to miss the beginning of the New Year. The synagogues would be crowded with believers, and at home people would eat sweet dishes, especially grapes and watermelons (which at the time become ripe in Palestine), and honey, hoping that the year would be sweet. They boiled honey with beetroots and radishes, and made special New Year's pies. Jews dressed in their best clothes and wished one another a good year. The festive rituals were performed on the second day of the holiday as well. In March and April, the Karaimes<sup>5</sup> celebrate *Jyl Bašy*. When the festival coincides with the new moon, the service held at the kenesa is more solemn. It is believed that on that day the storks fly back from the saint places of Jerusalem and bring joy. The Muslim New Year is also marked at a different time of the year by a solemn service at the mosque (Znamierowska-Prüfferowa 2009: 227—229, 237).

### Festivals in the city in 1945—1990

Public celebration of traditional calendar festivals was prohibited during the Soviet period; such occasions were only held at church and in the family. The mass media was engaged in promoting celebrations of just the New Year. Feature films, abundantly published New Year greeting cards, festive TV programmes, and the Kremlin chimes were all meant to make people forget about Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, and shaped stereotypes of the New Year as the liminal festival, also bearing symbols of “rite de passage” (Šaknys 2014: 107). The ideology and press of the time particularly strongly advertised the New Year celebration for children (Senvaitytė 2013: 114—115). Children's cartoons, gifts from Grandfather Frost (in Russian *Дед Мороз*), and the New Year (fir) trees were designed to ensure that in the future this festival would become the most popular holiday of the year. To some extent, this goal has been achieved.

In the Soviet period it was promoted to celebrate mass-scale, pre-arranged public festivals (cf. Vyšniauskaitė 1964: 561). Families were invited to celebrate with the work team (coworkers) in public places where the process of the festival could be controlled. Soviet ideologists emphasised that it was not necessary to welcome the New Year

only at home, and offered organised carnivals at culture centres, theatres, concert halls, and in the great outdoors instead (Mišutis 1979: 36). Thousands of people were attracted to the New Year's party in the Town Hall Square of Kaunas, the second largest city of Lithuania, where entertainment included a concert of bells, popping the corks of champagne at midnight, and firing homemade fireworks. According to the ideologist who promoted Soviet festivals, the New Year in Vilnius was to be welcomed similarly but in a chaotic manner (Pečiūra 1980: 39). Even the guide books for tourists emphasised that Gediminas Square<sup>6</sup> "becomes particularly live on the New Year's Eve when a twenty-metre fir tree decorated with colourful toys is set up there" (Maceika, Gudynas 1960: 87). On the one hand, the historical surroundings, even the Cathedral (then turned into a picture gallery), the tower of the castle of the Grand Duke of Lithuania—though adorned with the flag of Soviet Lithuania—bordering the venue of the festival could hardly evoke feelings close to the Soviet ideology. On the other hand, as noted above, the New Year celebration was being promoted by the television and special programmes for the New Year which became popular in the 1960—1970s (Anglickienė et al. 2014: 20). These programs motivated many people to stay home. It should be pointed out that the New Year has undeniably become the most important festival of the year.

In the years of national revival (1988—1990), the festivals gradually returned to the post-Soviet, partially secular, and highly divergent society in terms of confessions and nationalities in urban areas (Mardosa 2013: 53). The New Year, as the key celebration of the year (by popularity and importance) in the Soviet period, was step by step surpassed by Christmas festivals as it was at the end of the 19th century—early 20th century. Yet some of the rituals of the New Year developed in the Soviet period have remained and continue to be practiced as a tradition with family and friends.

### **Festival in present-day Vilnius**

Based on the data of the census of 2011, residents of Lithuania attributed themselves to 59 religious communities, and only 186,700 people, or 6.1 % of the population, did not attribute themselves to any religious community. The population of Lithuania practiced

9 traditional religions (existing in Lithuania for several hundred years).<sup>7</sup> Lithuanians constituted 84.2 % (in Vilnius 63.2 %), Poles accounted for 6.6% (in Vilnius 16.5 %), Russians constituted 5.8 % (in Vilnius 12.0 %) of the entire population of the Republic of Lithuania.

The three most numerous ethnic groups were selected for the survey of annual festivals in Vilnius, and in 2012—2014<sup>8</sup> the author had an opportunity to compare the welcoming of the New Year in the past year as celebrated by Lithuanians, Poles, and Russians.<sup>9</sup> The analysis of the company in which the New Year was celebrated showed that the Lithuanians had a family celebration more often than the Poles and Russians (67, 65 and 60 % respectively), although the number of Lithuanians among the respondents who had a family or cohabitee was slightly lower (43, 48 and 54% respectively). On the other hand, sometimes the New Year is welcomed together by just a girlfriend and a boyfriend, a married couple, a brother and a sister, and the other family members celebrate separately. Sometimes people manage to welcome the New Year in several venues: for instance, they celebrate with friends until midnight, and much later come back to the family circle.

Often New Year is celebrated not only with family members but also with friends. Nearly two thirds of the respondents celebrate this holiday with their friends (61 % of the Lithuanians, 71% of the Poles and 70 % of the Russians). If the data about young people of different nationalities are quite similar, they are rather divergent in the case of pupils. Approximately half of the pupils at a school with Russian as the language of education welcome the New Year with their families, whereas the custom to celebrate this holiday with friends is clearly dominant among the Polish and Lithuanian pupils. Analysing responses of the slightly senior youth has revealed differences among ethnic groups in terms of the number of those who celebrate the New Year with relatives. According to the Lithuanians, relatives rarely attended their party (12 %), whereas according to the Poles and Russians, relatives welcomed the New Year together much more frequently (25 % and 30 % respectively). Similar discrepancies can be observed with regards to the neighbourhood. Neighbours would celebrate together only in 10 % of Lithuanian families, but the percentage in the case

of Poles and Russians was 17 % and 25 % respectively. Poles would often (14 %) invite their colleagues as well, but only 5 % of Lithuanians and 0% of Russians would do that.

The venue of celebration is also significant for analysis of the festival. Russians mostly tend to welcome the New Year at home (56 %, also 45 % of the Lithuanians and 42 % of the Poles), whereas the Lithuanians and Poles tend to celebrate at their friends' (38 % and 41 %, and 38 % of the Russians), or in public spaces: at a cafe, a (rented) homestead, in the city centre (notably the New Year's celebration in Gediminas Square), in other cities and villages, or in a forest or abroad (17 % of the Lithuanians and Poles, and only 5 % of the Russians). In considering the venue for welcoming the New Year, it may be observed that Russians most often greet midnight on the premises (35 %, and only 15 % of the Lithuanians and Poles). In most cases, Lithuanians and Poles would be outside at midnight, e.g., in the yard, on a balcony, or even on the roof—cracking fireworks, popping the cork of champagne, and greeting one another outside (82 % and 85 %, whereas only 57 % of the Russians). When celebrating in the great outdoors, a bonfire is usually lit up. Representatives of all ethnic groups rarely went to church on New Year's Eve.

Special aspects typical of ethnic groups cannot be distinguished in the analysis of celebrations of the first day of the New Year. Representatives of all ethnic groups who celebrated the festival in their home town usually spent the New Year's Day at home, watching festive television programmes, and, more rarely, at a friend's home. Food preparation is a female area of expertise in traditional culture. However, according to our study, in modern society, men often contribute to preparing and setting the table for the festival. There are also negligible differences depending on nationality. If representatives of both sexes would more often prepare the table for the festival among the Lithuanians, the responses of the Russian and Polish (56 % and 52 % respectively, Lithuanians only 32 %) indicate that the table for the festival was mainly the duty of women, be it a wife, a girlfriend, the mother, a grandmother with a granddaughter, women or girls in general, the respondent herself. Yet no remarkable differences can be pointed out in terms of the dishes of the festival depending on these ethnic groups.

Most of the families maintained the traditions that are characteristic just for them, and usually served favourite dishes of the family members. The Polish respondents gave more prominence to meat dishes, whereas the Russians used relatively more fruit and sweets. Although many of the Russians are Orthodox and Old Believers, and January 1st is during Lent, some of the Russians (as well as the Poles and Lithuanians) indicated the meat dishes as being most important (43 %, with 51 % of the Lithuanians, and 69 % of the Poles).

Ethnic groups do not differ in the abundance of fortune telling and beliefs. However, the traditions of giving gifts for the New Year differ distinctly. Poles mostly exchange gifts on Christmas Eve; Lithuanians do the same on Christmas; and Russians usually give gifts at the New Year. The significance attributed to the festival also varies: when asked 'which festival in the year is most significant,' 17 % of Russians indicated that it was the New Year (with 8 % of Poles and 5 % of Lithuanians supporting the same view). Russians also celebrate the *Old New Year*. Already the survey of pupils showed that 40 % of Vilnius residents taught in Russian and 10 % of Vilnius residents taught in Polish<sup>10</sup> celebrate the New Year both on January 1st and January 14th, whereas 5% of the pupils in the school with the language of education being Russian mentioned only the "Russian" New Year (the night from 13th to 14th of January).<sup>11</sup> Russian people who are older than 20—40 years of age mostly celebrated the New Year based on both calendars. Despite the fact that January 1st is the Lent period for both Orthodox and Old Believers, the Old New Year is marked more modestly, because usually it is a working day. The New Year is also welcomed on January 1st a few times according to the local time of Lithuania, Warsaw, and Moscow. However, people do not attribute much significance to the ethnic aspects of the festival or its rituals and customs.

Quite a different picture emerged in the analysis of the Karaimes ethnic and confessional group. The Karaimes' New Year called *Jyl bašy* was celebrated during the Soviet period as well. The whole family, including adult offspring, would gather at home, A cake decorated with a little rose would be baked, and all the dishes of that day would be centered on believing that the new year will be happy. This festival has remained significant for the Karaites until now, and some

of the older Karaimes celebrate just *Jyl bašy*. Some of the Karaimes mark both *Jyl bašy*, and the Christian New Year. Lithuanian and Polish acquaintances greeted by the Karaimes on January 1st, would return the favour and wish the Karaites a happy new year in spring, when *Jyl bašy* is celebrated. Some older Karaimes spend the New Year's Eve babysitting their grandchildren so as to give their children an opportunity to welcome the New Year with their friends. Through the celebration of *Jyl bašy*, Karaimes are expressing feelings of ethnic and confessional identity, including in present times. Drawing together the observations on which this article was based, we can cite the words of sociologist Stanislovas Juknevičius: "In Lithuania, inert religiousness is dominant, but religious traditions still play an important role in the lives of part of the population" (Juknevičius 2000: 44).

### Conclusions

As we can see even among Christians, celebration of the same festival in historical perspective can acquire ethnic character, creating symbolic boundaries of otherness. We can find these delineations not only in various traditions to greet the New Year among the members of ethnic-oriented societies, but also by analysing the phenomenon of "Old New Year" or "Russian New Year," which originated from the various calendars (Gregorian and Julian) of festivals. On the other hand, we can see an opposing process. During Soviet rule, politics of atheisation had reduced such boundaries, through the creation, and standardisation, of uniform festive food and forming new Soviet symbols of festival, which were common to representatives of all ethnic groups. The comparison of the contemporary traditions of Lithuanians, Poles, and Russians shows that the New Year's festival appears to be more important to the people of Russian nationality. However, despite the difference in the dates—the festival of Old New Year celebrated by the Russians, we can see more similarities than dissimilarities in celebrating New Year. The Christian culture functioning in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia and a similar structure of a ritual year on the one hand and processes of secularization (especially in relation to the loss in prohibitions of Lent) on the other hand, prevent certain essential ethnic differences from being revealed, and a confluence of similar New Year food, beliefs, and traditions.

We find another situation when analyzing ethno-confessional ethnic groups, whose festival of New Year is celebrated at completely different times. As we can see analyzing Karaim New year festival *Jyl bašy*, ethnic and confessional identity is more clearly expressed in that instance. Ongoing research is warranted.

### Notes

1. The above-mentioned study of P. Dundulienė was published when a favourable opportunity presented itself, i.e. for the 400th anniversary of Vilnius University (Šaknys 2014b: 99).
2. National Research Programme “The State and the Nation: Heritage and Identity”. Vilnius University interdisciplinary project “Gervėčiai: Historical Memory and Cultural Identity” (VAT 17/2010).
3. First edition was published in 1997 in Polish.
4. Kissel is a viscous drink made from fruit and berry juices and thickened with starch, known in some places of East and North Europe.
5. The Karaites of Lithuania came from the old tribes of Turkomans, who were part of the powerful Khazarian State in the 8th—10th centuries and converted to the Karaism, i.e., the Karaite faith (Kobeckaitė 1997: 14). The Karaim community in Lithuania dates to 1397 when the Lithuanian Grand Duke Vytautas settled 383 families in Trakai.
6. Gediminas, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, who mentioned Vilnius for the first time in his letters in 1323.
7. Roman Catholic—77.2 % (2,350,478), Orthodox—4.1 % (125,189), Old Believers—0.8 % (23,330), Evangelical Lutherans—0.6 % (18,376), Evangelical Reformed Church—0.2 % (6,731), Sunni Muslim—0.1 % (2,727), Judaic—0.04 % (1,229), Greek Catholics (Unites)—0.02 % (706), Karaites—0.01 % (310).
8. The research project *Contemporary Family Festivals of Vilnius Citizens* is supported by the Research Council of Lithuania (LIT-5-6).
9. The Poles and the majority of Lithuanians were Catholics, the Russians were Orthodox and Old Believers and some of Russians were Catholic (may be from ethnically mixed families). Only a part of Ukrainians Greek (not Roman) Catholics, mostly in Vilnius and Lithuania they are Orthodox. But numerous parts of Russians said that they are Roman Catholics. It was difficult to believe even to me. But in a mixed families (Byelorussian, Polish, Ukrainian and Russian, part of child are becoming Russians Roman Catholics. I had few respondents Ukrainians, all of them were Orthodox.
10. Apparently from mixed families.
11. “Russian” New year is called the celebration the night of the 13th of January (Julian style).

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## **The Calendar Rites of the Muslim Bulgarians— at the Crossroads of the Cultures**

**Abstract.** The paper presents some preliminary results of the field research conducted by the author during the ethnolinguistic expeditions in the Middle Rhodopes in southern Bulgaria in 2012—2014. The field research was aimed at collecting materials on the traditional calendar of the Bulgarians Muslims (Pomaks) who live in Bulgaria where Orthodox Christianity is its main religion. The expedition's task was also to detect traces of mutual influences and interference in the texts of traditional culture, its archaic and borrowed reservoirs; to determine assessment mechanisms of "their" and "foreign" language and culture, to analyze the completeness of different cultural codes in the culture of the Muslim Bulgarians. As a result of the data analysis, the author came to the conclusion that in the national calendar of the Pomaks there are a number of phenomena similar to those cultural phenomena of the neighboring Christian population, due to their common ethnic origin. In the traditional Muslim culture, however, a more compact calendar—in comparison to the extensive system of Christian Orthodox calendar rites—has a compensatory mechanism, which operates on the principle of substitution and intensification of magical acts in various rituals and beliefs.

**Keywords:** calendric rituals, magic, Muslim Bulgarians, Orthodox Christianity, paganism, traditional culture.

The article presents preliminary results of a field research conducted by the author during the ethnolinguistic expeditions in the Middle Rhodope in Southern Bulgaria in 2012—2014 and contains materials on the traditional calendar of the Muslim Bulgarians, who live in Bulgaria where Orthodox Christianity is the main religion. The objective of the expeditions was to investigate the historical, cultural and linguistic heritage of the Muslim Bulgarians living in a different confessional environment for over the centuries in order to identify general and particular features in their language and culture in comparison with their neighbors (Slavs, Christians, Turks, Muslims) and others.

Muslim Bulgarians (*bǔlgari myusyulmani, pomatsi, akhryane*) represent cultural and religious groups distinguished by their marginal cultural status in Bulgarian society.<sup>1</sup> According to their ethnic origin, they are Bulgarians, Slavs speaking Bulgarian, but confessing a difference from the Christian's religion.

Bulgarian-Mohammedans have been for many centuries living compactly in Bulgarian villages in Western and Eastern Rhodope neighboring Bulgarian Christians and ethnic Turks. For this group of the population, more similar in terms of language would undoubtedly be the Bulgarians, but from the religious point of view, Turks may seem more "affined" because they are also Muslims. Language, however, is a stronger marker for ethno-definition compared to religion. How the Muslim Bulgarian community is perceived by neighboring communities is also of great importance: on the one hand, they are "affined" and on the other hand, they are "alien". Christians do not completely accept them as "their own" as they confess Islam, and Turks don't fully accept them as "their own" because Pomaks are Sunnis, not Shites, as the Turks are, and speak a different language. The Islamic doctrine common in Bulgaria belongs to the Sunni Hanafi School. On the one hand, it continues the tradition of the Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, it is a reflection of the historical development of the Third Bulgarian State (Troeva 2012: 5). I give below some of the major milestones of the history of Pomaks in Bulgaria:

- 14th—16th centuries—beginning of the forced Islamization of Christian Bulgarians in Rhodope region,
- 17th century—completion of the Islamization process of Rhodope,
- 1912—the Balkan Wars—an attempt of the Bulgarian state to converse Pomaks to Orthodoxy,
- the 1930s—creation of intelligentsia among the Pomaks and the cultural-educational organization "Friendship Homeland",
- 1942—1944—change of the Arab-Turkish names to Bulgarian ones,
- the 1950s—implementation of the passport system in the country, Pomaks massively register themselves as Turks. "Cultural Revolution" among the Pomaks. The process of "liberation" from Islamic elements in the culture, ban on wearing traditional clothing.

– the 1970s—the second stage of name changes to Bulgarian.

During the twentieth century, the State repeatedly attempted to force integration of the Bulgarian nation with the Muslim Bulgarians. During the Balkan wars of 1912—1913, they were Christianized (baptized) by force. During the Socialist period, when a general attitude to religion was negative, and its practice was possible only in the field of family relations, the Communist authorities in the 1970s and 1980s forced Pomaks and Turks to change their Turkish-Arabic names to Bulgarian. The ban was imposed on the Muslim clothes (tarboosh and the turban for men, trousers and covering veil “feredzhe” burqa for women), on visits to worship houses and mosques, on the celebration of religious holidays and so forth. Mass migrations of the rural population to the cities contributed to a violation of the traditional order of religious knowledge transmission through the family and rural community.

However, after the democratic changes in Bulgaria in 1989, the Muslims got the freedom to regain their old names and practice Islam. In different regions inhabited by Pomaks in Bulgaria, several trends in search of the identity and attitude towards religion are currently observed<sup>2</sup> from religious renaissance (Western Rhodope, Madan, Ruzhica, Gotse Delchev) to complete atheism and conversion to Christianity—Orthodoxy and Evangelism. The last one is mostly common among the youth and those Muslims living in the cities in the Northern and Eastern Rhodope who seek to free themselves from the dualism initially implied in their Bulgarian identity and language, and the Muslim religion itself (Troeva 2012: 7—8).

I conducted a field research in 2012—2014 in the Northern part of the Middle Rhodope (Smolyan region), where members of the local population consider themselves to be Bulgarian, confessing Islam. They are, in most cases, have kept their Bulgarian names, support the Muslim customs and celebrate holidays according to the “tradition” inherited from their parents. The religious norms are not strictly enforced. Young people are wearing European clothes. The mosques and houses of worship are visited mostly by the older men. In some villages the Muslim rituals have the features of the local tradition, which is currently denied by the young Islamic priests

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studied abroad: the veneration of the saints and places of burial (*tyurbe*), committing the funeral rite and obit rite *mevlid* and *devir* (distribution of money for dead during the burial). The search for the identity got a new force, and new versions of the ancestry have been implemented. Here are some of them:

1. The legend about the origin of Pomaks in the times of Thrace; voluntary acceptance of Islam before the 14th century, hence before the Ottoman regime.

2. Pomaks are descendants of Muslims (Arabs, Turks, prophets) who settled in the Bulgarian lands centuries ago.

3. Family line of Islamized Bulgarians dates back to the five priests of King Boris, who refused to accept Orthodoxy during his attempt to baptize Bulgaria in the 7th century.

4. Pomaks are descendants of proto-Bulgarians and ethnic Turks who came to the Bulgarian lands in the 6th—7th centuries and genetically related to the Volga Bulgarians.

At present, three ways of cultural development are open to Muslim Bulgarians: re-Islamization, secularism, Christianization. It can be achieved by:

– Return to their roots (Islam), restoration of sacred places; religion as a marker of identity;

– Commitment to atheism; execution of certain Christian and Muslim rites; modernization of lifestyle and traditional culture; appeal to the Christian holy places (Krūstova mountain); pseudo-Christianization;

– Adoption of Christianity (conversion): Orthodoxy and Evangelism.

As mentioned above, in the Rhodope Mountains representatives of various beliefs have been living together for more than 400 years. Cohabitation between these two religions has always been peaceful and the informants are proud of their tolerance. Most of the Muslim population of the Middle Rhodope remember their Christian roots. The Muslim rites preserved some of the Christian relics:<sup>3</sup> as well as Christians, they light a candle near the deceased or leave a lighted

lamp in the house for three days; on the 52th day of commemoration (*mevlid*) a long grace (*aminka*) is said, which title appeals to the completion of Christian prayer (*amin=amen*). Similar mascot acts are executed on St. George's Day in order to protect the house from the "magic", i.e. witchcraft. On St. George's Day, Muslims (who specifically went to the Orthodox churches) also tried to take from the church a little incense and eat a piece to protect themselves from being jinxed. In folk medicine, some protective actions are taken like usage of criss-cross pattern, which is reminiscent of the cross as a symbol of Christianity. Some bans are motivated by religious events. Thus, on Friday, it was forbidden to wash clothes not only because of the Friday Muslim prayers, but because Christ was crucified on Friday. They believe that if a woman washes clothes of her husband he will get sick.

The presence of the "new" customs related to Christianity among Muslims—visiting churches, lighting of candles, "secret" baptism of children, wearing the cross, treatment sessions in Christian holy places such as Krastova mountain, and also a toponymy data—is not influenced by proximit Christian villages. It is rather a return to the past, genetic memory going back to the deep roots as described by Bulgarian scientists—St. Shishkov (Shishkov 1936) and Khr. Vakarelski (Vakarelski 1965) in the early 20th century. Other possible explanation can be seen in the belief of the healing power of a particular sacred space or a saint that came as a reason for Muslims to visit objects of worship of other faiths for therapeutic purposes, as written in details in the monograph of O.V. Belova (Belova 2005).

However, in everyday life, the Muslim Bulgarians inevitably hold the views and traditions relating to their denomination and their system of values based on a number of fundamental spiritual principles of Islam. The most important holidays of the year are *Qurban Bayram* and *Sheker Bayram*. The Big one is celebrating "good health" and is known for the sacrifice made (*qurban*), and the Small Bayram, or so-called Sugar Bayram, is dedicated to the commemoration when sweets and sugar (*sheker*) are handed out.

Sometimes elements of Muslim prayer are entangled into an occasional pagan ritual. If it was frequently hailing during the summer, they would look for an orphan in the village and make him eat or bite (*da gi kisne*) three hail grains, ask him to throw salt three times

towards the sky and say: “*Ot solta po-edro da ne pada, bismileh i rahmane rahim*” [May anything bigger than a salt grain not fall. In the name of Allah, gracious and merciful]. When it was hailing, they also used the flowers left by children who visited the house on St. George’s Day. These flowers were kept until the following year, and in the case of hail those dried flowers and wild geranium, as well as broken dogwood twig were put on a shovel and lit to stop the hail.

The traditional culture of the Muslim Bulgarians at Smolyan villages contains a number of pagan components included in the celebration of the Christian holidays: these are rites of St. George’s Day (*Gergivden*), St. John the Baptist’s Day (*Eniovden*), a custom of setting ritual kinship (*kumleniye*) between girls (*posestrimstvo*) and others. Pomaks’ custom of guessing about marriage was conducted on Christmas Eve (*Bŭdni vecher*)—the same time as Christians. The name of the week from Christmas to Epiphany associated with the rampant evil spirits in this period has also kept its original name, *Buganska Sedmitsa* (*buganets*, ex. *poganets* ‘evil spirit, house spirit’).<sup>4</sup>

On New Year’s Eve, Muslim Bulgarians, as well as Christians, bake a scone (*pita*), in which they put in a coin and a dogwood twig. Recently, in addition to dogwood and coins, they started to put pieces of paper with descriptions of other types of “happiness” (*kŭsmetcheta*): work, love, travel, education, marriage, and so on.

Back in times traditional to all Bulgarians, Christmas caroling was commonly done: *survakane*. For children they made *survachki*—twigs of dogwood whose lateral branches are waived to the Cyrillic letter “Ф”. Twigs were decorated with wild rose hips, popcorn and red threads, dried apple slices and cotton fiber—all this was strung on a thread and hung on the branch. Children decorated the branches with their mothers and grandmothers. Early in the morning on January 1st children visited all houses of relatives and close neighbors and uttered good wishes (*da survakat*). In return, they used to receive coins and various delicacies. During the ritual, the master of the house would turn his back to visiting children, and they tapped him with sprigs saying: “*Surva, surva godina, vesela godina, zdrava gŭrbina, zhiv, zdrav—do godina, do godina, do amina*” [New Year, cheerful year, healthy back, live healthy until next year, until the next

year, until the end of the century]. The author notes that the text is almost identical to the version known among Christians.

*Ivanovden* (24.VI), associated with the summer solstice and the collection of healing herbs in the villages, is marked with girlish divination rituals, which were executed on the same day with Bulgarian Christians. The night before that day girls made bouquets of flowers (*kitki*), decorated them with recognizable details (*martenitsa*, colored threads, rings, blue beads)—each bunch necessarily contained nettles as an amulet against witchcraft and the evil eye (*uroki*)—and left it overnight in a copper pot in the open air under a bush of wild roses. Early in the morning the girls gathered in the village center and splashed water on each other (as on St. George's Day), sang songs, mainly about love and tried to tell fortunes (*narichat*). One of the girls took a bouquet out of the pot and guessed the future of its owner (*naricha / narezhdha*):

*Kutro veliko chestito, na visok sarai da sedi, zhŭlti altŭne da nizhe* [The lucky one, will sit high and will count yellow coins, i.e. the bouquet owner will be very rich].

*Kutro veliko chestito, zhŭlti altŭne da nizhe* [The lucky one will be sitting high and count yellow coins, i.e. the bouquet owner will become recognizable and rich].

*Kutro veliko chestito, s kantar parite da tegli* [The lucky one will be measuring money on the weights, i.e. marry a merchant].

*Kutro veliko chestito, hergele kone da kara* [The lucky one will ride a thin horse, i.e. marry a poor man].

*Kutro veliko chestito, do Kasŭm da sa ozheni* [The lucky one will get married on Kasŭm holiday].<sup>5</sup>

Wishes were not clearly defined and could be created in the process of divination. Each girl present at the divination took home her bouquet and kept it on the wall until the next year. The holiday ended by joint gatherings (*poprelka*) where the girls appeared smartly dressed in new clothes and fezzes, where they sewed, knitted and sang songs and at the end of the day they used to comb hair, dipping the comb in the water from the flower bouquets ("to make hair long and beautiful"), and braided each other sixty fine braids, weaving in the ends colorful beads as decorations (*krachelni sincheta*), hence hanging on

the ends of the braids. This hair braiding made by Muslim tradition has the Slavic name *preniz*. This ritual hairdo was done not only for that exact celebration. Usually the mother after bathing girls braided their hair that way to make them pretty and for hygienic reasons (the hair does not get dirty so quickly).

The individual elements of the archaic rituals are associated with certain days of the calendar, particularly St. George's Day (6.V), for which the Muslim Bulgarians kept the Slavic name *Gergivden*, *Praznik na Ovchara*, *Praznik na seloto* and is considered one of the most venerated holidays of the year after Bayram. In other Muslim villages of the region, the holiday is known as Khaderlez, Aderlez, Adrelez, Drelez.<sup>6</sup> St. George's Day here preserves the semantics of the beginning not only of a spring cycle, but a new year: it is linked to common rituals of the first washing with water/dew specially prepared on the eve, collecting herbs, preventive measures against magic, snakes, and so on. The people believed that what you did on this day, you would do the whole year: if you counted money, you would count them (had in abundance) all year.

The night before St. George's Day, the housemistress collected blooming tree branches and wild geranium (*zdravetz*) and left it over night in a container with water. The next morning she washed her face with the dew for "health and beauty", collected nettles and stuck it into the lintel of the front door to prevent the household from "the evil forces and witchcraft", swept the house, put the garbage from the house and the barn on a shovel, lit incense and fumigated the house and the housemates to save them from "evil forces, evil eye and snake bites". In order not to encounter snakes in the summer on St. George's Day, it is accustomed to avoid touching scissors and needles. On this day, the Muslims were required to bring the grass (forty two twigs) to the barn with animals, search for special herbs *parovo bile* to pull in money (*pari*) in order to have them in abundance this year, and herbs for love (*galiovno bile*) to get married. Dried herbs were stored until the next year.

Children had to sprawl out and tumble in the morning dew on St. George's Day, wash their eyes, face, and hair with the dew and then splash water with specially prepared bouquets of flowers and wild geranium, which had been prepared the day before, on the houses of

their relatives and neighbors, for which they get rewards in form of money and treats. Before going home, children would leave parts of the flowers and geraniums in the houses. These detours of the houses made by children resemble Christmas house visiting (*survakane*) of Christian Bulgarians when kids tap all housemates with the dogwood twigs worshipping “health” and also get rewarded for that.

St. George’s Day was the only day of the year when milk was fermented with the help of the dew and not the ferment. Before dawn, they would go to the holy springs in Christian villages (*ayazmo*), bring out water, give it to housemates to drink and use it for cooking food, making sure it is “solid” (potatoes, beans, lentils) in order to make everything in life “be complete and go smoothly”.

Based on the analysis of the field data collected on the subject of the traditional culture of the Muslim Bulgarians, I come to the conclusion that the folk calendar of the Pomaks has a number of features similar to the cultural features of the neighboring Christian folk due to their common descent. These elements can be attributed to the archaic components of folk culture, which could have been modified under the influence of local religious and regional traditions. Often the culture of the Muslim Bulgarians contains “forgotten” Christian knowledge and preserves old dialectic lexical tokens affiliated with the rites.

Elements of the Islamic culture are related mainly to the religious practice and beliefs (religious holidays such as Bairam: *Kurban Bayram*, or *Golem Bayram*, *Malük Bayram*, or *Sheker Bayram*, etc.) and are incorporated into the common holiday tradition of the Bulgarian Christians. However, in the traditional culture of the Muslims despite a less detailed calendar, unlike the extensive system of the Orthodox calendar rites, works the principle of substitution—various rituals and beliefs are enriched with magical actions which give those rituals additional content (often forgotten by Christians).

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## Notes

1. More detailed bibliography on Muslim Bulgarians study can be found in the book written by I. Kyurkicheva (Kyurkicheva 2004: 6—9).
2. More detailed information on this subject can be found in the book by E. Troeva (Troeva 2011).
3. For more detailed information about those phenomena of Pomaks from Zlatograd region, please see (Uzeneva 2013), Teteven region—(Uzeneva 2014).
4. The terminology of demonic characters of Rhodope is well analyzed and partially charted in the monograph of Evgeniya Troeva-Grigorova, see chart No. 6 (Troeva-Grigorova 2003: 244).
5. *Kasūm* is celebrated here on November 8 which coincides with the Christmas holiday of St. Dmitry's Day by Julian Calendar. Bulgarians use Gregorian Calendar nowadays, and St. Dmitry's Day is celebrated on October 25, but here it coincides with St. Dmitry's Day according to Julian Calendar: November 8 is St. Mikhail Day (*Arkhangelovden*).
6. See (Raychevski 1998: 45).

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## **The Evolution of Valentine's Day in Socialist and Post-Socialist Times**

**Abstract.** The paper outlines the changes in St. Valentine's Day celebrations in Estonia from 1980 to 2014. Valentine's Day, called also Friendship Day, reached Estonia in the late 1980s. At the time, the holiday in Western Europe and America celebrated love, engagement and marriage. However, to Estonia the holiday was introduced as a day to remember your close ones and friends. In the 1980s, the holiday spread among young people, with support from (pre)schools and teachers: cards and small gifts were prepared for friends and family.

The 21st century saw a breakthrough in media influence and commercialisation. Self-made gifts (cards, small objects) saw competition from international commercial gifts. Valentine's Day has also become a definite occasion for entertainment and food catering establishments with special offers, and romantic packages for couples. Today, Valentine's Day stands both as a day celebrating friendship as well as being in love, and accordingly the customs are varied.

**Keywords:** calendar customs, gifts, invention of tradition, St. Valentine's Day.

This article describes the introduction of a specific calendar celebration—Valentine's Day—in Estonia and the dynamics of its evolution across various political systems. Because Valentine's Day was simultaneously introduced in a number of European countries during the last decades of the 20th century, data on distant cultures available through close neighbours and scientific literature is used for comparison purposes. Celebration of Valentine's Day is new, and we can trace the invention of the traditions (Hobsbawm 1983). Essentially, Valentine's Day can be counted among a series a celebrations instituted in the late 19th century and in the 20th century, conveying a message of honouring family ties, contribution to the upbringing of children, and simple, traditional values. Other celebrations of its kind are Mother's Day, Father's Day, the newly established

Grandparents Day (observed in some countries only), and International Women's Day, aim to develop solidarity or promote a certain profession among the public, such as World Theatre Day, Journalism Day or Fisherman's Day, etc. The occupation holidays gained popularity in the second half of the 20th century. A celebration may be geared toward raising awareness about ecological issues or the need to change one's attitude to the environment (Earth Day, World Water Day, etc.) or calling attention to chronic diseases, diseases difficult to diagnose, people living in extreme poverty, special historical events or pets, such as World Cat Day. This list may go on and on, but at the same time, it provides a context for Valentine's Day.

It is noteworthy that similar celebrations are neither part of agricultural calendars, based on cycles of farming and harvesting, nor various liturgical calendars. Also, such celebrations are institutionalised to varying degrees—while some are observed as national holidays, others are not. Today, the observance of celebrations is upheld by cultural workers, interest groups and NGO movements, the commercial sector, and families. These celebrations are those of a modernised society, highlighting the human dimension and human values, and Valentine's Day should be considered against this backdrop.

The fact that Valentine's Day has two equally widespread translations into Estonian: *sõbrapäev*, 'day of friends', and *valentinipäev* 'Valentine's Day' refers to two different approaches and ways of celebration.

Carola Ekrem (1995) studied the evolution of Valentine's Day in the Finnish cultural space and predicted that the northern self-restraint does not allow the establishment of a day dedicated to the overflowing of emotions. Estonia seemed to fit well within that interpretation. However, Ekrem also noted that in the case of commercialisation, the structure of the holiday will undergo change. On the basis of Ekrem's assumptions, we will examine how the celebration, first introduced in the late socialist period and carried over to the post-socialist era, was adapted for its new surroundings and changed accordingly.

### **Short history**

The Christian Catholic Church recognizes at least three different St. Valentines who died a martyr's death on February 14. Most often,

the holiday is attributed to a Roman Christian priest who secretly performed marriages for soldiers in defiance of the orders of Emperor Claudius II. According to legend, before he was executed on Feb 14, 270 AD, he sent a letter to his beloved signed "Your Valentine". This is the phrase used on contemporary Valentine's Day cards. In 496, pope Gelasius named Feb 14 Valentine's Day and Valentine the patron saint of lovers. However, in 1969 pope Paul VI excluded the holiday from the church calendar.

Other claims state that the holiday originates from a pagan fertility festival, celebrated on February 14 in honour of Juno, goddess of marriage and women. It was customary that women write love letters and then cast them into an urn. Men randomly pulled one out and tried to track down the writer. Some sources indicate that the tradition was one of the more recent celebrations observed in the territory of the Roman Empire in the 4th and 5th century. It came to be a popular celebration that became more widely known by the 8th century (Catholic Encyclopaedia 2012; Oruch 1981: 537).

The origins of the day are also attributed to the start of the mating period of birds and bees, which, according to medieval beliefs, fell on February 14. According to research by Jack B. Oruch, establishment of the tradition of Valentine's Day was affected in the late 14th century by the poet Chaucer, who wrote a poem with three friends in which the celebration is associated with the mating period of birds and bees. From there stems a more recent tradition that did not gain wider popularity. It is known that King Charles VI used to celebrate the day with wine, music and poetry recitals in the company of 400 men from his court (Oruch 1981). A historical review indicates that the popularity of Valentine's Day has had its ups and downs, it has been observed sporadically, and it came to be among the most loved celebrations—primarily in the US, and promoted by the social climate of the time and the media—only in the 20th century.

### **Invention of the tradition**

Valentine's Day arrived in Estonia in the late 1980s from Finland. Valentine's Day was celebrated in educational institutions through the initiative of teachers, who relied on information gleaned from

the media: the articles spoke about the background of the holiday and the importance of celebrating it (see, e.g. Hiimäe 1999, Dogatko 2004). Personal touches were added as and where possible; hand-made effort was an important aspect of cards and gifts. Children in preschool and primary school made cards mostly for their mothers, while it was only in lower secondary school that they started to make and give them to friends, too. Also, children were encouraged to give homemade gifts (as opposed to purchased ones). In general, they prepared such gifts in preschool or school classes, sometimes at home, using materials at hand. These presents were age-appropriate keepsakes with a sweet emotional charge. The words of the young singer Jana Kask uttered in 2011 appropriately illustrate the prevalence of homemade gifts:

*"To celebrate Valentine's Day on the 14th of February, I always prepare homemade gifts for my friends. Sometimes it is not easy, because my friends are so different from each other. Some like the colour pink and Chihuahuas, while others dig Black Sabbath and black leather pants, but I think I'll manage. I will certainly make something with my own hands, for example, drawings"* (Kask 2011).

The holiday was introduced as a day to remember friends and loved ones. This was quite different from the Western European and American tradition, which regarded the day as one dedicated to romantic involvement.

### **The post-socialist period: people we do not consider quite adult**

In the early 21st century, high-schoolers started to take over the organisation of Valentine's Day activities (Dogatko 2004; Kõiva, Vesik, Särg 2004). Schools used stereotypical elements: post boxes for friendship letters and cards, hearts drawn or painted on the face, romantic decoration of classrooms and, in some cases, wearing dress clothes to school. Aspects of the celebration such as its improvisational nature and being targeted to cementing friendships are clearly emphasised.

In 2001, students of Audentes Private Gymnasium wore red outfits or traditional symbols of Valentine's Day, for example. All students

wore heart-shaped numbers on their chest. Everyone could use a big red mailbox to forward greetings to their friends. At the end of each school day, the mailbox was opened and notes were delivered to their receivers. Valentine's Day traditions and customs were discussed in English classes, and card-making competitions were held between classes, etc. In 2002, a pancake race was held at the same school, and participants as well as those in the audience had a great opportunity to experience the joy of participation and cheer for their favourites (Kõiva, Vesik, Särg 2004).

A local newspaper described the atmosphere in Jõgeva Gymnasium.

*"Valentine's Day on the 14th of February in our school was the same as every year: happy students clad in red, lively hustle and bustle around mailboxes, and the sending of cards. Students from 8th to 12th grade participated in a FRIEND GAME: participants draw the name of a person whom they had to surprise with a gift and hugs within three days"* (Kõiva, Vesik, Särg 2004).

### **The adults in their personal sphere**

Through the 1990s, the celebration of Valentine's Day spread among middle-aged and older people. It was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate close relationships and lacked any political (or even religious) connotations with gifts: flowers, small handmade gifts, well-wishes, dedicated greeting cards, and later e-cards as well. A contributing factor to this success may have been the fact that in 1992 Estonia officially excluded March 8 from the list of national holidays, and this day no longer being work holiday led to a decline in the festive celebration of Women's Day at home. Also, in the 1980s March 8 acquired the aura of a "red" holiday. Valentine's Day was conveniently available to fulfil an empty niche. Today, about 20 % of adults in Estonia have accepted Valentine's Day as a regular holiday (Postimees 2011).

### **The post-socialist period: transformation into a commercially institutionalised holiday**

Commercial retail enterprises quickly seized onto the idea of having another holiday with dedicated memorabilia—cards, heart-shaped pillows, roses, candy, etc. Commercial products became competi-

tion for handmade products. Entertainment and catering companies also saw an opportunity, developing dedicated evening programmes. As a conclusion, today it is almost compulsory for romantically involved couples to enjoy an evening out that night.

The local commercial sector immediately seized the opportunity to make money off the 14th of February celebrations. Special Valentine's Day articles were put into production: supermarket shelves became quickly filled with locally made confectionary specially customised for the celebration, as well as chocolates and smaller thematic gifts, heart-shaped and fittingly decorated cakes and pies. In 2003, the media announced that a whopping 20.6 tons of special confectionary was put on the market for Valentine's Day (Postimees 2003).

In the 21st century, commercialisation brought about powerful changes when domestic products were forced to compete with the selection of goods provided by international chains. First came globally mass-produced red-and-pink thematic greeting cards. This new wave of cards did not represent a message of celebrating friendship but one of American love culture. The assortment of internationally marketed gifts expanded. Although homemade presents are still popular, commercially marketed items have begun to gain ground over handcrafted ones, especially among adults.

Commerce has also tried to make the most of the "friend" aspect of the holiday, offering "prices for friends", announcing that this month is "friendship month, come see!" etc. These offers last throughout February and are not limited to Feb 14th. There are a great number of examples for campaigns which share only an arbitrary connection with Valentine's Day as a day of celebrating friendship, relying on a logical shift in product offering. For example, Tartu University Press advertised friendship month—buy 2 books, get a free bag; special offers for underwear or cosmetics have appeared: women's underwear—20 % off, 14 % off cosmetic products; and dry-cleaning promotional offers have been advertised (bring three items in for dry-cleaning, get one cleaned for free). The semantic scope of the word 'friend' has been broadened, because it is first and foremost friendly prices that are advertised, for example, a friendship month offer: cheap laptops and computers, or in another example, take

a friend with you for a free body content analysis. Some campaigns include the entire months of February and March in their promotional period, adding to the above list birthday parties at affordable prices—25% off in February and March.

Valentine's Day is important for entertainment venues: pubs and restaurant throw style parties, the dress code for thematic events is red, or a special programme is offered. For example, attending a retro party at the Lühikesed Mehed inn in Kadrina village, Pala rural municipality, in 2011. It was advertised that the best dance music from the last century would be played, and guests were expected to follow a certain dress code (red). In the 21st century, the celebration culture that started off with a couple of thematic evenings in the capital and larger towns spread all over Estonia.

As for a more personalised approach, there were Valentine's Day balls held sporadically on the initiative of students in some gymnasiums, featuring general elements such as mailboxes, friendship notes and romantic messages, ballroom dances, formal clothing, a vote for the hottest couple, and everything else associated with the celebration. Such balls are popular only among a certain group of students because these events are seen as competing with proms typically held at the end of the school year. Also, it is considered highly impractical to go to great expenses for clothing that is rarely worn and is not included in the generally accepted trend (Valentinipäeva ball 2011).

### **Gender differences**

All age groups and both genders are potential targets for celebrating the romantic-cum-friendship holiday. Although women often initiate the holiday's observance and men accept it as something they need to do, there is no uniformity in that attitude.

In 2009, the popular web portal Tarbija24 conducted a survey to find out how its readers celebrate Valentine's Day (Tarbija 2009). A third of the respondents were male and survey results indicated that approximately half of the respondents celebrate Valentine's Day and the rest do not. Even if it is perceived as a nice tradition involving surprise gifts and as a holiday worth celebrating, a significant share of respondents chooses not to observe it personally.

The comparison of social media comments by men and women reveals that in many families making gifts and surprises is a question of agreement, and both sides do it. Next follow some examples from the web portal Buduuar (2011):

*"I'm so glad that Valentine's Day trinkets are on display at shopping centres—that way it is quite impossible to let it slip your mind. Otherwise, it would be quite embarrassing. I do not think much of the celebration, but it is always nice to do something with my girlfriend."* Martin (28)

*"I'm waiting for it! Not one Valentine's Day has gone uncelebrated by me and my partner. We outdo each other with surprises and that's incredibly sweet!"* Rain (32)

*"The celebration itself is nice, but I cannot stand the idea of making bookings, running around shopping centres and, to top it all off, wearing a suit in the evening simply because it's some holiday. That's why I always try to surprise my wife with something nice at home!"* Lauri (36)

*"This day is marked with red in the calendar — my girlfriend did it as early as the beginning of January! I'm very excited to see how I will be surprised that evening! Granted, there will be gift for her as well!"* Margo (25)

The fact that women are more active in celebrating Valentine's Day can be explained with their desire to show off their relationship and draw attention to how special it is. However, their motives and solutions are different. The following example is typical in a number of respects, incorporating elements of making something yourself, taking initiative and conveying other relevant messages.

*"I usually agree with my husband about the price of our gifts, or we prepare surprises for each other, trying not to give it away :D That's what we do on all holidays. Granted, a box of sweets and flowers would be nice (for those who rarely get any), but I'd prefer more special and impressive surprises (it doesn't necessarily need to be expensive). For our engagement anniversary and for the birthday of my husband (on the same day), I prepared the following surprise.*

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*I bought red candles (in jars) and created a large heart shape out of them behind our house. A friend of mine was there to help me and when I was ready, I had her tell my husband that he should step out to the balcony... Then, I wished him happy anniversary and told him how much I love him. xD It is not always MEN who should do something... If you want a special experience, do it yourself... The feeling you get out of it is so much better compared to being surprised yourself with something ... xD” Furba.*

The above examples illustrate Valentine’s Day celebrations in a well-functioning relationship between people living together. Still, it is very common to give friends or loved ones symbolic gifts or candles, or take them out for a coffee, or to the theatre, or a concert to celebrate close human relationships in a more festive atmosphere.

### **Symbols and cards with poems— continuation of folklore tradition**

February being one of the coldest months of the year in Estonia, the tradition of giving flowers is not widespread because low temperatures may easily damage flowers. Conversely, in China, where Valentine’s Day has been popularised over the course of the last 15 years by the younger members of the middle class, the custom of giving flowers is viewed as one upholding traditional values (Zavoretti 2013).

Historically, the roots of the idea of Valentine’s Day cards are thought to reach back to Charles, Duke of Orleans, who wrote romantic poems to his wife when he was imprisoned in 1415. From the 16th century onward, Valentine’s cards written with coloured ink on coloured paper were hugely popular. A number of motifs and techniques used at the time have survived to our day, such as cutting out shapes from paper and writing poems on them, or the first letter in each line of a stanza making up the loved one’s name, or replacing some words with images.

In the early 19th century, black-and-white printed cards started to circulate and became very popular because explicitly expressing one’s feelings was disapproved of by the moral sentiment of the era. Gradually, Valentine’s Day cards evolved into true masterpieces, decorated with silk, flowers, gold leaf, or a printed or drawn Cupid, who became the symbol of Valentine’s Day. Valentine’s Day cards are an

important commercial article: for example, according to the website Howstuffworks (1998—2016), there are over 2,000 card printing companies in the US.

In Estonia, children generally give cards with short congratulation messages or simple greetings. However, adults typically resort to popular poems or aphorisms. Another interesting task for researchers is analysing Estonian-language cards with simple poetic forms and rhymes. It is often aphorisms and poems from the wealth of folklore heritage that are used:

*"To cry, / you need someone to cry with. / To laugh, / you need someone to be happy with. / To be happy, you need a friend you can count on. / Nice day of friends!"* or

*"Real friends are like mornings. / You can't have them all day / but they'll be there when you wake up. / Today, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow... / Forever!"* or

*"Don't forget a friend, / Don't forget me, Don't forget a friend / Who loves you.—Happy Friends' Day!"* or

*"Day of Friends! / Friendship is the spark of heart, it does not burn in fire."* (Postimees 2011).

Valentine's Day cards have emerged as a new field of application for aphorisms and poems. In Estonia, Valentine's Day cards do not feature all the usual symbols of romance, but only some of them, such as hearts and red roses representing strong feelings. At the same time, many card designs feature cute animals: a teddy bear with flowers or hearts, cute kittens or puppies sitting together or hugging each other. Images of people and couples in love are surprisingly rare. So it can be said that symbols and messages featured on cards mostly stand for friendship and traditional values and, to a lesser extent, for romantic love and courtship. The latter values are promoted by internationally marketed cards, the entertainment industry, and romantic films.

In Estonia, the role of media, including social media, should not be ignored: as with all other celebrations, people are encouraged to prepare homemade cards (the Valentine's Day card competition of

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2011) and gifts. For a few years, a thematic singing competition (Valentinipäeva laulukonkurss 2011) was held in the capital of Estonia—similar projects help to come up with new, creative solutions.

### Conclusions

Integration of new calendar holidays is a lengthy process that is likely to fail unless it receives support from institutional establishments as well as the media. In Estonia, the media support the regular celebration of St. John's Day (Midsummer), Christmas, New Year's Eve, Valentine's Day, Father's Day, and Mother's Day, stressing the importance of celebrating these holidays in the family or intimate circle.

Valentine's Day in the late socialist period began as a day to celebrate friendship and was observed in preschools (nursery schools) and schools. Homemade cards represent a modern means of validating the parent-child relationship. Valentine's Day has had a definite place in the institutional school calendar for over 30 years, being rooted in the post-socialist cultural space as an occasion for exchanging gifts, cementing friendships and having a good time.

According to survey results, a mere 20 % of adults celebrate Valentine's Day at home. In the context of the decline of calendar celebrations, such a process refers to the fact that the introduction of Valentine's Day has been a successful one.

The celebration successfully replaces International Women's Day on March 8, which lost its official status as a national holiday after Estonia regained independence in 1991 and after its appeal started to diminish as early as in the 1980s (Kõiva 2013). In terms of specific messages, Valentine's Day was an ideal substitute for the multifunctional Women's Day but was at the same time aimed at a larger target group: friends from all age groups, children showing appreciation to their parents, and loved ones—rather than being single-sex oriented, it seeks to take the position of a celebration cementing the relationship between friends or significant others. Valentine's Day has taken over certain elements of other adjacent holidays, including those of making cards (a characteristic feature of celebrating Mother's Day, later Women's Day) and giving flowers to mothers. Valentine's Day has become embedded in the post-socialist cultural

space as Friendship Day as well as a celebration of (eternal) love, creating opportunities for and requiring festivities as well as showing appreciation for one's friends and/or partners. While for some school students it is a part of the study process, for others the celebration requires self-initiated action. The celebration is also upheld by the commercial sector, international media culture and the entertainment industry. In addition to stereotypical forms of celebration, there are individual, creative solutions and various approaches. Celebrating Valentine's Day in the private space offers more creative freedom but copies what is seen in movies, etc. to a certain extent.

Celebrations of Valentine's Day in the late socialist era and the following period are not polarised. We can observe a complex of various trends emerging.

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