

# **THE RITUAL YEAR 10**

## MAGIC IN RITUALS AND RITUALS IN MAGIC



# THE RITUAL YEAR 10

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Edited by

Tatiana Minniyakhmetova and Kamila Velkoborská

INNSBRUCK – TARTU 2015

## **THE RITUAL YEAR 10**

**Magic in Rituals and Rituals in Magic**

**The Yearbook of the SIEF (Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore) Working Group on the Ritual Year**

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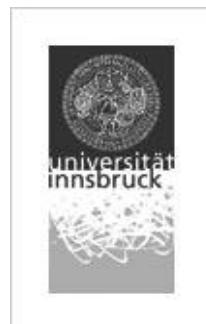
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**SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year**



## Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	13
<b>The Ritual Year and Magical Features</b>	
Lyle Emily (Edinburgh, Scotland)	19
<i>The Cosmic Connections of the Eight Key     Points in the Indo-European Ritual Year</i>	
Gunnell Terry (Reykjavik, Iceland)	28
<i>The Background and Nature of the Annual and     Occasional Rituals of the Ásatrúarfélag in Iceland</i>	
Håland Evy Johanne (Bergen, Norway; Athens, Greece)	41
<i>Magical Ceremonies during the Ritual Year     of the Greek Farmer</i>	
Mihaylova Katya (Sofia, Bulgaria)	61
<i>The Fortune-Telling Customs of Andrzejki     and Katarzynki in the Polish Ritual Year</i>	
Gierek Bożena (Kraków, Poland)	70
<i>Rituals of the Easter Period in Poland</i>	
Multari Anna (Messina, Italy)	83
<i>Coptic Magic and Its Phases</i>	
Lielbārdis Aigars (Riga, Latvia)	91
<i>Catholic Saints in the Latvian Calendar</i>	
Testa Alessandro (Pardubice, Czech Republic)	100
<i>The Re-Enchantment of Europe: “Traditional”     Carnivals and the Belief in Propitiatory Magic     (Two Ethnographic Cases from Italy and Czechia)</i>	
Mifsud Chircop Marlene (Msida, Malta)	110
<i>Good Friday Processions on Contemporary Malta</i>	

Griffin-Kremer Cozette (Rambouillet, France) <i>Doing Things Rightways and Three Times. From Maying Practices to Standard Procedures</i>	121
Mag Fhloinn Billy (Limerick, Ireland) <i>Sacrificial Magic and the Twofold Division of the Irish Ritual Year</i>	130
<b>Symbolism of Fire, Food, Ritual Objects and Magical Spaces</b>	
Sedakova Irina (Moscow, Russia) <i>Magico-Religious Symbolism of a Candle in the Slavic Calendar Rituals</i>	141
Minniyakhmetova Tatiana (Innsbruck, Austria) <i>Ritual Fire in the Annual Cycle of Udmurt Calendar Customs</i>	152
Wilk Urszula (Warsaw, Poland) <i>The Valencian Festival of Las Fallas as an Example of Symbolic Violence</i>	162
Ek-Nilsson Katarina (Uppsala, Sweden) <i>Folk Belief and Rituals about Bread in Sweden. Some Interpretations and Comparisons with Today's Hipster Culture</i>	171
Ramšak Mojca (Ljubljana, Slovenia) <i>The Magic of Wine Marketing: Invented Rituals of Slovene Wine Queens</i>	177
Rychkov Sergey (Kazan, Russia) <i>Magic of a Toast</i>	187
Sánchez Natalías Celia (Zaragoza, Spain) <i>Magical Poppets in the Western Roman Empire: a Case Study from the Fountain of Anna Perenna</i>	194
Kuhn Konrad (Basel, Switzerland) <i>Relics from the 'Lost Valley' – Discourses on the Magic of Masks</i>	203

Shutova Nadezhda (Izhevsk, Russia)	213
<i>Ritual as a Means of Organizing     the Traditional Udmurt Sacred Space     (The late 19th – early 20th century)</i>	
Khudyayev Andrey (Arkhangelsk, Russia)	220
<i>Magic Ritual and its Spatial Structure     in Archaic Cultures of the North</i>	
Verebélyi Kincső (Budapest, Hungary)	230
<i>Das Haus als geistiges Kraftfeld</i>	
<b>Innovations in Traditions</b>	
Gareis Iris (Frankfurt on Main, Germany)	239
<i>Politics and Magic in the Ritual Year:     Case Studies from Pre-Columbian Peru to the Present</i>	
Rancane Aida (Riga, Latvia)	248
<i>Motifs of Sacrifice in the Context of the Present-Day     Search for Spiritual Experience in Latvia:     Traditions and Innovations</i>	
Urboniene Skaidre (Vilnius, Lithuania)	258
<i>The Destruction of Religious Monuments in Lithuania     in Soviet Times: Stories, Magic and Beliefs</i>	
<b>Divination, Fortune-telling</b>	
Voigt Vilmos (Budapest, Hungary)	269
<i>Rebus – Charms – Evil Forces – Magic</i>	
Tuczay Christa Agnes (Vienna, Austria)	275
<i>Necromancy from Antiquity to Medieval and     Modern Times</i>	
Šaknys Žilvytis (Vilnius, Lithuania)	286
<i>Magic or Entertainment?     Marriage Divination and the Ritual Year in Lithuania</i>	
Klimova Ksenia (Moscow, Russia)	294
<i>Fortune Telling in the Modern Greek Ritual Year</i>	

Vlaskina Nina (Rostov-on-Don, Russia)	303
<i>The Types of Divination Used by the Don Cossacks: Highlighting Areas of Distribution</i>	
<b>Astral Objects, Plants and Magic in Healing Strategies</b>	
Kõiva Mare, Kuperjanov Andres (Tartu, Estonia)	313
<i>The Moon, Astronomic Objects and Symbolic Rites in Healing Strategies</i>	
Tchoekha Oksana (Moscow, Russia)	323
<i>Lunar Magic in the Modern Greek Folk Tradition</i>	
Mishev Georgi (Plovdiv, Bulgaria)	335
<i>Where Do You Come From, Ash? – I Come From a Pure Place. Magical Healing Practices from the Region of the Thracian Cult Center of Starosel, Plovdiv region, Bulgaria</i>	
Ippolitova Aleksandra (Moscow, Russia)	346
<i>Circumscription Ritual in Russian Herbals of the 17th–early 20th Centuries</i>	
Sidneva Svetlana (Moscow, Russia)	356
<i>The Magic Herbs in the Modern Greek and Italian Calendar Customs</i>	
<b>Shamanism and Neo-Shamanism, Paganism and Neo-Paganism, Cults and Wicca in the Old and New Traditions</b>	
Zoric Snjezana (Seoul, Republic of Korea)	367
<i>The Magic of Performance in Korean Shamanic Ritual – gut</i>	
Fehlmann Meret (Zurich, Switzerland)	376
<i>“The Earth’s Unseen Powers of Growth Need to be Nourished” – on Images of Seasonal Pagan Rituals in Popular Culture</i>	

Velkoborská Kamila (Pilsen, Czech Republic) <i>Magic as practised by the Brotherhood of Wolves (Czech Republic)</i>	384
Malita Joanna (Kraków, Poland) <i>Magic in Everyday Life of Polish Wiccans</i>	394
<b>Reasoning of Supernatural: Theory and Practice</b>	
Savickaitė Eglė (Kaunas, Lithuania) <i>Reasoning Supernatural Experiences: Rationalism and Intuition</i>	405
Fournier Laurent Sébastien (Nantes, France) <i>The Magic of Traditional Games: From Anthropological Theory to Contemporary Case Studies</i>	414
Zanki Josip (Zadar, Croatia) <i>Embodiment and Gender: Constructing Balkan Masculinities</i>	422
<b>Sorcerers, Witches and Magic Practices</b>	
Baiduzh Marina (Tyumen, Russia) <i>Constructing the Image of Witch in Contemporary Russian Mythological Beliefs and Magical Practices</i>	433
Betea Raluca (Berlin, Germany) <i>Magical Beliefs for Stealing the Milk of Animals. A Case-study on the Romanian Villages in Transylvania (18th–19th Centuries)</i>	444
Dillinger Johannes (Oxford, Great Britain) <i>Treasure and Drache. Ritual and Economy in the Early Modern Period</i>	453
Sivilova Yana (Sofia, Bulgaria) <i>Magic versus Rational Reasoning in Anecdotal Tale</i>	460

## **Magic and Rituals in Family Tradition**

- Paukštytė-Šaknienė Rasa (Vilnius, Lithuania) 471  
*Ritual Year of Godparents and Godchildren  
in Contemporary Society in Lithuania*
- Stolyarova Guzel (Kazan, Russia), 479  
Danilova Olga (Yoshkar-Ola, Russia)  
*Magic in the Traditional Culture of the  
Russian Population in the Mari Region*
- Mykytenko Oksana (Kiev, Ukraine) 487  
*Padlock and Key as Attributes of the Wedding  
Ceremony: Traditional Symbolism and Contemporary  
Magic (on the Material of the Slavic Tradition)*
- Rychkova Nadezhda (Kazan, Russia) 497  
*Magic as Communication in Family Rituals  
of Russians in Tatarstan*

## **Beyond the Threshold and Magic Value**

- Pócs Éva (Budapest, Hungary) 507  
*The Living and the Dead at the Time of the Winter  
Solstice in Central Eastern European Beliefs*
- Stahl Irina (Bucharest, Romania) 519  
*The Nine Miraculous Graves:  
Seeking Help from Beyond*
- Neubauer-Petzoldt Ruth (Erlangen, Germany) 532  
*The Year of Magical Thinking – Rituals and Magical  
Thinking in Autobiographical Literature of Mourning*

## **Analysing Magic in Rituals and New Field Researches**

Krasheninnikova Yulia (Syktyvkar, Russia)	547
<i>Magic Beliefs and Practices of Holy Thursday     in the Modern Tradition of the Peasant     Population of the Russian North     (based on materials of the XXI century)</i>	
Iagafova Ekaterina, Bondareva Valeria (Samara, Russia)	557
<i>Traditional Festive Rituals in Modern     Chuvash Culture</i>	
Koval-Fuchylo Iryna (Kyiv, Ukraine)	568
<i>Ukrainian Calendar Cry: the Magical Value     and Functional Features of the Tradition</i>	
Graden Dorothy Clark (Valparaiso, USA)	579
<i>Archaic Magic as Background to Artistic     Inspiration and Interpretation</i>	

<b>The Authors</b>	583
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## **SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year**

Inaugural Meeting	589
The Conferences	589
The Publications	590
Conference Memories	592



## Foreword

The SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year organized its 10th Annual conference on the 25–27 September 2014 in Innsbruck, Austria. The theme of the conference was “Magic in Rituals and Rituals in Magic”. The conference attracted scholars from 28 countries and 72 participants presented their researches on magic and magical rituals.

Magic and magical rituals in the past as well as today may be observed in formalized and regularly recurring religious and profane acts, i.e. in cult and customs. Many of these acts are based on ancient rituals that were demonized with the arrival of Christianity. In a number of modern customs that emerged from early magico-religious rituals, survivals of the magical basis are preserved, but these are no longer understood in their original meaning and are explained by secondary rationalizations.

Apart from the original magico-religious motivation and symbolism, today especially the social function comes to the fore. Modern festive ritual stabilizes social structure and creates identification with the community and, furthermore, we can observe an increasingly aesthetic dimension, especially in the form of decorative ornaments and costumes, etc. But the whole richness of *magical practice* can be traced in the ritual year from ancient times till today in all civilizations.

The range of the subject, as shown by the contributions to the present volume, is very broad, both geographically and ethnically. Special attention is paid to the magical rituals performed in the course of the year and their correlation with religious ceremonies. Another topic discussed is the typology of rituals, including their characteristic features and the reasons for their performance in particular parts of the year. Some presentations are devoted to contemporary magical practice and witchcraft and vegetation magic as represented in the year cycle and everyday life. As a rule magic includes spells and incantations which play the dominant role in many rituals. Magic is very widespread in the Neo-Pagan movements,

and from the remote past it has been observed and maintained in (neo)shamanism and folk beliefs. Nowadays, new rituals are being invented while archaic magic is presented as the background, and some contributors give interpretations of how it operated in the past and how it was adapted in the process of creation of the new rituals. Another viewpoint is offered in the articles which explore the concept of magic in its relations with human behaviour in ritual and everyday contexts. A number of papers offer valuable new field research materials and their scholarly interpretation.

The conference was organized by The Institute for History and European Ethnology of The Leopold-Franzens University of Innsbruck (Prof. Dr. Leander Petzoldt, Dr. Dr. Tatiana Minniykhmetova) in collaboration with Saga Studio Pilsen, Czech Republic (Dr. Kamila Velkoborská). It was supported by: The University of Innsbruck, through the Rector of the University, Prof. Dr. Dr. hc. mult. Tilmann Märk; The Office of the Tyrolean Regional Government, Cultural Department, and The President of the Tyrolean Government, Dr. Dr. Herwig van Staa; The Administration of the Town of Innsbruck; The Tyrolean Wasserkraft AG (TIWAG) and Dr. Bruno Wallnöfer; The Innsbrucker Kommunalbetriebe AG and Robert Scherer; The Russian Centre of the University of Innsbruck; The Publishing Company Tyrolia; The Institute for History and European Ethnology of The University of Innsbruck and Chairs Prof. Dr. Margret Friedrich and Prof. Dr. Timo Heimerdinger. We offer our very warm thanks to them all.

The present volume owes a great deal to many people. Our special thanks go to the President of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year Dr Emily Lyle (from September 2014: Honorary Chairman) and the Secretary Irina Sedakova (from September 2014: Co-Chair) for their kindness and continual support in organizing the conference and preparing this volume. We would like to thank the team of English-language editors for their hard work: Jenny Butler, Molly Carter, Cozette Griffin-Kremer, John Helsloot, Emily Lyle, Billy Mag Fhloinn, Neill Martin, Thomas McKean, and Elisabeth Warner; and Leander Petzoldt, who edited the article written in German. Without them this volume would never have come about. We also wish to express our gratitude to Mare Kõiva for organizing the printing of the volume by the publisher of the Estonian Literary

Museum, and to Liisa Vesik for preparing the layout and making corrections in the proof. Our thanks go to Yuri Lisovkiy, as ethno-futuristic artist, who generously granted us the permission to use his work for the cover. We are also grateful to Andres Kuperjanov for the design of the cover. The participants helped to choose the pictures of the conference and we are grateful to all of them for this.

Last but not least we would like to thank the authors of the articles and the members of the Ritual Year working group for helping to make the conference not only highly inspiring but also immensely enjoyable. We hope that the present volume will reflect this.

The Editors



The Ritual Year  
and  
Magical Features



Emily Lyle

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## **The Cosmic Connections of the Eight Key Points in the Indo-European Ritual Year**

**Abstract.** The ritual year in Indo-European pagan times formed part of a cosmology which included space as well as time and it is argued that winter is above and summer below in a division of the year that forms a vegetation cycle with four key points at the beginning and end of summer pasturing and the two half-way points. These points correspond to life-cycle transitions and the young gods. The solstices and equinoxes form another set of four key points which relate to fights between the hero and the old gods of heaven, sky, earth and sea who pose threats to humans and have to be controlled.

**Key words:** calendar, cosmology, dragon, elements, gods, Indo-European, life-cycle, monster, mythology, solstices

### **Introduction**

In the first talk I gave to the Ritual Year Working Group of SIEF, in Malta in 2004, I made an early attempt to deal with the sequence of festivals throughout the year (Lyle 2005), and I am now able to offer a clearer and sharper model of the year cycle as a result of the useful exchanges held within this group over the ten years of its existence. One apparently small matter, which is actually a major advance, is the ability to present the year cycle diagrammatically in a way that reflects its spatiotemporal nature. Because of the conceptual interrelationship of space and time in a cosmological system, it is necessary to know which time-period is “up”, although it seems rather paradoxical to say this about a segment of time. In discussing this point and in the rest of this paper I am treating the Indo-European tradition, but it should not be assumed that the model is exclusively Indo-European since the system modelled may well have extended more widely.

Although the topic of spatiotemporal organisation is obviously still open to debate, I am now satisfied that the winter half of a winter/

summer divide is “up” and the summer half “down” (Lyle 2012: 17). The use of this terminology immediately raises the question of what exactly is meant by the winter and summer halves. The actual days when the transitions occur vary in different cultures but it seems that the ritual attached to the transitions often relates to driving flocks and herds to distant pastures at the beginning of the summer and driving them back to enclosures near the home at the beginning of winter (Mencej 2005). This pastoral movement is dependent on the growth of vegetation, especially grass, in the summer half and so it can be regarded as being primarily associated with vegetation.

### **Four key points in each of two series: the vegetation cycle and the solar cycle**

Each half of the year can be halved in turn to create a fourfold series of seasons with winter and spring in one half and summer and autumn in the other. I refer to the transition points between these seasons as the four key points in the vegetation cycle. These points do not coincide with the solstices and equinoxes, which form a separate fourfold series of transition points which I refer to as the four key points in the solar cycle.

I argue that we can understand the sequence of ritual points throughout the year most fully by interpreting them as offering two different series. The presence of two series has been evident in the Celtic folk calendar where the transitions in the vegetation cycle have been referred to as the “true quarters” and are the important festivals on the day and eve of 1 November (Samhain), 1 February (Imbolc), 1 May (Beltaine) and 1 August (Lugnasad). The transitions in the solar cycle, which have been referred to as the “crooked quarters”, are less strongly marked in this tradition and have been overlaid by Christian festivals, notably that of the birth of Christ near the winter solstice (Lyle 2009).

The solar series is closer to immediate human concerns since it also relates to the human life cycle and the turning point of the sun at midwinter corresponds to the new beginning at birth. The culmination of marriage is marked at midsummer. The equinoctial point in spring between birth and marriage is that of initiation and it seems to relate to ritual contests (Lyle 2008). The equinoctial point in au-

tumn is that of the beginning of a death period (Lyle 2012: 52–53; 2013). Since escape from the extended death period comes only with birth at the winter solstice, there may well be a deepening of the emphasis on death at the 12-day period just before the marking of the increase of light. This relatively short midwinter period clearly had a powerful impact (see Pócs in this volume).

Continuing the idea that time should not be regarded in isolation, I shall put the annual cycle in a full cosmological context as well as in relation to space. The colour coding that it is possible to apply to the set of four that equates to the four seasons in the vegetation cycle is clearly present in Indo-European tradition (Lyle 2012: 16), but some of the correlations and concepts offered here are more speculative. In the scheme offered, the four seasons can be correlated with colours, elements and cosmic levels in the following way: winter = white, air and heaven; spring = red, fire and sky; summer = yellow, earth as element and earth as cosmic level; autumn = blue, water and sea.

### **The old gods at the transition points in the vegetation cycle**

In cosmology (as I have argued) each of the cosmic levels is a god with earth being female and the other three male. These three male gods and a goddess belong to the earliest time envisaged by the society and are wild and uncontrolled. Myths tell how the young gods, especially the hero-king, battle with these dragon-like creatures and make a space fit for humans to live in, as Michael Witzel demonstrates in his recent book on myth (2012: 64, 166). Witzel is also aware that these cosmic events from the beginning of time can be celebrated annually within the ritual cycle. This is an important point, of course, since applying this insight means that we can restore some of the original cosmic resonance of a ritual in relation to cosmology if we can identify the originating primal event as it is represented within the year. Of course, some ritual components may have been lost from the calendar and, even when they have survived, we may find it difficult to discern which mythic event lies behind a particular transition point. Part of the difficulty lies in the fact that a ritual can migrate from the point to which it properly belongs to another point in the year. The concept

of sequencing may help here for these contests with the old gods form a set of four (in the order Heaven, Sky, Earth and Sea) and we can explore whether any particular tradition has the full set and, if not, how many of the four can be located.

The four old gods are necessary since they form the foundation of the cosmos but the mythic stories indicate that they also posed four threats which can be understood as extremes. Heaven was once “too close” and people felt smothered or crushed so that it had to be pushed away. The sea also could come “too close” and people were in danger of drowning so that it had to be contained. The sky was once “too hot” and people were being burnt up so that the heat had to be reduced. The earth was once “too dry” and the land was barren and the people parched so that fresh water had to be made to flow. These four dangers could be articulated in various ways and they are of rather different kinds. Probably the idea of what is appropriate is important. The appropriate place for heaven is far above the earth and the appropriate place for the sea is below the earth. The warmth from the sky should be at a tolerable level and the earth ought to give moisture through its rivers.

### **The four victories over the cosmic gods**

A basic idea is that things in the beginning were markedly different from the current state and had to be changed in order to make human life possible. I shall sketch out the four contests that brought about the change. The first two are discussed by Witzel who gives an important place to the propping up of the sky and the release of the waters (2012: 64).

Since the Indo-European scheme distinguishes two areas above the earth, I have referred here to the higher one as “heaven” and to the lower one as “sky”. Although the story that heaven was once closer to earth and was removed to a distance by some means is widespread (Witzel 2012: 131–137), the specifically Indo-European idea is that a prop is needed to keep it up. In the Greek story, Hercules is asked to hold up heaven but manages to trick the giant Atlas into taking over from him and, according to this story, heaven is kept from falling on our heads by being held up by the giant Atlas or the Atlas Mountains (Gantz 1993: 410–412). A strong statement

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of the idea comes from India where Indra is hailed for his feat of propping up the sky and where an Indra pole is erected annually, as Witzel notes (2012: 135):

*In Vedic India the pole is most prominently known as “the pole of Indra,” the god who propped up heaven from the earth at the beginning of times. It was erected once per year in Vedic times (indradhvaja festival), and this is retained in modern Nepal at the indrajātrā festival in late monsoon as well as at the current Hindu New Year in April.*

However, the episode that has gripped the Indian imagination most strongly and has been much studied by scholars is the fight of Indra with the serpent, Vrtra, a name that simply means “obstruction”. This creature signals the state of things that precedes the life-giving release of the waters through Indra’s action (Witzel 2012: 78). In my view this is the female dragon of the set of four, and the achievement is brought about by allowing the water to stream out of the dragon which is the earth (Lyle 2012: 106–111). St George’s fight with the dragon seems likely to be a later representation of this battle.

The next fight to be discussed treats the defeat of a sea monster that was threatening to engulf the land. One way to deal with this huge creature is for the hero to allow himself to be swallowed and to hack away from the inside. There are two parallel treatments of this in Greek legend, in the stories of Hercules and Perseus. In a Hercules version, it was so hot inside the monster that the hero’s hair was singed off and he came out victorious but bald. The story is better known as part of the adventures of Perseus when he rescues Andromeda from the sea monster. Although in one instance he does this by being swallowed, like Hercules, he is also said to have held up the Gorgon’s head and turned the monster to stone. (Ogden 2013: 116–129).

The remaining one of the four deals with the condition “too hot”. This has to do with the sky blazing down on the earth, perhaps in the form of a larger, more fiery sun. The reduction in heat is told as a story of Vivasvat, the Indian sun god, being shaved until only a sixteenth part of him is left, and this small remnant is regarded as attractive (O’Flaherty 1975: 68–69). The star Sirius is connected with heat and drought (West 2007: 257), and perhaps the story was

that it was once huge and overwhelming until it was defeated and driven far away.

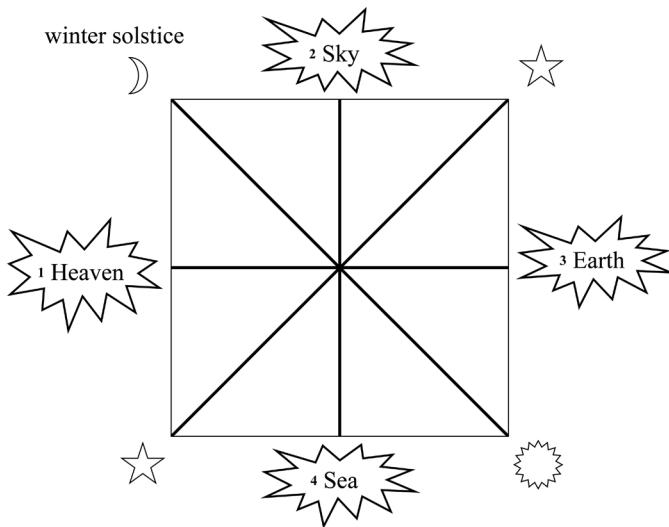
This last suggestion involves reading between the lines. We often have just fragments of stories that have been used for other narratives and some of this discussion is bound to be speculative at present. My argument is based on the concept that these particular stories were meaningful in antiquity and that they formed a set which was annually recalled in ritual.

### **The young gods at the transition points in the solar cycle**

Once the old gods had been controlled and had had their places determined, the young gods were able to take over. It has been difficult to examine the roles of the young gods since for a time scholarship was inclined to dismiss any mention of the sun and other cosmic bodies as belonging to an outmoded “solar mythology”. However, the stories do deal with the sun, moon and stars, as West accepts (2007: 237), and we have to understand them within the framework of a more developed view of cosmic structure (Lyle 2012: 56). Their king, who defeated the dragons, has the thunder-weapon, i.e. lightning. His helpers are the moon and the morning and evening stars (i.e. the planet Venus seen at these times of day), while his queen is the sun. These gods can be characters in a drama corresponding to human life so that the life cycle series mentioned earlier is also that of the young gods, with the moon especially connected with birth and the sun-goddess with marriage, while the stars relate respectively to initiation and death. In this way, the young gods could be celebrated at the corresponding points of midwinter and midsummer and the equinoxes, and the stories told about them went on being good stories after the gods faded from belief. Some stories are likely to survive attached to saints of the more recent belief system, and that is one area which it will be useful to explore in connection with this theoretical construct.

### **Conclusion**

The main theory discussed here is that the four points in the vegetation cycle commemorate four great cosmic battles. The theory has two components. One is that cosmic events which happened at



*Figure 1. The eight key points in the Indo-European ritual year.*

the beginning of imagined time account for ritual commemorations in the calendar, and form part of the corpus passed on through cultural memory with the help of ritual specialists as explored by Jan Assmann (cf. Erll 2011: 29). The other component is that there were four distinct threats that came from Heaven, Sky, Earth and Sea and that the gods of these levels were brought under control by the culture hero.

The solar series of four deals with the cycle of life and also probably commemorates events played out by the young gods at the beginning of time, although this set of events is not explored here. Human life is projected onto the divine level which in turn validates human activities.

The whole eightfold system is presented in relation to the year in Figure 1. The young gods are simply shown by symbols for the moon, sun and stars, with the starting point at the winter solstice corresponding to birth. The defeats of the four cosmic gods occur in

the sequence that corresponds to the order from top to bottom and begins with Heaven, at the 1 November point in the year.

All this seems rather remote from present-day reality, and so it is – it is perhaps five thousand years away from our time. But traditions can be tenacious and our modern consciousness can be enriched by speculating about how much has been retained from a distant past within the framework of the ritual year.

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## **The Background and Nature of the Annual and Occasional Rituals of the Ásatrúarfélag in Iceland**

**Abstract.** This paper is largely based on interviews which were taken with Jórmundur Ingi Hansen, and Hilmar Órn Hilmarsson, the last two *allsherjagoðar* (high priests) of the Icelandic Ásatrúarfélag (a society which involves the active worship of the Old Nordic gods). The interviews focussed on the nature and background of the rituals and prayers used by the society for their annual rituals, for weddings and funerals, and not least as part of recent protests against large building projects in Iceland which are likely to have a long-term influence on the environment. Among other things, the paper discusses the degree to which rituals are based on ancient texts, and the degree to which individual priests can decide how they wish to perform ceremonies. To what extent are rituals decided beforehand, and if so, by whom? Alongside material drawn from these interviews, reference will be made to recent MA research by Eggert Sólberg Jónsson.

**Key words:** neo-Pagan religions, invented traditions, Pagan religion, ritual, performance, ritual space, fire

Unlike those who follow a “new age” religion, a “neo-pagan” religious community deliberately keeps a foot in two different camps associated with two different times. On one side, it sees itself as “pagan”, stressing not only connections to nature beliefs, but also that it is non-Christian, and has associations with pre-Christian belief systems. On the other, there is little question that it is *not* a direct continuation of a pre-Christian religion, but one that has been recently created in our own times. I use the word “created” rather than “recreated” deliberately, since the mere fact that a religion is “pre-Christian” also means that unless external Latin or Greek records exist, there are few if any contemporary records of how these religions functioned, and almost certainly none written by the practitioners themselves. The practices of “neo-pagan” religions are therefore bound to be a fine example of what Eric Hobsbawm referred to as “invented traditions” (Hobsbawm 1983). Such new

religions give us a valuable chance to observe the way in which traditions and rituals are created, and the ways in which they both make use of, and refer to the past, essentially drawing on the past as a means of establishing meaning and value within the present.

The following article will focus on the ritual year of the first neopagan group to start practising the worship of the old Nordic gods, in other words, the *Ásatrúarfélag*, who are based in Iceland and were officially established in 1973. Much of the factual material in the article is drawn from an MA thesis written by Eggert Sólberg Jónsson (hereafter ESJ) in 2010, as well as two lengthy interviews taken with the previous and existing heads of the *Ásatrú* movement, Jörmundur Ingi Hansen (1940–) and Hilmar Órn Hilmarsson (1958–), in February 2014. While not a member of the society, I have had comparatively close contact with them since directing an experimental production of the medieval dialogic Eddic poem, *Skírnismál*, for them in 1992 (Gunnell 1995: 2). As a teacher of Old Nordic religions and folkloristics in Iceland, I have also had contact with both Michael Strmiska and Stefanie von Schnurbein, the two international scholars who have given most attention to the group (see Strmiska 2000 and 2005, and von Schnurbein 1992 and 1995; see also María Erlendsdóttir 2001).

It should be stressed immediately that the Icelandic *Ásatrúarfélag*, like the original Danish *Forn Siðr* movement which was modelled on it (see Warmind 2006), has nothing to do with right-wing or any other political movements, outside a slightly left-wing interest in protecting the natural environment (see ESJ 2010: 145–158). The society came into being as a result of coffee-house discussions between the farmer and poet, Sveinbjörn Beinteinsson (1924–1993; see further Sveinbjörn Beinteinsson and Berglind Gunnarsdóttir 1992); Jörmundur Ingi Hansen, executive director of a record company (1940–); Dagur Þorleifsson (1933–), a scholar of religion; and Þorsteinn Guðjónsson, a teacher (1928–2000), all of whom were dissatisfied with having to pay taxes automatically to the Christian church. All were interested in officially establishing a religious group of their own that had closer contact with the Icelandic culture reflected in the sagas and Eddic poems, and with the Icelandic landscape. Around this core gathered a number of other like-minded individuals of various ages, male and female, includ-

ing many artists and students, all of whom had similar feelings about the church which was viewed essentially as a symbol of the establishment. The *Ásatrúarfélag* was formally established at a meeting in Hotel Borg on 20th April 1972, and officially accepted by the Icelandic government on 3rd May 1973. Sveinbjörn, as first *allsherjagoði* (high-priest) was then given the official right to carry out the *Ásatrú* equivalents of naming ceremonies (referred to as *nafngjöf*), confirmation confirmation (*siðfesta*), weddings (*hjónavígsla*) and funerals (*útför*). (On the establishment of the group, see further ESJ 2010: 90–112; on the first ceremonies see ESJ 2010: 175–190.) There were 21 members at the first official meeting on 16th May 1973. By 2013, the total had risen to 2,148 members in a nation of c. 320,000 (see [www.hagstofa.is](http://www.hagstofa.is) last viewed 25th October, 2014), making c. 2% of the Icelandic nation *ásatrú* believers, a figure supported by a recent national belief survey (see Ásdís A. Arnalds et al 2007).

Over and above the limited number of original local sources on Old Nordic religious practices (most written at least 150 years after the formal acceptance of Christianity in Norway and Iceland in c. 1000 AD), the essential difficulty with establishing this kind of religion is that like all other folk or ethnic religions (see Steinsland 2005: 31–34), it varied by time, place, and social and geographical environment, around certain shared linguistic and theological concepts.

Another consideration is that moral attitudes have naturally changed. Human sacrifice, for example, is obviously out of the question. The same applies to the idea of sprinkling blood after an animal sacrifice, a practice indicated by several saga accounts (the words *blóð* ‘blood’ and *bleyta* ‘to make wet’ lying behind the Old Norse word for ‘sacrifice’ *blót*) (see references in Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1997; and Näsström 2001). As Hilmar Örn noted, such activities would be, in the very least, highly “messy” (interview 2014).

From the very beginning, those describing the new religion talked of it as being “*ný heiðni*” (lit. *new paganism*: my italics) (Sveinbjörn Beinstéinsson 1992: 132). As early as 3rd May 1972, the group is described in the newspaper *Vísir* as being “*Ásatrúarmenn hins nýja tíma*” (lit. *Æsir* believers of the *new age*: my italics); and in the first letter sent to the Icelandic Ministry of Legal and Religious Affairs, it is stressed that “the purpose of the society is to build up

and introduce the ancient religion of the Icelanders which had been legal until the year 1000, *to the degree that it meets the demands of new times and altered conditions*” (my italics). It is added that “the society will of course keep to the laws of the country and not practice any customs that conflicts with existing laws” (quoted in ESJ 2010: 96).

As noted above, Sveinbjörn was immediately officially permitted to carry out various rites of passage ceremonies. However, in addition to this, the group stated that they planned to hold various other ritual ceremonies throughout the year, ceremonies which they referred to from the beginning with the original word, *blót* (see above). By this time, the word had already come to mean simply “festival” in Icelandic (cf. the word *Porrablót*, referring to a recently recreated spring festival involving the eating of traditional Icelandic foods). The first *blót* referred to in the plans of the society (November 1972) are *Porrablót* (celebrated in late January, during the old Nordic rural month of *Porri*) and then *jólablót* at Yuletide (ESJ 2010: 97). The first *blót* to be officially carried out by the society after their legal acceptance was on what Icelanders still refer to as the “First Day of Summer” (in their two-season system), on 18th April 1973, which was also the anniversary of the group’s founding (ESJ 2010: 106).

The nature and dating of the main annual festivals that the *Ásatrúarfélag* decided to take up over the following years reflect a blend of traditions, with elements drawn variously from early texts and folklore. Few if any of those in charge would argue that they were trying to recreate past ceremonies as they were “originally” carried out. Jörmundur Ingi, in a lecture held for the World Congress of Ethnic Religions in Antwerp in 1999 talks of “rediscovery” (Jörmundur Ingi Hansen 1999) rather than recreation. Elsewhere he refers to vestiges of cultural memory maintained in language and folklore (interview 2014). Hilmar Örn meanwhile underlines the need for the temple the group is currently constructing to be “nútímaleg með gamla tilvísun” (modern with reference to the past) (interview 2014), in other words, something that needs to function effectively in the present. Both high-priests stress, however, that most of their ceremonies, like those mentioned in the original sources, relate symbolically to the natural year and the environment. They feel they are still searching for the best forms of ceremony.

According to the few records that are available concerning the Old Nordic pagan year, and most particularly in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* (*Ynglingasaga* and *Hákonar saga góða*) (Snorri Sturluson 2011: 11, 97 and 101) and *Ágrip af Noregs konungasögum* (1995: 30–33), Old Nordic pagan festivals took place around mid-winter, midsummer and loosely around the times of the equinox (the start of the winter half-year in late October [the “winter nights], and the start of the summer half-year in late March). That these festivals were associated with festive drinking is supported by *Ágrip* and the Norwegian medieval *Gulathing* law (*Den Eldre Gulatingslova* 1994: 19–20). The idea of an autumnal “winter-night” sacrificial meal having been common is supported by various sagas (*Gísla saga Súrssonar* ch. 10, *Piðranda þátr ok Þorhalls* chs. 1–2; *Víga-Glúms saga* ch. 6; and *Hákonar saga góða* ch. 17), while *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* (ch. 49) mentions a large sacrifice taking place at the start of summer in western Norway. Further support for the dating of these festivals is given in Bede's *Reckoning of Time*. Theitmar of Merseberg writes of national sacrifices in Denmark taking place in January; while Adam of Bremen states in that the large Uppsala sacrifice take place at the vernal equinox in March (Adam of Bremen 1959: 207–208) (see further references in Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1997; and Näsström 2001).

Today the Ásatrúarfélag celebrate five main festivals: Yuletide, Þorrablót, the beginning of summer in April, the so-called “*Ping-blót*” on the Thursday of the tenth week of summer (close to mid-summer) at *Pingvellir*, the original parliament meeting site from pagan times; and then the beginning of winter in October. Since 2008, another festival has been added on 1st December dedicated to the nature-spirits of the country (Hilmar Örn interview 2014), a ceremony which deliberately takes place simultaneously in all four quarters of the country. It might be noted that the *Ping-blót* meeting, which is the most popular, takes place on the date when the ancient Icelandic parliament used to begin each year.

Deciding dates for ceremonies was comparatively easy. More difficult were decisions about how rituals should be organised, and how a sacred atmosphere should be established which would turn these seasonal gatherings from being merely social into “sacred” (that is *hátið*, lit. ‘high-times’ as festivals are called in Icelandic).

Both Jörmundur Ingi and Hilmar Örn agree that Sveinbjörn had little fondness for rules or recurring ritual and ceremony. His beliefs were largely personal, and most of the ceremonies that he was involved in leading at the start were characterised by this individuality, along with a deep respect for Old Icelandic poetry, not least for the Eddic poems which he (like Jörmundur Ingi, Hilmar Örn and most scholars today) believed had a background in pre-Christian times and even pre-Christian ritual. As noted above, it was clear that the new *blót* would definitely not be like the original *blót* which appear to have focused on blood sacrifice; the sprinkling of blood; prophecy; toasts to the gods; and a shared meal (see Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1997).

From the start, the *Ásatrúarfélag* has largely limited itself to sacred toasts and shared meals, which are given atmosphere and context by the use of ancient texts largely drawn from the *Poetic Edda* (see *Eddadigte* 1961, 1964 and 1971; translated in *The Poetic Edda* 2011); by the use of fire and candles and other symbolic items that have come to have importance for the group; and finally by the high-priest's use of ceremonial costume. Where possible, festivals and ceremonies take place outside, most commonly at the group's officially designated outdoor site on the Öskjuhlíð ridge behind Reykjavík (as well as at Þingvellir).

It appears that the establishment of central ceremonies and rituals, along with their temporal variation, was originally placed in the hands of Jörmundur Ingi Hansen (with some help from Þorsteinn and Dagur). The core activity initially involved passing a ale- or mead-horn around the circle of worshippers three times, participants then drinking to the gods, the chief-priest and then other figures of individuals' own choice, who could include ancestors or nature spirits (Jörmundur Ingi interview 2014). This activity was largely based on the earlier-noted account of an autumn sacrifice in *Hákonar saga góða* (ch. 14 and 17) which included toasts to the gods Óðinn, Freyr, and Njörðr and departed friends. Growing numbers led to simplifications in this ritual. The horns in question appear to have varied by priest, and all have personal meaning and stories behind them.

The next central ritual object to be added was a silver arm ring. This is directly based on accounts of sacred arm rings which were

apparently kept in pre-Christian Nordic *hof* (temples) and played a central part in ritual activities, most particularly oath-taking (see references in Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1997). It should be stressed once again that the modern arm rings are never reddened with blood like that mentioned in *Ulfþjótslög* (see reference above). That presently used by Hilmar at all gatherings was originally made for Jörmundur Ingi, and is deliberately open-ended and slightly twisted (symbolically referring to the spiral cyclical ongoing movement of time believed in by both Jörmundur and Hilmar Örn). Nowadays it is held in one hand by the chief priest as he enters the room, while the other hand holds a horn filled with ale (see Figure 1).

A third key item, now only used at the summer *Ásatrúar-bing* meetings at Pingvellir is the ceremonial “*bingöx*” (*bing*-axe) which is not meant to refer to Þórr’s hammer but is rather seen as a symbol of legal power (as in Roman tradition), and was introduced by Jörmundur at an early point. Such axes are not mentioned in the sagas, but have potential parallels in Bronze-Age Nordic archaeological finds.

Alongside the objects noted above, it was necessary to make decisions about ceremonial clothing and ceremonial space as a means of drawing a line between the ceremonial and the everyday, and introducing a sense of ritual liminality to the proceedings. Once again, while photographs show that Sveinbjörn occasionally made use of a form of Viking clothing at early gatherings, at others he seemed happy to wear a jacket or an Icelandic woollen cardigan. Jörmundur Ingi, who had a greater sense of the need for some degree of performance (which included the adoption of ritual dramas at the winter and Christmas *blót*) thus designed long white robes with coloured overlays which were based in part on archaeological finds and Iron-age Nordic iconography. For Hilmar Örn, the colours chosen for the overlays have symbolic meaning relating to the seasons, green being used for the first day of summer, name-giving ceremonies and weddings (see Figure 2); and red for Yuletide. Dark purple is used for funerals (Hilmar Örn interview 2014).

With regard to the marking of the performance space, the *Ásatrúarfélag* has used fire from an early point, commonly using a ceremonial bonfire or brazier which burns in the centre of the group, while candles or torches are situated around the space, often in a circle, thereby referring to the so-called *vafrlagnar* (or flickering flames)



*Figure 1. The Horn and the Ring. 2014. Courtesy of Silke Schurack.*



Figure 2. Wedding ceremony. 2014. Courtesy of Silke Schurak.

that apparently surrounded the figures of Gerðr and Sigrdrífa in the Eddic poems, *Skírnismál* and *Fáfnismál* (Eddadigte 1971: 26; and 1961: 69). This effect is used whether the activities take place inside or outside. Atmosphere is given further sacredness by the quoting of lines of Eddic poetry (the *Poetic Edda* being seen by all the chief-priests as having more meaning than either the sagas or Snorri Sturluson's early thirteenth-century mythological *Prose Edda*).

The original pattern of ceremonies was largely decided by Jörmundur Ingi, but has since been developed and standardised by Hilmar Örn. As Hilmar notes, each seasonal ceremony is slightly different, and coloured by reference to different myths. He describes the process of how (out of sight), he dresses in the robes, fills the horn and blesses it silently, before entering the space within the candles, beside the fire, with the horn and the ring. He then calls on the gods (Freyr, Njörðr and the "almighty god") in line with an



*Figure 3. Ale offering. 2014. Courtesy of Silke Schurak.*

article on oath-taking drawn from the apparently pre-Christian Icelandic *Ulfþjótslög* (Law of Ulfþjótr: see Landnámabók 1968: 315), after which a libation is poured onto the earth (a so-called *dreypiforn* ‘pouring sacrifice’) (see Figure 3). The horn is then passed around the circle. This is followed by the quotation of a strophe from the Eddic poem *Sigrdrífumál* (sts 3–4) in which the day, night, the earth, the gods and the different directions are called on. After this comes the quotation of other seasonally relevant strophes from another Eddic poem, *Völuspá*, which tells of the beginning, ending, and reappearance of the world, and then other strophes or the retelling or re-enactment of a myth. The group then proceeds to eat a meal together. (In earlier times, it seems that Jörmundur Ingi attempted to associate these meals with the sacral year, having different meats at different times.) For Hilmar, the ceremony is not fully over until the fire has been put out, the robes removed and the horn cleaned.

Unfortunately space does not permit any more than this brief introduction to the way in which the ritual year of the Icelandic *Ásatrúarfélag* has gradually taken shape over the forty years since its inception. Perhaps most interesting in discussing the subject with Jörmundur Ingi and Hilmar Örn is the degree to which the new rituals that they have both helped create have gained deeper meaning both for them and the other followers as time has gone on. As Jörmundur Ingi regularly underlines, once something has been taken up in such a religious environment, it is very difficult for it to be changed because people commonly see it as immediately having importance and having always been that way (interview 2014). Hilmar Örn also stresses the effect that the robes, the fires, the sacred objects, the words, and the settings have come to have on him personally. He feels that while standing in front of the fire with the horn and the ring, speaking the ancient words, he is somehow creating an opening to the powers in the environment, and in some way, touching local history, even though the rituals have been largely created (interview 2014). These examples illustrate clearly the ways in which beliefs create rituals, and how the performance of ritual in turn fosters belief and a new understanding of time and the world around us, even when the rituals in question have been largely invented.

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## **Magical Ceremonies during the Ritual Year of the Greek Farmer**

**Abstract:** In the wake of the British scholar, James G. Frazer's claim that Greek religion reflects peasants' concepts connected with fertility magic, the very term has been criticized by most humanists during the entire twentieth century, while it has been present in scholarly literature written by anthropologists. Through a comparison between modern and ancient Greek festivals and rituals taking place across the ritual year, the article illustrates the importance of fertility magic to ensure the food both for the modern and ancient farmers, since *sympathetic magic* is a persistent characteristic of ancient as well as contemporary festivals. While performing various fertility rituals, the farmer assists nature to pass the worst of the winter. The point is that the magic works, and an important magical means of communication is indeed the festival and all the factors that it consists of.

**Key words:** agriculture, ancestors, death cult and rituals, fertility cult and rituals, festivals, Greece, modern and ancient, healing/purification rituals, sympathetic magic

### **Introduction: Some Notes on Agriculture, Magic and Religion**

In agricultural societies, several factors are important to secure the future crops, particularly fertility rituals and death rituals in which important factors are the dead ancestors and also water. Both in earlier times and now, and all over the world, we encounter peasant societies where the living are dependent on the deceased mediator's successful communication with the chthonic powers to assure the continuity of their own lives through the fertility of the earth. Furthermore, the farmer is dependent on sufficient water. Every aspect of human life and divine interferences on earth is possible to express with water symbolism, and religious rituals and beliefs in connection with water to secure the future crop are found cross-culturally, be that in Asia, such as in Japan (Inukai 2007), in the Middle East and Mediterranean areas, as well as in Africa

and Latin America. In other words, rituals in connection with the religious significance of water occur across several civilizations and religious groupings.

Around 8,500 BCE a cluster of domesticated crops and animals appeared and spread to the Balkans around 7,000 BCE (Noble 2001: 74). Generalized agriculture apparently first arose in the Fertile Crescent because of several factors. The Mediterranean climate has a long dry season with a short period of rain, which made it suitable for small plants with large seeds, like wheat and barley. The “trinity” of cereals, vines and olives forms the basis of all subsistence agriculture in the Mediterranean region. The following will focus on the Greek part of that region, and traditionally magical rituals have been important to secure the food.

Magic, however, is a relative concept. Officially, magic is illegal in the Greek Orthodox culture, paralleling pre-Christian circumstances. It nonetheless does take place in practice, both in everyday life and within the official Church, and in reality it is therefore very important in this culture, likewise paralleling pre-Christian circumstances. The distinction between magic and religion is fluid, and in all religious festivals magic is not only a persistent characteristic, but the festival itself can be considered a magical means of influencing both higher powers and other people in the same way as other sacrifices do. According to the British scholar, James G. Frazer (1922, 1987), fertility magic constituted the essence and origin for ancient religion. Accordingly, Greek religion reflects peasants’ concepts connected with fertility magic. Frazer regarded magic as a false form of science based on primitive man’s mystical and scientific universe. Magic was superseded by religion and when this proved inadequate, came the development of the scientific mode of thought when people began to employ the principle of causality and, instead of magical causality, took up experimental causality. This has been criticized by several scholars (e.g. Burkert 1985; Price 1990), and in the wake of Frazer the concept of fertility cult has been absent in dictionaries of religion during the twentieth century,<sup>1</sup> while it has been present in scholarly literature written by anthropologists working on e.g. the Kwaio people of Malaita on the Solomon Islands (Keesing 1981), African material (Jacobson-Widding/van Beek 1990), and also among historians (Håland 2005,

2007, 2012a), ethnologists (Kyriakidou-Nestoros 1986; Psychogiou 2008) and classicists (Brumfield 1981; Robertson 1996) working on Greek material. One should not reject the concept around a peasant religion, since the value-system in the Greek area was and still is the one found among peasants, a view which is also found in other places in the Mediterranean area, e.g. among the Kabyles of North-Africa (Bourdieu 1980) or in Italy (Finrud Di Tota 1981). Although Frazer's evolutionistic starting point was wrong, his analysis of the laws that govern magic remain a functional point of departure for analysis of religious agricultural festivals both in modern and ancient Greece.<sup>2</sup> Frazer's two fundamental laws for how magic operates are the law of similarity and the law of contamination. The first law involves manipulation of something corresponding to what one wishes to invoke. This may be done by presenting large fertility symbols as part of a carnival procession around the spring equinox. The second law implies that two items, which have been in contact with one another, retain some influence over each other after being separated. These two laws are known under the common term of *sympathetic magic* and are a persistent characteristic of ancient as well as contemporary festivals.<sup>3</sup> The fact is that magic is employed today by people who are well educated and financially well off as well as by people who are marginal within society. Also, while performing various fertility rituals, the farmer assists nature to pass the worst of the winter through "sympathetic magic". The point is that the magic works, and an important magical means of communication is in fact the festival and all the factors that it consists of (Håland 2007). The concept of sympathetic magic will therefore be employed in this study, but as a modified version of Frazer.

### **Agricultural Ceremonies in the Greek Context**

In Greece, official religious festivals in general reflect the memorial rituals people perform for their own dead family members. It has been argued that the origin of the ancient hero cult was magic (Robertson 1992: Ch.11, cf. Håland 2014: Ch. 7), i.e. the magic that this deceased who is down in the underworld may ensure to the best for the living. This magic element is the point of the death cult. In the festivals, rain-making rituals are also important, because the

religious rituals were and are performed by the farmers to ensure the forthcoming rain, so that the crops may grow and give a plentiful harvest. The early rains in autumn are of great importance as a preliminary to the sowing. From this perspective, rain-making rituals represent fertility cult. In addition, several rituals are and were performed around harvest as a thank offering, sprouting is also important, but the most important period is around sowing, since the result is totally unknown.

The striking similarities that are found between the ancient and modern Greek agricultural festivals and rituals need to be accounted for. How and why are there such similarities? There are many other places in the world where the ecology is the same as it was in the past but the rituals and their meanings differ. How does the situation in Greece relate to *la longue durée* of the historian Fernand Braudel?

In earlier scholarship, history was considered to be synonymous with rapid changes, but now we realise that stability is no less historical than change and that it is as important to explain stability as change. According to Braudel, a single society may have different dimensions of time (1969), and it is particularly *la longue durée*, connected with his view of the ecological unity of the Mediterranean (Braudel 1990), that is relevant for the material we encounter in the Greek context in connection with the religious ceremonies of the agricultural calendar. Since man is prisoner of the climate and the vegetation, it is difficult to escape certain geographical frames and limits of productivity as well as spiritual constraints or mentalities. Therefore, it is important to take account of the history of the infrastructure, the nearly “non-moving history”, which everything gravitates around.

Braudel's *la longue durée* corresponds to the second and third of Klaus Roth's categories: linear time, cyclical time, and dreamtime or frozen time (cf. Roth 1994). The cyclical perception of time is characterised by predictability and repetition, and is typical of peasant societies. Dreamtime or frozen time presupposes a static perception of time without movement and involves an orientation to the past; its vehicle is oral tradition. In Greece, a cyclical perception of time and the perspective of frozen time are still prominent. The two important factors in this connection are firstly that Greece

is still an agricultural society and secondly that past stages in the development of Greek culture are unusually accessible. The Mediterranean area generally, and Greece particularly, offer a unique opportunity to follow questions of continuity and change over very long spans of time directly and not conjecturally, since we find a long literate – and archaeological – tradition which may be combined with the results of empirical fieldwork.

So, how and why are there such similarities between ancient and modern Greece? How and why is it possible to make a comparison between agricultural rituals in modern and ancient Greece, despite a gap of two millennia between the two cultures? In Greece, the cyclical dimension of time is woven into *la longue durée*, and is connected with the mental outlook, the *mentalité*, of the farmer. Ancient and modern rural Greece represents two peasant societies, inhabiting the same landscape, with the same climate and almost the same technological level. The two societies demonstrate strong similarities in culture, social organisation and folk religion which relate to the economic base of the community – agriculture. The basic crops are also almost the same, in a geographical area where the water supply always has been a great problem.

Space does not permit me to go into all the factors which should be examined in order to give an extensive account of all the historical circumstances which gave rise to the existence of cults connected with agricultural ceremonies in general, and rain-making rituals in particular, in South-eastern Europe and Asia Minor, dating from Antiquity and from Byzantine times up to the present day, since problems of such depth cannot be solved or contained within a few pages. The uniformity in the economic structure of several communities in the region that have an economy based on agriculture and sheep-raising has been due to the unchangeable geophysical and geographical factors.

Although modern Greece depends ever more on tourism, these factors remain important, because the mentality of the farmers does not change easily, illustrated for example by the agricultural calendar today which is also synonymous with the ritual calendar, since the church calendar is added to or built upon the first, i.e. the order of nature. Since technological improvements have not given them control over the vicissitudes of nature, the survival of the

community still depends upon natural events beyond the farmers' control. Most of my older informants who have passed, or still are in, their seventies remember the scarcity of their childhood, when famine was the result, if the crop failed. So, by way of rituals representing a world-view belonging to a traditional agricultural society, people try to influence the supernatural powers to ensure the rain, so that their crops may flourish. Ploughing and sowing are basic activities undertaken in order to earn a living, and the ceremonial portrayals of such activities are acts of mimed magic undertaken to ensure a rich harvest. Both ancient and modern people celebrate particularly before important passages of the agricultural year, in order to secure these passages, i.e. sowing, sprouting and harvest. Today, they pray to their saints for plentiful rain, as the ancients prayed to their Gods. The belief in the sanctity of water is present both in pre-Christian and Christian religion and, like his older and modern popular equivalents, the Orthodox priest is prophet, exorcist, healer and rainmaker. The magical immersion of the traditional carnival-figure, the rainmaker *Kalogeros* (i.e. the monk) in Northern Greece, "so the greenery can get rain", thus parallels other magico-religious litanies in modern and ancient Greece, and the sacred immersion in water, mud or marshes is pure rain-magic. Even if many of the rituals as observed in modern Greece may be traced back to the classical past through the post-Byzantine and Byzantine eras, they are not separate from Christianity.

### **The Agricultural Year of the Ancient and Modern Greeks**

In ancient and modern Greek religious festivals many symbols and rites are shared, indicating a common understanding of agriculture, fertility and women. Considered as a whole, the ritual year is produced by the conjunction of a multifaceted ritual history, a popular social and economic calendar, with a great interest in the fertility of crops, animals and women, plus a close attachment to periods of time related to agricultural work and divinities.

The conditions of both weather and soil were the same in ancient Greece as they are today. The techniques of dry farming practised in ancient and modern Greece are dictated by the occurrence of sometimes torrential rains in the fall, which can wash away the soil,

and by summer drought, which makes necessary the conservation of soil moisture by every possible means.

The times of sowing and reaping, and the crops grown have hardly changed since Antiquity. In ancient Attica (the Athenian area), the great majority of grain was sown in the fall, as in modern times, since spring sowing necessitated irrigation and was not practicable. Given the climate of Attica, with mild but wet winters and dry summers, the desirable cereal was barley, which needed much water in the early stages of growth, but which would ripen early enough to avoid the worst heat of the summer sun. The sowing of cereals today extends from the middle of October to the end of December, depending on the rains. The best guides for the farmer have always been the rain, the condition of the soil, and his own experience and weather-wisdom. The season of sowing was and is a time of great anxiety for the Greek farmer. Perhaps the rains will be delayed or will not come in the right amount at the right intervals. People feel a greater need for ritual and magic on occasions when their own technical skills are limited. That the ancient Greeks proliferated their rituals at the critical time of sowing is understandable. The insufficiency of mortal wisdom at this seasonal moment of crisis is all too evident; in other words, the rainmaker is an important figure. Everything is felt to depend on the weather Gods and, to propitiate them, rain-making rituals take place during the whole agricultural year.

Scholars in the past, most notably those residing in temperate climates, had the assumption, natural for Northern Europeans, that the grain harvest in Greece took and takes place in late summer. But generally May is the month for the barley harvest. Hesiod (*Op.* 571–575, cf. 383 f.) places the harvest at the time of the helical rising of the Pleiades, i.e. around 19 May. Today the rising of the Pleiades is attached to the *Anastenaria* festival dedicated to the dead saints, *Agios* Kōnstantinos and *Agia* Elenē on 21 May, while their setting is attached to *Agios* Philoppos' day on 14 November, in sowing time, and this is one of the polarities that connect aspects of everyday life and cosmology (cf. Hart 1992: Ch. 8). The wheat is harvested in June, and July is the threshing month. The popular names for these months, *Theristēs*, i.e. reaper, harvester, and *Alōnarēs*, i.e. thresher, reflect these activities.

After harvest and the threshing of the grain, the dead period of the grains' cycle (cf. Bourdieu 1980) starts. At the end of the dog days, roughly by the end of August, the official ecclesiastical year closes and the summer half-year also closes at this time when the transitional period towards autumn starts (cf. Loukatos 1981). At the beginning of September, the official ecclesiastical year starts again, while the agricultural year begins later. By the end of September, the farmer anticipates the "first rains", the early rains of autumn (cf. Hes. *Op.* 414–419), that fall from Zeus, so that Mother Earth conceives again. Afterwards, it is time for ploughing and sowing. November is the main sowing month. There is great danger that the tender young shoots will be harmed if the frost is strong or prolonged. If the cereals have not reached a certain height by the time the frost sets in by January, the farmer may lose the crop. The period after Easter is also precarious, since the crop may be lost if it starts to hail. Therefore the White Week after Easter is celebrated, paralleling and thus warding off the white hail, to secure the period until the grain is about to be reaped in June. In fact, the farmer's worries are not really over until the grain is in the granary.

The popular calendar was and is a social representation of the order of nature, that is, of the "natural" year: the perceived order of hot and cold, rain and drought, germination, fruiting, shedding of leaves, migrations of birds and so on. The annual production cycles of agricultural work (sowing, harvesting, pruning, vintage, gathering of fruits) and stockbreeding activities (shearing, breeding, milking, pasturing) composed an economic calendar developed from these perceptions of the natural order. This socio-economic content is integrated with the Christian saints and their narratives, as the ancients once integrated it with narratives of their Goddesses and Gods.

Agriculture was the key element in the ancient economy, and the Greeks believed that humans had to serve the Gods "for the sake of the produce of the earth, both solid and liquid, and for the sake of their cattle, horses and sheep" (Xen. *Oec.* 5.19–20). All festivals were concerned with good offspring generally, animal, vegetable or human.

The economic basis of present-day Greece does not depend unilaterally on agriculture, since a great part of the income is derived from

work migration and a constantly growing tourism. Nevertheless, all the modern festivals are seasonal festivals symbolising important passages of the agricultural year, in the same way as all the ancient festivals, and all are connected with agricultural fecundity, with fertility and increase.

People celebrate particularly before important passages of the agricultural year, in order to secure these passages. The festivals celebrate late summer, autumn, the middle of winter, the end of winter, spring, the end of spring and summer, or ploughing, sowing, "greening" of the fields, harvest, threshing, vintage and pressing, tasting of the wine, etc. Festivals are celebrated before critical periods during the agricultural year, particularly before sowing and during spring, the most decisive periods of the year's passage. Festivals celebrated at the end of winter and during spring symbolise the passage from winter to the part of the agricultural year when food will ripen and be harvested. This scheme relates to the grain- and wine-festivals, but festivals are also of importance for another essential crop, the olive. The olive and its oil are still staples of the Greek diet and the major source of fat.

### **The Cyclical Festivals of the Agricultural Calendar and Fertility Magic**

The modern liturgical year follows the seasonal rituals of the agricultural calendar. This is a legacy from the pre-Christian cult, since prehistoric agricultural rituals also permeated the official Athenian calendar in the ancient world. The modern farmer performs the same ceremonies at the same time of the year as his ancient equivalent: before the sowing he prays to ensure a good crop and at the harvest he offers a thank offering by celebrating a festival. In that way the ancient farmer secured the future relations with his divinities, as the modern farmer does with the saints and other deceased.

The analysis of the fertility cult demonstrates how fertility is connected to the deceased and the powers in the subterranean world where life begins, according to the cyclical symbolism, which is central in Greek culture. The central act of the festival is the blood sacrifice or a bloodless offering, for example corn cakes, the gift to

the Goddesses, Gods or the dead, to assure that they will be generous and return the gift in the future. So the deceased mediator often receives a blood sacrifice, the ritual slaughter of an animal, for example an ox or a lamb, which afterwards is consumed as a communal meal by the participants of the festival. The communication is presented on several levels. The dead receives the offering in order to provide for the fertility of the society through the communication with stronger powers, first and foremost, Mother Earth. Her importance parallels the woman's who is the central performer of the cults, which are important in the festivals, because they are connected to the female sphere. The Greeks conceive the Earth as a woman's body and the agricultural year as a woman's life. The Earth is also seen as the female sex organ. The close connection between women and the earth is illustrated by the custom that has taken place on 1st May, when childless women used to roll in the grass to become fertile. The point was to transfer the reproductive power of the earth to women through the grass. The custom originated from the identification of the fecundity of the earth with that of women in popular thought since Antiquity (Papamichael 1975). During the ancient *Thesmophoria* festival, women lay on beds of branches directly on the earth to make the earth grow and for procreation. Women are also the most important performers of the rituals that take place during mid-winter when they, with singing and obscenities, drinking and feasting help the earth "to wake up from the death's embrace".<sup>4</sup> Merry feasting and obscene behaviour, is a ritual way to do this. The fertility of the earth is stimulated by the magical manipulation of sexual or agricultural symbols. These rituals are not only performed as a reminder of natural events, but attempt to influence them, both magically and by propitiation of the relevant supernatural forces. But, the Earth represents only one of the two parts of the nature that has to be invoked to ensure the harvest. Accordingly, rain-magic dedicated to a heavenly God is a generally theme in the festivals, particularly around the most important periods during the agricultural year: sowing (autumn) and sprouting (spring). From this fact follows the significance of the Sacred Wedding, *hieros gamos*, also illustrated by the union of Mother Earth with her son, the corn-seed, to make the ground fertile.

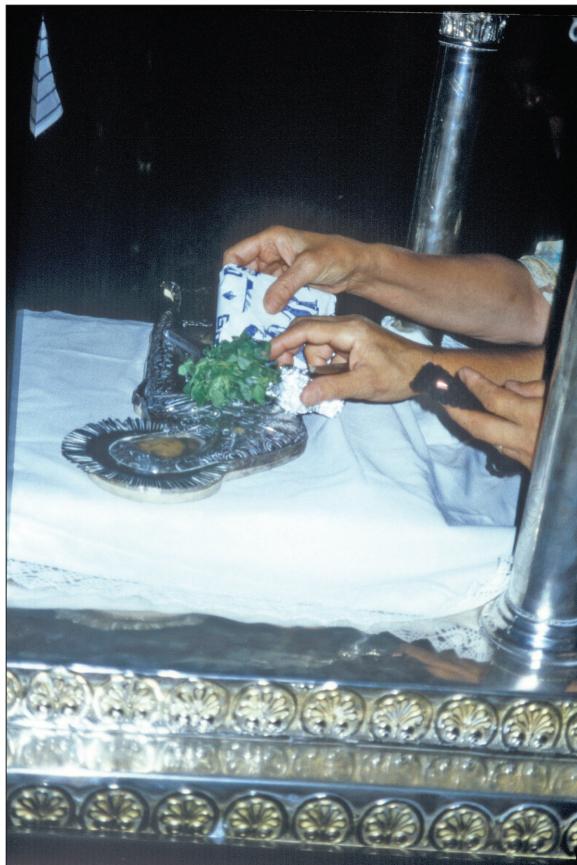
Religious festivals reinforce the bonds between members of a community and their supernatural patrons, celebrating the exchange of gifts that seal their relationship: the devotees bestow honours and offerings to their patrons who in their turn are expected to renew the protection they provide to the community. This means that the festival in general is an important means of communication, an offering or a gift, most often dedicated to a deceased guardian of society, either alone or together with a Goddess or God – for instance, to the modern *Panagia* (i.e. The All-Holy One, the Virgin Mary) or to the ancient Goddesses Demeter and Athena or the God Dionysos. The festivals illustrate the importance of popular beliefs connected with fertility cult, death cult and healing or purification for the preservation of society (cf. also Håland 2005, 2007, 2010).

The fertility cult is connected with important life-cycle passages, since the festivals are celebrated at important passages of the agricultural cycle, and the agricultural year is represented in terms of the life of a Mother Goddess. All the religious festivals are connected with an important passage in the cycle of nature and a passage in the life-cycle of a divine person. Today, the *Panagia* is important. In ancient Greece it was particularly manifested through the *Homeric Hymn* dedicated to the Corn Mother, Demeter (*HHD*).

The cyclical perspective is central in connection with the festivals of the agricultural year, and the official ideological rituals are adapted to the agricultural calendar. Thus, the orthodox liturgical year is in fact established through the *Panagia*'s biography. It begins around autumn, and several important moments in the life of the *Panagia* are celebrated during this period of the year, i.e. before and around sowing and during the germination and growth of the corn crops, when the “female”, wet and fertile period in the agricultural year's cycle replaces the “male” and dry period, because the woman is looked upon as the productive partner in a relationship in the Mediterranean area (cf. Bourdieu 1980; Håland 2007, 2010).

After harvest and the threshing of the grain, the dead period of the grains' cycle (cf. Bourdieu 1980) starts in August. By the end of the dog days, in mid-August, the modern festival dedicated to the Dormition of the *Panagia* marks a turning point towards autumn, when the transitional period towards the “productive part” of the agricultural year is about to begin again.

Then, women cross various amulets three times over the silver figure of the dead *Panagia* to make them powerful in a magical way (Figure 1). Roughly at the same time, the ancient *Panathenaia* dedicated to Athena, the Goddess of the olive crop, was celebrated by the end of the first month of the official Athenian year (Håland 2012b and c). The other festivals deal with other important passages



*Figure 1. Women cross various amulets three times over the silver figure of the dead Panagia (the Virgin Mary) to make them powerful in a magical way, on the “9th day’s ritual of the Panagia” which starts on the eve of 23 August, Tinos, 1993. Photo by the author.*

of the agricultural year, as the sowing when the Presentation of the *Panagia* in the Temple is celebrated, and marks the beginning of the winter-period. The Presentation of the *Panagia* in the Temple on 21 November marks an important point in the period of winter sowing, and the festival celebrates the *Panagia*, as the patroness of the sowing, by offering her *polysporia*, a boiled mixture of all kinds of crop and several varieties of corn and so all kinds of the fruits of the earth. The ingredients are the same as in *kollyba*, a mixture of wheat, nuts and fruit that is usually offered at harvest to various other saints and to the dead during the memorial services at the tombs as in the ancient world. Although 21 November is dedicated to the Presentation of the *Panagia* in the Temple all over Greece, the name of the patroness and her festival varies with the region. By that date, the good farmer, especially in Northern Greece, will have sown at least half of his land. Accordingly, this feast day is known in some regions as *Panagia* “Half-Way-Through-the-Sowing” (*Mesosporitissa*: *mesos*: middle, half; *sporos*, *spora*: seed, sowing). In other regions, the festival is known as *Panagia* “the sowing begins” (*Archisporitissa*) or *Panagia* “the sowing is over” (*Aposporitissa*).

Also in ancient Greece during Demeter’s festival at the time of sowing, the Mysteries at Eleusis followed by the women’s *Thesmophoria* festival, a general mixture of the edible plants to be sown was boiled and offered to the Goddess, and her worshipers also partook of it, while praying for a renewal of the various crops the next year. The ritual was repeated around sprouting in January and before the harvest in May-June.

The mid-winter-festivals are celebrated around the solstice and the first sprouting of the grains. The end of winter or the birth of spring is celebrated around the spring equinox, following are the summer solstice, the “first-fruit”.

At the festivals which are celebrated after harvest, in September, people take some of their crop to the church, and put it near the entrance to the sanctuary or *iconostasis* which separates the congregation from the Holy of Holies, to be blessed by the priest. Next, they take the blessed crop home, so the house will be protected towards the time of sowing in October-November. Then a handful of this consecrated crop is mixed with the seed corn, while the rest is buried in the field to ensure an abundant crop next year. This is

a parallel to the ancient women's *Thesmophoria* festival when the decayed remains of the offerings (piglets and objects made from wheat into representations of snakes and male shapes) to Demeter were fetched up from underground "rooms", i.e. caves, the entrances to the womb of the earth, and mixed with the seed corn.<sup>5</sup>

In the ancient world the link between the ideological festivals and the agricultural calendar is also particularly illustrated by the ancient Athenian festivals dedicated to the Goddess Athena that were celebrated in connection with important phases during the ritual year of the olive (Håland 2012c also for the following). All the festivals dedicated to Athena were related to the olive, the third main crop of the Athenians and protected by her, since her festivals were celebrated in the crucial period for the olive crop, from the flowering of the olive tree (*Thargelion*, i.e. May-June), through the growing period of the fruit, until the harvest in *Pyaneption* (i.e. October-November), when the *Chalkeia* was celebrated. The festivals celebrated during the month *Skirophorion* (i.e. June-July) were particularly important, because of the summer heat and dryness. Furthermore, the most important crops, grain, vines and olives were associated with female divinities (the ancient chthonic wine God, Dionysos also has female traits, Håland 2007), thus, paralleling women's nurturing role. Today the grain and olive are associated with the *Panagia* while wine celebrations are associated with male saints or the *Kalogeros*. On the Dodecanese and Cyprus, for example, they have a local festival dedicated to *Agios Giōrgēs* (Georg) on 3 November, when they celebrate the "laying down of the corps of *Agios Giōrgēs*, the great martyr". The festival is also dedicated to *Agios Giōrgēs, o Sporiarēs*, i.e. the "rich in seed" or "seedy", i.e. on the island of Rhodes. On the same day they celebrate *Agios Giōrgēs*, "the Drunk", on Karpathos. These festivals are not included in the official calendar of the church (Tsotakou-Karbelē 1991: 223 f.). Other places, and in general the new wine is opened in February such as when celebrating the *Kalogeros* in Northern Greece, paralleling the ancient Dionysian *Anthesteria* festival dedicated to the new wine. Today, the importance of the grain, wine and olives are illustrated by the most common gifts women bring to the church both during saints' festivals and memorial rituals for their own dead: one or more loaves of bread, a bottle of wine and a bottle of olive oil. The two first, i.e. bread and wine, are for the blessed bread distributed

by the end of the liturgy, and wine for the communion, the third, i.e. oil, mostly for the ever-burning oil lamp in the church, oil is also brought for anointments during baptisms, illustrating the importance of the staple food within the Orthodox liturgy.

Food is important within all festivals. The *Kalogeros* ritual, for instance, is celebrated around the spring equinox. During the main ritual of the festival farmers sow *polysporia*, while invoking the buried grain so that it may come back to life again. The ceremony ends as it started: the *Kalogeros* is fed in front of the church. The ritual meal always consists of three mouthfuls of each of their most important articles of food: blessed bread, cheese, and olives. The villagers thereby give what they wish to receive in abundance the following year. During the carnival procession the celebrants pay visits to all the houses in the village and are treated to wine, ouzo, and food – most often bread and cheese or the staple food – “to ensure the good”, i.e. the future crop. Likewise every housewife is offered a mouthful of wine by one of the visitors before sprinkling the *Kalogeros* with *polysporia*, from her sieve, as a return-gift.

In addition to the memorial services performed within the family sphere for people’s own dead, there are annual collective festivals dedicated to the dead. Particular days are dedicated to the dead, as at the ancient Dionysian *Anthesteria*, which was also the festival of the ancestors, but today these festivals are called *psychosabbata*, i.e. Soul Saturdays or All Souls’ Days. They are celebrated at the end of winter and at the end of spring, i.e. during the sprouting of the grains and at harvest time. In this period, the souls of the dead are thought to wander among the living. During the ancient *Anthesteria*, the spirits of the dead were thought to visit their former homes and roam around the living for three days around spring germination. At the modern “Soul Saturdays”, women bring food to the cemetery. After the blessing by the priest, it is eaten, so the souls of the dead may be forgiven and be able to assist the growing seed.

Since these feasts are dedicated to the dead, many people assume that they have a magical meaning. The tombs are sprinkled with water, and many scatter the rest of the *kollyba* over the tomb. In some places, people assume that the souls of the dead are set free on the Sunday prior to Lent, by sacrificing hens’ blood on the grave. During a ritual that takes place on “Meat Saturday” in the

second week of the carnival season, people daub blood on the ears and foreheads of all the family members. This is reminiscent of the blood ritual during the festival dedicated to *Agios Charalampos*, just before the grain harvest. Then, the living can fetch some of the life-giving blood from the bull at *Tauros* (i.e. Bull) mountain, when they immerse their hands in the blood, and daub a cross on their foreheads or palms with the blood, for the good of it. At the ancient animal sacrifices, paralleling the modern animal sacrifice, the victim was also killed so that the blood would flow into the earth and appease the souls of the dead. But it is also a sacrifice to the underworld accompanied with a prayer for a bountiful harvest. Blood sacrifice can generally be understood as “killing as a source to fertility”, from the logic behind “sympathetic magic”. It is important that the blood from the sacrificial animal will flow into the earth, through the freshly dug hole close to the sacrificial tree and its roots, to ensure the continuity of the vegetable life, to secure the grain harvest.

Although this article has focused on the Greek and thereby pagan and Christian ceremonies within the agricultural year, similar rituals and gifts are also found within other cultures all over the world, both in connection with peoples’ Goddesses and Gods, saints and dead ancestors: gifts are dedicated to have return-gifts, i.e. food. As in Greece, also in several other places, the festivals are often annual memorials and celebrations, and thereby annual festivals, dedicated to a deceased guardian of society, a saint, hero or heroine (Håland 2008, 2014). In Greece, this idealized guardian is a mediator between human beings and the supernatural within the hierarchical structure that constitute the polytheistic-polydaimonistic society, in the same way as he or she often functioned when still alive, within the human society. In ancient Greece, a putative tomb was a prerequisite for the festival site, and blood-offerings were made in honour of the heroes at the altar that was of central importance in the cult of the hero. This dead person was the wielder of a magical influence. Like the dead heroines, he was also a mediator between even stronger powers in the underworld, who were responsible for the fruits of the earth. It was of great importance to manipulate these powers for the benefit of the living world, i.e. to secure the next harvest. The dead mediator ensures the communication with stronger powers, to ensure fertility in a magical, healing or purify-

ing way. Therefore blood-offerings are still made to the earth via the dead saints, *Agios Kōnstantinos* and *Agia Elenē*, just before the grain harvest. New ideologies are assimilated with deep-seated values, consciously or unconsciously, because all new ideologies must adjust to the old magical agricultural rituals to ensure the food.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Eliade 1987. In vol. 5 (treating e-g) no entry is found for fertility, while the opposite is the case for Keesing 1981 see infra. See Håland 2007: Ch. 3 and 6 for a comprehensive discussion.

<sup>2</sup> Frazer 1987: 11–48, based on Mannhardt 1963. See Finrud Di Tota 1981: 91–93 for critique and modification of Frazer on which the following draws. Cf. also Keesing 1981: 519. See however Neusner 1989, who distinguishes between miracle and religion vs. magic. Cf. Dowden 1989: 6 f.

<sup>3</sup> The same way of thinking is found in the concepts of metonym, wherein a part is representative of the whole, and metaphor, which is based on the striving for likeness, Leach 1986: Ch. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Schol. Luc. *DMeretr.* 7.4, see Rabe 1906: 279.24–281.3, this and other sources are discussed in Håland 2007: Ch. 4–6, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Schol. Luc. *DMeretr.* 2.1, Rabe 1906: 275.23–276.28.

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## **The Fortune-Telling Customs of *Andrzejki* and *Katarzynki* in the Polish Ritual Year**

**Abstract:** The paper deals with the different magic practices of fortune-telling about marriage which take place on the eve of St Andrew's and St Catherine of Alexandria's day, known as *Andrzejki* and *Katarzynki* in the Polish ritual year. The author aims to explain why these ritual practices are carried out on these days in particular, basing her argument on certain moments in the *vitae* of the two saints and on the fact that these saints' days mark the beginning of a new period in the calendar year, namely the beginning of winter and the beginning of the Christmas Fast (Advent). In their contemporary form the fortune-telling customs of the *Andrzejki* and *Katarzynki* festivals have evolved into a popular children's entertainment.

**Key words:** fortune-telling about marriage, St Andrew, St Catherine of Alexandria, *Andrzejki*, *Katarzynki*, Polish ritual year

The current paper deals with the different magic practices of fortune-telling about marriage during the festivals of *Andrzejki* and *Katarzynki* in the Polish ritual year. On the eve of St Andrew's Day (30 November), unmarried girls meet together and tell fortunes about marriage, while on the eve of St Catherine of Alexandria (25 November), boys gather and perform similar magic practices, although this latter tradition was much less widespread and died out relatively early. These ritual fortune-telling practices were characteristic not only for the Polish ritual year but were known to a whole range of other peoples too.

Why are such magical fortune-telling practices relating to marriage carried out namely on the eve of St Andrew's Day or St Catherine's Day?

St Andrew was an apostle and martyr, born in Bethsaida, Galilee. He preached in the lands near the Black Sea, in Greece, Scythia (present-day Russia), Asia Minor, Armenia and Georgia. In the end he settled in Patras, Greece, where he died as a martyr. His relics

were preserved in Constantinople, but in 1208 they were transferred to the Cathedral in Amalfi, to the south of Naples. From 1462 the head of the saint was preserved in Rome, until, in 1964, it was returned to Patras. The official cult of St Andrew was widespread in the East and in the West alike. He is considered as a patron saint of Greece, Cyprus, Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Sicily, Scotland and the cities of Patras, Amalfi, Manila and Luqa in Malta. St Andrew is known in the Orthodox tradition as *Πρωτόκλητος* or The First-Called, as he was the first one among the apostles who was called to follow Christ. 30 November is the date of his death.

The folk cult of the saint reveals two different traditions – the first one honours him as a patron of weddings, the second as a protector from bears, wolves and other wild beasts. The first tradition is related to the association between the saint and the male principle, revealed in the etymology of his Greek name – *Αὐδόνεας* ‘manly’, ‘brave’. The second tradition is connected with a legend, according to which St Andrew tamed a bear and then rode upon it (Vinogradova, Tolstaya 1995: 109). Evolving from the perception of the saint as a patron of weddings, the magic practices of fortune-telling about marriage are known among Catholic and Orthodox Christians, although they are more popular among the Catholics. Fortune-telling about marriage on the eve of St Andrew’s Day is widespread among some Catholic peoples – e.g. in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Switzerland, and Germany, whilst it is unfamiliar to some Orthodox peoples, such as the South Slavs. In a more limited cultural area – among the Balkan Orthodox Slavs (mainly Bulgarians and Serbs) the ritual practices performed on St Andrew’s Day are linked with the veneration of the saint as a protector from bears, wolves and other wild animals, so this day is also known as “the bears’ day.” Maize is boiled on this day and the corn is thrown through the chimney of the stove with an incantation designed to ensure the bear will eat only the boiled corn and not the raw crop, nor any other crops, domestic animals or people. On this day prohibitions against weaving, spinning and sowing are strictly observed, and the scissors with which such women’s activities are carried out are tied up – following the example of “like produces like”, the principle used in positive homeopathic magic. The intention is that the jaws of bears and wolves will stay “tied up” in a similar way (Marinov 1914: 526, 522). Both of these two main traditions connected with

the celebration of St Andrew's Day among Catholic and Orthodox people, are of Christian origin and are linked with the saint's folk *vita*, although the magic actions that are performed are of ancient pagan origin.

In Poland, St Andrew is considered to be a patron of young unmarried girls hoping to marry well and for this reason the folk tradition of fortune-telling about marriage is extremely rich there, which is the reason for choosing it as the subject of the current paper. The first data about such practices come from priests' sermons of the 14th and 15th centuries, where they are sharply denounced (Pośpiech 1987: 15). It is important to emphasize that the fortune-telling repetitive rituals of the so-called *Andrzejki* were popular both among the peasant population and among the aristocracy, the Polish gentry. Some researchers have suggested that the fortune-telling customs were passed on from the aristocratic court to the village – a thesis that I cannot accept. I prefer to agree with Zygmunt Gloger, who emphasizes that, although in different versions, these magic practices were known to both social classes in Poland (Gloger 1900: 377). My paper is based on archival and published materials from different regions of Poland. I present also my fieldwork observations on the contemporary maintenance of the customs of *Andrzejki* and *Katarzynki*, which have largely lost their initial function.

The most convincing explanation as to why magic practices such as fortune-telling take place and predictions are made on the eve of St Andrew's and St Catherine's Days is that in traditional folk culture this time was perceived as a liminal period and these days are associated with the beginning of a new cycle in the calendar year. According to peasant beliefs and the "folk calendar" the agricultural year has two seasons – a winter and summer half of the year, each of which has its "leading" saints. In the Catholic folk calendar the heralds of winter are considered to be St Martin (11 November), St Catherine, St Andrew and St Nicholas. In folklore texts their images are usually connected with agricultural and other human activities. Thus, on the one hand, in the agricultural year, St Andrew's Day concludes the vegetation period and the agricultural activities associated with it. Therefore this day is considered as the actual beginning of winter. On the other hand, in the Catholic calendar, the old church year ends before St Andrew's Day and this day is considered

as the beginning of the new liturgical year. It is also the beginning of the Christmas Fast (Advent). Strictly speaking, Advent begins on St Catherine's Day (25 November), but it is believed that strict fasting actually starts on St Andrew's Day (30 November). There are a number of popular proverbs and sayings on this subject in Polish folklore: *Św. Katarzyna Adwent zaczyna, Św. Jędrzej jeszcze mędzej (ściślej)* "St Catherine starts the Fast, and St Andrew makes it even stricter" (Frankowski 1928: 62); *Święta Katarzyna klucze pogubiła, Święty Jędrzej znalazł skrzypki zaraz* "St Catherine lost the keys, but St Andrew found them and immediately locked the fiddles" (Bystron 1976: 39); *Święta Katarzyna Adwent związuje, a święty Andrzej jej poprawuje* "St Catherine ties up the Fast and St Andrew corrects her" (Ogrodowska 2006: 251).

In the Polish folk tradition (as in other folk traditions too), every liminal period and every beginning has its own fortune-telling acts about the future. Magic practices to predict the future take place on Christmas' Eve, at New Year, and on the day of the summer solstice – 24 June, the Day of John the Baptist. The fortune-telling acts on these days are connected mainly with predictions about the weather and about fertility during the coming year. There are also some about marriage, although these are not as important. By contrast, fortune-telling on the eves of St Andrew's and St Catherine's Days is mostly about weddings, whilst general predictions about the weather and fertility are an exception. There is a link between the days of the Christmas Fast and the cult of the dead. It is believed that the souls of the dead come up to the world above ground where they wander among the living and are able to foretell the future, which is why the living made predictions about fertility, marriage, etc. especially on these days.

The magic fortune-telling practices about marriage on the eve of St Andrew's Day are numerous and extremely diverse. Here, I will draw attention only to the most popular among them.

The moulding of wax or lead on the eve of St Andrew's Day is carried out in all regions of Poland and is also referred to among other peoples too, in magic acts and incantations directed, for example, against fright or fear (Todorova-Pirgova 2003: 196–213). The founding of lead is a much older practice which could still be observed until the end of the 19th century, although it is long forgotten

nowadays. At the present time, only wax is used. The melted wax is poured into water and after it gets cold, the figure that has been shaped is held up to a lamp or another shining object and people tell fortunes according to the shadow reflected on a wall or on a stretched piece of cloth. A figure that resembles a cat, a dog, or a child indicates that young woman will remain a spinster in the future; the figure of a bird or a man predicts her success among men; a figure shaped like a nest suggests a forthcoming wedding; a flower promises a good life (Pośpiech 1987: 16). The melted wax is usually poured through straw or a broom. Straw is a “heavenly” symbol connected with the birth of the Saviour – straw is placed on the table for Christmas Eve as a reminder of Christ’s crib. The demonological and, at the same time, protective functions of the broom are also well known – on the one hand it is used for making magic and is an inseparable attribute of witches and sorceresses, but on the other hand, it is a weapon against them, a tool against evil eyes and diseases, a means for driving away evil spirits and all types of devil’s forces.

Most fortune-telling practices relating to marriage are actually forms of positive homeopathic magic which follow the principle of “like producing like”. For example, people sprinkle seeds of flax or hemp on the bed of the young girl or on the earth, indicating that she should conceive and give birth in the future just as the seeds grow and reproduce. The so-called “sowing of flax” has the same significance as scattering seeds over brides and bridegrooms and is clearly symbolic of fertilizing. The “sowing of seeds” is accompanied by a certain type of incantation. In the regions around Cracow and Ruś (nowadays in Western Ukraine) and in all Polish-Russian borderline areas, people pronounce the following verbal formulae as they throw the flax seeds: *Swiaty Andreju! / Ja na tebe lon sieju; / Daj mene znaty, / Z kim budu zberaty* “St Andrew! / I am sowing flax to you; / Help me understand, / With whom shall I harvest it” (Gołębiowski 1830: 320). In other regions, on the night before St Andrew’s Day, people sow seeds of flax, hemp or wheat in special places in the fields or in flowerpots. The flax is sown mostly along the pathway leading to the house, to ensure the future husband will come along it. People called these “plantations” “gardens of St Andrew” and they made different forms of magic and pronounced spells there (Ogrodowska 2006: 247). The seeds that are sown are

usually flax seeds and this is not accidental, but results from the “heavenly symbolism” of this plant. We can see expressions of this notion in folklore texts among Catholic and Orthodox Christians. In Bulgarian folk songs, for example, the path of the souls to heaven is made of a flax thread. Flax seed is also put on the table for Christmas Eve.

Some of the magic practices are performed either with living creatures or with objects and special connotations are attributed to the ritual actions and to the overall organization of space.

In different regions of Poland some practices with animals have been recorded. For example, in Kujawy, Upper Silesia, as well as in other places, a gander was let into the room (sometimes with blindfolded eyes) and people would observe which maiden it approached first, as this would indicate that she would be the first to get married (Gołębowski 1830: 321; Gloger 1900: 378; Pośpiech 1987: 17). In the region of Podlasie girls went out into the yard and listened for the first bark of a dog in the evening of that day. The direction from which the first bark was heard was considered as a sign of the direction from which a future husband would come (Petera 1983: 5; Gołębowski 1830: 321).

In the fortune-telling acts with objects the left side of the object has special significance. A very popular practice, still followed today, is the placing of young women's left shoes so that they face from the wall towards the entrance door – the girl who manages to get her shoe first across the threshold of the house would be the first one to get married. Another practice widespread in all regions of Poland is the hiding of three objects under three plates: a wedding ring, a rosary, and a doll. The girls pick up the plates with their eyes blindfolded. If a girl finds the rosary, it means that she will remain a spinster. Finding the wedding ring means that she will marry soon, and the doll – that she will have a child before marriage. In the village of Chybów, Podlasie region, maidens would burn yarn and would then note the direction in which the smoke went – as a sign that the future husband would come from over there. In the villages of Horodyszcze, Ostromečzyn and Paszenki, every young girl would walk to the fence of the house, with her eyes blindfolded, and then she would look to see what kind of stake from the fence she had approached. It was believed that her future husband would

resemble it: if the stake was thin, the girl's husband would be slim, but if the stake was crooked, then he would be lame (Petera 1983: 6).

The dreams which took place during the night before St Andrew's Day were considered very important, as people believed that everything they dreamed would come true. Girls would hide a pair of men's trousers or some other piece of men's clothing under their blankets – in the hope that their future beloved would show up in their dreams. A much more recent practice in different regions of Poland is one in which girls place under their pillows some blank pieces of paper and others with the names of young, unmarried men of their acquaintance. In the morning, with their eyes blindfolded, they draw out a piece of paper. If the girl picks up a blank piece of paper, this means that she will not get married in the forthcoming year. In order to ensure the success of the fortune telling, it was necessary to fast during the entire day before lying down to sleep (Petera 1983: 6).

In Poland the fortune-telling practices involving young men on the eve of St Catherine's Day take place on this day precisely because in Christian folk beliefs St Catherine is portrayed as someone who helps young people to choose a good wedding partner and as a patron of marriage. This is associated with the legend of the mystic marriage of St Catherine of Alexandria to Christ as told in her *vita*, where she is described as rejecting all other suitors choosing instead to follow her "Heavenly bridegroom Christ," as a result of which she received the name "The Bride of Christ" (Zhitia 1991: 582–587). In most other Catholic countries it is girls who tell fortunes about marriage on the eve of St Catherine's Day and the day is considered as a women's day, whereas in Poland the reverse is true – young men tell fortunes about marriage. Many of the practices are the same as or similar to those carried out on the eve of St Andrew's Day. Thus, for example, boys would break off a branch from a sour-cherry tree and plant it in a flower pot, waiting for it to bloom around Christmas or New Year. The lad whose branch blossomed first was considered to be the first one who would get married (Głogier 1900: 377; Gołębowski 1830: 319). They also put women's clothing under their blankets or slips of paper containing women's names under their pillows. By the beginning of the 20th

century such fortune-telling acts by young men during *Katarzynki* were already rare and nowadays have died out completely.

The fortune-telling practices associated with *Andrzejki* are still widespread today and, in their contemporary form, have also become known as a popular children's entertainment. In the Polish school in Sofia, where children of permanent Polish residents in Bulgaria are educated, such an entertainment is organized for the youngest pupils between their first and fourth year at school. The old custom of moulding wax is performed in a modified form – instead of straw, the melted wax is poured through a hole of a key. Predictions may also be made by using a piece of apple peel. The peel is thrown backwards across the left shoulder as far as possible and when it falls to the ground the girls watch to see what kind of letter it has formed and predict that this will be the first letter of their future husband's name. The fortune-telling is actually done by little girls, but boys from the class are also present. Due to the young age of the participants, these fortune-telling acts are not always related to predictions about weddings, but have a more general character. Thus, for example, schools in Warsaw also organize *Andrzejki* for the youngest pupils. These are extremely popular occasions for which there are even fortune-telling "recipes" with instructions published in the press. One of the practices which was particularly well-known in the past has been modified and is performed nowadays in the following way: several objects, including a pen, a sweet, a drawing of a black cat and a piece of paper – none of which have matrimonial connotations – are placed under several plates. Every pupil chooses a plate, but with blindfolded eyes. After the plates are picked up, the uncovered objects are used to tell fortunes. The pen means "You need to study diligently," the sweet that "A surprise will come soon," while the black cat means "Beware of insincere friends," and the piece of paper that "You will meet soon an interesting person and will fall in love," and so on. In Poland, respondents from the Podhale area – one of the ethnographic regions where traditions are best preserved – inform us that in the past it was forbidden for lads to attend the maidens' fortune-telling games. However, around the mid-twentieth century, when girls gathered together on the eve of St Andrew's Day to make predictions about their future wedding the young men would come along later and make fun of them so that the entertainment, the songs, and the music lasted until dawn.

During the past few decades, *Andrzejki* has come to be seen as a time when girls and youths get together to enjoy themselves. Thus, for example, in Silesia, as well as in other regions in Poland, dance parties are held on the eve of St Andrew's Day in private houses, and, more recently, also in clubs, restaurants, etc. If there is any traditional fortune-telling on these occasions at all, it is only as an additional amusement for the evening (Pośpiech 1987: 18).

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## Rituals of the Easter Period in Poland

**Abstract.** In this article the author describes rituals (which the author refers to as customs, as they are seen as such) of the Easter period (from Palm Sunday till Tuesday after Easter Sunday) still conducted in Poland on different levels: in families, in small communities (parishes, villages), and on the national level (the last ones enhanced by the mass media). The author shows different meanings of these rituals, displaying intermingled traditions. Influence of the mass media on keeping, changing and abandoning old rituals is also highlighted here.

**Key words:** Easter, cakes, Calvary, custom, dead, eggs, fertility, magic, palms, rituals, *Siuda Baba*, spring, *śmigus-dyngus*

Easter is the greatest Christian feast to celebrate Jesus Christ's death and return to life, which abounds in rituals. But not all of them are of Christian origin, at least those performed in Poland. Many of them are excellent examples of a blend of old (pagan) and new (Christian) traditions. With a great deal of confidence I can say that most Polish Catholics are not aware of the pre-Christian origin of many Easter rituals, which are connected to farm work and changes in nature. Although not all these rituals are performed with the same strength throughout Poland and some of them have been commercialized and secularized, thus they are not free from innovations; they are still present and conducted in Polish society.

In this article I present rituals (which I refer to as customs, as they are seen as such) of the Easter period (from Palm Sunday till Tuesday after Easter Sunday) still conducted in Poland on different levels: in families, in small communities (parishes, villages), and on the national level (enhanced by the mass media). I show their different meanings, displaying intermingled traditions. The influence of the mass media on keeping, changing and abandoning old rituals is also highlighted here.

I use folklore materials, the results of the questionnaire distributed<sup>1</sup> among men and women in the under 20 to over 50 age range from different parts of Poland in April-June 2014, and also material placed in the following newspapers in the period 2010–2014: *Gazeta Wyborcza* (“Electoral Gazette” – nationwide, daily newspaper with a circulation of 190,000); *Rzeczpospolita* (“Commonwealth” – nationwide, daily newspaper with a circulation of 94,000); *Dziennik Polski* (“Polish Daily” – Małopolska Region newspaper with a circulation of 54,720). In this material I also included a fortnightly nationwide magazine (with a circulation of 460,650) *Przyjaciółka* (“Female Friend”).

### **Christian background of Easter**

Easter is the most important and earliest of all Christian feasts, which celebrates the passion, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Originally it was observed on the fourteenth day of the month Nisan, on the same day as the Jewish Passover (*Pesah*). In the second century, Rome changed it to the first Sunday after the first full moon following the spring equinox – on the first Sunday after Jewish *Pesah*. Primarily the celebration began with the one-day fast, subsequently extended to a period of forty days<sup>2</sup>, commemorating the fast of Jesus in the wilderness. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday with the sprinkling of ashes on the heads of those gathered in the churches as a sign of mourning and penance.

Palm Sunday (also known as ‘Flower/Willow Sunday’) that precedes Easter Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week. Its name comes from palms<sup>3</sup> that are brought to the churches to celebrate Christ’s entrance into Jerusalem. After that the palms should be kept at home till Ash Wednesday in the next year, then burnt, and ashes are used for sprinkling on the heads of people in the churches on that day. The high point of Holy Week is the Paschal *Triduum* (Paschal three days)<sup>4</sup>, which consist of Great Thursday, Great Friday<sup>5</sup> (Good Friday) and the Paschal Vigil at night from Great Saturday to Sunday of Resurrection. On Great Thursday during the Mass of the Lord’s Supper,<sup>6</sup> the institution of the Eucharist at the last supper of Jesus with his disciples is commemorated and the enactment of the sacrament of priesthood takes place. Great Friday commemorates the death of Christ on the cross. On that day the Holy Sacrament is

exposed, then carried to God's Sepulchre (so called 'dark cell') and left there ('buried') till the Resurrection, when it is brought to the altar. From that day till the Resurrection, the cross is venerated and people visit God's Sepulchres (17% of respondents indicated doing this<sup>7</sup>). In Poland, it is a widespread custom to prepare God's Sepulchres, as well as organising processions of the Way of the Cross – there are also miracle plays put on. The most famous Way of the Cross is attended and performed in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, the other one called 'Polish Jerusalem' – in Kalwaria Wejherowska. The Paschal Vigil<sup>8</sup> is the high point of the *Triduum*. It opens with the lighting of a new fire. From this fire, the paschal candle, a large candle representing the risen Christ, is lighted and carried into the church in a procession. After a solemn entrance into the church, bells peal (they become silent from the evening on Great Thursday) and the Great Matins or Morning Prayer of Easter begins. At 6.00 a.m. in the Sunday morning there is Liturgy of Resurrection in the churches and the bells announce the Resurrection.

### **Polish Easter customs**

Besides having palms blessed in the churches, and many local rituals related to them, like smacking with them each other in the Wielkopolska region, or placing them between rafters in the loft (to protect from lightning strike) in the Silesia region, there are also other Easter rituals and customs kept in Poland. Probably the most characteristic (66% of respondents) is having baskets with food<sup>9</sup> blessed by a priest<sup>10</sup>, usually in a church, but it can also be in another place, like the Main Square or even a football stadium in Kraków, on Saturday.

In the basket on a white cloth, very often a traditional crocheted one, food is placed. The most important is a lamb with a red paper flag with the word 'Alleluja'. Traditionally the lamb should be baked (in some regions made of butter), but it is also made of sugar, chocolate, even of plastic or plaster. The lamb symbolises Christ – the Lamb of God and his sacrifice. The second most important element<sup>11</sup> of the basket's contents are eggs<sup>12</sup> – coloured naturally (boiled in onion shells or with fresh blades of rye or beetroot) or artificially. They can be additionally decorated with some patterns (like flowers), sometimes made of threads, wool or paper. The eggs symbolise the

new life that is possible because of Christ who overcame death. Some bread, salt, pepper, horse-radish, ham and sausages, cakes are also there, as well as any food. Besides, there can be eatable or artificial chickens, ducklings and rabbits. The basket and its contents are decorated with a box tree. Very often everything is covered with another white cloth.

The blessed food brought home is displayed in an honourable place. Some families consume it immediately after it is brought home, but most wait till Sunday morning to have a solemn Easter breakfast together<sup>13</sup>. It is a very common<sup>14</sup> custom to share eggs with one another, accompanied by wishing all the best. A kind of 'egg battle' – knocking one's egg at another person's egg – might take place; the person whose egg shell cracks loses. It is also customary in some families to exchange coloured or decorated eggs at visits. A young woman (20–30-years old) from a village wrote about a custom of dipping a horse-radish in salt, vinegar and pepper and having a bite of it together with the blessed bread before Easter breakfast. According to her this custom is related to the Paschal *Triduum*.

There are two typical Easter cakes: *baba* (round yeast cake)<sup>15</sup> and *mazurek* (flat nut, chocolate, marzipan or other flavour very sweet cake).<sup>16</sup> Traditionally they should be baked at home. Some respondents mentioned sour rye soup as traditional Easter food. In the Mazowsze region there is an interesting ritual linked to making Easter bread. A person who makes it goes to the orchard and hugs trees with the hands with dough or washes off the trees with the water that the bread was washed with before. Farmers shake the trees or hit them with green branches, and all that in order to ensure fertility (Knap 2012: C 07).

Even, if only 5 persons wrote about cleaning and decorating (with chicken and palms) houses, it can be assumed that most people who celebrate Easter do it. In the Mazowsze region, especially in villages and small towns, people decorate their houses with flowers, green branches, colourful paper cut-outs and empty egg shells (*ibidem*).

An Easter Monday ritual known as *śmigus-dyngus*<sup>17</sup>, *lany poniedziałek* ('poured Monday') or having other local names is an inseparable element of Polish Easter<sup>18</sup>. On that day everybody can be doused with water<sup>19</sup>. There are *dyngusiarze*, usually boys and



Figure 1. Easter decoration in the house, Brzeszcze, 2014. Photo by Bożena Gierek.

young men, going around with water. In the Kashubia region people will rather whip each other with willow twigs<sup>20</sup>. There are also typical local customs on that day. One of them is *Siuda Baba*<sup>21</sup> (one respondent mentioned that custom) in Wieliczka near Kraków. It is a man dressed as an old, ugly, sooted<sup>22</sup> woman who goes around accompanied by a 'Gipsy' (other sooted man), collecting offerings given as a kind of ransom for not to be caught. It is believed that those who are sooted by *Siuda Baba* will have a happy and prosperous coming year. Poznań has its *żandary*<sup>23</sup> – 8 dressed men (chimney-sweeper, paupers, old woman, bear with hay balls tied to its legs, priest with a bucket and an aspergillum, musician, gendarme) – who bring wishes to the houses, smear the faces of the people with soot and pour water on the children. It is believed that *żandary* drive away evil forces with water, a stick and a twig. In Podhale (mountainous region) shepherds have their sheep blessed at the church. They take with them holy water and pieces of the Great Saturday wood, with which they set first fire on the mountain pastures. One respondent mentioned blessing fields on the Easter Monday in order to ensure fertility for the coming year. A similar ritual is observed in the village of Białoboki, where the fields are sprinkled with water, and eggs are buried in the earth in order to protect it from corn cockle that could be sown by the Devil. In a village of Pietrowice Wielkie,

the Easter horse procession (Emmaus procession) rides around the fields in order to ensure fertility. *Emaus* is also the name of a famous church fair organised in Kraków on that day.

On Tuesday after Easter there is the *Rękawka* Feast at the Krakus Mound in Kraków. During this feast a fair at the nearby church is organised, fire is lighted on the top of the Mound, and since 2001 there have been events organised that refer to the pagan past. There are a few theories regarding the name of the Mound: a sleeve (*rękaw*), or a hand (*ręka*), or a grave (old-Slavic *raka*). The legend has it that it is a burial mound of the Polish ruler Krak, and it was piled up from the soil brought here by his people in their sleeves.

### Pagan background of Easter rituals

The time when Easter is celebrated coincides with the coming of spring which was a very important time for conducting pagan rural rituals that would ensure fertility among people and animals, as well as for the fields<sup>24</sup>. Easter is considered to be a climax of spring festivities and rituals (Zadrożyńska 1985: 114). The rituals of bidding farewell to winter and welcoming spring, in which fire and water prevailed, lasted until Whitsun. The feasting generally had a joyful character<sup>25</sup>. Winter represented by *Marzanna* (a female effigy made of straw or twigs) was drowned or burnt<sup>26</sup> outside the village, and spring represented by greenery and flowers ('Summer', 'May', 'Bride') was brought into the houses. If *Marzanna* was burnt, the remains were collected and sprinkled on the fields, as death, besides being destructive, also carries revitalising forces (Tomiccy 1975: 183).

There was a ritual of lighting bonfires<sup>27</sup> on hilltops to celebrate the coming of spring, which coincides with the kindled Easter fire in the Vigil and an outdoor sunrise service celebrating the resurrection (Baldovin 2005: 2579). However, it must be noted that unlike in English or German languages, where the name *Easter* or *Ostern* might derive from *Eostur*, the Norse word for the spring season (*ibidem*), in Polish the name denotes its Christian origin – the Great Night (*Wielkanoc*).

The other important element of spring rituals, water, was used for cleansing of the winter dirt and helping in waking nature to life, as

well as enhancing vital forces (fertility), hence the custom of pouring water on Easter Monday. The cleansing power of spring water was replaced by the power of holy water (Krzyżanowski 1965: 397–398; Tomiccy 1975: 188).

In Christian tradition, palms symbolise the immortality of the spirit, but used in pagan rituals they were to drive away evil, bad luck and illness. The catkins – the symbol of nature coming to life – were placed in beehives and till not that long ago swallowed by people, which was to protect against illness, especially of the throat, in the coming year (Knap 2012: C 7).

An egg, one of the most important elements of Easter, in cultures all over the world symbolises new life. In traditional folk religion it is:

*a powerful symbol of fertility, purity, and rebirth. It is used in magical rituals to promote fertility and restore virility; to look into the future; to bring good weather; to encourage the growth of the crops and protect both cattle and children against misfortune, especially the dreaded evil eye. All over the world it represents life and creation, fertility and resurrection.* (Newall 2005: 2702)

Thus an egg was sacrificed to the earth, that was coming to life, also offered to the dead<sup>28</sup> (rolled on the graves or buried in the earth), as a symbol of re-birth, as well as to stimulate the spirits linked with vegetation to action (Tomiccy 1975: 190).

The spring time was one of the periods dedicated by pagan Slavs to the dead and many rituals, like feeding them at home or in the graveyards, were carried out in the old times (see e.g. Tomiccy 1975; Zadrożyska 1985). The above-mentioned Feast of *Rękawka* was a spring funeral banquet, when fire was lit, food (bread rolls, bread, ginger breads, apples, nuts and Easter eggs) was brought for the poor, holy groves were planted, coins were placed in the ground, bad spirits were driven away (Głoger 1972b: 161–162). Also the church fair *Emaus* in Kraków is said to be connected with the pre-Christian rituals dedicated to the dead. There were three typical traditional toys at the fair: little wooden axes, a tree of life<sup>29</sup> (with a bird on the top), clay bells and little figures of Jews. It was believed that the sound of the bells drove away the evil and brought luck, and the spirits of the dead were to come as birds that were sitting on

the cemetery trees. Axes were to be used during the ritual games. It is not clear, what was the meaning of the figures of Jews (Pilichowska 1980: 33–37).

A rabbit (or the Easter Bunny), as an extraordinarily fertile creature, symbolised the coming of spring (Balduvin 2005: 2579). In the Greco-Roman world, a rabbit was especially associated with Dionysos, the god of love, fertility, and life, also of death and immortality (Waida 2005: 7590).

### Conclusion

There are two streams of tradition that intertwine and meet in the Polish Catholic Easter customs: pagan Slavic and Christian. The rituals of pagan origin, carried within the Catholic Church, were Christianised long ago and they have been ascribed different meaning than they used to have. The rituals of Great Week related to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are also very rich in their meaning, although not everybody who participates in them might be aware of it. The revival of tradition, which is reflected in various Easter exhibitions, fairs and competitions publicised in the mass media, strengthened by contemporary commercialisation<sup>30</sup>, can be perceived as a reaction to suppression of open, public celebration of Easter during the Communist period. This revival is perceived as a great thing, as long as it does not overshadow the essence of the celebration (Rotter-Stankiewicz 2012: C 7). What struck me while going through newspapers is a presence of articles, pieces of information on old pagan customs that are restored. They do not appear in the context of any pagan movement, but rather simply as a part of ‘Polish tradition’.



*Figure 2. An Easter stamp designed by Jan Konarzewski, Poczta Polska 2011.*



Figure 3. A wicker Easter egg in the main hall of the railway station in Kraków, 2014. Photo by Bożena Gierek.

A poll carried out by the Centre of Research of Social Opinions in 3–9 April 2014 shows that for 63% of Poles Easter is first of all a family feast, and 44% link it with a religious experience (CBOS 2014). Whether it is a family or religious feast in the first place, whether knowing the origin and meaning of the Easter symbols and rituals or not, most Poles keep the tradition, as is also shown by the answers given by 35 respondents. They reflect what can be observed generally. They also show the fragmentary, poor knowledge of pagan origins of Easter customs and symbols that were replaced by Christian ones. Some respondents pointed to tradition<sup>31</sup> as the main reason for cultivation of old customs, for some Easter is an occasion to be together with family, to enjoy the meetings and eating special food, but there were also persons who fall into line with tradition in order to please the family, although they might perceive all those rituals as a kind of “maniac socialization”.

So where is the magic in contemporary Polish Easter rituals? For Zofia Geszter-Karwat decorating eggs together with her family is perceived as a magic time (Wilczyńska 2013: 16). Contemporary Polish Easter rituals are deeply immersed in magic and the magic of the Easter time reveals itself in these very rituals, even if, at first glimpse they might seem simply so mundane, like sitting together at the Easter table, even if the magic is not realised by those who perform these simple rituals that carry the magic. Of course, we do not encounter here the magic as interpreted classically as the acts by which people who perform them “intend to bring about certain events or conditions, whether in nature or among people, that they hold to be the consequences of these acts” (Middleton 2005: 5562), but still it is there.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Most of them by Olga Koehler.

<sup>2</sup> At present on Good Friday, most Polish Catholics strictly observe fasting. Although among the respondents only 3 mentioned keeping it, it has to be remarked that in the questionnaire, there were no specific questions, only a general one about Easter customs kept in the respondent's home and about their meaning.

<sup>3</sup> In Poland they are usually made of dry flowers and cereals, also often of artificial material. See the picture: [http://slowdizajn.pl/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/lipnica\\_palmy-300x200.jpg](http://slowdizajn.pl/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/lipnica_palmy-300x200.jpg) (Date of access: 8.01.2015).

<sup>4</sup> 51% of respondents participated in these ceremonies.

<sup>5</sup> I use the names common in Poland.

<sup>6</sup> Which is in the evening. Before the noon is the Mass of Chrism during which chrism is consecrated and other oils blessed.

<sup>7</sup> One person wrote about giving alms.

<sup>8</sup> It might vary locally, but in Poland it starts at earliest from 6.00 p.m. on Saturday.

<sup>9</sup> See the picture: [http://www.gminaskawina.pl/data/images/aktualnosci/koszyk%20\(4\).JPG](http://www.gminaskawina.pl/data/images/aktualnosci/koszyk%20(4).JPG) (Date of access: 8.01.2015).

<sup>10</sup> Jan Turnau (2012: 2) writes about “an astonishingly nationwide Polish action of having food blessed”. This custom goes back to the 8th century (Starzak 2012: A 04).

<sup>11</sup> Although only 31% of respondents wrote about painting eggs and only 11% about decorating baskets, it can be assumed that the number should be at least as high as for having the baskets blessed.

<sup>12</sup> There are three kinds of Easter eggs: a) *malowanki*, *kraszanki* or *byczki* – in one colour (usually red) without any decoration; b) *pisanki* or *piski* – with decoration in two or more colours made with wax using a pin or a felt tip pen; c) *rysowanki* or *skrobanki* – made by scratching ornaments with a sharp implement on the coloured eggs (Fischer 1934: 239).

<sup>13</sup> 34% of respondents indicated this custom and a further 8% – generally the family meeting at the table.

<sup>14</sup> Although only 2 respondents indicated it and 1 – the ‘egg battle’.

<sup>15</sup> See the picture: <https://encrypted-tbn1.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQtHRbXCKIMTewidO4gNFInOCzm8SVsiISvmn-LGbcDisE7B1Ok> (Date of access: 8.01.2015).

<sup>16</sup> See the picture: [https://encrypted-tbn2.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcT\\_0jp65Uo2Jpo4uo1qhM5oJH4l36Xp8G6AEIRVEbEtdV3lRVV9gw](https://encrypted-tbn2.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcT_0jp65Uo2Jpo4uo1qhM5oJH4l36Xp8G6AEIRVEbEtdV3lRVV9gw) (Date of access: 8.01.2015).

<sup>17</sup> The name comes from German: *Smackostern* – when a person caught in the bed was smacked with a palm or rod and doused with water; and *Dünnguss* – meaning ‘watery soup’, ‘gush of water’, or *Dingnus*, *Dingnis* – meaning ransom during the war for a protection against robbery (Gloge 1972a: 88).

<sup>18</sup> 37% of respondents indicated it as practiced.

<sup>19</sup> In the Kujawy region on Monday, water is poured on the girls and on Tuesday on the boys.

<sup>20</sup> One respondent wrote about a Great Friday morning custom of waking children by the father with a shout “For God’s wounds the lambs are hit!” He explained that the custom commemorated the Christ’s passion, but it is a clear resemblance of an old pagan ritual of hitting people with a ‘twig of life’ to bring happiness.

<sup>21</sup> According to a local legend it was a pagan priestess who guarded fire on the hill near Wieliczka. She was not allowed to wash herself, to comb her hair or to change her clothes. Only once a year at spring was she allowed to go out and to search for her replacement. The girl who was caught had to pay a ransom or take the place of the priestess for a year (Białek 2014: B7). See the picture: [https://encrypted-tbn3.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcTc\\_horl6RGSSRHn7xTxBkG8a-EE7fSbDH4RknVQ3EmckTSdq3m](https://encrypted-tbn3.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcTc_horl6RGSSRHn7xTxBkG8a-EE7fSbDH4RknVQ3EmckTSdq3m) (Date of access: 8.01.2015).

<sup>22</sup> One respondent mentioned that in the Poznań region “boys used to throw soot at girls” on that day.

<sup>23</sup> See the picture: <https://encrypted-tbn1.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcS6vaPLLrN4oADvmQhQp95alL1i5lu4IEhenDTCT-H7r-w7V90Z> (Date of access: 8.01.2015).

<sup>24</sup> People rolled about the fields and drove out cattle (that were sprinkled with water) in the fields for the first time (Fischer 1934: 198).

<sup>25</sup> Two respondents listed customs related to so called ‘prankish night’ (*psotna noc*), during which for example gates can be thrown into a pond on the Easter Monday.

<sup>26</sup> Which usually was done on the forth Sunday of Lent, called Mid-Lent. One respondent wrote about burning Judas in a big fire, which is to symbolise destruction of evil. It looks like the Church replaced the pagan ritual with a Christian one, as burning or throwing down Judas from the church tower was practised widely in the Middle Ages. In the Podhale region, Judas is drowned on Great Wednesday (Knap 2012: C 7).

<sup>27</sup> Fire was also lit on the graves, as it was believed that the spirits of the dead came to warm themselves.

<sup>28</sup> Especially red eggs (Zadrożyńska 1985: 113–114).

<sup>29</sup> In old times, the tree of life was also present during the Feast of *Rękawka*.

<sup>30</sup> The part on the new Easter tradition in Poland had to be removed due to the limited volume of this article.

<sup>31</sup> Also very often emphasized in the mass media.

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## Coptic Magic and Its Phases

**Abstract.** Magical ceremonials may be subdivided in phases that involve the execution of rites defining these separate phases of the ceremonial. Each rite has a remarkable importance, because its correct execution and consequent outcome affect the result of the ceremonial as a whole.

Taking the ritual praxis in the London Hay 10391 Papyrus as an example, this contribution explains the phases, their similarities and differences, typical for the execution of Coptic magic.

**Key words:** Coptic magic, ritual typologies, phases of rite

In scholarly literature, ritual is usually defined as “prescribed formal behaviour for occasions not given over to technical routine, having reference to belief in mystical beings and power”, or a “culturally constructed system of symbolic communication, constituted of patterned and ordered sequences of words and acts”, or a “symbolic behaviour that is socially standardized and repetitive, [...] often enacted at certain places and times that are themselves endowed with special symbolic meaning” or a “performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers” (Snoek 2008: 6–7). In Snoek’s opinion, “each definition does two things: on one hand, it describes a concept, and, on the other, it gives that concept a name, which is to say, it links it to a particular term”. Referring to Melford Spiro’s classification (“rite: minimal significant unit of ritual behaviour; ceremony: the smallest configuration of rites constituting a meaningful ritual whole; ceremonial: the total configuration of ceremonies performed during any ritual occasion” (quoted from: Snoek 2008: 8), Snoek proposes, to avoid the ambiguity deriving from “the use of one term for more than one concept, and the use of more than one term for the same concept” (Snoek 2008: 8). He advocates a classification in which a term corresponds to a single concept, such as “1) ritual: the prescription/script (written or not); 2) rite: the smallest building-block of a ceremony (e.g. exchanging rings at a wedding);

3) ceremony: a group of rites (e.g. a church wedding); 4) ceremonial: a group of ceremonies (e.g. all the wedding, including reception and dinner); 5) Rite: the total cult of a tradition (the Russian Orthodox Rite); 6) ritual: a ‘role’ or ‘part’ played in a ceremonial (e.g. bride or priest)” (Snoek 2008: 8). Thus he uses “the term ritual for two concepts (‘prescription/script’ and ‘role’ or ‘part’); since these two are very different, it will hardly ever be unclear which one is meant, since that will emerge from the context” (Snoek 2008: 9).

On the basis of Snoek’s classification, I try to identify and observe some particular phases and therefore some ‘rites’, constituting a ‘ceremonial’ of Coptic magic, considered as a ‘Rite’.

The London Hay 10391 papyrus is dated to the VI/VII century, made in leather, coming from Egypt, maybe Thebes, and written in Coptic. Scholars define it as a “recipe book” or a “cookbook” because it contains numerous spells relating to the invocation of guardians<sup>1</sup> and ritual instructions (Sanzo 2012: 139; Meyer-Smith 1994: 263).

Coptic magic is the magic practiced by Egyptian people converted to Christianity. It is a syncretistic magic: in fact the magic-religious substratum of rituals is Egyptian but influenced by foreign cultures such as Babylonian, Greek-roman, and in a particular way Jewish culture. Frequently foreign divinities are equated to Egyptian deities and very often, for example, the Jewish-Christian god Yao-Sabaoth is identified with the Egyptian god Amun.

Like any other kind of magic, Coptic magic is also founded on an ancient secret magical knowledge according to which the world is ruled by a sympathetic principle, that is to say an energy that establishes a relationship among everything that exists in creation (Plotinus 1896; Plotin 1927; Kropp 1930; Mauss 1965; Graf 1995; Sfameni Gasparro 1999–2000). The magician has to know the laws and the ways to employ this energy, such as: 1) to be in a condition of purity; 2) the use of substances (vegetable, animal, mineral) that are in a relationship with the divinity that he calls for help; 3) the name of the divinity (Kropp 1930). Sometimes he needs also the help of a *paredros*, a divine assistant that participates in the execution of the ceremony. According to Ciraolo this *paredros* could be classified in four types “the *paredros* as a god and as a physical representation of a god; the *paredros* as the partial physical remains of a dead

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person and as a *daimon* of a dead person; and the *paredros* of a god, celestial phenomenon; a physical object" (Ciraolo 1995: 292).

As we can see in the London Hay papyrus 10391, for example, at line 80, and also in Papyrus Michigan 136 from line 135 until the end, or in Papyrus Cairo 45060 from line 31 until line 34 the magician employs vegetables to do his spell. In these cases the magician knows that the plants have an intrinsic magical power, but this power is instilled in the plants by a rite executed at the moment of the harvest. In the Greek Magical Papyri IV, 2967–3006 (Calvo Martinez-Sánchez Romero 1987: 177–178; Preisendanz 1928–1931: 169–171; Betz 1986: 95) we can read the procedure used by the Egyptian magician at the moment of harvesting: he first purifies his body, and then he purifies the plant and picks it and, at the same time, prays to the deity whom the plant is consecrated to. According to Scarborough, the plant's harvest could be considered a form of cult because the magic herbalist knows that during the harvest, the conveyance of the divine power occurs to the plants and at the same moment the transformation occurs from plant to *pharmakon*, and then the *pharmakon* becomes an extension of divine power in aid of humanity (Scarborough 1991: 156–161).

LiDonnici classifies the ingredients that a magician employed to make the *pharmaka* in four types: the first includes some "medicinal plants with real pharmacological effects recognized by both ancient and modern medicine" (LiDonnici 2002: 359), the second includes plants that are consecrated by a particular rite during plantation. Thanks to this rite the plant is transformed into something else and can be used for a specific aim. In the third category are substances that are burned during the rite (as incense). And in the fourth are included ingredients that the popular belief defines as magic, such as mule hairs, lizards, dung (LiDonnici 2002: 360–362).

For a good realization of the whole magical ceremonial, the purity of the place which the ceremony is realised in, the purity of the magician and of other objects that the magician uses during the execution of the ritual are very important because everything must be appreciated by divinities. About the purity of the place we know just that the pure places were established by the magician; while for the purity of the magician we know that he must be fasting for three days and during the rite he must say that he is fasting. Also

his clothes must be purified and, as an Egyptian priest, they must be in linen and their colour must be white; clothes made of wool of sheep, shoes, belts and ribbons were impure, instead vegetable objects were preferred. The magician keeps in his mouth ammonia and on his head a garland with the purpose both to expel the demons and also to attract the invoked spirits (Kropp 1930).

The magician executes the rite in a magic circle that protected him from dangerous demons and during the execution of the rite he wears amulets. He uses a magic bowl (that must be new or purified) that he puts on a magic stone, so that the bowl doesn't touch the ground. In the bowl is an image that keeps out bad influences that could disturb the magic rite, on the ground near the bowl there is a lamp (new with linen or wool wicks) and a basin (copper or terracotta) is used to offer smoke sacrifices, by burning woods (Kropp 1930).

During the execution of the rite the magician says pleas and invocations. These elements constitute the magical worship, that could be divided in four phases: (1) the plea at a divinity, demon, angel, symbolic objects (nails of the cross, holy oil) or the narration of *istoriola* (a brief tale of a mythological occurrence); (2) the request; (3) the order of fulfillment of wishes or requests; and (4) the final exhortation: 'yea, yea, at once, at once' (Kropp 1930; Vycichl 1991). The names that the magician invokes during the rite are the secret true names of the divinities, which they have revealed to humanity through a secret disclosure; so the magician pronouncing the secret true names or a strange sequence of words or letters (called *ephesia grammata*) acquires the power to force the divinities to obey him. The power of the true name consists not only in identifying accurately the divinity but also in establishing a better contact with him/her in order to acquire his/her power (Kropp 1930; Vycichl 1991; Gordon 2002). The name of the invoked divinity could be the name of other foreign divinities which the invoked divinity is similar with (Kropp 1930; Vycichl 1991). The names of foreign deities weren't translated because, according to magic knowledge, the power was in their diction rather than in their intrinsic significance (Origene 1971; Kropp 1930; Sfameni Gasparro 1998; Sfameni Gasparro 1999–2000; Gordon 2002; Gasparro 2013).

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So we can observe that the London Hay papyrus 10391, from line 1 to line 6, begins with an invocation to three guardians in order to obtain a healing. In this invocation the magician says also the aretalogies (an aretalogy is a sacred biography told in the first person in form of poem or text, in which are listed deity's attributes) of the divine entities to attract their attention and then to attract them upon his sacrifice, as happens at lines 19–29 of the Papyrus Michigan 136.

From line 12 to 19, or at lines 60 to 111 of Papyrus Michigan 136, there's an *historiola*; an *historiola*, as we have seen, is the brief tale of a mythological occurrence in reference to a previous divine experience, establishing in this way a likeness between man and deity; searching to reproduce at a human level what has already happened at the divine level: that is, triumph over enemies and sicknesses (Kropp 1930; Ritner 2001; Sfameni Gasparro 2002: 255–301). The narration of the *historiola* also intended to realize a link between divinity and man, in order to join their mutual fate (Kropp 1930; Mauss 1965; Ritner 2001).

From line 50 to 55 of Papyrus London Hay 10391 and at lines 5–24 of Papyrus Cairo 45060 there's a plea. The plea that the magician says during the rite is similar to a religious prayer. But, instead of ending with a supplication, it ends with an order, because the magician knows the true magic name of the divinity so he can obligate the divinity to obey him (Kropp 1930: 217; Vycichl 1991).

In magic, the sacrifice of a ritual victim represents another rite that permits to create a way of communication between human and divine world, and very often the sacrificial victim is in a sympathetic relationship with the invoked deity (Zuesse 1994: 486–487). The sacrificial rite is a way to obtain the *ousia-ba*. The *ousia-ba* is an essence, both material and immaterial, that permits, through the rite, to communicate with divinities and to benefit from their power. Death, or better the essence that death can produce, and that seems to be similar to the divine energy, could be both the key and the doorway allowing entrance into the sympathetic circuit that rules the universe. Its physical and spiritual vehicle is the *ousia*, that is a physical object which was last linked to the vital energy, the *ba*, as it was called in ancient Egypt (Kropp 1930: 110; Mauss 1965; Sfameni Gasparro 1999–2000). In this way the sacrifice is

perceived as a gift that represents the transfer of magic force, a kind of *do ut des*, a force that is reciprocally exchanged between the magician and the divinity, but the driving force is the energy of *ousia-ba* (Kropp 1930; Mauss 1956; Banks Findly 1993; Thomas 1994; Dunnigan 1997; Ries 2008a; Ries 2008b).

At line 56 of London Hay papyrus the text reports the use of amulets. In Coptic magic the creation of an amulet and its putting into effect were two distinct moments. The formulary talks about a specific material, dye and its specific measures. The amulet must be drawn on an alabaster board and varnished with pure honey, that hasn't touched water or fire because otherwise its magic power will be destroyed. The drawing must be made using animal blood (white pigeon or bat), myrrh and white wine; and it must be made in a moonlit night or on particular moments (Greek Magical Papyri VII: 272–284; Calvo Martinez-Sánchez Romero 1987: 209; Preisendanz 1928–1931: 15; Betz 1987: 124). The implement of the amulet was achieved by a rite that blessed the passage from the example impressed on the papyrus to the image drawn on the amulet, and the magician has to specify the name of the person (or the place, etc.) for whom the amulet was produced (Kropp 1930).

As we have seen, a magical ceremonial, in this case of the magic Coptic Rite, could begin at the moment of planting a plant, and end at the moment of its utilization. Or it could begin at the moment of the collection of the ingredients for the creation of an amulet, and end when it is worn until it has completed its function. The correct execution of each ritual moment phase represents an essential stage towards the perfect outcome. Each individual rite is linked to achieve the final aim.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The guardians have several tasks; usually they protect something or somebody, or symbolize and protect a particular part of a body or of the world, heaven, etc.

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## **Catholic Saints in the Latvian Calendar**

**Abstract.** Religious hermits, martyrs and saints have a special place in Christianity, particularly Catholicism. Venerated as holy patrons, each of them has become a protector of some area of human life. The tradition of honouring saints in Latvian culture spread simultaneously with Christianity, starting from the 11th century. Since the very beginnings of Catholicism in the territory of Latvia, an important role was given to the Virgin Mary. She was a patron saint of Livonia. Whereas, the patron of the dockers' and load bearers' brotherhood was Saint Christopher, whose altar was placed in churches of Medieval Riga. After the Reformation, traditions, which were established by the Catholics, including the honouring of saints among them, were called superstitions and placed on the same level as magic.

**Key words:** Catholic saints, Latvian calendar, Virgin Mary, Saint Christopher

Religious hermits, martyrs and people of divine origin or with powers have a special place in Christianity, particularly Catholicism. Venerated as holy patrons, each of them has become a protector of some area of human life, for example, St Anthony was the patron of swineherds, St George (in Latvian *Juris*) became the patron of soldiers, St Agatha's bread protected against fire, St Peter protected livestock during summer pastures by locking a wolf's mouth in the spring and so on. Historian Keith Thomas pointed out, that by the twelfth and thirteen centuries the lives of the saints had assumed a stereotyped pattern. The Medieval church related the miraculous achievements of holy men, and stressed how they could prophesy the future, control the weather, provide protection against fire and flood, magically transport heavy objects, and bring relief to the sick. Thus, the medieval church demonstrated its monopoly on the truth (Thomas 1971: 26). The honouring of saints spread throughout Latvian culture mostly before the Reformation, but after that – a struggle between representatives of Lutheranism and Catholicism began. Catholic traditions – including the veneration

of saints, which were intermingled with pre-Christian notions and practices – become *magic* in Protestant lands.

In this article, attention has been focussed mainly on two saints – the Virgin Mary and Saint Christopher and the historical context of the Catholic tradition of honouring saints is explained, linking it with changing traditions nowadays. Research on Latvia's cultural history, as well as the conclusions made by the author through fieldwork were used in analysing the Catholic tradition of honouring the saints.

### **Historical Background**

Since the 13th century, the current territory of Latvia as well as a part of the present day Estonia were a part of a country called Livonia, which later became a Confederation of Livonian countries. Latvia was divided between the Archbishopric of Riga, the Bishopric of Dorpat, the Bishopric of Courland and the Livonian Order. The religious governing bodies of all of these lands also, to a large degree, had political and economic power. The tradition of honouring saints in these countries spread simultaneously with Catholicism, starting from the late 12th century and gradually replacing, merging with or assuming the pre-Christian gods and their functions. The activities of preachers from religious orders such as for example, the Cistercians, Dominicans and Franciscans had considerable significance in bringing Christian traditions to life – around the year 1190, Pope Clement III allowed the Livonian Bishop, Maynard to employ monks and clergymen of all orders (Švābe 1937: 16). The tradition of honouring saints strengthened Christian legends, which became especially popular in the 12th and 13th centuries. As Christian legends were mainly verbally spread, the Latvian community was introduced to them largely by preachers from religious orders – the Franciscans, the Dominicans, and from the 16th century, the Jesuits too, preached their religion in the local languages. The Jesuits spread the practice of using different consecrated objects, e.g. candles, corn, oil, salt, etc. For example, the water of St Ignatius Loyola was very popular and widely used in healing (Kleijntjenss 1940: 254). According to the historian Jonathan Wright, it was mostly the Jesuits who used the

cult of martyr relicts and holy water (Wright 2004: 5). The Jesuits operated in the territory of Latvia from 1582 to 1820.

Lutheranism began to spread and put its roots down in Latvian society during the early 16th century, when a part of Livonia came under the rule of the Kingdom of Sweden. Riga became one of the most active centres of Lutheranism in Europe. In 1524, the followers of Lutheran teachings battled with Catholic churches, religious orders and monasteries in Riga, destroying altars and images of the saints (Grosmāne 1998: 46). The confessional disharmony continued to exist in the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia throughout its existence, whereas Latgale (the eastern part of the current Latvia), which had remained in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth after the division of the Livonian Confederation in 1629, retained its Catholicism. In the rural environment of Latvian territory, Catholic saints were still venerated up to the 18th century because many of the churches were devoted to saints, for example, the Virgin Mary, St. Anna, Jesus Christ, St Anthony and others; most of the significant festival days were named after the Catholic saints (Adamovičs 1934–1935: 21534); and the spring and autumn markets also had saints as patrons.

The annual markets took place next to churches and chapels, which were built on ancient Latvian sacred sites. As every church or chapel was dedicated to the memory of some saint, then the annual markets by the churches took place on the days dedicated to these saints. In the 17th century, the annual markets were held at all times of the year, but especially in September – on Mary's birthday (8th September) and on Michael's Day (29th September) (Bērziņš & Jenšs & Straubergs 1940: 42969–42970). The tradition of organizing a market by churches during religious celebrations was still very widespread in Catholic Latgale in the early 20th century (Kraukle 2011: 21) and is still preserved in individual areas nowadays. In this way, the annual markets had an important role in strengthening certain celebratory days in the calendar and as a consequence, Christian names in the broader community as well.

The passing of time in the Middle Ages was determined by the Catholic calendar. Over time, the calendar was supplemented with days, which were dedicated to various saints and martyrs. They also kept their places in the calendar after the Reformation and this

is true nowadays as well, for instance, Martinmas, Michaelmas, St Agatha's day and others, which continue to be marked. In this way, Latvian seasonal festivals were closely linked to the Catholic calendar. Children too were given the name of some saint, with the latter then becoming the guardian and protector of the one carrying the name. Names like Jānis (John), Pēteris (Peter), Juris (George), Marija (Mary), Anna (Ann) and so on, are still popular in Latvia.

### **Virgin Mary**

Since the very beginnings of Catholicism in the territory of Latvia, an important role was given to the Virgin Mary. She was a patron saint of Livonia (*Terra Marianā*), which is confirmed by the image of St Mary on both the flag of the Master of the Livonian Order (early 15th century), as well as in the great seal of the Rīga Dom Order of Monks (1234–1269) (Strods 1996: 113; Švābe 1990: 101). The first churches were built in honour of the Virgin Mary, for example, the Dom church in Riga, the building of which was started in 1211, and many other churches and chapels throughout Latvia. Nowadays, the best-known object is the Aglona Basilica, which is dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. The Basilica is a very popular place of pilgrimage where important religious activities are held on 15th August.

In Latvian folklore, Mary is called *Māra*, Saint *Māra* and *Māriņa* (diminutive). In many folk songs, *Māra* takes care of livestock, especially cows. She can appear in the image of a black or spotted pig. The connection of the Virgin Mary with pre-Christian deities has been found in other European cultures, for example, in Greece (Hålland 2012: 8). In Latvian folk songs, *Māra* helps in giving birth. The cluster of charms is related to the name and functions of Saint Mary as well, for example, the birth-giving charm: "Dear *Māriņa*, Saint *Māriņa*, stay in your place, sleep in your place! Don't stand up, don't move! If you will stand, if you will move – [someone] will come with three to nine ropes... Dear *Māriņa* help to (name) in these days of pregnancy!" (Brīvzemnieks (Treiland) 1881: 115).

Four days are dedicated to the Virgin Mary in both the Catholic calendar, as well as in Latvian annual traditions, which are called *Māra's* days – 25th March (Annunciation of the Virgin Mary), 2nd

July (Visitation of Elizabeth), 15th August (Assumption) and 8th September (Birth of the Virgin Mary). Each of these days is connected with specific work and prohibitions (one is not allowed to spin, weave, or one must not bring anything from the forest to home etc.). In Latvian folklore, Māra has partly assumed the place of a pre-Christian goddess, Laima (Līdeks 1991: 17; Bieza 2006: 220).

### Saint Christopher

In the 15th century, craftsmen's fraternities and their associations – guilds, existed in Rīga. Each of them had some guardian, for example, the Great Guild, which united Rīga's traders, had Saint Mary as their guardian. Whereas the Small Guild, which united Rīga's craftsmen, had John the Baptist, who had his own separate altar created in St. Jacob's Church, as its patron. Each trade also had its own guardian and altar in one of the churches or Monasteries in Rīga – for doctors, the patrons were Cosmas and Damian, the beer carriers' brotherhood – John the Baptist and so on. In the late 15th century, there were about 20 altars in St. Peter's Church and around 30 altars at the Rīga Dom (Grosmane 1998: 46). The dockers' and load bearers' brotherhood also had their patrons, among them – Saint Christopher, whose altar is mentioned in the Dom Church in 1431 (Grosmane 2010: 19), and there was an altar to St Christopher in St Peter's Church as well in 1458 (Adamovičs 1934–1935: 21536–21537).

According to Christian tradition, Christopher was a martyr in 3rd century Rome. Legends tell us that Saint Christopher carried the Christ child across a river, which is also marked by his name (from the Greek *Christoforos* 'Christ bearer') (Voragine 1993: 10–14). In Latvian folklore too, one can find stories about *Kristaps* Christopher, who in local tradition was described as *Rīga's Kristaps* or *Lielais Kristaps* 'Big Christopher':

*Kristaps was a ferryman at the Daugava. He was tall and had a powerful build. He had a small hut by the banks of the Daugava where he lived. When someone had to get from one bank to the other, people called out to him. One night it was very late, and Kristaps heard a child crying on the river bank. Kristaps came out of his hut and asked: "What do you*

*want, little one?” – “I need to get to the other side!” Kristaps did not want to go, but then thought, the child is crying, and transported him over. He took the child and carried him to the boat... (LFK 1985: 843)<sup>1</sup>.*

It's true that a legend tells us that from the mid-16th century already, there was news about a statue of Kristaps in Rīga where the Rīdzene River flows into the Daugava (Grosmāne 2010: 31). Today, a wooden sculpture of Kristaps, which was made in 1682, is still preserved (Grosmāne 2010: 26). It is stored at Riga's Museum of History and Navigation, while a duplicate of the statue has had a place on the banks of the Daugava since 2001. Lielais Kristaps was also the patron of raftsmen, sailors and travellers, and people also turned to him when they were ill: “Rīga's Catholics believed that Lielais Kristaps could perform miracles. If you had a pain in your arm or leg or elsewhere, then they'd tie some ribbon around the sore spot and then around the same spot on Kristaps, so that he'd take it away.” (LFK 1985: 899). As we know, Saint Christopher was also the guardian and protector of the sick in the Middle Ages, and refuges for the sick were named after him. In images from the early 20th century, one can see that Kristaps has various ribbons tied about his arms and legs.

## Conclusion

In part of Latvia – Vidzeme and Kurzeme, which came under the influence of Lutheranism after the Reformation, traditions which were established by the Catholics, including the honouring of saints among them, were attacked, as they did not conform to the new religious concept and were called superstitions and placed on the same level as magic. According to Marcel Mauss, magic is any rite that does not play a part in organised cults: it is private, secret, mysterious, and approaches the limit of a prohibited rite (Mauss 2006: 30).

Nonetheless, various saints are still honoured and many of them have maintained their functions in Latgale, which in later centuries, and even now, has maintained Catholicism. For example, Saint Anthony helps one find lost items, deflects bad weather and ends long drought; one turns to Saint Anne if one is unable to produce children; if one has a toothache, one seeks the assistance of Saint

Apollonia and so forth. In Latgale, which is rich in its vocal music traditions, among them religious song polyphony, church songs helped to maintain the cult of saints. For example, in a song and prayer book published in 1857, one can find more than 20 saints to whom different songs are dedicated (Pilniejga gromata 1857).

The Virgin Mary, having merged with the pre-Christian goddess, Laima and partly taking over her functions, became Māra or Saint Māra in Latvian traditions. Relicts of the cult of Saint Mary can be found in Latvian folk songs, charms and beliefs, as well as in calendar customs. The image of Lielais Kristaps retained its functions in Rīga after the Reformation as well. He has been standing by the gates of Rīga since the mid-16th century and has been accessible and viewable to both the local community, as well as visitors. In this way, the maintenance of his function as a saintly patron has been promoted, and also led to him not being forgotten, which has happened with other saints in Lutheran territories.



*Figure 1. The image of Lielais Kristaps on the banks of the Daugava in 2014. Photo by Aigars Lielbārdis.*

Even though the broader community does not pay attention to it, saints still continue to exist in calendar celebrations and also in the names given to children, creating a connection with the early Christian world of long ago.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Here and herafter LFK – Archive of Latvian Folklore.

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## **The Re-Enchantment of Europe: “Traditional” Carnivals and the Belief in Propitiatory Magic (Two Ethnographic Cases from Italy and Czechia)**

**Abstract.** In this paper I present some of the results of my doctoral and postdoctoral research, focusing on Carnival festivities happening respectively in an Italian village and in a Czech small town.

I describe two examples of ritual “magical” acts: in the Italian case, an act which occurs during a very formalized Carnival pantomime called “Gl’ cierv”; in the Czech case, instead, the “magical” acts are a constituent part of a less structured kind of ceremonies.

I will present the emic reactions and beliefs related to the aforementioned “magical” acts, and the conditions and consequences of their formation.

**Key words:** magic, ritual, carnival, rural, cultural circulation, post-socialism

### **Introduction**

My recent research is embedded in a current of study that considers festivals as windows from which the researcher can peer at social reality and its transformations. More precisely, it concerns so-called “traditional” festivities in Europe and their revival, manipulation, and reconfiguration, which have taken place roughly in the last four decades and have soon acquired a pan-European characterization. It focuses on two main clusters of factors: 1) the relationships and interconnections between these changes and the social and historical processes that have determined them, and 2) the cultural processes of mediatization, ossification, musealization, touristification, politicization and finally commodification that characterize the facts once called folkloric and other kinds of “traditions”.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Cases**

The two cases that I have studied in the last few years match appropriately with the category of phenomena which I have briefly outlined at the beginning of the Introduction.

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The first one is the Carnival of the man-deer in Castelnuovo al Volturno, a small village of the Central Apennines, in Italy. This ceremony is characterized by some very archaic features, amongst which is a ritualized pantomime that dramatizes the hunt for a man disguised as a deer. The pantomime ends with a ritual “magical” act that is supposed to bring fertility to the community.

The second one is the Mastopust (the Czech equivalent of Carnival or Shrovetide) in the region of Hlinsko, in Bohemia, which is characterized by door-to-door processions of masked men who perform dances and other pseudo-ritual actions, also to ensure, as they claim, good luck and fertility.

Both of these festivals are rather old and, like many others in Europe, both went through a period of relative disinterest and abandonment during the sixties and the seventies, only to be reborn afterwards, during the eighties and the nineties, when they were revitalized, and charged with new forms, meanings, and functions. As an ideal end to this process, Masopust in Hlinsko was also included on the UNESCO list of World Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2010, while the organization that today promotes and organizes the Carnival in Castelnuovo has founded a museum about the local zoomorphic mask and similar masks from other parts of Italy and Europe.

Both of these Carnival festivities underwent deep transformations, which have taken place in recent decades. These are particularly evident in the case of Castelnuovo. In fact, the old rite was abandoned in the sixties; then, after having been neglected for more than a decade, it was revitalized in the eighties; when this happened, it had already completely lost its strong social function as a fact that contributed to explaining and maintaining the social order and the cultural codifications of the village, as it was before. Then, having been made something completely different from its original form, function, and meaning, it was reconfigured again during the nineties, when people not only re-enacted it, but also started to claim that, besides being an event performed for fun and to expose the distinctive traits of the locality, it was a true rite, and even, in a rather counter-intuitive way, *the same* rite as before the process of revival.

## Description of the Ceremonies and Critical Observations

At the end of the pantomime which is at the core of the Carnival of Castelnuovo, a peculiar action is performed: right after having been killed and resuscitated, the deer-man leaves the village for good and goes back to the mountains, where he belongs; before disappearing, though, he casts a handful of wheat grains onto the town square in order to ensure “fertility” in the village, as some villagers and a local ethnographer claim.

I have tried to find out the origins and the motivations of said belief, and also to understand its broader cultural and religious implications. What I have discovered is quite surprising. I will now report my findings by numbering and articulating them in a few observations.

The first observation concerns the belief itself in relation to the religiosity of the people in the social context where it developed. Despite Castelnuovo being a somewhat typical small village in southern-central Italy, and therefore solidly Catholic since its very foundation in the Early Middle Ages, the presence of such beliefs which would normally clash with the usual Catholic doctrinal framework is well established and can also be easily documented. It is true, though, that not all of the people in Castelnuovo share this belief in the propitiatory magic emanating from the pantomime<sup>2</sup>. Nor does everybody conceptualize its force in terms of fertility or even magic. Nevertheless, the credence is diffused, and seems to transcend the borders of the village, as we are about to see.

The second observation concerns the very function of the magical act. In order to better understand this aspect, I will now quote a few words from my ethnographic field notes: a woman from the village openly and publicly claimed that (I quote) “When the deer-man launches that handful of grain as a propitiatory act, we do believe in what he does. And not only us: I know farmers from Cerro, Colli and even Castello [these are all nearby villages] who come expressly to gather a few of those grains in order to propitiate the harvest”. Please note that I have quoted the exact words, trying to translate them as accurately as possible from Italian. Now, since the fifties the territory of Castelnuovo al Volturno and its surroundings have been going through a process of radical and irreversible de-

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ruralization: the agricultural activities, once primary in the whole region, have been neglected due to factors such as emigration, the industrialization of the near urban setting of Isernia, and the more general and typical post-industrial growth of the tertiary sector at the expense of the primary and secondary ones. So, it is interesting to notice that, despite the fact that the importance of agriculture in the local economy is nowadays utterly marginal, the belief in magic for the fertility of fields and animals seems to persist, or rather to have been successfully reinvented. This obviously collides with the functionalist explanation of the magical act, since there is little to be propitiated through an invocation of fertility. There are several interpretations that can be proposed to explain this apparently contradictory credence, but I will not mention them here for the sake of brevity – the reader longing to know about them will consult either my book (in Italian) or one of my forthcoming articles (in English), all cited in the bibliography at the end of this chapter.

The third observation concerns the ritual effectiveness which is observable in the symbolic mechanism at the basis of the pseudo-ritual act performed by the deer-man. It is in fact the mask and the mask only who can cast the grain and by so doing bring an end to the pantomime. It is he and he only who can ensure and transmit to the wheat grains their propitiatory force. The seeds are impregnated with such a power, which makes them magical tools for people who believe in their usefulness. This effectiveness that results from this post-modern emic belief in propitiatory magic is itself a very interesting phenomenon.

The fourth observation is probably the most surprising: the final magical act of tossing a handful of seeds, which by means of this very act become themselves magical amulets, was invented by a local amateur ethnographer in great spite of the tradition, during the process of revitalization and re-configuration of the pantomime, and more precisely in the year 1992. Subsequently, it was added to the pantomime and was firstly performed in 1993. This is documented and I have personally reconstructed and published the whole story by using the documents kept by the organization that currently organizes the Carnival. The belief in the magical act and its propitiatory force, as well as the magical act itself cannot be considered older than 20 years.

In the Czech Masopust mumming, on the other hand, the propitiatory acts are documented by the very first sources, which date back to around 100 years ago.

Associated with the fertility, in this case, are only secondarily the fields or animals: the first object of the propitiatory magic – which nevertheless is not emically conceptualized as magic – seems to be the married women of the local communities. Various actions that can be called magical are performed by certain masked figures during the door-to-door processions. The most common of such actions are a) feebly beating the women with phallic sticks, b) miming a sexual intercourse with them, and, c) sometimes, make a woman fall down to the ground and roll in the snow or in the dirt with her (an act not necessarily performed – but tolerated – by her husband). This aspect results from an interpretation of the data, since most of the informants prefer to indicate and highlight the general propitiatory function related to the most “popular” explanation: that related to the necessity of propitiation for the change of season, without any mention of a specific propitiation of women’s fertility. This treatment of the local women is part of a broader ritual and behavioural pattern that includes the celebrations and the social perception of the Carnival period itself.

Another pseudo-magical conviction quite diffused in the Czech Masopust is the credence in the masks bringing “good luck”, for which they usually receive, in return, an offer of food expressly prepared for the occasion, shots of the local liqueur *slivovice*, and/or small sums of money. When asked about the range of this “good luck”, people usually refer to a rather diverse set of things, like health, sex, business, family, work, and others. Obviously, like in Castelnuovo, not everybody shares these beliefs, and usually, just like in the Italian case, the more learned an individual is the less likely he or she is to believe in or even follow and participate in the ceremonies, preferring to consider them a cultural relic and a manifestation of backwardness.

It is interesting, at this point, to notice that not only the form and structure of these acts have been kept and transmitted in a rather strict manner: their very magical dimension has been transformed too into cultural heritage. In fact, in the official document of the nomination of the Masopust of Hlinsko we read that “the actions

of the masks are associated with magically securing fertility". The use of the present tense is very significant, because it denotes and suggests that the practice has undergone no change and is still associated with the same "fertility" as in the past. The *emic* belief in the magical effectiveness of the ceremonies, being part of the living tradition, has become cultural heritage itself, and it could not be otherwise: one of the criteria for the acceptance of a tradition by UNESCO, is that it be as unchanged as possible and still significant for the tradition-holders.

The Czech case lends itself to observations similar to those I have already made about the Italian one. As for the broader religious context, the majority of the population, according to the statistics, declare itself atheist (nearly the entire Czech society *seems* to be highly secularized), with a minority of people considering themselves Christians (Protestants or Catholics). Nevertheless, the belief in the propitiatory magic of the Masopust subsists (or persists), even though many people are not always able to or do not want to conceptualize it openly, and prefer, when openly questioned, to leave it undefined and to shrug.

Like in Castelnuovo, the traditional agricultural activities that had characterized this territory for centuries have been mainly abandoned, especially due to the modernization and industrialization processes promoted by the communist regime. After its collapse, though, the region has been undergoing a process of de-industrialization due to the closure or the relocation of many productive activities. Hlinsko and its surroundings are suffering under the pressure of social insecurity, unemployment and other material problems determined by harmful and synergic factors like de-industrialization, the demise of agricultural activities, the consequent decrease of commerce, and therefore the general impoverishment and depopulation of the town.

One of my research suggestions, still to be fully developed, is actually that the recent rise in the interest in the Masopust, and its patrimonialization, as well as the very belief in the effectiveness of the Carnival magic, could be linked to the degradation of the material conditions which occurred during the post-socialist transition and the social stress which these people have been suffering ever since.

In short, in spite of the geographical distance and the different political history, Castelnuovo and Hlinsko share many social and economic similarities.

### **Conclusive Remarks: Pre-Modern, Modern, Post-Modern, and Anti-Modern**

Processes like secularization, re-enchantment, industrialization and de-industrialization, ruralization and de-ruralization, and many others, are unevenly happening or not happening in Europe today, up to the point that, rightly, many scholars in the fields of ethnology, anthropology, sociology, and history have long challenged the idea of a linear process of modernization, with its clusters of side-processes and factors. Modernization's unevenness (both in space and time), and its consequences – which manifest themselves mainly with the evident disproportions and gaps that exist in and between many European areas – can be considered one of the aspects of an apparently paradoxical, but nonetheless indubitable, *post-modern* condition.

Refunctionalization, mediatization, bureaucratization, and commodification of rural traditions are some amongst the most manifest socio-cultural transformations that characterize post-modern Europe. This is particularly evident in the case of festive and ritual facts, those which, once considered the expression of pre-modern or “backward” lifestyles – and usually categorized as “folkloric” –, have often, in the last few decades, been manipulated and reconfigured for expressing different concerns, claims, and expectations, and in order to openly challenge, sanction, or fortify existing political orders or other aspects of social reality. Sometimes, as it has recently been claimed, they have even constituted the means for different and alternative declensions – or refusals – of “modernity”.

The belief in propitiatory magic which I have presented here seems to be part of this set of transformations. It could be thought of as anti-modern in the sense that it represents an attempt to withdraw to a secure land of identity, authenticity, and communitarianism in contrast to the disrupting factors of modernization brought by liberal and/or communist modernization; a cultural response to a situation of social stress constructed using symbolic tools drawn

from imaginaries of tradition, ritualism, archaism, and romantic primitiveness.

I consider the belief in propitiatory magic a side or sub product of post-modern factors (or itself a post-modern factor) just like the de-industrialization of previously industrialized contexts, or the demise of agricultural and traditional activities in contexts that had previously been characterized by the presence of such activities. In the cases presented in this contribution, these are both very representative phenomena, because in Castelnuovo de-ruralization has recently happened for the first time in 1000 years, and de-industrialization in Hlinsko is happening for the first time in its history as well, because before the fifties the secondary sector was underdeveloped in the area.

The re-enchantment happening in certain European settings seems to be founded on very urgent existential needs and cultural motivations. In our cases, this re-enchantment goes under the form of the persistence of the belief in magic (in Czechia), as well as the creation of a completely new type of ritual magic (in Italy). It can be considered, together with interconnected processes such as the creation of cultural heritage, the revival or invention of rural traditions, and the construction of primitivistic imaginaries, as a cultural response to a generalized (and often completely new or unexpected) situation of social stress determined by factors such as economic impoverishment, social insecurity, depopulation, and cultural dispossession; all factors that contradict the neoliberal discourse of assured development, never-ending growth, and abundant happiness which is nowadays hegemonic in the European Union.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The present paper is based mainly on the outcomes of my doctoral and postdoctoral research and related materials. Some of them have been published; others are in the process of being written or published. They are:

- The book which accounts for my doctoral research (Testa 2014a);
- A recent article about methods and theories in the study of festivals and public rituals (Testa 2014b);
- A recent chapter about some specific aspects of my Italian ethnographic fieldwork, aspects strictly related to those presented in this paper (Testa 2014c);
- The ethnographic materials from my Czech research: my own notes and records from the fieldwork, a book (Blahůšek, Vojancová 2011), and an article in preparation (Testa forthcoming-a);
- A final article, also still in the process of being finalized, which, like the present paper, deals with both my Italian doctoral and Czech postdoctoral research (Testa forthcoming-b).

Abundant – and, in relation to some topics, exhaustive – bibliographical references are provided in the entirety of the above-mentioned studies.

<sup>2</sup> I use the word “propitiate” (Italian: *propiziare*, Latin: *propitiare*) and its derivative “propitiatory” as the locals in Italy do. In Italian as well as in English it is possible to say “to propitiate fecundity (or fertility, or the harvest)”, in the sense of making “something” – whether thing or god or man – propitious or favorable, although the most common connotation is that of appeasing the god(s).

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— Forthcoming-b. Fertility' and the Carnival: Symbolic Effectiveness, Emic Beliefs and Popular Frazerism in Europe.

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## Good Friday Processions on Contemporary Malta

**Abstract.** This paper looks into the transformative ritual in Good Friday processions in contemporary Malta with reference to people, time, and boundaries in space that are liminal. The procession creates the physical space of a theatre of cruelty the groups of statuary and the participants occupy to embody what they represent. However, at one time, the transition from Roman history to Maltese culture was made and thus the continuity and change can be seen in the space between power and submission in parts of the pageant, between some figures and others, in the costumes at times far removed from historical reality, while all this might be serving a wider political undercurrent. Moreover, the multitude of overpowering Roman figures in some processions might risk turning the story of Christ into a meta-narrative.

A ritual of surplus value, inspired by religious belief mingled with supernatural powers, Malta's Good Friday processions are good examples of drama, cultural performance and a response to society's needs through ritual involving humanly meaningful action. Vows have to be kept and prayers for graces said. For some faithful, sharing the suffering of Christ, overpowered by emotion, therefore helps them avoid their own suffering later on through graces granted by invisible energies, divine powers and other phenomena that are meant to be in concordance with a reality independent from worldly contingencies and man-made arrangements based on secular knowledge.

**Key words:** cultural mobility, theatre of cruelty, acculturation, meta-narrative, translation, liminality, "the other"

A unified and unifying performance is seen in the celebration of Good Friday processions in Malta and Gozo, a calendar based, high ceremonial point in religious practice with which the involved large groups, a whole society or even the whole nation identify immediately and directly, to quote Victor Turner, in "the passage from scarcity to plenty" (Turner 1969: 168–169).

Besides the function of a renewal of belief in Christian values, giving them meaning, recreating feelings, revitalizing social bonds and holding Maltese society together, whatever the political and social

background may be, this annual encounter with a manifestation of Maltese culture passes on cultural values to successive generations, individually and collectively, restoring order to life over the natural and social chaos (Turner 1969: 96–97, 102ff). In it there is no space for *festa partiti* or political party antagonism because the feeling of *communitas* helps the individual pilgrim amidst his companion pilgrims to temporarily transcend the hierarchical social roles that usually divide them in their everyday lives, in their social structure (Turner 1974: 305–327).

### Cultural mobility

Since the early Christians' frescoes in catacombs, the Passion of Christ has been among the most culturally mobile forms of art – from the Bible to architecture, art, sculpture, plastic art forms in clay and *papier mache*, crafted jewellery in gold and silver, illuminated books, sacred music, theatre, street pageants, indoor Passion plays involving the performing arts (Mifsud Chircop 2007: 4–20), literature, children's books, cinema, photography, old postcards and DVDs of Good Friday processions including Roman characters and Jews translated into it, all artifacts of cultural and social memory. The five-century-old annual processions held late in March or early in April, incorporate some of these art forms, but primarily it is paintings of the Stations of the Way of the Cross which have evolved into life size static and dramatic statuary groups, themselves performers.

The Good Friday procession originating in Rabat, Malta (c.1590), spread to Valletta (1645), the Three Cities (c.1700–c.1714) another six parishes (c.1742–c.1820) and to Rabat, Gozo (c.1830) followed by the remaining seven localities (1866–1968). The procession originally consisted of a few wooden or *papier mache* statuary groups, some dressed in expensive costumes (Cassar Pullicino 1956: 4–24). The artistic mostly locally made or sometimes imported statuary groups were mainly used, subsequent to the Council of Trent, to avoid having actors in the procession.

Without excluding Good Friday processions in other localities which I have watched repeatedly, I shall here be referring mostly to the Mosta procession, my home town's. I also conducted interviews with organizers, participants, clergy, devotees and spectators.

The Mosta procession started in 1866 with just two statues which came out of the old church by Tumas Dingli, soon to be replaced by the present Rotunda by Grognet. This parish was to become the proud owner of the only complete set of seven statuary groups by renowned sculptor and statuarian Karlu Darmanin (1825–1909), *Karlozzu* of Senglea (Mangion, Magro 2010: 42–44) showing continuity in the iconology. The first statuarian in Malta was Saverio Laferla (d. 1761). Besides Darmanin's, statuary by Antonio Mifsud "In-Najči" of Mosta, Pietro Paolo Azzopardi, Wistin Camilleri, Xandru Farrugia, Abram Gatt, Salvu Dimech (Cassar Pullicino 1956: 7, 15), Mariano Gerada, Glormu Dingli and Alfred Camilleri Cauchi (Gauci 2003: 122–165), to be found in other localities, are among the best.

### Composition

Early in the evening, the church-organised procession rolls out of the parish church in silence, high on the visual theatrical element of suffering, flags flying at half mast, clappers used instead of bells. The "... *communitas* of suffering ... incites compassion ..." (Turner 1974: 319) of a public already exposed to funeral music on local radio stations. So deep was the general mourning that till the sixties black suit and tie were *de rigueur* for male spectators. It winds its way along the town or village core for over four hours and returns at night, when the exhaustion all around is palpable as the participants would have shared in some of the suffering of Christ, the object of their veneration. The Mosta procession route, somewhat similar to Christ's route in Palestine, extends from one large stone statue (St Mary) to another (St Joseph) at either end of this village.

This evolving *mise-en-scene* is especially exemplified in localities like Qormi, where, in a spirit of innovative rephrasing and of continuity, statuary groups reflecting stations of the Way of the Cross as yet not reproduced in plastic art form were added, the eight basic ones being The Agony in the Garden/*Tal-Ort*, The Betrayal/*Guda*, The Scourging at the Pillar/*Il-Marbut*, Christ crowned with Thorns/*L-Àċċjomu*/*Tal-Porpra*, The Redeemer/Christ falling under the Cross/*Ir-Redentur*/*L-Imghobbi*, the Veronica/*Il-Veronika*/*Il-Veronka*/*Il-Vronika*, The Crucifixion/*Il-Vara l-Kbira*, the Dead Christ/*Il-Monument* and Our Lady of Sorrows/*Id-Duluri*.

Processions in twenty localities (including Mgarr, Malta, in spite of opposition from parish priest and Curia), modelled on those in neighbouring Sicily and in Spain, are called *misteri* as in those countries. Each statuary group is preceded by a confraternity (Borg 1986: 9; Bonnici 1998: 113) and a large number of hooded penitents, carrying crosses, many of whom drag heavy chains tied to their ankles by a piece of cloth or leather (Borg 1986: 20, 42), implying a cathartic function, fulfilment of a vow or a physical test and the spectacular aspect of it. The hooded chain draggers stop to nurse their sore and bleeding feet and, to keep their anonymity, never remove their chafing hoods, in their own words, “an experience of interior satisfaction”. However, in the times of the Order of St John, these hooded penitents were Muslim slaves, converted or not, prisoners and galley rowers – *battuti* or *buonavoglia* (Cassar Pullicino 1956: 11). Thus there has been a mutation into penitents dragging chains. Similarly to present day *battenti* in Verbicaro, Nocera Terinese and Guardia Sanframondi in Calabria (Muraca 2006: 420–425), flagellants, a Spanish influence, still existed under French rule in Malta. Under British rule prisoners’ participation was stopped. Part of this theatre of cruelty are the barefooted women at times following *Il-Vara l-Kbira* (The Crucifixion group). Occasionally some women walk up the church steps on their knees at the end of the procession, an act of humbling themselves and asking for graces, as in the case I witnessed of a mother of a terminally ill youth.

The statuary groups are carried shoulder-high on three to five poles at the front and at the back, depending on the weight, by six, eight or ten *fratelli*, bearers/*reffiegha* (in reality showing their performative competence) wearing a white pleated full-length smock held at the waist, white gloves and black tie (Borg 1986: 13; Riolo 2014), except for the dead Christ lying on a gilded Baroque canopied bed which in most processions is moved forward on wheels by men hidden under it.

Later on, besides altar boys and clergy, there featured males dressed in biblical costume (first introduced in Rabat after 1850, taken up by Qormi and other villages early in the twentieth century and in 1970 by Mosta as well, but here the characters are taken from New Testament only. Children in biblical costume carrying platters with Passion symbols from stock motifs attached to Christ’s passion (chal-

ice, hammer, glove, crown of thorns, ropes, nails, rooster, chains, tunic, column, lance, ladder, sponge, etc.) were also introduced. Women have been participating since the 1980s, except in Mosta.

Although the public still joins the procession devoutly as in the past, “suffering and praying together” (Turner 1969:106–107), since the sixties, from a devotional, votive and penitential manifestation, the procession in some localities has, in some Maltese people’s view, degenerated into a spectacular 850-strong, crowd-pulling commercialised pageant flaunting at times unrealistic or over-the-top costumes in garish colours (Bonnici 1998: 32–33), even with Pharaoh (Boissevain 1996: 106), degrading traditional culture. Scores of Roman centurions take part, some on horseback or even in chariots (Greenblatt 2010: 15) in Żebbuġ (Bonnici 1998: 32–33). This acculturation creates a meta-narrative. Each parish has its own policies which at times participants defy (Times of Malta 2014). Influencing factors for such developments have been Hollywood films including their music scores, locals’ foreign travels and a higher standard of living (a replica of Roman armour and accessories costs the participant over 2,700 euro. One shop in Merchants Street, Valletta, the capital city, supplies the required leather goods). A Qormi procession past organizer, Fr Gerard Frendo, has acknowledged the influence of the Oberammergau Passion experience in Germany on the Qormi procession (Grima 2003: 76; 2006: 96).

### **Social and Demographic changes**

The various towns and villages in Malta and Gozo still vie with each other to produce better, more organised pageants every year, amid currents and undercurrents in their organisation (Mifsud Chircop 2003: 49). In spite of changing patterns of spectators and a decline in some areas, the processions have survived and are now picking up again. Due to the smallness of the two islands and the availability of private transport, crowds shift quickly, as some families or groups tend to watch more than one procession in one evening and not all locals watch their own procession year in year out. Therefore only a rough calculation from certain vantage points can be made. Tourists watching the procession can be easily picked out from the locals as seats are provided for them. For example 800

seats in groups of 200 are provided outside the church for tourists to watch the Mosta procession (Riolo 2014).

Further to Jeremy Boissevain's observations on social reasons for developments and increase in participants (Boissevain 1984: 163; 1991: 92, 94–97), there has been a shift in crowds over the years since emigration in the fifties and sixties, political conflicts, new patterns in the life of communities and consequent changes such as 1. the increase in housing estates, since the procession might not appeal to newcomers to a locality as to a local, especially if the new settlers come from a locality which has no procession; 2. the three major local television stations having for decades directly transmitted one procession or another for viewers who are unable to attend or who avoid crowds; 3. easily obtainable recent DVDs and videos of past processions and so in a lifetime one would have seen many changes in the production of every procession; 4. in the last thirty years, the phenomenon of the younger generation which has taken to spending the Good Friday weekend in Gozo or in other countries, not necessarily to follow the processions there; and 5. similar processions in Sicily and Seville, Spain attracting more and more Maltese visitors.

### **Transformative ritual**

Ritual in Malta is inspired by religious belief mingled with positive supernatural powers. Besides being a response to society's needs, the Good Friday procession ritual involves humanly meaningful action. On an individual level, people participating actively in the processions and passive onlookers also find "surplus value" over and above other secular forms of thought, through invisible energies, divine power beyond this world, such as in graces granted (Mifsud Chircop 2004) even though the transformation might not be physical but interior. In spite of secularization, some Maltese are so attached to this ritual that they find it difficult to come to terms with having missed out on a Good Friday procession without a valid reason, even if they are not enthusiastic about religion for the rest of the year. There are several accounts of this calendarising of expiation for one's sins, such participation involving individual and collective memory: family members who accompany participants on the sides, statue bearers of the heaviest statuary who say they like to suffer

that little bit more, who like to listen to funeral band marches or to play a musical instrument with the band which precedes *Il-Vara l-Kbira* and others such as Aaron Caruana's of Valletta (Calleja 2014: 7) from a family of tradition bearers.

Transformative ritual in our secular age with reference to people, time and boundaries that are liminal, is seen in the anonymity and detachment of the hooded penitents, liminaries (Turner 1969: 143), between one statue and another, dragging chains or not. The artistic statuary which almost never changes is complemented by the ever growing number of participants in the procession, consciously or not, temporarily transformed into the character of the image they represent.

In this context, the present Mosta procession procurator of long standing, Mario Riolo, speaks of a tourist who while watching the Mosta procession underwent an interior transformation by converting to Catholicism as this tourist's letter to Fr Joe Carabott (Carabott 2014), the parish priest at the time, states (Riolo 2014). In a very short period of liminality inside a church niche in the presence of the statue of a crucified Christ reputed to be miraculous (Aquilina 1986), anthropologist Jon Mitchell recounts a momentary experience he tries to explain (Mitchell 1997: 82).

### **Echoes of a British colony**

While keeping in mind that Roman soldiers had been translated (Greenblatt 2010: 7–14) as a supporting subject in the statuary to a small extent before the sixties (Gauci 2003: 94, 141) – the years of Independence – the participation of live figures, such as the Roman soldier Longinus in the Qormi procession, dates back to the pre-twenties (Bonnici 1998: 144; Kittieba 1992: 119, 130) – significant years for the Maltese language and in Maltese politics while Malta was still a British colony.

The ubiquitous Roman soldiers and centurions (Borg 1986: 16, 22, 36; Mifsud Chircop 2007: 17; Schembri 1969: 17, 18, 20, 21, 28), contingents of cavalry and infantry, present a further discourse. This is the symbolic significance of the power of faith over the vanquished might of “the other”, Rome paralleled by the British Empire or other colonizers (Roman soldiers also feature in the Philippines’

Good Friday), a way of overcoming the malaise of the colonized by a show of power. This show of power was also evident in the large placard with “British Go Home” on it, for long hanging from the front of the balcony of the Labour Party Club in the Mosta Square right in front of the Parish Church in the fifties or early sixties, part of the collective memory. Was this belated use of Roman figures in a religious pageant a subversive mode of resistance, too little too late, in the sixties, or, to borrow Prof. Mark Anthony Falzon’s comment (University of Malta 2014), a “testimony to the resilience of the Maltese spirit and a slap in the face of all foreigners who dare question it” in the seventies and later? Or did the Roman soldiers’ symbolic presence in the procession have a new significance, serving as a warning to the Maltese to safeguard their newly acquired independence? The Roman figures’ function seems also to be didactic in that the Roman Empire – agents of which had made Christians suffer – fell, as all empires do, whereas Christianity became one of the three great religions which have sprung from the Mediterranean and which has not only survived but spread all over the globe.

Paradoxically, preceding the statue of Christ carrying the Cross, members of the Boy Scouts, a symbol of the British Empire if ever there was one, though ambivalent (Bhabha 2004: 145ff, 311; Kennedy 2000: 135–137; Mitchell 2002: 1–33) being part of the Maltese scene, have for decades played the bugles in front of the *Redentur*, while fifes and drums play in front of the first statue (Kittieba 1992: 123; Borg 1986: 41), rather than say local folk musicians as in the past, though there have been some revivals of the latter. In some processions Girl Guides (Borg 1986:8) also participate, beating drums.

## Conclusion

The days leading to Good Friday are an organized experience supposedly leading to the climax of the Risen Christ according to Vatican Council reforms, but instead, leading to the climax of the Crucifixion according to popular Maltese Catholicism. Actual experiential sharing in Good Friday processions in pre-Vatican Council rituals predominate over the Easter Sunday Ritual. It is not the Risen Christ which takes centre stage, but the Crucified Christ.

In its group consciousness Good Friday is closer to the people's emotions than any other feast (except perhaps those of a few patron saints of towns or villages) as, conscious of their own problems, participants and onlookers identify with the suffering Christ. The Maltese brand of popular Roman Catholicism shows that the tastes of the public, of active and passive participants alike, have to be catered for.

In most processions the Crucifixion is the seventh statuary group – or the eighth in the longer processions – *Il-Vara l-Kbira* (the large statuary group). Even though larger statuary groups have been made since, the title of *Il-Vara l-Kbira* has not changed because it is its significance of climax which counts. After the predominating finale of *Il-Vara l-Kbira*, in an anti-climax there follow, *Il-Monument/the Dead Christ* and *Id-Duluri/Our Lady of Sorrows*. In a subconscious reaction, active participants in the procession and the praying faithful following the last statuary group hurry on visibly and one can already see small crowds preparing to move away. Many a time, since childhood, have I heard spectators utter *lestā /* it's over – referring to the procession – as soon as *Il-Vara l-Kbira* and *Il-Monument* roll by, without these statues having yet returned to the parish church, *Id-Duluri* now following in a near-deserted street, as people turn away.

In the sixties of the last century, lawyer/editor/journalist Herbert Ganado (Ganado 1984: 269) summed this emotive force and expectation through his experience of just one musical instrument, the bugle – in front of the *Redentur* statuary which would stop at crossroads in Valletta – thus: *Għal għarrieda dik it-trumbetta, b'dawk in-noti li, ta' kull sena tismagħhom, preciżi bħas-sena ta' qabel, bħal tqanqlek u ssammrek.* (Taken unawares, that bugle emitting precisely the same characteristic notes as the previous year and every year, pulls at the emotions and keeps you rooted to the spot.) And so to this day.

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## **Doing Things Rightways and Three Times. From Maying Practices to Standard Procedures**

**Abstract.** There are terms in many languages for turning right and this action is sometimes carried out three times in ritual procedures. This is a vast subject embedded in the broader context of acting rightly, in conceptions about handedness and laterality, as well as in notions concerning the efficacy of certain numbers. Such practices are attested in connection with May Day and maying in the British Isles, as well as in procedures of many sorts carried out at other times.

**Key words:** rightways, three, ritual techniques, May Day, maying, British Isles

There is not much reason to qualify customs involving turning right three times in May Day and maying customs, especially in the British Isles, as magical, since their reporters rarely use the term, nor do the two actions fit too well into a classic definition and etymology for ‘magic’ (Webster’s 1966: II 1358; Chantraine 1974: III 656). Hence, it is more prudent to use the term ‘ritual’, in the sense of actions undertaken to assure the proper ordering of things (Benveniste 1969: 100–101). It is equally fruitful to dovetail the term ‘action’ with that of ‘technique’, as defined by Marcel Mauss: traditional effective action, implying lateral and vertical transmission and that the objective is deemed to be attainable (1950: 371–372). Just what the objective might be is occasionally explained in the definitions provided for turning right and descriptions of how to do it.

There are often terms or expressions for turning right: rightways, clockwise, and sunways/sunwise, *dans le bon sens* in French, *destl*, an obsolete term in Welsh (Evans and Thomas 1976: 168) and *deiseal* in Irish and Scottish Gaelics, an especially rich term with an explicit opposite for turning left, *tuathal* (Dwelly 1994: 328; Vendryes 1996: D61–62; 1974: 77–78; 1978: 165). Thomas Pennant in his *Tour in Scotland* provides a definition: “turning from east to west, according to the course of the sun” and cites it for May Day bonfires in

Uist where “cattle are driven round it sunwards (*dessil*), to keep off murrain all the year” (1769: 369; iii.136 citing Shaw). Martin Martin provides a definition outside maying, speaking of the Skye Loch-fiant well pilgrimage, where “they make the ordinary tour about it, called *Dessil*, which is performed thus: they move thrice round the well, proceeding sun-ways from east to west, and so on”. He also notes that “some of the poorer sort of people in these islands retain the custom of performing these rounds sun-ways about the persons of their benefactors three times, when they bless them,” and he had this kindness paid to him personally by a lady in Ila (1716: 619; 612–613; 580–581). This definition provides us with a first statement of an objective: to bless a benefactor, and this was the case more generally, to wish well, as when someone sneezes or swallows awry (Dinneen 1927: 327).

Among the many Scottish fire customs specifically associated with the May Day cluster, there is mention of walking around a May Day fire three times sunwise, as cited for Murray (Frazer 1913: 153–154 citing Shaw). The whole opening-of-summer was a logical time to check out the signs of the season, as in a 1597 account, again from Scotland, noting a woman was “indicted for ‘passing to the greyne growing corne in May’ because she sat before sunrise peeling the bledis of the corn and, finding the ‘bled of the corne’ growing withersones; ‘and quhan it grows sonegatis about (clockwise), it wil be an gude chaip year...’ whereas growing withersones it will be a ‘deir’ year” (BCC:S 1939: 205). In County Kilkenny, Ireland, a circuit of fields was carried out on May Eve just after sunset, when farmers with their households walked around the boundaries of their lands carrying tools, seed, the flower of the well and, if possible, vervain, and “the procession always halted at the most convenient stations facing the four cardinal points, beginning at the east” (Arensberg 1937: 216).

This recalls Eric Hamp’s proposals regarding Indo-European conceptions of ‘rightness’ in many procedures, as proceeding firstly from facing the rising sun, when one’s right hand is thus to the south, then facing south as a more deeply conceptual orientation, making the south side of any dwelling, assembly and so on, the most prestigious and powerful (1974: 254). This latter point is certainly evoked in a Donegal May Day morning cure for an infant with hernia

that involved splitting a living willow branch with the thumbnail (not a knife) and then passing the child through it, facing the sun, three times, so that the defect would heal as the wood grew back together (Hunt 1932: 332), and both rightways and three times (or multiples) are rife in prophylactic, protective and cure procedures (Griffin-Kremer 1999: 332–382).

Leaving May Day or maying custom aside, utilisation of turning right and threes opens the door onto a mountain of references from all over the British Isles, mainly from the eighteenth and nineteenth century, though some of the customs involved were carried on into the twentieth. We do many things ourselves by turning right or three times, as Alan Dundes recalls for “third time’s the charm” or “three strikes and you’re out” (1980: 134–159). Much rightways action may well be attributable to what physiologists term the turn tendency, right-handers tending to turn right and turn things right, left-handers to the left, which leads to design principles of supermarket entrances or to tools constructed purposely for the left-handed (Coren 1992: 240–249). Needless to say, this field of turning, handedness and laterality has a vast literature of its own that has enthused biologists, primatologists, anthropologists, and psychologists (Griffin-Kremer 1997: 86).

There is an astounding number of references to doing things *deiseal*, as well as to *deiseal* + 3 times or multiples thereof, beginning with the early mention by Poseidonius of Apameus that the Gauls saluted their gods by turning left to right (O’Rahilly 1984: 296n3 citing Athenaeus 4,36) and continuing on to various measures to protect and carry out work rightly, such as cutting the first ear of harvest corn left to right (Carmichael 1928: I 250–251) or flailing the sheaves in the Shetlands, where the leader began and the others followed “clockwise” (Fenton 1978: 364–365). Straw was plaited left to right into Saint Brigit’s crosses to protect the byre (Evans 1957: 268–269; O’Sullivan 1973: 74–77), as it was essential to turn around a young mother and newborn to protect them from being taken by the good folk (Martin 1716: 612). One ought to turn rightways to bring good luck before an important rendez-vous (Campbell 1890: 229) and around a house at new year’s to wish all in it well (Carmichael 1928: II 226–227) or circumambulate fields and cattle in the Highlands to protect them (BCC:S 1939: 229). Walking around

the Saint John's fire rightways three times brought a year without illness or disease, just as carrying a burning sod around the house from the same fire protected the dwelling (Evans 1957: 275). One should finish a pilgrimage to a holy well by turning round it *deiseal* (O Duileargae 1981: 327), as fishermen of Lewis gave thanks upon coming ashore by taking off their caps and turning as did the sun (Martin 1716: 579–581). The deceased in a coffin was carried rightways around the grave or a holy place along the way in both Scotland and Ireland (Campbell 1975: 229; Arensberg 1937: 216).

Scottish herders would search for the new moon by turning left to right and then immediately tell their cows (Carmichael 1940: 278–279) and a cowmaid would send her cow back home safe by turning her fetter around *deiseal* (Campbell 1975: 229). In homely tasks, holiday cakes were kneaded by making a hole in the middle and turning the thumb sunways to counteract all witchcraft (Carmichael 1928: II 226–227) and most work associated with the food supply, such as ploughing, casting a net or taking a pot off the fire should follow the way the sun turned (Evans 1957: 66–67), just as the farm gates “should swing ‘with the sun’ for luck” (Evans 1967: 200). In parts of Scandinavia and Scotland, land was allotted as the sun turned, according to *solskifte* (Dodgshon 1975). As a concrete consequence of turning, it might even be possible that ploughing *deiseal* affected field profiles and foreshadowed systematic drainage techniques (Griffin-Kremer 1997: 85–93).

There are so many examples of practices employing three and threes that it makes the head spin, an array matching that of rightways: cows were struck on the back three times with a quicken rod on the first of May (O'Cléirigh 1928: 247); cakes were rolled downhill three times for May Day in Corgarff (Gregor 1895: 4); water was lifted three times out of St. Ultan's Well near Culdaff, Co. Leitrim, to throw against the waterfall (O Muirgheasa 1936: 161); a Launceston cure for goiter prescribed visiting the most recent grave of a person of the opposite sex, passing the hand three times from head to foot of the grave and applying the dew gathered to the part affected (BCC:E 1938: 206).

Once one begins hunting, there is no end of rightways and threes, so that they belong in any self-respecting reading grid for popular custom today, where these spatial or temporal actions might

be significant – just as they may be incidental. If the mayor in a contemporary maying festival escorts a girl around clockwise on a dais, it would be overzealous to over-interpret. After all, you can only do that two ways. Pointing out a rightways procedure in an event of great historical depth may be quite pertinent, as in the Breton *troménies*, where there is an equal density of other ritual techniques, a wealth of explicit association with revered figures, and the added value of one or more festal narratives.

More prosaically, we might note that three-legged objects, such as stools, are a byword for stability, as well. It is also worth recalling child's play, in which right-handed children tend to turn *deiseal* around a pole until they make themselves dizzy, dizziness being among the first self-produced states impressively outside the ordinary, a form of fun that children enjoy sharing with their playmates. Nor should the link bridging play and cognitive development to ritual behaviour be overlooked, as exploratory, rhythmic early body movement often involves rotational activity that, like all the rest, 'sculpts' the brain (NIFP). Children transmit play and games, as their elders do festive events, harking back to Mauss' 'traditional' as lateral and vertical transmission. The 'effective' part is another matter, and it is at this point we may see the end of tradition. Martin Martin was quite aware he was describing *deiseal* as a practice that was falling into abeyance, noting often that it was no longer observed but by the very old (1716: 612–613).

There is a later commentary, speaking of the late nineteenth-century pilgrimages to springs in Scotland, that points out this end of tradition: "when the pilgrims regard the practice as a magical rite, they usually prefer to keep the rest of the world in the dark as to their doings", although "there is a consciousness that it has not been gone about as an empty, meaningless ceremony" (Mackinley 1893: 278–279). This leads us back to the notion of effectiveness, which would surely not be thought to result from a 'meaningless' ceremony.

We might recall how Georges Dumézil regarded festival threeness – as an intensification technique (1975: 54). Turning rightways and/or doing things in threes may be done on a large, 3-day festival scale, but they can also be micro-gestures in everyday life that have a soothing effect on the psyche, as does saying a rosary or reciting a yoga mantra (Bernardi *et al.* 2001). On newly urbanised May Day

festivities in seventeenth to eighteenth-century London, Charles Phythian-Adams remarks that they “prompt two observations about transmission and development in collective popular culture by this period... however innovative such developments may have been, in the last resort, each of them drew eventually from an established but essentially limited vocabulary of ritual conventions” (1983: 101). His ‘collective’ and ‘conventions’ dovetail with the implicit ‘sociability’ of many ritual techniques and emphasize the eminent rehearsability of some aspects of popular custom. They also point out the breakdown of that sociability, of consensus that an action is both respectable and efficacious, so that actors begin to *look at themselves*, often – not always – a terminal malady for custom. In looking beyond their task, to what they fear others think of it, they lose what Henry Glassie notes that they possessed before – “during the event’s blinding intensity, the actors are too involved to do more than create it properly” (1982: 651).

In some cases, it is perhaps the experience of this very intensity, unadulterated, that motivates both transmission and the unexplicated belief in efficacy, but the interplay with mnemonic techniques must also not be neglected, as witnessed by the wealth of the triads in Irish and Welsh literature (Bromwich 1961; Meyer 1906). The mind finds ways to make sense of myriad experience and often sets those acts of ordering apart from the ordinary. They mirror the multitude of threes that flow into one, as in the numerous proscriptions for carrying out efficacious action at the meeting of three boundaries or three waters (Danaher 1972: 123–124; Rhys 1891: 295–296), when the union of multiples is a mystery (Rees 1961: 351) and we glimpse the intense satisfactions of uncontradictory oppositions.

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## **Sacrificial Magic and the Twofold Division of the Irish Ritual Year**

**Abstract:** The pre-Christian Irish ritual year was, in ancient times, divided into two major seasons, and the juncture points of these divisions, called Samhain and Bealtaine, were considered to be especially potent times for enacting protective magic. The historical development of St. Martin's Day in Ireland, and its relationship with the more ancient festival of Samhain is examined, revealing circumstances that saw much of the ritual nature of Samhain being adopted within a Christian context in the medieval period. Consideration is also given to the festival of Bealtaine, at the other end of the year, revealing commonalities in terms of ritual, magic and prophylaxis.

**Key words:** St. Martin's Day, Samhain, Bealtaine, ritual, calendar custom, sacrifice

The Christian festival of All Hallows falls on November 1, and perhaps more significantly, All Hallows' Eve, or Hallowe'en, occurs on the night of October 31. This was traditionally a night of celebration, merriment and mischief in Ireland in recent centuries, and continues to be observed throughout the country as a vibrant expression of Irish calendar custom. Hallowe'en is known in the Irish language as *Oíche Shamhna*, or November Night, falling as it does on the commencement of November, and the beginning of winter. In this regard, it is related to the more ancient Irish festival of Samhain, a feast-day that was observed in Ireland before the advent of Christianity. This was a time for assembly, and great fairs were held at this time, down to the early Medieval period (Hutton 1991: 177). It was also a time when cattle were brought in from summer pasture, and rent or tribute was paid to lords in the form of slaughtered animals (Kelly 1997: 46, 59–60, 320, 357, 461). Martinmas, or St. Martin's Day, falling on November 11, was also a widely-observed feast in Ireland, which involved the slaughtering of animals, and the consumption of their meat, but its roots in Ireland are unlikely to be as early as those of Samhain. The killing

of animals at Martinmas was most often conducted in a ritualistic manner, with offerings of the blood made in honour of St. Martin of Tours, who was often viewed in Irish tradition as a protector of animals and people (Ó Súilleabháin 1957: 252). The relationship between the two feasts will be examined, to see if there is a plausible link between the two feasts, and if the Feast of St. Martin has inherited its ritual importance from the pre-Christian feast of Samhain. Great caution must be exercised when pursuing such an argument, however, as the broad theories of ‘pagan survivals’ so espoused by Frazerian anthropology have been critically deconstructed as a valid model for analyzing folk tradition, and interpreting modern customs as vestiges of ancient religion can prove to be an academically precarious exercise (Watkins 2004: 144).

### **Samhain Origins**

Early Irish tradition saw a division of the year into two seasons, as witnessed, for example, in the early medieval tale “The Wooing of Emer”. The dating of this text has been ascribed to the tenth century, but appears to be a slightly modified form of an eighth century original (Toner 1998: 87). The relevant section reads as follows:

*For two divisions were formerly on the year, viz., summer from Beltaine (the first of May), and winter from Samuin to Beltaine.* (Meyer 1901: 245)

It has been proposed that, in the Indo-European reckoning of time, there were originally two major seasons, summer and winter, and that this twofold division continued into the early medieval period. This was an ancient system, and survived down to the historical period in a number of European countries (Anderson 2003: 219). In the scheme of a twofold year, *Samhain* appears to be a point in the Irish calendar where the grazing term ends, cattle were brought to the infields for the winter, and some of these animals were selected for slaughter. Indeed, the case has been made that meat was once a central component of the feasting at Samhain. Joseph Nagy has identified a series of references to feasting on meat at this time. Incidents from the medieval tale “*Macgnimartha Finn*” describe Fenian warriors consuming pork at *Samhain* (Nagy 2003: 314). Also discussed are events in the eleventh-century mythological tale “*Togail Bruidne Da Derga*”, where characters feast upon a living

pig (Stokes 1901: 9–61; 165–215; 282–329; 390–437, 391). Another famous Irish tale, “*Scéla Muicce Meic Datho*”, presents the imagery of feasting on a swine, and again the incidents of the story are said in a poem from the eleventh or twelfth century to have taken place at Samhain (Gwynn 1924: 193). A further piece of evidence from Early Irish literature seems to agree with Nagy’s hypothesis. It consists of one of four quatrains that were written about the ancient festivals, of Samhain, Imbolc, Bealtaine and Lughnasadh (Meyer 1894: 48). It clearly outlines the fact that meat was consumed at Samhain, and the inclusion of the word *cadla* in the first line, which is translated as the small intestine, indicates that it is most likely the offal from freshly-slaughtered animals that was consumed. If meat was once a central component of Samhain celebrations, this was not the case in the post-medieval period, where it was seen as a night where one abstained from the eating of meat. As Christianity came to dominate Ireland from the fifth century onwards, the importance of the ancient pagan festivals was lessened, and Christian feast-days came to dominate the calendar. The celebration of All Saints’s Day (November 1) and All Souls’ Day (November 2) can clearly be seen as Christian festivals that greatly influenced the development of Samhain (Hutton 1996: 360). Like many feast-days in the Christian tradition, meat was forbidden from being consumed on All Saints’ Day, which may go towards explaining why the consumption of meat no longer took place at this time (Collinge 2012: 165).

The feast of St. Martin of Tours, in contrast, was a day where meat was traditionally consumed as a central element of the feast in post-medieval Ireland. Ritual slaughter and the eating of meat were of utmost importance. It seems to be the case that meat consumption was transferred from Samhain to the feast of St. Martin, probably during the medieval period. When one considers the fact of a declining economic and political importance of Samhain through the middle ages, it seems that Martinmas took its place in this regard. Great public assemblies once took place at Samhain (Hutton 1996: 361), but Martinmas fairs begin to appear in Ireland the thirteenth century, particularly in areas under control of the new Anglo-Norman regime, who had invaded Ireland in the twelfth century, and began to exert their influence throughout much of the country. For example, in the year 1245, Geoffrey de Turville, bishop of Ossory and former Lord Chancellor of Ireland, obtained

a royal grant for an annual fair in Clonmore, Co. Carlow. The fair was held ‘on the day of St. Martin and 7 following days’ (Carrigan 1905: 148), referring to the Octave of St. Martin. Another such fair, held at Limerick throughout the Octave of St. Martin, was granted permission in 1204 (Lennon 1998: 61). Quarterly assizes began to be held in areas under English rule in Ireland from the thirteenth century, and one of the four quarter-days on which court was in session was the Feast of St. Martin (Mac Ivor 1960–1: 77). The importance of November 11 as an administrative and economic occasion appears to have increased greatly under English rule, and in all likelihood began to eclipse the importance of the older feast of Samhain in areas outside Gaelic rule. The process of the shift in emphasis away from the older Samhain to Martinmas as the end of the summer period is one that seems to have continued throughout the medieval period, and examples of rent being paid (*Liber Flavus Fergusiorum* MS 476: 23 O 48) or tribute being offered (Begley 1906: 366) on St. Martin’s Day in the form of slaughtered animals appear from the fourteenth century onwards. Thus, by the high medieval period in Ireland, Martinmas had become firmly associated with animal slaughter, and likely much of the attendant ritual of Samhain seems to have also transferred to the new date.

### **Bealtaine**

As mentioned above, Gaelic Ireland once reckoned time from Bealtaine to Samhain. Thus, an examination of folk customs at Bealtaine may reveal certain themes and concepts that found similar expression on St. Martin’s Day. If this is so, it will lend further evidence to the idea that St. Martin’s Day partly inherited the role of Samhain as the end of summer, and the close of that half of the agricultural year. Patricia Lysaght has undertaken an insightful study into the rituals and beliefs surrounding the festival of Bealtaine. She describes the many actions people undertook to “promote personal and agricultural luck and prosperity” (Lysaght 1993: 28). There was a perception of danger at this time of the year, which was situated on a temporal threshold between winter and summer. Indeed, at such liminal times, the effects of the supernatural could be most powerful. Thus, to confront and counteract any malevolent forces that might be at play at this time, people conducted particular ritu-

als to reaffirm and redefine boundaries. These could include the use of water, iron, or salt, and these substances were used to mark boundaries, such as the threshold of the house, or the borders of the farmland. These rites of protection were often employed at sunset, on the eve of May 1, which accords well with the idea that liminal time is the most effective for conducting magical acts. Lysaght cites a description given by Kevin Danaher of a protective ritual undertaken in Co. Laois, whereby the hearth, threshold and four corners of the house are blessed with a candle, to ensure protection and prosperity for the coming year (Danaher 1972: 144). Lysaght also mentions the notion that cattle were an important element in the Bealtaine rituals, and the protection of cattle and milk products was a central theme. This is related to the idea of the cattle grazing term usually being calculated from Bealtaine to Samhain, May 1 to November 1.

There are a great many parallels to be seen with St. Martin's Day in these practices. When people killed animals or fowl for St. Martin, they spilled the blood at the threshold of the door, on the doorstep, and often allowed the blood to fall in the four corners of the house. It was also done at the door of the byre or stable. This was undertaken for protective purposes, as the blood was believed to guard against disease, death and evil spirits (Mag Fhloinn 2013: 217). People marked out the boundaries of their domestic space, and indeed the living spaces of their animals. The ritual was most commonly undertaken at sunset on the eve of the feast, when it was thought most effective. A picture emerges with Bealtaine and Martinmas of two temporally-liminal festivals, that employ rituals of protection and reaffirmation of boundaries in order to protect the herds and farm from potential harm and supernatural forces. If the complex of beliefs and activities surrounding Bealtaine can be seen as originating in the human desire for ritual protection against potentially harmful supernatural agencies at the beginning of the grazing period, then the rituals of St. Martin's Day can be seen as an expression of similar desires at the end of the same period. Samhain surely occupied this position in the pre-Christian and early medieval period, but its economic and agricultural significance became transferred to Martinmas during the middle ages. St. Martin's Day, poised on the threshold of winter, is the perfect dichotomous analogue of Bealtaine, and has undoubtedly inherited

the role from Samhain in this regard. It must be mentioned that the twofold division of the year is not just an Irish phenomenon, and in many cases throughout Continental Europe it ran from St. George's Day to Martinmas. Similarities between Ss. George and Martin, in terms of legend, imagery, role and function are apparent, and testify to the similarities between the two festivals that are situated on the axis points for the turning of the pastoral year (Mag Fhloinn 2005: 106–23). Thus, the role of St. Martin's Day as a point of potential danger and ritual protection, can be seen in a wider frame of reference, and contextualises the practices of slaughter and the attendant beliefs in the agriculturally-based belief systems of the people of Europe.

### **Bloodletting at Bealtaine**

There is a body of evidence regarding custom of people letting blood from cattle on May 1, and there is good reason to suggest that this may have had ritual significance. If the balance of evidence points to Bealtaine and St. Martin's Day being ritually connected since they acted as bookends to the cattle-grazing season, then evidence of blood rites at Bealtaine would further confirm an association between the two feasts. Farmers in Ireland used to draw the blood of living cattle at certain times of the year, a custom undoubtedly related to the belief that bloodletting was somehow good for the health of a person or animal (Seigworth 1980: 2022). There are some cases, however, which strongly suggest that it had a deeper importance. There are a significant number of accounts where the eve of May 1, or May Day itself, was the date upon which blood was spilled. In a description given by antiquarian William Wilde in 1853, he talks about elaborate precautions taken by people to protect cattle around the first of May, and writes as follows:

*We have known each head of cattle to be slightly singed with lighted straw upon May Eve, or to have a lighted coal passed round their bodies, as is customary after calving; and it was not unusual, some fifteen or twenty years ago, to bleed a whole herd of cattle upon a May morning, and then to dry and burn the blood.*

*We have more than once, when a boy, seen the entire of the great Fort of Rathcroghan, then the centre of one of the most*

*extensive and fertile grazing districts of Connaught, literally reddened with the blood thus drawn upon a May morning. Bleeding the cattle at this period of the year was evidently done with a sanitary intention, as some of the older medical works recommended in the human subject; but choosing that particular day, and subsequently burning the blood, were evidently the vestiges of some Heathen rite.* (Wilde 1853: 56)

A similar account appears in W.G. Wood-Martin's "Traces of the Elder Faiths of Ireland" (Wood-Martin 1902: 6). Both of the antiquarian authors mention old forts, which have a strong association with fairies and the supernatural in Irish tradition, and both make much of this fact, seeking to associate the custom with ancient pagan rites or beliefs. There does appear to be some genuine folk tradition that seems to testify to the practice occurring in association with *Bealtaine*, or the first of May, and indeed the bleeding of cattle appears to have taken place, on at least some occasions, within the remains of ancient enclosures (National Folklore Collection of Ireland, Main Manuscripts Collection, MS 476: 327).

A.T. Lucas, in his work on agricultural bloodletting, documents several accounts that testify to the association of bleeding cattle with the month of May, and with May Day itself (Lucas 1989: 212). Another example, from Tullaghobegly in Co. Donegal, describes protective blood letting rituals that were performed upon cattle before being brought to summer pastures at the start of May (Ó hEochaídh 1943: 141). An anecdote recorded in Ballingeary in Co. Cork, makes mention of the custom as being performed around the start of May (Ó Suibhne 1931: 164), amongst many more examples that can be found in Irish tradition. This practice bears more than a passing similarity to the rites that took place on St. Martin's Eve, with both featuring themes of health and protection. The fact that the *Bealtaine* customs were sometimes mentioned as taking place within old forts and enclosures seems to suggest that it may have more ancient, and possibly, ritual, undertones. Forts were considered liminal places, with definite supernatural associations. It must also be borne in mind, however, that the use of ancient enclosures for these purposes may have been purely practical, since they would be useful places to corral cattle, and the supernurtural associations may be secondary, or simply a figment of antiquarian speculation. Whatever the case regarding ancient enclosures, the

notion of the twofold year, and the concern for health and protection is a key concern at juncture points, and blood is a powerful symbol present in both situations. People drew some of the animals' blood at the beginning of the grazing season, and spilled the remainder at the closure of the pastoral year. Thus, it seems that a convincing case can be made that the Irish ritual year was once reckoned from Bealtaine to Samhain, and from May Eve until St. Martin's Day at a later point in history. The ritual importance of St. Martin's Day is a continuance of the earlier Samhain, with its attendant blood rites and concern for protection and the establishment of boundaries, and it bore many similarities to Bealtaine in this regard.

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Symbolism of Fire,  
Food,  
Ritual Objects,  
and  
Magical Spaces



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## **Magico-Religious Symbolism of a Candle in the Slavic Calendar Rituals**

**Abstract.** To ascertain the reasons for manifold usage of a candle in the calendar rites and beyond, the author analyzes its qualities, both natural (fire, light, warmth) and cultural (as a hand-made object). A candle is seen through the semantics of life and death, light and darkness, sacred and profane. The Slavic word for a candle (\**svētъ* 'light') is close to and associated with another root (*svētъ* 'sacred'), which in the folk perspective, increases the blessing power of this object. These and some other qualities assigned to a candle make it play the key role in sacrifice, purification, commemoration, fortune-telling, and other magic acts in the course of the year. Nowadays many distinctive ritual functions of a candle have vanished, giving way to the dominating one – commemoration. This confirms the Piotr Bogatyrev's view of a ritual object as a system of functions, the number of which can diminish, while the intensity of those left can even grow.

**Key words:** candle, Slavic calendar, rituals, function, Christian, pagan, magic, commemoration.

### **Introduction**

According to archaeological data, mankind has been using candles since at least 5000 B.C. Important objects for domestic use, such as providing light, heat, and fragrance, and as a way to keep the time, candles have attained many symbolic connotations through the ages, and have become the key object in the performance of a magico-religious ceremony.

This article leaves aside the Biblical, theological and spiritual<sup>1</sup> meanings of a candle and is concentrated on its rural folk religious and magic issues. It is very difficult or even impossible to draw a dividing line between 'religious' and 'magic' usage of a candle. In any case it is an extremely sacred object, which together with an icon (or a cross, or another image) and a prayer (or a folk charm) design the classical situation for magico-religious practice (Sedakova 2003).

What makes a candle an absolute necessity in many if not almost all dogmatic religious services and magic rituals? For the Slavic countries, apart other facts, linguistic data is pertinent. In all Slavic languages the very term for a candle (in old Slavic *\*svētia*) is derived from *svět-* 'light' and etymologically is related to Hindu *çvētyás* 'bright, white' (Fasmer 3: 576). Meanwhile phonetically it is very close to or even coincides with another Slavic root *\*svēt-* 'sacred, saint' (in Old-Prussian *swenta-* 'saint', ib. 3: 585), which doubles the sacredness of this object in the Slavic folk traditional discourse.

The multifaceted magic functions and symbolic meanings of a candle are partly due to its properties and its 'construction'. Light, heat, fire, and the smoke a candle produces are relevant for any magic ritual, be it with positive or negative value. Candles are lit in order to magically facilitate and lengthen the life of a person, or they can be lit to cause death; they can cure somebody or make him/her ill; they can be used either to stop natural disasters or to provoke them. A curse and a prayer equally can be read in front of a candle. The candles are useful in mantic rituals, as they give visible signs for the future (Belova, Sedakova 2009). Thus a candle gives a lot of possibilities for semiotic and axiological attitudes and is treated in terms of the basic semiotic oppositions: bright/dark; sacred/profane; alive/dead; pure/impure; divine/humane in their manifold combinations.

It is believed that a candle has powerful magic qualities and functions as an apotropaic, healing, purifying, driving off the evil spirits object, as well as something that brings misfortune or even kills. I regard the array of meanings and functions of a candle as a system in terms of Piotr Bogatyrev's functional theory (2007), a system in which one function dominating in one context can diminish or be combined with other functions in a different ritual setting.

### **What's in a candle?**

A burning candle and the fire (one of the most important symbolic elements in magic acts) are synonyms for life and health. Bright fire predicts long life, whereas an extinguished or weak fire denotes

death and diseases. A South-Slavic legend says that when a baby is born, a candle is lit for it, so when somebody dies, they say “His candle went out” (Risteski 1999: 31). To turn down a candle and thus to extinct the fire on purpose is a means of harmful magic, which causes illnesses and death.

Giving the light, a candle allows a person to see the right path, which corresponds with the metaphorical notion of life as a road. That is why a lit candle is a necessary object in the folk rituals of the life-cycle. The absence of candlelight in childbirth, as well as during the agony is depicted as sinful, since the right path to the soul has not been shown. Another belief connected with lighting a candle when somebody is in agony is to show the person his sins; commemorating the dead with a lit candle is aimed at giving the dead the ability to see into the other world.

The candle is a unique object which affects all the five human senses of perception: sight, hearing, taste<sup>2</sup>, smell and touch. All its qualities and peculiarities are appropriate for further interpretation and magic usage. Thus the visual image (the colour, the form, the size of the candle) is often used in the rituals of imitational magic. In Bulgaria, a lit candle is placed next to a newborn baby with these words: “Let the neck of the baby be shaped as straight as a candle”. By way of prediction, the crackling sounds of lighted candles in spring predict a thunderous summer. On Christmas Eve the smell of the scented candles is used for fumigation the house and the barns. Finally, the warmth of the candle helps to melt the tin for charming rituals against an evil eye and other perils.

Manufacturing of candles is a ritual itself, and the material they are made of is meaningful. Wax candles are seen as clean and blessed, since the bees, according to a legend, are sanctified by God. In contrast, candles made from wax of dead bees or from the fat of a corpse were used for evil witchcraft – to bring misfortune to a person or a household.

Several examples of the use of candles in the Slavic wedding can illustrate the variety of their functions. The mother-in-law joins two wedding candles together with the verbal formula, “Let us join the candles, so our children [the bride and the groom] will not be separated” (Polischchuk, Ponomarev 2003: 303). During the wed-

ding black magic could be performed. If a witch turned the candle upside down, the bride would never have offspring; she wouldn't be able to create new life. The wedding candles also served as omens; those whose candle (the bride's or the groom's) is shorter or would burn out earlier would die first. If somebody dropped the candle on the floor, he would soon die. However, a bright fire from the candles predicted happy life for the couple.

As highly sacred objects, wedding candles have been kept until the death of the spouses. They have also been lit slightly in case of a difficult childbirth, a fire, epileptic attacks, etc. When the wife and the husband died, their wedding candle was put into the coffin, so it would help them to find each other and meet up in the other world.

All these and other symbolic characteristics of the candles too numerous to be mentioned here are used in the life-cycle, the calendar, and other Slavic rituals.

### **The candle in the Slavic ritual year**

The symbolical meanings ascribed to candles in the calendric rituals have their peculiarities, especially when compared to those in the life-cycle, mentioned above. Within the context of calendric rituals, candles were lit to mark the changes in the season, the beginning and the end of the work in the fields, and last but not least, to mark the dates of the Christian festive calendar.

All the feasts, saints days, and annual commemorations have started with lighting a candle and a reciting a prayer (or a charm). There then followed the performances of other magico-religious acts. To many villagers, it was essential to light a candle to a saint who is in charge of any particular profession, or a protector of a certain activity. In Slovenia, on St. Danila's day candles were brought to the church by the farmers so that the saint could protect the cattle from wolves. In Russia, the beekeepers lit candles to the St Zosima and St Savvatiy. These are just a few of numerous examples of the uses of candles in calendric rituals.

There was also a gender specification in lighting the candles during the Christian calendric year. For example, the women who wanted to get pregnant, venerated all the Virgin Mary celebrations by light-

ing candles in the church, bringing them home, and them burning then every day until they had conceived.

Great Christian holidays generated a peculiar cult of candles that have been burned during the liturgy in the church. Nikita I. Tolstoy and Svetlana M. Tolstaya denoted such and similar cases as “secondary use of ritual objects,” which is a frequent practice in folk traditional customs (Tolsty 1994: 239). Being sanctified at one ritual complex, these objects acquire and retain additional sacred properties (purifying, healing, apotropaic, guarding, etc.), and therefore can be used in other rituals to drive away evil spirits, cure deceases, or stop fires. Such candles have been placed next to the icons and kept in the house throughout the whole year to be lit on special occasions.

The Christmas candle symbolized the star that showed the way to the Magi. In Serbia this candle was used by farmers who on St George’s day went out to the fields and made a cross with it, blessing future crops. The Epiphany candle was lit in the case of lasting agony of a person. It was also used when a cow gave birth to a calf.

Of special ritualistic value was the candle that was made on the eve of Candlemas and then lit in the church. It was called a ‘thunderous’ candle and it was kept especially for natural disasters. According to a Polish legend, this candle helped the Mother of God to get free from the wolves. So in the evenings in the rural areas this candle was put in each window to drive away the wolves. It was also used to fumigate the barn and the cattle, and to provide good ploughing and harvesting. It helped the tooth ache; the suffering person bit it, which stopped the pain. Nowadays the Ukrainians still believe in the power of this candle. A picture of a candle and the icon of Virgin Mary illustrates the plea to pray for the soldiers who fight and to light the Candlemas candle (Figure 1).

The candle that was lit during the Vespers on Maundy Thursday was thought to contain protective magic power. The candle was taken home without extinguishing the flame. Outside the house on the doors near the windows crosses were drawn with the black of the candle, so as to protect the house from evil spirits. The flame of the candle was used to ‘revive’ the light in the house; the icon lamp



*Figure 1. A post in Facebook pleading the Ukrainians to light the Candlemas candle to support the soldiers in the fight near Debaltsevo, Ukraine. 2015.*

and the fire in the oven were lit with this candle. This candle also helped to keep the house clean and to drive away the cockroaches.

Another powerful festive candle that was used in multiple ritual acts was the Easter candle (“Christ candle”). In the villages of the Carpathian area people believed that if the landlord holds one half of the Easter candle in his mouth and goes around the field, the moles won’t touch his crops. With the beeswax of an Easter candle stolen from the church the beekeepers fumigated the beehives and the bees for their health. In Russia, the cowboy put the beeswax of the Easter candle onto his musical horn and went around the cattle to keep them together and to protect them from the wolves.

In Byelorussia and on the Russian-Byelorussian borderline there is still performed an archaic ritual, “Brothers’ candle,” when a huge community candle is manufactured and is then given to the church. In some regions the candle was taken as a human being and had clothes on it, receiving an anthropomorphic design. This candle was thought to belong to God and was called also ‘God’s cloth’ (Listova

2009: 35; Lapacin 2013: 43). This ritual has various versions and functions and is accomplished in case of a disaster, an epidemic, or to celebrate the village's major religious feast<sup>3</sup>.

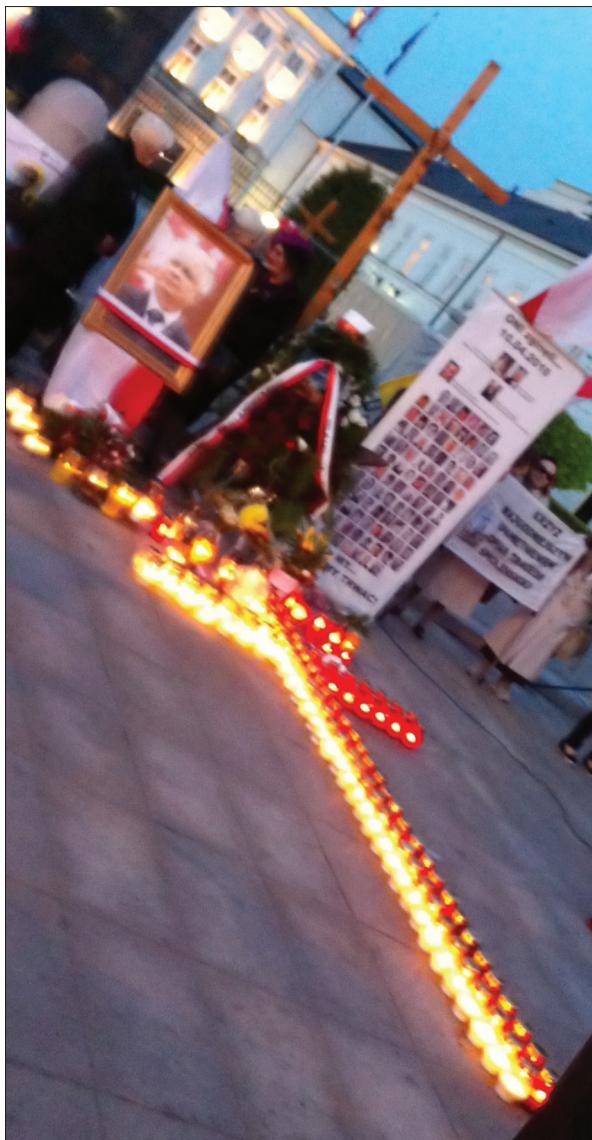
## Conclusion

Nowadays in the Slavic Christian countries a candle has kept its value as an obligatory religious object. Knowing that the candles are often used for neo-pagan rites, divinations, and black magic rituals (activities that the Church authorities strictly condemn) the priests usually ask the parishioners to light only the candles bought inside the church they are attending. Notes explaining this rule can be seen on the doors of the Orthodox churches.

Outside the churches the use of candles for ritual purposes has diminished with regard to the modern urban society mentality and its needs. All over the world this tendency is accompanied by a strengthening the commemorative meaning and function of a candle. To light a candle to commemorate a person is a tradition that is performed in the church, on the grave, or at home. This ritual has spread to other spaces, and usually it marks the very place where the death (usually a tragic one due to a catastrophe or a terrorist act) has happened. One can see such commemorative candles on the bridge in Moscow, where on February 27, 2015 Boris Nemtsov



Figure 2. The memorial place on the bridge, where on February 27, 2015, Boris Nemtsov was killed. Photo by Irina Sedakova.



*Figure 3. A cross of candles to commemorate the victims of the Polish airplane crash near Smolensk. Warsaw, April 10, 2014.*  
Photo by Irina Sedakova

was killed (Figure 2); in the Moscow subway where terrorist attacks took place, as well as at the locations of air-plane crashes. Occasionally, candles are lit in a central urban location in the form of a cross (Figure 3), numbers, or letters. For example on June, 22, which is the memorial day marking the beginning of the Second World War in the USSR in 1941, in the city squares the candles form the date 22 or a sentence “We remember”. Thus commemorative functions are combined with explanatory and decorative aspects as well.

To commemorate, the candles are not only being lit literally; the image or a picture of them also symbolizes grief and compassion. In the age of new technologies, candles quickly turn into an emblem and often appear on the Internet on the occasion of the death of a distinguished person, on the occasion of natural disasters (floods,



Figure 4. A post in Facebook on the international day of commemoration the victims of Holocaust. January 27, 2015.

fires, earthquake) or other tragic events that have caused death(s), and correspondingly on the anniversaries of those mournful dates. Millions of pictures of candles appear in Facebook and other Internet sites on the memorial day of GULAG in Russia, genocide of the Armenians, Holocaust Memorial Day (Figure 4), Famine in the Ukraine in the 1930s, and September 11th.

As we see with the decrease or vanishing of some functions of a candle (productive, healing), other functions (the commemorative one) extend through space, and develop additional features (emotion, expressing solidarity, decoration), grow in numbers and allude to all occasions for grief. This is a good illustration to P. Bogatyrev's theory in his study of folk costumes: "...when one function declines, the intensity of the other grows" (Bogatyrev 2007: 271). I should add here that not only the intensity increases, but diversity and the quantity of its visual representations as well.

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### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> See, for example "A candle is a symbol of light, a symbol of individual soul, a symbol of the relations between spirit and matter (the flame that burns wax)" (Becker 2000: 66).

<sup>2</sup> Taste as a sense is not that involved in using of the candles. Occasionally black magic includes eating or biting a candle.

<sup>3</sup> There is a professional documentary "Community Candle" on the Byelorussian version of the ritual complex (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVTEt-56BPI> (Date of access: 28.08.2014)).

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## **Ritual Fire in the Annual Cycle of Udmurt Calendar Customs**

**Abstract.** Fire is one of the most important components in Udmurtian calendar rites and almost always is mentioned in magic formulae and prayers. The significance of fire can be observed in the tradition that the New Year begins with the production of new fire. There is a responsible person who is in charge of production of fire before the ceremony, keeping it during the rite and putting it out at the end of the ritual. Fire serves many functions; at the same time, fire is not eternal. The article provides insight into the worldview in special regard to fire.

**Key words:** fire, new fire, calendar rites, Udmurts

Fire is one of the most dominant elements in Udmurt culture, because it plays a key role in all aspects of religious life, such as family, tribal and calendar rites, and rites for particular occasions. In calendar rites, for example, fire is often involved in association with magical formulae and prayers. This paper provides insight into the Udmurt worldview with special regard to fire: what significance it has, and how its role is understood both in ritual contexts and in everyday life situations.

Although all four elements (earth, water, air, fire) are represented in the cosmology of the Udmurts, fire is the only one that man is able to produce himself. In the context of traditional conceptions and ritual practice, I will examine the rites and customs related to fire from a comparative perspective, because the Udmurtian conceptions and beliefs regarding fire have many parallels among the neighbouring Finno-Ugric and Slavic peoples.

In some of the rituals, a ritual without fire is meaningless, as it is either devoted to fire, or fire itself is the basic element of it. The secondary or subordinate use of fire in different rituals is rather common, such as preparing the ritual food, or heating and lighting

the scene. Beyond these utilitarian purposes, fire is also applied in a symbolic sense; for example, to purify the ritual site, the ritual objects, and the participants; to protect them from harmful forces and evil influences; to destroy or to change the status of certain ceremonial objects; to establish communication with supernatural forces; to divine, and to prophesy. Sometimes materials produced by combustion, such as charcoal, ashes, or smoke, are substituted for fire, because these are believed to have similar qualities to fire (Khristolyubova 1995: 176).

### **Fire in the Udmurt language**

*Tyl*, the Udmurtian word for fire, is of Finno-Ugric origin. Mostly, the derivatives are either related to ritual activities, or are used exclusively in a ritual context. Let me discuss some examples below. The still commonly used term *tylzhu*, meaning bonfire, refers to one of the most ancient forms of ritual fire. The expression *tyl dun* means “very expensive, unavailable for the price”; *tyl kyl* means “incantation, charm”, *vö'styl* means “sacrificial fire”; *vyl' tyl* means “new fire”; and *tyl ponna* means “honestly!”. In many calendar and family customs, the very place where the fire is set has its own name, which is *tyldis'konti* or *tyldis'kon inty* (dial.), and is excluded from everyday use; otherwise the place is violated. The same expressions are applied for the hearth, which assumes a close relationship between the hearth and fire. The connection between hearth and fire, both considered as sacred entities, is obvious. This tendency is reflected in their similar treatment during particular rituals.

### **Fire in calendar customs**

As a typical ritual at the beginning of the New Year, the lighting of the new fire illustrates the significance of fire. It is not only a ritual, but a special occasion as well, where one can demonstrate his own ability to handle fire. The Udmurts have a very significant ritual, the new fire ceremony (*typutyl potton*). It takes place during the ceremonial period called *Bydzhynal* (The Great Day) on Thursday at the gate by the end of the village street. In the past, participants usually belonged to the same kinship group (*Vorshud*). This fact highlights the considerable importance of kinship in this ritual.

Before setting the new fire, each household extinguished all fires and lights in the house before sunrise. Then a male family member went to the village gate. There was some inflammable material placed between the oak-block and the post of the gate. As the men were swinging the gate to and fro, the two wooden parts of the gate were rubbing against each other and finally lit the flammable material. New fire was called *typutyl*, which is a combination of the Udmurt words for “oak” and “fire”. Then the new fire was increased in order to produce a considerable amount of charcoal, from which each family received several pieces to take home. With their own share of charcoal, the family lit a fire in the courtyard. Each member jumped over it, most probably for purification purposes. Afterwards the fire was rekindled on the hearth. The new fire had to be kept alive during the entire year, when the ritual was repeated (Minniyakhmetova 2009: 14–16); this fire was effectively tamed, and it was regarded as the main fire for the year. In a sense, it was the center of the household, as it was used for all purposes, including the many household-based rituals.

During the annual cycle several rituals associated with fire were organized at the natural sacred sites, in the sanctuary called *Kuala*, or at home. In the first case, particular fireplaces were created, while in *Kuala* and at home the usual fireplace was used. The fire was usually set before the start of the ceremony.

At the natural sacred sites, fireplaces were situated very close to the sites of sacrifices, which used to be devoted to certain gods or spirits. Each time a new place was established according to clockwise movement, or *shundyya* (moving in the direction of the sun). Some firewood was always left there from the last year’s fire in order to be re-used; this small detail lets us suppose that a sacrificial fire should be set as well as put out exactly here, on the ritual site, and this fire is a particular case. It can also be interpreted that the fireplace should not be left empty, and it also constitutes some kind of connection between the previous fire and the next one, or implies that the fire should not be put out by any means.

The first ritual in a newly built house was kindling a fire on the hearth. Similarly, when a new *Kuala* was constructed, the family carried the stones and ashes from the old hearth and placed them in the new one.

Before ceremonial occasions, the first thing is to light a fire in the stove of the house. As a rule, one should also light a fire in the open fireplace of the *Kuala*. For this reason, some firewood is always stored there. The hearth of the house should always be kept clean and can never be empty.

Beyond the common, everyday functions the hearth serves religious purposes and it is often considered as a special altar. During the *gulbech taka* (“cellar ram”) ceremony, for instance, the bones of a black ram, which was previously sacrificed in a cellar, are burned on the hearth (Sadikov 2001: 87). Vessels filled with food and beverages are put in the earthen oven as part of both the individual and the communal spring and autumn ceremonies commemorating the dead ancestors. In some localities, several wax candles used to be fastened along the edges of the vessels according to the number of departed relatives. The way the candles were burning informed the living of the otherworldly fate of the departed. Thus steady burning was interpreted to mean that they were fine, but a smoking candle meant that the deceased were unsatisfied. As the latter examples indicate, the hearth in the house, especially if one takes the chimney into account, could function as a symbolic link between the worlds of the living and the dead.

Fire also served as a mediator between humans and gods in the religious-mythological universe of the Udmurts. During the *tylas'kon* ritual, for example, the blood of a sacrificed animal and some pieces of the sacrificial food were thrown into the fire. Apparently building a fire or bonfire was an important part of every sacrifice, and fire is central as a ritual tool and ritual medium today, as well (Kaliff 2007: 11; 70). Probably this act is a rite of fire sacrifice in a ritual; it may also serve to build a link with supernatural forces, to whom one prayed and whom one worshipped.

It was customary that, during the rituals of the annual cycle, some of the ritual objects were burned. For example, when animals and birds were sacrificed during the common worship ceremonies, “the slaughterer [...] wipes his blood-stained hands on a cloth, which will be burned on the bonfire, when the praying is over” (Holmberg 1911). Another example for the same act: “fluff, feathers, internal organs will be burned on the same bonfire” (Shutova et al. 2009: 115) as well as the bones, which remained from the ritual meat.

There are several accounts saying that “during prayer ceremonies a hearth or a fireplace is considered as the centre of the ritual space” (Sadikov 2008: 112). It is not by chance that in such situations the prayers were assisted by a person called the *tylas'*, who was assigned in advance and was responsible for setting, guarding and finally extinguishing the fire before, during, and after the ceremony.

Keeping the fire burning during the ceremony was crucial, as it was used to divine the future. But when the ceremony lasted for several days, the fire was to be “kept burning for the whole night, so that on the following morning it would be possible to light the other sacral fires from it” (Touluze & Niglas 2014: 114). At the very end of the ritual, the “*vös'as'* (priest of the indigenous Udmurt religion) and his assistants raked the ashes together to the centre of the fireplace – *tylzhu*, walking clockwise three times around the fireplace; in this way the opened ritual space was again reduced to the single original point” (Minniyakhmetova 1999: 107). In this way the ritual was completed in terms of both time and space.

Before cattle were first brought to pasture in the spring, there was a rite aimed at the prevention of epidemics and epizootics. Straw was set on fire along the village gates, and cattle were driven through the fire and smoke. Then a hole was dug, where a puppy, which had been slaughtered and immediately cremated, was buried (Aptiev 1891: 2).

However significant the moment of lighting the fire is in the Udmurt ceremonies, extinguishing it with human assistance is equally important. For example, before creating new fire, the “old” fires and lights from the last year had to be extinguished. In many prayers, there is a particular formula concerning fire – *tulpuosydles' ut'y/sakla*, which means “warn us of (your) fire/ put up your guard against (your) fire”. I think that expresses and emphasises the supernatural nature of fire. Although fire is considered to be a divine and sacral force both in everyday and in ritual contexts, it is not permanent, as it is limited in duration. The presence of fire confers special status on ordinary spaces and times; it sacralises and provides a ritual structure for the spatial and temporal boundaries of the ceremonial performance.

### **Fire, hearth, oven**

As I said before, the veneration of fire and hearth is directly connected to the cult of the kinship organization (*Vorshud*); therefore the treatment of fire holds considerable importance for a kinship group. The hearth of the house is a certain physical manifestation of this cult. For example, when one returns home, one touches the stove first with the right hand. Relatives act in the same way when paying a visit. Furthermore, the same act, along with respect for a hearth, is related to the purifying and protective properties of fire and the hearth stove, respectively. For example, the newborn child or domestic animal is lifted up three times before the mouth of the earthen oven. The hearth was believed to be the protector of the family and its belongings in various situations. For example, when one wanted to tell his/her dreams, or mentioned evil forces, he/she had to address the story to the hearth first: *gurly/muryoly veras'ko* – I am telling it to the hearth. The next example also demonstrates the protective nature of fire. A stranger who entered the house while the fire was burning on the hearth could not leave until the fire had burned down; otherwise the spirit of the fire would leave the home. Fire could also be considered as property, as the following example reveals. If one was warming himself by a stranger's fire, he/she was expected to thank the "owners of the fire" for that. This last example may contribute to the well-known idea of man dominating a natural force, which is then at his disposal; "...learning to control fire was, and is, a form of civilization" (Goudsblom 1992: 6), and ritual use of fire is a phenomenon of culture. There was a rite called *ur vös'*, which was organized in the autumn and spring liminal periods; after darkness fell, after the prayer ceremony had been completed, the young men threw smouldering pieces of wood around. Among the various meanings of this act, one could be the demonstration of power over fire. However, in the ritual year we see that the main aim is not to demonstrate control over fire, but to use and adopt fire for the special periods of the yearly cycle, and thereby to signify its temporal sections and the special significance of fire itself.



*Figure 1. Ceremony of completing of the ritual: the assistants rake the ashes together to the centre of the fireplace.*  
Vyl'gurt, Russia. 2013. Photo by R. Sadikov.

In mythology we can observe how the treatment of fire had developed. The Udmurt cosmogonic myth tells how giants (prehistoric men) are sitting around a bonfire with their legs stretched out before it; it was hot, so they soiled their heels with damp clay, protecting their feet from the heat.

In the mythology of different cultures we find the connection of fire with female genitals; perhaps it is not accidental that the words for the female genitals and flint sound the same in the Udmurt language.

Here I want to refer to E. Lyle's idea that fire is related to one of the four seasons of the year (see her article in this publication, and Lyle 1990: 72–73, 143, 151, and 2012). She has argued for an Indo-European order of winter as related to air, spring to fire (= red), summer to earth, and autumn to water, with spring and summer forming a dry half and autumn and winter a wet half. The Udmurtian structure is partly the same and partly different. In the Udmurtian conception a year is divided into two halves: winter and summer, with winter (the wet half) containing the seasons winter and spring, and summer (the dry half) containing the seasons summer and autumn.

The summer half begins by producing a fire and by observation of the Sun. The young men build a big bonfire on high ground; and the children run on the thawed grass crying "Mother-Sun/Father-Sun, come out, come out!" There was a ritual to see off the last of the ice; people burnt straws and sent them downstream and the long-burning fire meant that the year would be successful and easy.

I would like to follow the theory further and provide some examples of the seasons in relation to the four elements. In spring, weather is mentioned in many prayers (air or atmosphere and weather are conceived of as being equal). The birth period of the Earth falls in June, on the summer solstice. In late autumn, there was worship of the Earth deity. Before sunset, a hole was dug in the courtyard; burning charcoal was brought on a coal-shovel from a hearth; keeping the shovel over the hole while the burning charcoal on top of it was used to start a fire. Afterwards the charcoal was strewn into the hole and milk porridge was poured on it with the prayer, "My *Mukylchin*, do not abandon [the Earth/us], here is food [for you]."

The sacrificial ceremonies at the beginning of the winter half and at its end are devoted to water, and in this way the “winter year” is encompassed by the devotions to water. Nevertheless, fire is produced at one time but lasts for both halves of the year.

### **Conclusions**

Our examples have shown that fire and the hearth, along with the special objects originating from fire, have prominent status in the everyday life and ritual practice of the Udmurts. They explain the ambivalence of nature and semantics of fire in the ethno-cultural frame of the Udmurts. In spite of significant developments in the lives of the Udmurts, fire still has an extraordinarily important ordinary position in it. Fire still possesses a particular sacred richness in both the traditional and the contemporary ritual cycles. The various ritual activities that take place at each seasonal transition reflect the symbolic importance of that time of year. Each event needs its completeness; this means that everything should be considered and realized from beginning to end, and then the circle is completed.

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## **The Valencian Festival of *Las Fallas* as an Example of Symbolic Violence**

**Abstract.** This paper presents and briefly analyzes the process of *Las Fallas*, a festival that every 19th of March comes to an end with burning of enormous sculptures – *las fallas*. The element of symbolic violence, present during the festivity is not only related to reducing to flames, purifying and restoring the community with the civil ceremony of burning the figure associated with the corrupted reality, but it is also a component of its history, as it was transformed from a popular celebration to the unified feast that represents what is thought to be Valencia.

**Key words:** *las Fallas*, *falla*, festivity, symbolic violence, Saint Joseph, Valencia, fire

*And they have burned them, dear friends. They have burned them all. There are no more giant chameleons, no more phantom of the opera or naked beauties with spirals on their ears. No falla was spared in the crazy city of Valencia. They have burned them all.*<sup>1</sup> (Kobylarczyk 2013)

### **Introduction**

The aim of this paper is to present and briefly analyze the process of *Las Fallas*, a festival that every 19th of March comes to an end with burning of enormous sculptures – *las fallas* – in the Spanish city of Valencia and surrounding villages. Almost 400 *comisiones falleras*, tending to surpass their financial means while aspiring to boast and amaze the audience, present their work in order to gain acknowledgment and prestige. The festivity is a paradox in which the economic logic plays almost no part. Instead, social logic takes its place, and, as the anthropologist Lisón Tolosana emphasizes, the community of *falleros* repeats with their festival the squandering so heavily criticized by them in their sculptures (2004: 119).

### ***La falla***

The most popular opinion about *Las Fallas* is that their origins could be found in the cleaning of Valencian carpenters' shops of wooden remains after winter – the culmination of the feast happens on the day of St. Joseph – the patron of carpenters. Nonetheless, as mentioned by Antonio Ariño, the Valencian social anthropologist who revived the studies of this *fiesta* in the nineties and proposed to form the Association for the Studies of *Las Fallas* (Asociació de Estudis Fallers) (Hernàndez i Martí 2006a: 93–94), this theory has its roots in the story spread in the work of Marquess de Cruilles in 1876, and later on promoted by the carpenters' guild. His version, although based only on oral tradition, and later on frequently dismissed by researchers, appears in the history of *Las Fallas* as the canonical one (Ariño 1992a: 55). Ariño enumerates investigators who had their own theories on the origins of this festivity. He mentions Cebrián Mezquita, Gayano Lluch, Amades or Sanchis Guarner as the defenders of the theory that the feast has its beginning in pagan times and is related to spring rites that promote fertility, and Tramoyeres, Puig Torralba and Navarro Cabanes as the supporters of the theory that these celebrations are related to the *peleles* (effigies) of the Carnival and Lent. Ariño himself, speaking about the origins of *Las Fallas*, relates to us the investigation of Emili Casanova that linked the word *falla* with the latin word *facula* (torch), and later on mentions that, as stated in written documents, the inhabitants of the city had the custom of lighting bonfires one day before the celebration of Saint Joseph's Day and that they were called *fallas* (Ariño 1992a: 55–57).

Currently, after years of the evolution (which will be described briefly later on as it is an important process through which symbolic violence was inflicted by higher social class upon those who first started celebrating this feast), *la falla* is a monument that, after a year of preparations, is erected on the street of the city during the time of *la Plantà* (the building). It consists of one or more figures several stories high, and is surrounded by a lot of little ones (*ninots*) that tend to have a satirical meaning (e.g., they can represent politicians). It usually has also its smaller equivalent, *la falla infantil*, which is prepared for the children.



Figure 1. La fallera during la cremà.  
Photo by Emilio Javier García Escobar. 2014.

### ***Los falleros***

The *artistas falleros* who design, build, and install the monument on the streets are especially chosen to prepare it a year before by *los falleros* of each district, who are the members of the community that not only participate actively in the main festivity, but also organize and celebrate numerous projects to promote (and also gather money for) their district's *falla*. This type of collective action helps the creation and integration of the community. Its members enjoy the symbolic language provided by the celebrations that permits to express their disappointment and fear, their joy or hope, through the metaphor of the ritual and the transgression of daily routine (Ariño 1992b: 58).

During the official acts of the *fiesta* its participants are obligated to wear a special type of attire. For women (*las falleras*) it is the dress of *la labradora valenciana*. It was firstly worn in the context of this festivity during *la Ofrenda* – the act of bringing flowers to the Virgin

Mary – the patron of the city. Later on it started to be worn also on other occasions. Another typical part of the female uniform is the hairstyle: a bun flattened on the back of the neck and two snail-like buns over the ears, adorned by *peinetas* (special type of combs). For men, the garment was imposed in the fifties by *la Junta Central Fallera* – the body in control of the rules of conduct, dress code and organization of the main proceedings of the festivity. Strikingly, it sometimes does not relate to local folklore, leading to a situation where the *falleros* wearing any kind of regional attire and lacking mandatory elements of the *fallero* garment could be identified as wearing improper uniforms (Ariño 1992b: 45).

The main part of the spectacle of *Las Fallas* belongs to women, although the role they play is mostly ornamental and holds no real power (this has slightly changed since the 1980s when the first woman was elected president of her *falla* (Pilán 2011: 102). Their representatives: *la fallera mayor*, chosen among the collective of all *falleras*, together with *la fallera mayor infantil*, represent the community during *Las Fallas*, but also serve as representation of the Valencian culture during other festivities celebrated outside of the region. The election of these figures originally was not part of the course of this *fiesta* – it was added in the beginning of the 20th century when the festivity was changing its nature from a local celebration to the *fiesta* that was supposed to represent the essence of Valencia and attract the attention of the public and tourists.

### The Evolution of the Festivity

As mentioned before, it is thought that the celebrations of *Las Fallas* were established around the Day of Saint Joseph. In the 18th century, documents started appearing, with references to constructions that were traditionally burned on the days with close proximity to this feast (Ariño 2006: 15). The main themes for the *fallas* in the 19th century were erotica or social criticism. Because of that, *Las Fallas*, together with other popular festivities of those times, suffered condemnation and censorship from the officials as being disruptive to the rules of decorum and unworthy of practicing. That triggered a strong response from society, arguing that the festivities were their sacred right. In 1887 the journal *La Traca*, for the first time granted prizes for the monuments, which in following years

stimulated the appearance of a new type of monument, *la falla artística*, where the aesthetics were the main concern.

In the beginning of the 20th century the awards started to be given by the city council, which demonstrated a slight shift in the perception of the festivity by the officials, who started to notice the public demand for this type of activities and the potential of attracting attention to the city *via* celebrating it. At that time *la falla* structurally started to resemble the current constructions more, with one central figure accompanied by several little ones – *ninots*, from which there was one (*ninot indultat*) chosen by the public to be exempt from the flames (this tradition has lasted until the present time). During that time the themes of the monuments started to be more regionally related with its focus on *lo valenciano*.

The popularity of the *fiesta* required better organization and, with that, in the late twenties special entities were chosen to establish firm rules that would govern *Las Fallas*, and would later in time be transformed into the *Junta Central Fallera*. After organizing a poster contest to assure the advertising of the acts (1929), in 1932 the local government became the entity responsible for the organization of the festivities. As such, it declared that the events, with some new ones added (e.g. the parade – *la cabalgata del ninot*) would take place during a whole week called *la Semana Fallera*, with its culmination – the burning of the statues (*la Cremà*) on Saint Joseph's Day.

After the war the celebration of *Las Fallas* was revived with new elements that focused on the religious aspects. In 1945 *la Ofrenda* was introduced, changing the object of veneration from Saint Joseph to the Virgin Mary (Hernández i Martí 2006b: 49). An important moment in the study of *Las Fallas* comes in the 1960s, with the work of Joan Fuster, who in his publications analyzes not only the origins and the course of the feast but above all its social and cultural meaning for the Valencians (e.g. see Fuster 1992) (for more details on the history of *Las Fallas* see e.g. Ariño 1990, 1992a, 2006).

### **The Current Course of *Las Fallas***

Although for the *falleros* the preparations for this festivity last a whole year, we will limit ourselves to listing only some of the most

important elements of *Las Fallas* that lead to its culmination on 19th of March.

### ***La Crida***

The ceremonious opening of the festival is called *La Crida* (the shout). Currently the event is celebrated at the Torres de Serranos; during its course the city officials give the keys to the city to the *fallera mayor*, thus granting the symbolic right to rule the city to the society of *falleros*.

### ***La Desperta***

To show the non-participating inhabitants that their time to celebrate has begun, *los falleros* wake up their neighbourhood during the period of the festival with daily early morning parades complete with orchestras and fireworks.

These are not the only moments when the fireworks are present in the celebrations as there is also an everyday firework show during the daytime (*la mascletà*), and in the proximity of the 19th of March there are also firework shows during the night (*Nit de Foc*), as well as a fire parade (*la cabalgata de fuego*).

### ***La Plantà***

The artists who build the statues of *Las Fallas* have a limited time to put them on the streets. After that the monuments are graded within the sections to which they belong. This division started in the 1930s, when *fallas* were split into sections according to the budget that was spent on their construction. According to Llopis Piquer, this divided *las comisiones* (commissions) *falleras* into three groups. In the first one, the statues were constructed by the members of the community with scarce funding. The second – by those of the middle class who could afford to organize competitions for the best project of the monument, and later on to hire artists to create the *fallas* within the budget limits. The third group was for the upper class, where *fallas* were created by the same artists who were responsible for choosing the theme and the design (Llopis

Piquer as cited by Ariño 2006: 38). Currently the system is much more complicated and the most valued by the public are the *fallas* from the Special Section (*Sección Especial*). Their budget is normally a few times bigger than those of the other monuments.

### ***La Ofrenda***

As mentioned before, in the 1940s the bringing of the flowers to the *Virgen de los Desamparados*, the patroness of the city, was introduced. Nowadays, because of the number of the *falleros*, it lasts two days. *Las comisiones* come from all parts of Valencia, bringing flowers which are then arranged on a wooden construction assembled in the square adjacent to the basilica, to slowly create the dress of the Virgin.

### ***La Cremà***

On the Day of Saint Joseph all the statues erected on the streets of Valencia are burned to the ground in the event called *La Cremà* (the burning). They are destroyed by the fire in an established order and the burning is a spectacle itself, often arranged by pyrotechnics. This moment is considered the end of one cycle, but also the beginning of the preparations for the next year.

### ***Las Fallas* in the Context of Symbolic Violence**

The tensions in this field were examined by Pedro García Pilán in the context of the work of Pierre Bourdieu (2011). The scientist analyzes the history of the festivity describing the constant interplay of not only economic capital but also the cultural and the social one in the field of this *fiesta*. Relating his observations to those of Ariño, he notices the process of symbolic violence that has been inflicted upon those who first celebrated *Las Fallas*, when the festivities were still considered 'uncivilized'. As such these 'pioneers' were a group socially dominated by those who later, *via* incentives such as prizes, started the trend of creating monuments that were more in accord with the sensibility of the higher class. By eradication of unwanted elements, this popular festival was 'elevated' to its status of a unified festivity worthy (in their opinion, which later become

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the opinion of the majority) representing the region's culture (García Pilán 2011: 98).

Nowadays the dynamics of *Las Fallas* still tend to create many disagreements among the inhabitants of Valencia. Three of them are obvious and stand out the most. The first one is between *los falleros* and the inhabitants of the city who do not participate in the festivities. The *fiesta* cannot pass unnoticed even if one is not willing to participate. The monuments and *carpas* (tents where *los falleros* hold their celebrations) for almost four hundred *comisiones falleras* block the entire city for the duration of the festival and inhibit the regular lifestyle. Because of that those who do not participate often leave the city for the duration of *Las Fallas* if they can.

The second sore point can be found between *los falleros* and the city officials who want to attract tourists and bring revenue to the city by any means necessary. To achieve that, sometimes officials want to tamper with the already established traditions, which is hard to accept for the community (e.g., the latest idea has been to change the date of *Las Fallas* and move it according to the calendar and the weekends, which would allow more people to visit the city).

Other disagreements can be found between *los falleros* themselves, as they come from different *fallas* with different means, and their vision of the future of the festivity varies, as a few commissions (mainly from the special section) thrive, but many nowadays struggle financially and are trying to find some new solutions that would let them survive (Mesa 2006: 77). A curious example of this practice is, e.g., a recent attempt to build a *falla* via crowd funding.

Although the balance between different interests can be easily broken, the festival of *Las Fallas* encounters ways to evolve, allowing *los falleros* to celebrate each year their ritual, as the figures associated with the corrupted reality are reduced to flames, purifying and restoring the community with this civil ceremony.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Spalili je, kochani. Spalili je wszystkie. Nie ma już gigantycznych kameleonów, upiora w operze ani goliutkich ślicznotek ze spiralami na uszach. W szalonej Walencji nie ostała się ani jedna 'falla'. Spalili je wszystkie.* (Kobylarczyk 2013: 67).

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(All translations, if not indicated differently, were made by the present author).

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## **Folk Belief and Rituals about Bread in Sweden. Some Interpretations and Comparisons with Today's Hipster Culture**

**Abstract.** Among traditions concerning bread baking, breads connected with the celebration of Christmas are special. There were Christmas breads baked in the shape of birds, pigs, horses and even more imaginative shapes, to be given to the children. There were also yellow "Lucia cats" (*lussekatter*), baked with saffron. These are still baked every year in most households in Sweden.

One special bread, the "Christmas cake" or "spring cake", used to be saved until spring farmwork, and was then divided and given to the horse(s) or ox(en), as well as to every member of the family. Finally, the rest would in some cases be crumbled and spread over a field. This ritual has been interpreted by older folklorists as a kind of fertility cult, an interpretation I want to discuss here.

I will also compare the historical bread tradition with today's hipster culture in urban, postmodern Sweden, where young fathers bake their own sourdough bread. This can also be interpreted as a kind of ritual, maybe not so far from the old farmer's ambition to ensure for the family's welfare.

**Key words:** bread, Christmas, fertility, ritual, hipster

Bread is more than just something to eat. Bread is a symbol of life, a symbol for surviving and also a symbol for celebration, for festivals, and so it has been for hundreds of years. If you do not have bread, you have nothing to eat. No wonder that ethnologists have taken an interest in how different kinds of bread express social and cultural standards, working organisations, and celebrations.

In Sweden, Åke Campbell, published *The Swedish bread* (Det svenska brödet) in 1950, a comparative ethnographic/historical investigation of how bread was made, and what meaning it had through the decades until the middle of the twentieth century.

The history of baking shows us that it all started with baking the bread over the fire in a simple way. In Sweden, in older times, the dough was made with barley, perhaps flour from peas, or rye, plus



Figure 1. The Swedish saffron buns "Lucia cats". Photo from "Sju sorters kakor", ICA bokförlag, 1985.

water and nothing else. Bread was made only twice a year, then dried and stored.

Baking twice a year meant work for many days during which the village women baked together and men were banned; this was an exclusively female field of work and get-together.

For festivals, and especially Christmas, different bread was made, breads not for storing but for consuming at Christmas. These breads were decorated; they were soft, and they were baked from rye; some could even be baked from wheat, but this was extremely rare. The bread was laid in piles on the table on Christmas Eve, one pile for every member of the family, in some cases complemented with a cheese. The children were often given bread in shape of pigs, horses, or other animals, and also an apple. In the middle of the table there was one, sometimes two, round loaves. The 13th of January, when Christmas was over, only those round loafs, one or two, were left, and they were saved until spring.

Those so-called Christmas cakes, or spring cakes, were given to the people on the farm, and to the horses, on the first day of sowing in the spring. This very special bread was seen as a survival by folklorists and ethnologists in the decades around 1900 (P:n Nilsson 1915, Keyland 1919 et al). Åke Campbell, however, never made such presumptions and did not discuss the possibility of such breads being a survival from pre-Christian periods. The survival theories of Frazer, Mannhardt and Tylor had long been abandoned by ethnologists and folklorists when Campbell published his bread book in 1950. Other ethnologists, like Albert Eskeröd, also discussed Christmas bread, and the spring cake, from a more functional perspective. Attempts to interpret Christmas bread as evidence of a pre-Christian, Old Norse cult concerning bread are hopeless, he wrote. The survival theories take it for granted that there was once a cultural unity, which over time had been destroyed, leaving only fragments. Instead, Eskeröd suggests that the function of the spring cake is undoubtedly to give extraordinary power to the horse and to the family before the hard work of sowing. In people's imaginations, and with magical thinking, Christmas could load the bread with this power. This is an example of how farmers in premodern times, long before modern, scientific farming, made efforts to guarantee the survival of the family with the help of the supernatural (Eskeröd 1953). There is no basis for the presumption that the spring cake was an inheritance from pre-Christian periods.

However, earlier folklorists maintained, for example, that Christmas bread harks back to a very old tradition from pre-Christian times. The traditions connected to Christmas food, and especially to Christmas bread, would, if you believe in the survival theories concerning fertility rituals, have to be regarded as survivals from prehistoric times when there were magical rituals, within a fertility cult, to ensure good harvests. The Christmas cake, which is saved until spring and then divided into several pieces to be eaten by the family members and the horses, was thus ripe for interpretation as a survival. Martin P:n Nilsson, a Swedish folklorist and religious historian, wrote that the tradition of how to handle the Christmas cake, baked from last year's crop, is an expression of the idea that fertility in the year to come is within this cake itself (Nilsson 1915). That is, ideas about the last sheaf giving an extra amount of power to the new harvest. Saying this, he makes it clear that he is working

from the perspective of the survival theories which were dominant and accepted by most scholars at the time. This was written in 1915 and probably reflects the only interpretation possible at the time; Nilsson, like all of us, have to work within the theoretical paradigms prevailing at the time.

Nilsson also examines the fact that the Christmas table is laid, with bread and all kinds of Christmas food – pork, cheese, butter, porridge – through the night of Christmas Eve, for deceased family members, who were supposed to visit the old home during this night. This is a survival, Nilsson suggests, of pre-historic sacrifices to fertility goddesses, but without presenting any evidence.

Breads looking like pigs or horses, baked to amuse the children at Christmas were, for Nilsson and his generation, evidence of Old Norse sacrifices of pigs and other animals to the gods. However, those breads cannot have been baked before Medieval times, for the simple reason that they imply fermentation – and that kind of bread was unknown in Sweden until late Medieval times and, furthermore, they did not become common among the majority until after that time (Campbell 1950). Nilsson, and other fertility scholars, therefore, and for other reasons, construct their theories from a weak empirical basis.

A bread which today is called “Lucia cat” is a saffron bun still eaten on Lucia Day. This kind of bun seems to have been imported from Germany in the 17th century, a fact that would not have been accepted by survival theorists who would like to have given them a much longer Nordic history. There is a legend that the devil, in the shape of a cat, punished the children, while Jesus instead gave buns to nice children. To keep the devil, away the buns were coloured and given flavour with saffron, a very expensive spice.

This tradition, in contrast to other Christmas breads, is very much alive today. I dare say you could not find one person in Sweden today who does not eat those yellow “Lucia cats”, beginning on Advent Sunday or earlier, until Christmas. Most families bake them, but you can also buy them in any café or grocer’s shop. In a way one could say that “Lucia cats” are used in a magical way, even if it is a very diluted magic. When everyone is waiting, and longing, for Christmas, the “Lucia cats” give promise of the Christmas festival to come, and make Christmas feel a little closer.

Even other kinds of bread or cakes can be said to be “magic”; with a strawberry cake, with whipped cream and fresh strawberries, summer starts. No celebration of Mother’s day, a school examination, or a birthday party from the middle of May until the end of July can take place without a strawberry cake; the strawberry cake makes a summer.

So, what is the meaning of bread in Sweden today? Home-made is the key word. When Campbell wrote his book about bread around 1950, he presumed that the time of home-made bread was over or almost over. Even in the countryside, house-wives wanted to buy bread. He writes in the English summary:

*It is comparatively recently that the professional bakery trade which had ancient traditions in the towns, began to cater to the country people’s demand for daily bread. Bakers established bakeries in the villages, following the trade traditions which had long belonged to the towns. Already the abolition of trade restrictions in 1846 was a threat to the home-made bread, but in spite of that it survived in most country houses during the whole of the 19th century. During the 20th century bakery-made bread is, however, becoming more generally used among country people, and especially among lumberers and other non-farmers.*

This was 1950. Twenty years later something happened, a sudden interest for baking at home emerged among young parents. Today this interest has grown even more and today you cannot be really trendy if you do not bake your own bread – with sourdough, not yeast. This belongs to so-called hipster culture, growing especially in Stockholm and other big cities among fairly young, well-educated people, well paid and politically aware, such as journalists, psychologists, economists, consultants, doctors.

Baking your own sourdough bread has become a male business and young, trendy fathers spend much time with their children. Swedish parents have almost two years of paid parental leave, 102 weeks. Many parents share it so that the mother and the father stay at home, first the mother for one year, then the father, also for a year. It seems that the most extreme sourdough trend has grown among those young fathers in the “hippest” areas of Stockholm city. Parental leave, the values connected with political awareness and strong

ideas about equality contribute to a special culture in postmodern, urban Sweden, in which home-made bread has a special place.

In this part of Stockholm, south city, there are even some hotels for sourdough; when going away, you must have someone take care of your dear sourdough starter. Furthermore, if you travel through Sweden on the small roads in summer, you will find signs telling you about cafés with home-made (*hembakt*) buns and cakes, and nowadays also bread baked with sourdough.

So, in postmodern Sweden, home-made bread, buns and cakes symbolize quality and – why not – contact with the old farmer Sweden. My question is: if the difference between the father on a farm in nineteenth-century Sweden, who gave pieces from the Christmas cake to the family members, and the young hipster father in Stockholm south city, really is that big. Is it not in both cases a question of giving your family a good quality of life? For the former, a good harvest so that you would not starve, for the other good health and security about what you give to your family to eat.

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## **The Magic of Wine Marketing: Invented Rituals of Slovene Wine Queens**

**Abstract.** Wine Queens are a contemporary marketing phenomenon, which spread throughout Slovenia with the expansion of small private winemakers in the years after the independence in 1991. Essentially, they enhance the recognisability of wines, spread and promote the wine-drinking culture, but they also continue the old, and create new rituals connected with wine. Women in the role of wine queens, with their manifestations and ritual ceremonies, have emerged from the background of a largely male wine industry, where they had been obliged traditionally to remain on the side, although they played a crucial labour role.

**Key words:** Wine Queen, Slovenia, invented rituals

### **Introduction**

By 2015, over forty “royal” titles were bestowed in Slovenia, mostly in relation to food and drink. Nearly half of these titles went to wine queens. Even though organizers claim that such local contests are truly original and the result of their own creative efforts, it is safe to say that the Slovene wine kingdom sprouted from a foreign seed, from the German-speaking countries. This invented tradition is based on the concept of beauty pageants, and on the fear that despite its increasing quality and production, wine will eventually be edged out by other, more fashionable alcoholic beverages.

Most of the Slovene traditions associated with wine queens have been newly invented after Slovenia’s independence in 1991 when a sense of Slovene identity increased and when the small-scale winemakers, who lacked any joint promotion at the time, wanted to be more visible. Over the years, as the invented tradition became well established and the title of the wine queen acquired a certain prestige, such coronation rituals multiplied following the requirements of the wine industry. Although the wine queens identify with their newly-acquired identity of promoters of wine and the wine-drinking culture, and are frequently in the spotlight during

their term of office, they cannot transcend their role of a visual prop with very little public influence. Once they hand their crown to their successors even that influence vanishes. In view of the veritable multitude of coronations of wine highnesses in Slovenia, the critical voices of the heritage experts, have abated. As a result, the Slovene wine heritage is permeated with tawdriness, references to the national identity are frequently false, the wine queens are largely sexist symbols, and the wine kingdoms are too large.

In order to understand the socio-cultural role of wine queens we need to know: which women are allowed to join the competitions or selections and for what reasons; what beliefs and what experiences do they have; how, where, and when are wine queen selections performed; who pays them and who expects to benefit from them? Within the answers to these questions, asked in specific socio-cultural circumstances, lies the answer to how wine queens and other harvest queens are situated between representation and consumption, and how they become symbols of identity.

### **Historical Overview**

The first local wine queen – Queen of Teran – was crowned in 1979 in former Yugoslavia. In 1995, the coronation of the first Wine Queen of Slovenia was held in Vipava. In Ljutomer, where the first Slovene Wine Growing society was founded in 1872, the Wine Queen of Ljutomer was crowned in 1986; in Svečina the first Wine Queen of Svečina was crowned in 1987. In the same period other winemakers in certain districts or in wine growing areas also crowned their queens, princesses and kings. In 1992, Novo mesto granted a title to the Cviček (a wine) King for the first time; the town of Maribor won the title of Queen of Maribor Wine Growing Region in 1996; the titles of Wine Queen of Radgona-Kapela Hills, Princess of Cviček and Ambassador of Cviček were awarded in 1999; since 2005 Ptuj has its Wine Queen of Ptuj; from 2006 to 2008 there was the Queen of Zelén Wine and in 2009 she was renamed to Vipava Wine Queen; since 2008 new titles were awarded to the Wine Queen of Slovene Istria, the Wine Queen of Metliška Črnina; the Wine Queen of Kog; and the Wine Queen of Cerkvenjak.

At the same time, some local associations that take care of educational, social and cultural life and of adaptation to new circumstances in the field of agriculture also organize contemporary festivals celebrating nature and those that cultivate it. One such municipality with twenty years of granting crowns is Juršinci in Prlekija, where girls received honorary queen's titles from 1993 to 2012 in events called Autumn Thanking (Toplak 1997, 2004, 2010; Ramšak 2012; Ramšak 2013; Ramšak 2014): Queen of the Autumn, Queen of Bread, Queen of Wine, Queen of Fruit, Queen of Cheese, Queen of Poultry, Queen of Agriculture, Queen of Flowers, Queen of Housewives, Queen of Wine, Queen of Music, Queen of Hearts, Queen of Horses, Queen of Hospitality and Tourism, Queen of Nature and the Hunters, Queen of Custom, Queen of Honey, Queen of Water, Queen of the Castle, Queen of Slovene Hills, and Queen of the Queens.

Tourist associations and public or private tourism agencies bestowed yet other titles. For example: Hop-Princess in Savinja Valley (since 1962); Cider-Girl in Mežica Valley (since 1999), Queen of Cherries in Šmartno and Dobrovo in Gorizia Hills (since 2009, before that it was Miss Cherry – cherry blossom) and in Lower Carniola (since 2000), Pumpkin Queen in Lipovci near Beltinci (since 2010), Queen of Woodenware in Ribnica (since 2011), Queen of Bograč (a stew) in Lendava (since 2011). The food industry has engaged with Honey Queens in Gornja Radgona (2009) and Dairy Queens of Slovene brands (2008), which promote the regular consumption of dairy products and raise the quality of Slovene milk, free of genetically modified organisms (Ramšak 2012: 102; Ramšak 2013: 80; Ramšak 2014: 49).

The mandate of the Wine Queen of Slovenia and other regional or local wine queens lasts one year, except in the case of Styria and Prekmurje wine queens, where the title lasts two years. Wine Queens must be single/unmarried. However, there are exceptions. The Wine Queen of Svečina must be married or living in a consensual union and her husband/partner becomes the keeper of the Svečina village vine with her election. Marital status is not an impediment for Prekmurje Wine Queens. Wine queens can be elected several times; they can be local, regional as well as national. The regions with the most wine queens overlap with the wine growing areas.

(Kuljaj 2005: 186; Curk 2011: 17–25; Ramšak 2012: 101; Ramšak 2013: 79–80; Ramšak 2014: 48).

### **The Material Inventory of Wine Queens**

The inauguration of wine queens may include: parades, carnivals, formal celebrations, national and international wine competitions, fairs and other public events. In addition, the enthronement of wine queens is also a form of enactment of social rituals, visual codes, dress codes, uses of make-up, forms of expression of competitiveness towards other candidates, submitting to the jury, and the management of protocol behaviour.

In order to be better acquainted with the functions of wine and other queens, I acquired the personal views on their 'reign' of nine queens and princesses from different parts of Slovenia in 2012 and 2014. In addition, I read their published diaries or reports, and visited the spring or autumn events several times, where either new wines were chosen or where they played a key role in the cultural program.

In the initiation ritual of wine queens their material inventory is a very important component. This, with only minor variations consist of: a gold crown or diadem with motifs of grapes and vine leaves, sometimes with a coat-of-arms, which is a symbol of power; sash, ring, gown or/and coat, queen's throne, queen's key, queen's wine, a flag, vinicultural scissors, queen's escort, for example, page boys. The material inventory of wine queens does not always contain all these elements, it depends on a queen's ingenuity, the financial capability of sponsors, the length of the title awarded, attributing importance to the tradition of the event, and other circumstances.

The time wine queens spend on their costumographic image shows that the selection of queens also has, in addition to marketing functions, sexual dimensions. The queens' material inventory, their new social roles, and the rule, that, exceptional cases apart, only unmarried young women get into the selection. An attractive appearance is an important factor in the selection of wine queens. It appears that the selection of wine queens has a ritualistic role in the life cycle of the girls that are associated with wine, and that this rite of passage is almost impossible without attractiveness. Selection of wine queens as a rite of passage marks the transition from one

status (or phase) to another. It is not a transition from girlhood to womanhood, but more a transition from the state with fewer social roles and responsibilities to the situation where the wine queen takes many new roles in a year or two of her reign. Therefore, being a wine queen has also educational functions for the girls.

The symbolism of the material inventory is also evident in the conceptual foundations of the clothing image of wine queens and in their way of make-up and hairstyles. The gowns of wine queens are a metaphor for their sexual and moral status, where the eroticism of a covered body and accented women's curves are mixed with decency. Metaphors relating to the wine queen costumes are playing with colours, shapes and materials, and thus try to influence the response, mood, perception and imagination of the observer. The colour of the wine queens' gowns is the same as colour of wine they represent: red and white or burgundy, purple, beige, yellow, or greenish shades. Materials are shiny and rarely dim. The length and tight shapes of festive dresses are redolent of a wine glass or a bottle of wine; they also symbolize a female figure.

Similar metaphors as for the wine queens' dresses can be attributed to the hairstyle of wine queens, where hair tied up together symbolizes seriousness, while loose and curled hair symbolizes playfulness, which can be compared with a heavy wine, or one that need some time to be animated in a glass, and light, maybe a bit sweeter wine. The hairstyle opposites "tied up" vs. "loose" are only one of the orientational metaphors in which concepts are spatially linked to each other, in a way where all good things are up and bad are down. This pattern in which concepts are characterized by an upward orientation, while their opposites receive a downward orientation, is visible and advertised also through other metaphors, such as, the "a wine queen is the crown of wine growing". In this case the crown is on the upper side of the body, what expresses excellence. Another often used metaphor is, "wine queens are raising the drinking and wine culture", meaning figuratively, that both cultures are rising and improving with their help.

Make-up, which is part of the costumographic image of the wine queen, is associated with certain social codes that allow the wine queen to access secondary benefits, such as power, prestige, sex appeal and increased self-confidence. Photographic comparison

of the make-up styles of contemporary wine queens with queens from past decades and from different countries shows that they reflect the global trend from more to less make-up, from noticeable make-up techniques to more concealed ones. Metaphorically, this can mean three things: a return to nature and to a healthy and environmentally-conscious society; the message of a well-kept young woman who gets a new prominent role in society, which increases her self-esteem and reputation; and internalization of a not quite overcome excessive paternalism censuring the morality of artificial girls.

The prominent role of cosmetics, and the presence of a cosmetician, make-up artist, hairdresser and dressmaker also illustrate the importance of a new temporary social status of the wine queen. Information on cosmetic products and services are often exchanged on social networks or in person, and become part of wine queens' identity even after they have handed over the crown to their successors. A higher grade the wine queen in the hierarchy has – on the scale from local, regional to national – the more she emphasizes her physical appearance. Senior queens, married queens, the queens with children – if permitted by the selection's rules – and the former queens, who long ago handed over the crown, devote less time to exchange beauty tips. For them, beauty is not the central preoccupation, because they've already lived their experience of being exposed and graded for their beauty together with their knowledge on wine. Finally, the metaphor of the whole image of the wine queen potentially bears the last hidden message, namely that the wine queen is ready for consumption, like the wine she represents.

The dimensions of the whole costumographic metaphors of wine queens are always culturally specific; sometimes elements, from which it may be referring to national identity, climatic conditions, etc., are added, but we can rarely deduce out of these elements any individual characteristics of the wine queen. Even the wine queen must represent a model of beauty and femininity, which applies to that is considered normal in her environment, and not her own beliefs that may deviate from this ideal. Initially, some Slovene wine queens arranged about the dress, the crown, etc. themselves and according to their own feelings, but eventually their image has become an important side business at the coronation of wine and

other queens. Wine queens are a more cultural than individual brand, which is represented through intangible, imagined assessments connected mostly with national, regional and local identity and gender roles. Personal branding of wine queens emphasizes their attitude, character and communication skills. Cultural and personal branding of wine queens are sources by which allows others to box them into categories: she's beautiful, she's witty, she has working morale, etc.

The appropriate verbal and visual metaphors, attached to the wine queens, aim to work wonders in promoting the wines, to attract the attention of the viewers and to communicate culturally available meanings. Branding of wine queens is powered on the queens' images, their body language, facial expressions, and gestures, and on understandable metaphors and slogans, used in wine advertising.

### **Reactions: Positive and Critical**

These metaphors and slogans can be used in a positive, but also in a negative way, especially in the media with more trivial contents. On one side, the media relate the new functions of wine queens with the metaphors and synonyms, they bear after the election: "Queen of Slovene land", "the first lady of winemakers", "connoisseur and lover of wine", "ambassador of Slovene wines", "harbinger of the nobility of Slovene wines", "bouquet of Slovene wines", "crown of Slovene wine-producing and wine country", "legate of Slovene tourism and cultural heritage". When two generations of women from the same family are crowned as wine queens, the older gets the title "Queen Mother". For the Queen's provenance journalists like to reiterate the phrase "love of the vine, wine or wine culture was placed in her cradle". Such positive metaphors represent the honour and value of the wine queens in an environment where they live and are again alluding to the monarch's life.

However, when at the coronation incidence of various complications arise, such as to the ownership of the license of the event, the media publish, that the wine queen lacks autonomy and metaphorically ask "who harvests her grapes", or "who drank her wine", although wine queens have nothing to do with this. In some cases, the media also reported in an extremely offensive way and portrayed the

wine queens as “drunken wine flies”, gave sensational highlights in the titles of articles, for example, “Wine Queen Topless”, or “Wine Queen drank on Mount Triglav” when they scaled it to point what are their educational functions. In the case of other elections in agriculture, they stick ambiguous and sexist labels on them. Thus, it is not surprising that many wine queens write and design the media messages themselves, and are therefore responsible for their own visibility and dissemination of knowledge about their importance.

## Conclusion

Taking all the above considerations regarding the award of the women's queen titles in agriculture, the question remains whether these selections in any way actually benefit women and empower them. It is well known that the role and extent of women's involvement in the agricultural sector are successful if women can largely decide themselves on agricultural production; if they have access and the ability to make decisions about resources; if they have control over income and expenditures; if they have the leadership roles in the community; and if their power is proportional to the power of men. It may be said that the only significant progress in the selection of wine queens is that young women have acquired more public exposure and better opportunities of speaking in public, but even this is mostly of a protocol nature. Very few wine queens actually own land, a vineyard, or agricultural machinery for the production of wine. In the absence of these key elements, in particular the autonomy of agricultural production and ownership of resources, such contests unfortunately cannot bring any progress in any of these points. Also the public speaking, which seems to be one of the obvious benefits of wine queen contests is directed by others, mostly men.

A question needs to be raised whether enthronements of wine queens, which require a great deal of effort and expenses for all involved, and that in the long run do not yield any significant profit, truly and sufficiently popularize all that is being promoted by the wine queens, namely the wine drinking culture and normal, non-problematic enjoyment of alcohol, particularly among the young. The statistics on excessive drinking of teenagers and young adults are becoming more and more alarming, since more and more young-

sters become alcohol addicted. Perhaps the organizers of the wine queen contest disregarded the fact that cultural and social aspects of consuming the alcohol are associated with values, attitudes and beliefs, which young people may not easily identify through the figures, etiquette and ritual practices of wine queens. More attention should be paid on the defining the drinking situations, the role of social integration, bonding, ritual roles, the gender and social status of a particular group, class or even the nationality of young drinkers. Perhaps then the wine queens' roles as the guardians of social propriety and self-control would come more to light. So far they have been successful mostly in the function of mascots who sell wine. Therefore, from the standpoint of wine producers and wine sellers, they perform their task as unpaid force excellently. Decreasing of drinking alcohol, which is closely connected with promoting of cultural drinking, is not really in the focus of the largest wine producers at all. Nonetheless, some wine queens stay in the wine business or wine tourism after they give away the crown. There, they professionally specialize in wine marketing, they give a voice to the minority groups of the small winemakers in regions where cultural heritage and reputation for indigenous wine production is also economically important. In this sense they get a chance to valuable contribute to the field and give some hope that in a long term drinking culture might improve; their former roles as wine queens makes more sense.

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## **Magic of a Toast**

**Abstract.** The author explored the connection between toast and magic. Discourses used: glyuttonic, historical, philosophical, rhetorical. Structures of typical toast, several typologies of toasts are identified.

**Key words:** toast, table ritual, magic

The research objective is to determine the role of a toast in modern ritual of a feast. The research discusses the following problems:

1. To designate the functions of a toast.
2. To consider the structure of toast in the concept of its connection with the magical ritual.
3. To give the typology of toasts.
4. To show similarities and distinctions of ritual of a toast for different ethnic groups all over the world.

*Toast* is a word from the English language, a slightly roasted slice of bread. In past times, before drinking wine or any stronger drink, inhabitants of the British Isles would dip into it a slice of bread roasted over a fire to give a grainy aroma and flavour to the drink. Subsequently, the tradition of dipping the toast was forgotten, but another was born: “toasting” before drinking. A toast now is one of the genres of table etiquette (ritual), along with a small talk, a song and, in some cases, greeting and farewell. All of these genres have different roles in terms of communication strategy, value concepts and their degree of actualization. For example, within the framework of Western cultures the most popular feast genre is a secular talk. French communicative style has almost no traditions associated with giving toasts during feasts (Kremshokalova 2012: 91).

The ritual of eating food collectively exists in all cultures: simple and complex, ancient and modern. On special occasions, when consum-

ing alcoholic beverages in Russian and some eastern and southern cultures, the toast is an important element. Its main functions are:

1. Communicative. The exchange of certain information between people takes place at the table. The secular meal has its roots in the sacred, dating back to the sacrifice, during which conversation between people and the gods occurs;
2. Integrating. Eating together strengthens social bonds; the presence at a common table automatically includes a person in a circle or collective. A special unity is felt by people in the process of offering a toast, with the following actions of glasses touching and drinking;
3. Differentiating. Occupying a party banquet space and consuming the food becomes a means of social identification. The differentiating role of the toast is shown in the following oppositions, often conditional: the opposition “host-guest” social status opposition, age opposition, gender opposition, toast-maker/recipient, etc.
4. Utopian. Feast appears as a kind of ideal model of the future, conjugated with fun and an abundance of food. Drunkenness and gluttony, having a carnival character, are specific ways to achieve the state of utopia. Even people who observe relative moderation in everyday life often absorb an incredible amount of food and drink at large celebrations. The toast serves to provide a reason for such behaviour (“I didn’t want to drink, but it was necessary to drink for it!”).
5. Maintains continuity of spiritual culture. A toast provides transfer of cultural values from generation to generation by means of certain signs and rules of symbolic behaviour. This feature is shown primarily in the following of etiquette accepted by this group of people.

The importance of table ritual is in the explication of cultural values; communication thus transforms the feast from the physiological act of eating and drinking into a realization of the people’s spiritual values. Since ancient times, feasts were a place where tradition was transferred in the form of moral maxims. Table verbal communications (drinking songs, discussions, friendly informal conversations, including toasts, stories, and epigrams) are combined with nonverbal components (the collection of gifts, the order of seating at the

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table, demeanour, participants' clothing, etc.). The toast takes a special place among verbal components promoting the transfer of life-living experience.

Discourses on the toast:

- Gluttonic, understood as a process of communicative activity of a cognitive-semiotic nature;
- Historical and source study, considering toasts from the standpoint of their impact on the historical process. The image of Stalin giving a toast at a reception for graduates of military academies of the Red Army on May 4, 1935, for example, originally contained the word "Cadres means everything, and not mares and machines"; only after Stalin edited the final version did it go down in history as "Cadres mean everything!" (Savin 2005).
- Philosophical: during the holiday feast, especially when offering toasts, transcendental channels between the individual and the world around are opened and the desire to generalize the experience is realized through the linguistic and semiotic symbols.
- Rhetorical, where toast is considered as an art, a sample of a well-designed artistic speech.

There is no doubt that correctly formulated toasts have tremendous power to influence listeners. The thrust of the genre is primarily predetermined by the lexical content of the text, intonation, illocutionary and perlocutionary modalities, as well as by ritual actions accompanying speech acts, which give general support and are keyed to the text. Toasts echo the integrating function of meals, as sharing food strengthens social bonds, representing a magical act, a godly form of social communication. Although magical acts do not exist in table manners, there is a verbal magic supported by the collective consciousness of the participants in the communication. In many cultures, one of the key phrases when toasting is, "Let God be with you ...!", which is also linked to the origin of the magical toast.

A typical toast consists of the *main part* containing certain parables, stories, history, observations, etc.; the main task of the speaker is to prepare audience for the final part by attracting attention, intriguing at listeners; and the *final generalization* with naming the subject of the toast and calling on those gathered to drink to

it. At this moment, the concentrated collective energy of the group is transmitted to the toast's hero (celebrant) or spread to the audience ("For us!").

### **Typology of Toasts**

It is possible to classify the toast by a large number of features. It can express any emotion, from love to hatred. Toasts can be sentimental, lyrical, comic; short or long, sometimes being expressed with one word. Traditions associated with this form of oratory reach back to ancient times. In the old days toasts were prepared in advance, varied widely, and then gradually changed both in content and in form. The lack of time for preparation and memorizing long toasts was one of the reasons. Thus, the toast can be regarded as auto-precedent (if speaker repeatedly uses the same toast for a long time), as social precedents (if a toast is used among members of a particular social group) and as national precedents (if a toast is used in a certain linguo-cultural community). We might suggest a typology of toasts on these themes and subjects:

1. Direct appeal to drink;
2. Congratulations to the holiday, celebration;
3. Wishing health, wealth, happiness, etc.;
4. Adoption of universal values (peace, friendship, love, professionalism, family, etc.);
5. Pathos of life, company, feasts, friendship, value of a minute, etc.;
6. Lively, interesting thought, memory, and observation;
7. Historical, philosophical, lyrical themes: excursions and parallels;
8. Erotic flirting;
9. Compliment;
10. Interesting information;
11. Personal toast, with respect to the presence of... (name);
12. Humour, joke or anecdote; "So let us drink for cybernetics!"

13. Practical joke;

14. Mercy.

There is also a typology of toasts based on the textual flourishes used tools of decorating the text. This is based on the toast's compositional techniques and rhetorical choices:

1. Reception of using ready texts. Anacreontic toast;
2. Reception of rhyming;
3. Acceptance of the joke;
4. Toast-reflection;
5. We emphasize the necessity of toasts for ladies in the Russian table culture;
6. Allegory. "I want our children to have rich (healthy, intelligent, smart, etc.) parents!";
7. Shocking. "I want you to be killed ... at the age of 150 years by jealous man, and his jealousy has the reason!";
8. Using fashionable words;
9. Method of stylization. In imitation character, antiquity and so on;
10. Unexpected lexical interpretation;
11. Playful typology. ("Pensioners are divided into camels, still working, the shepherds who care for their grandchildren, and sadists. So let us drink for us sadists who like working in our garden!"), etc.

Let us now consider the relationship of toast and magical ritual when pronouncing "For your health!" on the philosophical level. Modern medical science and medical institutes appropriate many sacral functions and, while people know about the limitations of medicine, even "medicine of high technologies", they mostly do not speak about callousness and the bureaucratic estrangement of medical institutions. Modern medicine is infrequently able to cure perfectly, and has difficulty addressing questions of immortality. The so-called "healthy way of life" also does not guarantee against accidental death. Therefore people often avoid dialogue

with doctors and come back to the traditional, often magical rituals focused on health. Thus, the person saying a toast “For health” appeals to spheres of magic and religion, cultivating contact with the prospective transcendental blessing and, at last, to the sphere of practical philosophizing, as though to “exorcise” the powers of darkness. Thus, in a toast “For health!”, the philosophical position allows one to look death in the face, as in the Meduze Gorgone, and not be turned to stone, understanding that we do not have reliable rational guarantees neither on eternal life, nor on its average duration (Yudin 2011: 230).

### **Conclusions**

1. Toast is a small genre of verbal communication, one of the elements of the structure of feast’s table ritual. It has several research discourses: gluttonic, historical source study, philosophical, rhetorical, and others.
2. We have identified five functions of toast: communicative, integrative, differentiating, utopian, continuity of spiritual culture (cultural and educational).
3. There is magic toast, determined by the close historical, cultural and axiological connection with magic and religious rituals and is expressed in linguistic and semantic, kinesic, and other behaviourist components.

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## **Magical Poppets in the Western Roman Empire: a Case Study from the Fountain of Anna Perenna**

**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to examine an interesting case of aggressive magic dated to the IV century AD and discovered in the Roman sanctuary of the goddess *Anna Perenna*. The poppet represents a man trapped in the coils of a snake, who was additionally attached to a *defixio* and enclosed in a series of three miniature leaden cinerary urns. The ensemble was finally deposited within the cistern of the fountain, where the victim was consecrated to the goddess and her nymphs.

**Key words:** magical poppets, *Anna Perenna*, *defixio*

### **1. Introduction**

Since the publication of Christopher Faraone's article in *Classical Antiquity* (1991), the number of magical poppets discovered in the Latin West has doubled. Currently we know of 35 figurines, which form a limited but meaningful ensemble. The use of poppets, attested from the V century BCE onwards, is closely linked to the use of curse tablets (*defixiones*). Both types of objects belong to the category of aggressive magic and were used to achieve purposes otherwise unattainable through "normal" or "legal" methods, since "...they were intended to influence, by supernatural means, the actions or welfare of persons or animals against their will" (Jordan 1985: 151).

Within this framework, the main difference between the poppet and the "typical" *defixio* is simply one of shape (Ogden 2009<sup>2</sup>: 245): while the former is an anthropomorphic representation of the victim him- or herself, the *defixio*, usually but not always a lead *tabella* (on the different media employed, see Vallarino 2010 and Sánchez Natalías 2011), constrains the victim merely through the engraving of his or her name. From the III century AD onwards, however, we also find drawings of bound victims on the tablets, whose function was exactly the same as that of poppets (Faraone 1991: 25).

Thanks to the “Greek Magical Papyri” (hereafter *PGM*, with its editor specified when necessary) – true treatises of ancient magic –, we know a fair amount about the manufacture of this kind of poppet. Apart from some brief instructions (such as *PGM* XXIV b, 1–15; *PGM* CXV, 1–6; etc.), the most complete recipe is a love spell of attraction which prescribes (*PGM* IV, 296–334): “take some wax or some clay [...] and mold two figures, male and female. Arm the male one like Ares, brandishing a sword in his left and striking the female’s neck on her right side. Put the female doll’s hands behind her back and make her kneel” (English translation by Ogden 2009<sup>2</sup>: number 239: 247). Then, and after inscribing several magical words over the woman’s body, the recipe continues: “take thirteen bronze needles and insert one of them into the brain [...] two more into her eyes, one into her mouth, two below her rib cage, one into her hands, two into her vulva and anus, and two into the soles of her feet, while on each occasion saying once “I pierce the (insert name of the part) of (insert her name), so that she may think of no one, except me alone (insert your name)”. Take a lead tablet, inscribe the same spell on it, and say it through. Bind the tablet to the figures [...] while saying [...] “Abrasax, constrain her”. Lay it as the sun sets, besides the grave of one untimely dead or dead by violence, and lay flowers of the season there with it...” (English translation by Ogden 2009<sup>2</sup>: number 239: 248).

This recipe, preserved in the so-called great magical papyrus, now in Paris, is dated to the IV century AD and describes a complicated Graeco-Egyptian praxis, all of whose components are perfectly defined. This constitutes the most precise recipe for making a magical poppet within the *corpus* of the *PGM*, and it has a striking parallel in a poppet from Egypt (on which see the interpretation of Ritner 2008<sup>4</sup>: 112–113 and Ogden 2009<sup>2</sup>: number 240; Louvre Museum, Inv. number 27145). With these instructions provided by the *PGM* in mind, we can now turn to the find from Rome, which dates from a similar period.

## 2. A case study from the fountain of *Anna Perenna*

The fountain, discovered in 1999 by Marina Piranomonte and her team, is a Roman sanctuary consecrated to the ancient goddess *Anna Perenna* and her nymphs (*vid.* Piranomonte 2010 and 2012).

Located in the modern Piazza Euclide (Rome), between the 2nd and the 3rd milestone along the Via Flaminia (the Tiberian *Fasti Vaticani*, however, placed the fountain near to the 1st milestone; for this controversy, see Piranomonte 2010: 192–193), the sanctuary was in use, at least, from the IV century BCE until the VI century AD. Typologically, the fountain was a *krene*, i.e. a revetment fountain with a concealed cistern to the rear. This cistern preserved an extraordinary ritual deposit comprising 549 coins, 74 oil-lamps, 22 curse tablets, 10 sets of containers made of lead or clay, a bucket, seven pine cones, egg shells, twigs and small wooden plaques (Piranomonte 2012).

## 2.1 The container's contents

Upon its discovery, the artefact discussed here appeared to be a single small container with a sealed lid (measurements: 7.5 [height] x 6.5 [lid Ø] cm). When opened, however, the archaeologists uncovered a wonderful ensemble consisting of three lead cylinders nested within each other, like “Russian dolls” (middle container: 7 x 5.5cm; smallest: 6.2 x 4.8 cm. [height x Ø]; see figure 1, upper image). The smallest of these contained an elaborate but tiny magical poppet. Both it and the outer container were closed by means of a flat lid and sealed with resins, to prevent them from being opened (and luckily protected the ensemble). In addition, the resin preserved some fingerprints that, when analyzed by the Roman police, were determined to belong to a young man or a woman (Polakova and Rapinesi 2002: 43).

From my point of view, these containers deliberately fulfilled two ritual objectives at once: first, to serve as a vessel for the poppet representing the victim; second, to provide a surface on which one could write a curse. Concerning the first purpose, M. Piranomonte has rightly pointed out (Piranomonte 2010: 207), that there is an obvious parallel in the IV century BCE tombs in the Kerameikos necropolis at Athens, where several inscribed lead ‘coffins’ containing poppets were found (see Ogden 2009<sup>2</sup>: number 237). Nevertheless, she interprets our containers, constructed some 700–800 years later, as ink-wells or containers for cosmetics or medicines (Piranomonte 2012: 167–171).

In my view, however, there are compelling reasons for thinking that they were intended to represent miniature cinerary urns, for there are clear typological similarities between them and a series full-sized cinerary urns (see Cochet 2000: 183–185, fig. 184–187 for urns with flat lids; and 186, fig. 188–189 for conical lids). Moreover, we can find allusions to the use of lead cinerary urns in the magical papyri. One recipe, for example, to prevent a woman from being possessed by another man, recommends to model a crocodile and then put it into a ... εις <σ>οπίον (*vid. PGM XIII*, 322 [Preisendanz's edition]), that is, a small lead cinerary urn. The same recipe requires the practitioner to write the prescribed formula on the urn. Both details seem to offer a broad parallel to the procedure in our case, even though the aims of the *praxeis* are quite different. I would therefore suggest that the containers from the Fountain of *Anna Perenna* should be understood as small cinerary urns whose function was precisely the same as that of the coffins from the Kerameikos, namely to bury symbolically the victim (Sánchez Natalías 2011: 88–89).

## 2.2 The inscription

As already mentioned, the second ritual objective of these containers was to provide a surface on which an indication of the target of the curse could be written. It has been argued that in ancient magical practice writing was considered a powerful technique whereby anything mentioned (the victim, his/her actions, possessions, life and destiny) was inextricably fixed to the medium and thus constrained by the spell (Piccaluga 2010: 15–16). And this is the case with the innermost of the containers we are analyzing, where an inscription of two columns surrounds a standing figure. The editor has read the text, written in IV AD Roman late-antique minuscule, as follows (Blänsdorf 2010: 232–233; see figure 1, middle image):

I col.		II col.
<i>Sete</i>	standing	<i>Decen</i>
<i>Mnu</i>	figure	<i>tias</i>
<i>S</i>		
<i>Θ</i>		



Figure 1. Upper image: ensemble of containers from Anna Perenna,  
Inv. number 475549.

Middle image: drawing of the inscription placed in the innermost  
of the containers.

Bottom image: magical poppet of a man being gulped down by  
a snake, Inv. number 475550. Courtesy of Archivio Fotografico  
Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma.

Although I have some doubts about this transcription and am currently working on a new reading of the text (which requires a longer technical discussion), for the time being, we will follow the *editio princeps* for practical reasons. Thus, let us begin with the first column. The editor states: "...the letters SETE are [...] the name of the Egyptian god Seth, in the vocative. Below it we read MNU, an approximation to one of the ritual names of the deceased Mnevis-bull, identified with Osiris. Below that again we find [...] the letter S [...] and [...] an uncertain letter. I think these are to be taken together and interpreted as a Greek abbreviation of *Seth* (ΣΗΘ)" (Blänsdorf 2010: 218). Regarding the second column, Blänsdorf interprets the inscription as the female *cognomen Decentia*, a name which is already attested on another container discovered in the sanctuary (specifically, Inv. number 475564). The epigraph ends with a series of five *charâkteres*, magical signs usually created *ex professo* to reinforce the power of the text, since they were considered sacred (Gordon 2011). Between the two columns there is a drawing of a standing male figure, represented with marked pectorals or, perhaps, wearing a cuirass. According to the editor, the figure is crowned or wears a helmet, and thus it represents the Egyptian deity Seth (Blänsdorf 2012: 623).

### 2.3 The poppet

In the innermost of the containers of this ensemble, there was placed a small poppet (with measurements 7.5 x 3.2 cm; see figure 1, bottom image) facing head down, just as the *PGM* recommends (*vid. PGM CXXIV, 23–26* [Betz's edition]), which metaphorically prevents the victim's escape. This deliberate positioning, used here to confine the target, is reminiscent of some burial practices used to restrain restless dead, who, sometimes, were buried in *decubito prono* (that is, face down), in order to block the spirit's possible passage out of the tomb (Alfayé 2009: 210).

With regards to the media employed, the poppet was made mainly of wax. On this point, it is worth noting that before the discovery of this site, in the Latin West we only knew about the use of wax poppets from the textual record, namely from recipes found in the *PGM* (such as IV, 296; CXXIV, 10–11, etc. [Betz's edition]) as well as scattered references in some classical authors, such as Ovid (*Amores*

III, 7, 29–30), who explained to his *puella* his sexual impotence while wondering: “...did a witch bind my name with red wax and drive fine needles through the middle of my liver?” (English translation by Ogden 2009<sup>2</sup>: number 99).

The poppet, a *unicum* among the magical figurines of the Latin West, represents a man in the very act of being gulped down by a snake which is coiling itself around his body. It seems likely that this scenario is a plastic (three-dimensional) version of some images depicted on some of the roughly contemporary Roman tablets found in a ‘columbarium’ (or mausoleum) outside the Porta S. Sebastiano (specifically, the SV number 16–18, 34 and 43). In this period, as R. Gordon has rightly pointed out (Gordon 2002), Egyptian influences can be recognized in Graeco-Roman magic, as would be the case with the objects under consideration. Thus, following Gordon’s suggestion, the poppet from the sanctuary of *Anna Perenna* was likely inspired by the well known icon of Osiris’s mummy rolled up in the coils of a snake, since in his words “...in Egypt, this signified Osiris the deity in the Underworld watched over by the snake (dw3t= Eternity), with the connotation “rebirth” [...] but outside Egypt] once the snake became a sign of daimonic power, [it] was later appropriated to signify the bound victims of a curse” (per litt. to the author 13/10/2014). In fact, interesting iconographical parallels are found on several magical gems (such as Michel 2001: number 9 and 10, and above all Mastrocinque 2014: number 73 and 166-verso, where the mummy is engulfed by the snake in the same way as the poppet from *Anna Perenna*).

For the sake of *necessitas* (i. e. the inevitableness), and in a new case of what has recently been termed as “transferred death ritual” (Marco Simón 2009), poppet and snake were fastened together by means of a bronze tablet transfixated by two small iron nails. This sheet was itself engraved with a depiction of a male figure wearing a cuirass and greaves, who could be identified as the victim of the spell. Some *chârakteres* and the Greek letter *theta* surround the image of the target, whose feet and head were nailed to the poppet itself with the aforementioned nails. This performance was, doubtless, aimed to secure the complete paralysis of the victim, who, enclosed in a triple cinerary urn, was consecrated to *Anna Perenna* and her nymphs.

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## **Relics from the ‘Lost Valley’ – Discourses on the Magic of Masks**

**Abstract:** The paper shows how ‘the magic of the mask’ is an important and dynamic narrative strengthening the vitality of rituals and the attention of the public. In the example of the *Tschäggättä*, carnival masks from the Lötschental region in the Canton of Valais in Switzerland, the paper points to the importance of scientific interpretations for popular discourses on the magic of masks, but also for the formulation of local discourses on the valley and for tourist and self-representative images today. Masks as ‘relics from the old days’ are highly valued objects for fragile community identities in an alpine region.

**Key words:** carnival masks, discourses on magic, interpretations of folklore studies, popular narratives, Valley of Lötschen, Switzerland, 1900–2014.

Wooden masks exert a profound fascination with their often seemingly archaic appearance. Also the discipline of folklore studies has surrendered to this fascination. Academic interest in wooden masks can be seen through the process of their documentation by scholars of folklore and ethnography from an early point. It can even be said that the focus on wooden masks is approximately as old as the discipline itself. According to this early understanding, masks from the Alps were regarded as typical objects of an anonymous folk culture of rural areas and have been scientifically documented by the early folklore studies. It was the desire for relics of an ‘original state’ of culture, but also for comparability with ethnographic objects from distant parts of the world, that shaped scientific ideas. How strong this desire is still today can be seen in the perpetuated highlighting of the supposed ancient past of the masks, and in the perpetuated discourses of the magic in the mask-rituals. The magic of rituals is thus a permanent trope in narratives on wooden masks, both in local stories as well as in scientific interpretations.

Widely known since their “discovery” by folklorists around 1900 are the wooden carnival masks from the Lötschental region in the Canton of Valais in Switzerland. During the 1930s, they advanced to become part of the repertoire of the national culture of symbols. The magical power of these objects symbolises the valley and the local community to this day, especially since the masks have been carved and sold as tourist souvenirs since in the 1950s.

First, I present the procession of carnival rituals in the Lötschental region and their most important figures, the *Tschäggättä* with their carved masks. Then I will discuss the power of narratives on the origin of these masks that link folk tales to scientific explanations by folklore studies since 1900. Finally, the paper points out to the importance of cultural artefacts for biographic identity constructions as well as for collective representations. It will become clear how various actors are involved in shaping the public image of these masks from the valley. During the nocturnal mask runs, in scientific and popular narratives around the masks as well as in tourist and self-representative images today, ‘the magic of the mask’ is an important concept, fostering the vitality of the ritual and the attention of the public.

### **1. Tschäggättä – on Masks and the wild Carnival in ‘the Magic Valley’**

The carnival in the Catholic valley of Lötschental begins on February 2nd and ends on the night before Ash Wednesday. The *Tschäggättä* are the most famous characters of the Lötschental carnival. The *Tschäggättä* wear carved wooden masks with human features, old inverted dresses and big pelts on their shoulders, which are grotesquely elevated with padding, so as to make their appearance more frightening. They bind a large cowbell around the belly, and wear inside-out woolen gloves on their hands. The mask is between 30 to 50 centimetres in height, made from pine wood, features a fur covering the head and is either painted or blackened with the gas flame. The design of the masks is grotesque and horrific with monster and death elements, disfigured faces and figures reflecting modern influences from Hollywood movies or Hardrock music. While no actual typology exists in the Lötschental masks, there still are two distinct positions among the around 40 active mask carvers in



*Figure 1. "Tschäggättä" during their walk through the villages.  
Picture: Lötschental Tourism, 2011.*

the valley: While one group orients itself more by the traditional masks, the other group is open to influences of the current society and incorporates inspirations from Hollywood movies or Hard Rock aesthetics in the design of their masks (Chappaz-Wirthner, Mayor 2009). The name *Tschäggättä* probably comes from the Swiss German dialect word for 'spotted', which refers to the black and white sheep and goat skins. The origin of the carnival figure is unknown. While some quote connections to theater performances in the Early Modern Age, others refer to legends of inhabitants of the Valley who undertook nocturnal raids for which they were wearing masks. Restrictions linked to magic indeed still apply for these figures: the *Tschäggättä* are still today not allowed to enter cemeteries or churches and there is a mask ban on Sundays which is very strictly enforced. That the church originally rejected the mask run can also be seen in today's tales when elderly inhabitants from the valley point out that they have never worn a mask due to their Catholic belief. The mask ritual largely takes place in an unorganised man-

ner. In the evenings and nights of the carnival, individual groups dress up and put on their own masks or borrow masks from carvers. Then they meet up and trek through the valley for hours. Mainly young single men participate in the *Tschäggättä* run, but nowadays, also women and married men can take part.

Still today, the ritual of the *Tschäggättä* plays a crucial role for the identity of the majority of the population in the Lötschental and thus constitutes a cultural capital that can be utilised commercially. A key player here is Loetschental tourism, which uses the *Tschäggättä* in its marketing campaigns where they are attributed a prominent role: carving courses have been offered since 2012, and advertising material talks about the carnival as the “pagan ritual in the magic valley” – the tales about the mysterious origins of the ritual have even become the backbone of the marketing claim for the entire valley. A retrospective look at the history of research around the magical masks of Loetschental shows how much they resort to more than one hundred years old fragments of discourses.

## **2. National Emblems and Circulations – the Role of Magic in Narratives about the *Tschäggättä***

It is the masks which have received a lot of attention from various sides for about 120 years (cf. Niederer 1970; Chappaz-Wirthner 1974). Carved masks with human features are widespread in the Alpine region, but also in other parts of Europe or the world. The Lötschental, however, was already visited by folklorists and local historians on the quest for lost original cultural artefacts around the turn of the century to the 20th century. Their search for evidence of mythologies and complex cultural migration theories in the masks (Seeberger 1974: 85–91; Bellwald 1999: 15–17) brought them to name ‘ghosts’ and ‘souls of ancestors’ as the origins of the mask rituals (Stebler 1898; Rütimeyer 1907 and 1916; Meuli 1943 and 1932/1933; Remy 1998). From there, theories were derived that saw the masks as remnants of a shepherd culture, as relicts of ‘pagan origin’ which survived in the “lost valley” (Chappaz 1975) as a cultural retreat area due to its seclusion. The founder of folklore studies in Switzerland, Eduard Hoffmann-Krayer, literally spoke of a “world-deserted valley” (Hoffmann-Krayer 1897: 275). These projections failed to recognise that the Lötschen Valley as a transit

route or as place of origin of mercenaries in foreign military service was in a constant active exchange with its surroundings. This is even more true since the opening of the transalpine Lötschberg tunnel in 1913; it can thus only be spoken of seclusion to a very limited extent. How much the "constraint to the primal" (Jeggle 1992: 620) was effective in the second half of the 20th century, quintessentially proves the text of the priest of the Valley from 1974, in which the masks are said to "have been brought to the Valley from the east by the first inhabitants of the Valley in pre-Christian times, the so-called Alpine people" (Seeberger 1974: 9–10; see also Siegen 1971: 44). The alleged age of the masks and the origin in distant prehistoric times were key arguments in the discourse about the masks. The archaic appearance and the magic emanating from the objects influenced the interpretations in an ahistorical way. Even if the ancient appearance of the masks suggests an older origin, the first certain sign is an explicit ban of the masks in 1865 (Niederer 1970: 282; Seeberger 1974: 86; Bellwald 1999: 21–23). All other backtracking is pure speculation. Nevertheless, the interpretations of the mask rituals as the remnants of ancient mystical rituals exhibit a remarkable stability and persistence. In annual newspaper reports for instance, you can read that the tradition of mask carving had been handed on for centuries in families (Cramer 2010) and in popular books, the *Tschäggätä* are presented as ghosts emerging from the interior of the earth (Carrera, Grezet 1981: 126).

The interpretations regarding the age and meaning of wooden masks which originally came from outside of the valley are now common among the inhabitants; they consider their masks "as ancient and 'pagan', as symbols of fertility and winter expulsion cults or embodied spirits of the dead" (Bellwald 1999: 54). The high virulence of such interpretations indicate that the cultural identity of the inhabitants of the valley is strongly influenced by these discourses – irrespective of the fact that these referrals can barely withstand criticisms from cultural scientists or historians. Such criticism is nowadays even vehemently rejected, like for example in a book of a local historian: "We want to continue to preserve this tradition, as it has been handed down to us. [...] We people from the Lötschen Valley believe in the legacy of our ancestors and can not be misled by science. Even the *Tschäggätä* are not born after the Big Bang of ethnologists and researchers. This magical gene

was born in the Lötschen Valley and not on their table." (Bellwald 2013: 496). Here long established hierarchies of knowledge are explicitly rejected on the basis of local interpretations. Seldom it is recognised, how much this local knowledge is based on earlier scientific interpretations.

How much the discourses of origin have become self-representations is visible in the field of popular culture, where the magic of *Tschäggättä* plays an important role. An edition of a French comic book series *Les chemins de Malefosse* (Dermaut, Bardet 1991) is thus set in the medieval Lötschen Valley where a witch and bandits with wooden masks occur. We encounter similar stories on websites and films (cf. Rieder 2002) that deal with the *Tschäggättä*. Here we can find both adherence to the idea of a postulated ancient tradition as well as the invention of new myths (Kuhn 2014). In addition to the new media on the internet, video films on the online platform YouTube play an important role in the dissemination of fragments of stories about the *Tschäggättä*. Most of these films aim to evoke fear and respect of the *Tschäggättä*. In the short film *Lötschäggättal* from February 2012 with its spooky-threatening music there are intertitles between the recordings of the mask wearers that report that the *Tschäggättä* protect their valley and dispel evil spirits; and thereby allegedly 'know no mercy' (Thöni 2012). Even in the short film *Les Tschäggätta, monstres masqués du Lötschental* from 2012, masked figures run down the snowy mountain slopes to professional horror film music and walk by deserted villages beset with fear (Armand 2012). A current film project also plays with the magic of the valley and the mythology around the *Tschäggättä*: a young botanist "undertakes a journey into the unknown at the end of the 19th century [...] But during her journey, the mountain shows its hidden face, the *Tschäggättä*" (Costas 2014). What is striking about these popular culture productions on the masks' origin is the fact that magic – in different forms – always plays a major role. And these productions continue to shape the interpretations about the *Tschäggätä* in the public and the valley alike.

### 3. Objects for the Identity of a Mountain Valley

Since the 1940s, the manifold interpretations of the masks in the valley has been joined by an increased interest from the outside.

This interest is no longer primarily scientific and ethnographic, but also attributes the masks an emblematic function (Antonietti 2011: 18) which can be used by the tourism industry. This is how a market for souvenir masks emerged in the 1950s. The carvers were thus confronted with new requirements to which they reacted flexibly: the masks were increasingly standardised and miniaturised which turned big masks for wearing into small souvenir masks for the hanging up on the wall. Also, the masks were no longer carved individually, but blanks were created, and the work stages were broken down so that they could partially be passed on to wholesale buyers for further processing. Sometimes, copy milling was also used, which made it possible to produce a number of identical masks. In order to still add the aura of handwork to the masks, the blanks prefabricated by machine were subsequently carved manually. In addition to this rationalisation in the proto-industrial production, there is also evidence of aesthetic changes, which made the masks increasingly uniform. Only with these processes of change in the production of this cultural object could the wooden masks of the Lötschen Valley now also be produced and sold as regionalised 'masks from the Valais' in far away valleys.

Connected with this highly charged repertoire of symbolic capital, an actual image program was created that is also known from other similar visually attractive rituals, such as the Bavarian-Austrian *Krampus* or *Fastnacht* in southern Germany: *Tschäggättä* masks adorned stamps of the Swiss Post as of 1977 and the poster campaign of 2009, which was launched after the opening of the Lötschberg base tunnel. The executive advertising agency used masks from local collections and played ironically with the strong myths of origin but also with the existing regional stereotypes by promoting the slogan: 'Discover earthy peoples'.

The fact that this description was not only well received by the population of the valley itself shows that there are competing interpretations of what a mask from the Lötschen Valley is. It is not only the population of the valley who formulates interpretations though, but also external perceptions with a long tradition. Even if other players are involved now in this archaising representation, the local carvers fight to keep their position in the establishment of the image of the *Tschäggättä* by constantly expanding, negotiating

and debating the boundaries of what constitutes a 'real' mask from the Lötschen Valley. One can find hierarchies within the valley community, which manifests in highly competitive positions of power regarding contact with the various media. A few carvers consciously occupy an active role in the representation of the mask ritual and act as actual gate-keepers. They are protagonists in reports, have their own websites, advise film teams and represent with their masks the whole ritual on an iconographic level.

#### **4. The Magic of Masks as a dynamic Narrative**

The mythicising ritual interpretations in the case of the wooden masks from Lötschen Valles are of an impressive concision and date far back historically. In these circulating discourses, magic and the mysterious origin of the masks in a dark and distant past constantly appear. This is due to the early academic interpretations of the ritual. What is interesting is the fact that these interpretations were further supported by the population of the valley and the mask carvers since about the middle of the 20th century. It can thus not simply be assumed that these are interpretations that found their way back to the valley and transformed the masks into an ideologically fixed ritual, but rather, we encounter autonomous adaptations and developments that are negotiated and represented in different forums and appear in ever new variations. This self-representation thus establishes distinctive relationships with older narratives in which the magic of the masks and the theories of pagan origin figure as central arguments for the collective identity of the valley. One possible way of dealing with this alleged magic of the masks are the ongoing negotiations about the aesthetics of the masks. People are constantly trying to define how a real *Tschäggätta* has to behave and look and where the boundaries of these wild figures could be drawn (Chappaz-Wirthner 2010). These limits are even more contested, precisely because there are no organising carnival societies, no formalised mask types or set props.

A different approach to the narrative traditions of the 'magic' is the partially ironic twist of the strong need for myths. This need is being addressed in a creative and innovative way and thus unmasks not only magical claims, but it also points to a remarkable vitality of the ritual and the associated masks. The masks thus illustrate ne-

gotiation processes for fragile community identities in alpine border regions. The narratives about magical masks refer to ambivalences between autonomous capacity of acting and passive representation that are highly relevant to the field of cultural studies.

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## **Ritual as a Means of Organizing the Traditional Udmurt Sacred Space (The late 19th – early 20th century)**

**Abstract.** This paper is devoted to the study of special creative activities connected with organizing a virtual favourable space. It examines two types of ritual ceremonies: praying at family and kin-group, and territorial sanctuaries, and calendar rites. These feasts and rituals promoted an economic and social cohesion and unity of the people in the local neighbourhood. Sacral spiritual values had been regularly reproduced; the mystical space was formed within each local habitation area. All this guaranteed, according to Udmurt worldview, the well-being, health and comfortable psychological existence for all members of society.

**Key words:** creative activity, sacred space, praying, agrarian ceremonies

The research on sacred space is based on three main theoretical positions. Firstly, it is considered as a virtual natural and cultural complex. Art historian A.M. Lidov suggested using the term “hierotopy” (from the Greek roots *ἱερόν* / *ἱερός* ‘sacred’ and *τόπος* ‘a place, space, concept’) for designation of a special type of creativity and a special field of historical research in which concrete examples of the creativity are identified and analyzed (Lidov 2012: 12–13). Secondly, the sacred space is investigated as the result of special creative activities connected to the symbolic organization and transformation of the natural, social, cultural and spiritual environment. People used the natural resources of their inhabited area and it was spiritually mastered according to their traditional worldview (Gemuev and Sagalaev 1986: 189). Thirdly, the sacred space includes a presence of the divine, a mystical component. Historian of religion Mircea Eliade introduced the category of “hierophany” which means appearance of the sacred: “Every sacred space implies a hierophany, an irruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from

the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different" (Eliade 1959: 164).

Special creative activity around organizing a specific type of virtual favourable space is especially prevalent during two groups of regular ritual ceremonies: the first one included praying at family and kin-group, and territorial sanctuaries, and the other one consisted of calendar rites. The group of ritual ceremonies at pre-Christian shrines has already been the subject of my previous studies, in which I examined such factors as: types and variants of cult places, topography of pagan shrines, types of offerings, sanctuaries' planning structure, order and sequence of prayers and sacrifices, behavioural rules within a sacred area, collective meals and relationship with/ supplication of gods were examined (Shutova et al 2009; Shutova 2011: 119–130).

In this report the aspect of sacred space formation is analyzed using the example of agrarian ceremonies which were devoted to a coming spring and beginning of spring and agricultural works (*Bydzym Nunal* 'Great day' or *Akashka* – the beginning of the New Year according to the traditional Udmurt calendar).

***Akashka* celebration.** In the late 19th until the early 20th century this holiday was widely celebrated by the majority of Udmurts. It lasted from one week to a fortnight and consisted of a set of rituals, the timing and sequence of which varied among different Udmurt territorial groups. Moreover, there were differences in each local area, even in each village. The Northern and Southern Udmurts have different names for the festival: *Gery potton* 'taking out of the plow' and *Akashka* (from Old Bulgarian *aka* 'plow', 'sowing' + *jashka* 'soup', *kasha* (boiled cereal), taken together, meaning "soup or *kasha* in honour of the plow". The common names *Bydzym Nunal* 'the Great Day' and *Paska* 'Easter' were synonymous and widespread among all groups of the Udmurt population. In Recent times, the duration of the festival celebration is one or two days. The festive cycle associated with the greeting of the spring is characterised by the syncretic nature of its content and structural components, and also by the actions and verbal content of open-air festivities and rituals.

More detailed versions of the New Year celebrations have been recorded among the Southern Udmurts. The Zavjatsky Udmurts living in the Kukmorsky and Baltasinsky Districts of Tatarstan held festivities a week before and a week after the main celebration of *Akashka* or *Bydzym Nunal*. Later it was timed to the Orthodox Easter Day. It was a cycle of interrelated and consistent ritual ceremonies, aimed to purify and recreate a new sacred space and time as a condition of future well-being of the people. The festival included three main phases: preparatory week, main Sunday festivities, and the closing part (Shutova 2013: 107–109).

During the preparatory period, houses were cleaned and decorated, purification rituals were performed on the eve of Holy Thursday, protective amulets were placed on the doors of houses and out-houses, and prayers were said for deceased relatives. Before the feast day of *Akashka*, people heated their *banya*-saunas and washed themselves. The main festivities were held on Sunday. On this day people prepared and consecrated the ritual dish (hot *kasha* with goose) and other traditional dishes. After that rituals of visiting were performed. During these rituals participants visited their fathers' relatives by making trips up a local river, or by moving clockwise or the same direction as the sun moves. In the afternoon teenage boys rolled Easter eggs. Such games were popular both among the Udmurts and the other ethnic groups in the region – the Russians, Tatars, Bashkirs. The symbolism of the ritual is associated with activating fertile natural forces (Urazmanova 2001: 22–23; Agapkina, Belova, 2012: 630).

Every village had local differences in celebrating *Akashka*. For example, in the village of Novy Kanisar (Kukmorsky District of Tatarstan) on Sunday, on the first day of the festival, people performed rituals *argyzh pukon* (from Tatar *argyzh* ‘a leader of a wedding procession’ and from Udmurt *pukon* ‘sitting’), when specially selected elders, a man and a woman, sat as honourable people on a bench at a community shrine. They played the role of the sacred symbol of the feast. Researchers of the late 19th century B. Gavrilov and B. Munkácsi emphasized the particular attitude towards these chiefs. They were brought to the festival on horseback or by cart. If they went on foot, they led the procession. The man walked on the right side, and the woman on the left side. In a meadow, they sat

on cushions; a tablecloth was spread in front of them, and people served them with sacrificial hot *kasha* and drinks (Munkácsi, 1887: L. 171; Gavrilov, 1891: 97).

After *Bydzym Nunal* (the Great Day) the celebration of *Akashka* continued for the following week. On Monday, the tradition was that every house owner consecrated bread in their kin-group's sacred building (Great *kuala*) and prayed to the family/kin-group protecting gods. On Tuesday, people visited the cemetery to commemorate their deceased ancestors and rode horses through the village, performing the ritual *uraj karon* (ritual activities, accompanied by exclamation “*uraj!*”<sup>1</sup> from Udmurt *karon* ‘performing’ + exclamation ‘*ura*’): each person met on the way would be whipped with brooms or sticks, and then these items were thrown toward the cemetery (the symbolic ritual of purification and consecration of the village space). On Wednesday, people brought ritual bread to a specially selected house *sebet korka* (the etymology of the term *sebet* is unclear; *korka* means ‘house’). Guests were offered a meal and entertained. And then people visited each other's houses. Homemade beer was consecrated on the same day. It was cooked in a big pot in the *sebet* house. The girls who intended to marry that year treated all the villagers to beer. The sacred persons (*argyzh pukisjos* ‘performing an *argyzh* roles’) and their helpers visited houses and were treated by the villagers. On Thursday, the festival of the first green glade was celebrated. On a special grass plot, a hot ritual *kasha akashka* was prepared. The products were gathered from the villagers. Similar rituals were also performed by the other ethnic groups of the region (Urazmanova, 2001: 24–33). However the feast had some different details such as rituals’ terms, time, and participants. On Friday, swings (*tagan*) for young people were set up. After that people prayed. The swings were disassembled on *Semik* Day, when the dead were commemorated. On Saturday, the villagers went to their *banya*-saunas and performed their ablutions. On Sunday, they prayed to *Inmar* (Udmurt god of the sky, later merged with the Christian God). This day was called *Inmar puksjon nunal* ‘the day of of *Inmar*'s accession’. It was forbidden to work during *Akashka* week. Spring work in the fields would begin after the festival.

One of the elements of *Akashka* as *roj karon / uraj karon* ('exclaiming *roj / uraj*'), *suren shukkon* ('beating, hitting with war-call/battle exclamation "suren!"') served as a symbolic purification and sacralization of the village space. In the village of Verkhnyaya Yumya (now Kukmorsky District of Tatarstan), young birch trees were used in a ritual. In winter young men selected suitable trees. About a week before *Akashka* or Easter, they cut down the trees and took only the topmost branches and formed the shape of a crown. They rode horses holding the birch trees in front of them. Early in the morning, the young men with the birches rode to the kin-group shrine and went around it clockwise three times having taken off their hats. Then they rode three times around an old solitary pine tree at the end of the village; it was a special *Akashka* tree. After visiting their relatives, people went out to the field to a certain place. There they threw away the birch trees, washed their faces, and prayed (Prokopiev, 1916: 124–126).

The celebration of *Bydzym Nunal* 'Great Day/Easter' by the Zakam-sky Udmurts living in the Republic of Bashkortostan is described in detail by T.G. Minniyakhmetova (2003: 88–152). Close variants of celebrations were recorded among the Southern Udmurts in Agryz District of Tatarstan by Aado Lintrop in the paper "The Spring Prayer Feasts in the Udmurt Village of Varklet-Bodya in Tatarstan" (2002: 43–55).

**Conclusion.** According to the traditional Udmurt calendar, the celebration of the New Year involves a significant agricultural symbolic system for appealing to and evoking the forces of nature and therefore ensuring the fertility of the earth, domestic animals, and humans. Rituals and games had generative, purifying, and protective functions, and contributed to the sacredness of the village's cultural space. The spring festival *Akashka* included various elements: prayers addressed to the ancestors and kin-group gods, community meals, horse-riding by young men as a purifying ritual, an egg-rolling game, eating goose and hot *kasha* (boiled cereal), and visiting one's fathers' relatives as a condition for the family integrity.

Thus, we can notice, that particular indicators of the conducted rituals were the following:

- 1) Forms and times of the rituals;

- 2) Place and functions of its participants, their gender and age;
- 3) Ritual attributes (trees, branches, women's headdresses and towels with embroidered ends, special costumes of priests and participants);
- 4) Transpersonal abilities of priests, special procedures of food consecration;
- 5) Special scenarios including the music accompaniment (the gusli, violin, canticles), walking in a circle, meditation of a sacral person, exclamations, bows, lighting fires (bonfires, sometimes candles), ritual eating;
- 6) Mystical results of ceremonies, when rituals and praying had certain consequences (positive and beneficial or negative effect). The feast had a positive influence on its participants;
- 7) Presence of the divine component during the rituals.

In general, the traditional Udmurt rural community carried out regular work on the formation of a sacred space. It was characterized by a well-organised system of placement and functioning of the pre-Christian and Christian religious monuments and sacred places, and collective performing of agrarian and family rites. The importance of sacred space was determined by two factors: these feasts and praying ceremonies promoted an economic and social cohesion and unity of the people in the local neighbourhood. Sacral spiritual values had been regularly reproduced, as well as the mystical space that was formed within each local habitation area. In Udmurt worldview, all of these actions guaranteed the well-being, health and comfortable psychological existence for all members of society.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Shouting *uraj* is a way of driving away evil forces.

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## **Magic Ritual and its Spatial Structure in Archaic Cultures of the North**

**Abstract.** This article deals with the investigation of spatial aspects of magical practices in archaic cultures of the North. Using several ethnographic illustrations, the author makes an attempt to define a special type of magic rituals based on actualization of a spatial direction, which functions as a connecting link between subject and object of a magical operation. At the same time the syncretic character of such rituals, combining magic (pragmatic, operational) and religious (world view, ideational, ethical) aspects, is taken into account.

**Key words:** sacred space, orientation, magic and religion, northern peoples, shamanism, mantic rituals, symbol

Within the research field on the problem of sacred space, which was first explicitly raised by Mircea Eliade, the author considers this term as something that could exist in three dimensions (or levels). In the first one, sacred space is understood as a qualitative-differentiated cosmological scheme, which is the important part of religious and mythological knowledge. In the second dimension, it appears as an object of the spontaneous perception of environment in human consciousness through the prism of living religious experience. The third one deals with space considered as a historically concrete process and product of human creative activity (Khudyaev 2013: 35–39). Sacred space, integrating all of these three levels, must be comprehended as symbolical and could be considered as an object of semiotic or phenomenological analysis.

Locating the problem of the symbolical character of space in more operational and suitable form for a study of concrete cases, a more precise definition of sacred space is developed within a specific research model. This pattern of investigation considers orientation as a main element and type of signs or symbols which constitute a sacred landscape. In that way, sacred space is comprehended as a totality (or a system) of orientations. The term “orientation” covers

the subject of religious or magical action, the object on which this action is spatially directed, and most importantly, a vector of spatial direction which binds them. The comparative typological investigation of spatial directions, actualized in a sacred landscape, becomes the crucial distinctive feature of the research model.

Consideration of an orientation as a sign or symbol, which has a certain stable meaning and refers the interpreter to the most universal elements of traditional outlook, allows to include it in the category of religious phenomena. Religion, as it is well known, in some cases is opposed to magic as collective is opposed to individual, official to unofficial, symbolical to pragmatic, periodical to situational, mediated to unmediated. Considering that sometimes it is very difficult to define an action as religious or magical unambiguously. Thus, any religious rite with symbolical meaning could have a pragmatic aim, and inherently any pragmatic action in the principles of its construction could be based on religious universals. In such cases we should not try to determine the certain status of any sacral practice. But it is better to highlight different aspects, which could be related to one or other type of outlook.

In the context of the orientational model described above, all directions actualized in the space of traditional practices could be divided into three groups:

- 1) solar orientations or cardinal directions (East, South, West, North);
- 2) orientations on certain earthly objects, which people could potentially interact with;
- 3) occasional orientations, which have an inconstant character and are illuminated each time through special rituals of divination.

Resting upon this classification, three types of orientations will be considered in relation to their possible use in magical rituals.

### **Solar Orientations**

The solar orientations (or cardinal directions) play a fundamental role in the differentiation of sacred space. In archaic cultures of the North they play an important role in crucial rituals of home

constructing, sacrificing, burial rituals and cultic installations. Many examples could be given. But here we see that it is difficult to exarticulate the magical component from religious rites. The matter is that cardinal directions are often considered as the symbolic carcass of space. Symbolical series of elements, colours, seasons, animals etc. overlap these directions (Podosinov 1999: 400). East and South, as a rule, are associated with higher areas of the Cosmos and the kindly mythological creatures are located there. Conversely, West and North are comprehended as the Underworld, where the evil spirits dwell. Even when we consider an action in its pragmatic aspects, then the positive and negative effect, which it must bring about, is always mediated with these attributes and features. Although, we may assume that in its genesis appreciation of cardinal directions had not such pithy and dogmatic character, but was based on spontaneous sensual perception. Thus, in Ernst Cassirer's view, differentiation of cardinal directions is related to a fundamental physical act of succession of light and darkness. Initially, people directly seek out or avoid those areas in space, where light appears and disappears (Cassirer 2011: 110–111). To a considerable degree, it looks like an unmediated magical way of perception.

In the investigation of magical practices, related to solar orientations, there are examples of big interest in the world view of the Nivkh<sup>1</sup> people, where different groups of shamans are associated with certain cardinal directions. There is a mythological image of a special tree in the culture of this people. Shamans were born from nests which were located on three sides of this tree. The Shaman, who had a nest on the eastern side, became a fortunate shaman and did healings. The one, who had a nest on the western side, became a malicious shaman and brought troubles. Finally, the third shaman had a nest on the northern side and he did healings and brought troubles simultaneously (Hudyakov 1969: 307).

The cardinal directions correspond to certain directions in one-dimensional space of the circle, i.e. directions in accordance with and in opposition to the sun's way. Orientations, existing in such one-dimensional systems (such as spaces of circle, road or river), could be included in an additional fourth type of orientations. But they usually carry meanings which are identical with those ones of cardinal directions.

For example, as Geza Roheim mentions, in the culture of some Finno-Ugric peoples, in order to obtain the magical means for healing, the sorcerer makes a sacrifice on the shore of the pond and disturbs water. Then he examines the foam on disturbed water. He believes that, if the foam circulates in accordance to sun's way, it will have good influence. If otherwise – the magical effect will not appear. Water, which is scooped without sacrifice and from the whirlpool circulating against the sun, is used to put the evil eye on somebody (Roheim 2012: 24).

### **Orientations on earthly objects**

As noted above, in the case of using cardinal directions in rituals it is difficult to unequivocally determine its magic or religious status. But such ambiguity and vagueness disappears when we treat the second type of orientations. In such cases spatial orientation is connected directly with an object, which the magic effect is aimed on. For instance, if the sorcerer, in order to pronounce a malediction on somebody, immediately points with some item in the direction of this man, then we cannot speak about correlation with cosmological and moral-ethical universal structures. Such pointing is always maximally concrete.

A special place in the magical actions, where orientations of the second type are actualized, is taken by shooting, which is one of the most obvious and apparent examples of actualization of directions in space and of establishing of a mystical link (or participation) between subject and object of magic action.

Ritual shooting plays a significant role in traditional practices of Saami people. Nikolay Haruzin describes the following example of such actions. During the ritual a bearskin was fixed on a pole. And blindfolded women threw arrows to this skin. They sang songs, in which the bearskin is associated with the enemy, who comes from Sweden, Poland, England, and France. The first woman, who hits the skin, receives commendations and in accordance with Lapp's beliefs gives a fortunate omen (Haruzin 1890: 201). Vladimir Charnoluskiy narrates about a special pine. Saami shot from rifles to this tree to sanctify bullets for fortune in hunting (Charnoluskiy 1972: 100–101). Ekaterina Prokof'eva reports that, each time, when

the Taz Selkups passed a sacred tree, which was on the shore of the river, they shot in the direction of this tree with bows (Prokof'eva 1977: 68). A Selkup shaman shoots to the artificial image of a mythic deer in order to obtain his soul (Prokof'ev 1930: 138). Generally, a projectile weapon, really or symbolically represented in the rituals, is an obligatory attribute of a shaman.

Even if the projectile does not reach the object physically, it sets the vector of magical influence. Here, references can be made to some examples that can be found in the "Primitive Mentality" book by L. Lévy-Bruhl. These examples are not related to the northern cultures, but they are connected with ones typologically close to them. When hunters of Northern-American Sioux come to a prey at a distance of several hundred meters, they begin to throw special stone projectiles in its direction. Hunters believe that these projectiles have magical powers to prevent the prey's escape. The same tribes have another custom. When a hunter detects a prey, he right away takes up his "Vommera" (spear-thrower) so, that this weapon is in the position as if it "sees" the prey. This action entails the same effect as the one in the first example (Lévy-Bruhl 2012: 153). Aboriginals of Princess Charlotte Bay in Northeastern Australia believe, that, when a sorcerer wants to kill his victim, he points a spear in his direction. At that moment the shaft is kept at the hand and the unfortunate victim is defeated by an invisible bone shard, which is considered as an extension of the spear (Lévy-Bruhl 2012: 247).

After shooting, the second place in importance and frequency of mentions is taken by those cases, where looking appears as one of the forms of actualization of direction in the space of magic ritual. In northern archaic cultures there are many taboos related to the direction of looking. For instance, in the Saami tradition the *noida* (shaman), in order to possess the water-spirits, must approach their group by looking only upward, but not in a horizontal direction (Haruzin 1890: 159). Looking also could have a destructive effect. In Scandinavian ancient literature there is an image of two Finnish sorcerers. Under their looks the earth is turning around and the living creatures die getting the range of sorcerer's look (Golovnev 2009: 330).

It is of special interest when the sacral significance of some place is determined by the looking perspective. For instance, Elena Ermakova and Nina Liskevich describe the sacred place, marked with a wooden cross, worshiped by the community of the Western-Siberian Komi people. Among other things, the place has a special significance, because just from here, last time before their long descend to Ob's small floodplain, these people could see the Ural Mountains, which are perceived as the geographical border of their “long-lost native land” (orig.: *давно утерянная родина*) (Ermakova & Liskevich 2011: 173).

It is necessary to notice that the orientational structure of magic rituals sometimes is formed with certain liminal objects or symbolical thresholds. Thus, for example, in the ritual of sanctifying bullets, which we have described before, the shooting at a sacred tree is realized in a trajectory passing the stone Seiðr (Charnoluskiy 1972: 100–101). There is also a custom, in which Saami women, when they greet their husbands after hunting, look and spit with chewed alder bark at their direction through a copper ring (Haruzin 1890: 200). The personages of Komi folklore, in order to shield themselves from evil spirits, shoot in their direction with a bow from between the legs. Others also shoot with a rifle from under the right armpit, or throw hot embers through the bosom (of their coat) (Limerov 2005: 165; 378).

As already shown, rituals, in which orientation is formed in direction to concrete objects, could be considered to a greater degree as magic, while cardinal directions have a vague status. We can consider the proportion of these two types in Hegel's “Philosophy of Religion”, where he distinguished between Primary Sorcery and Secondary Sorcery. The first one deals with natural objects, which can be possessed by human beings. The second one, on the contrary, is related to those objects which are beyond man's control (as for example – the Sun) (Hegel 2007: 329). In the context of Hegel's system the veneration of cardinal directions (formed by the sun's movement) could be comprehended as a transition phase from magical perception to the first forms of religion. Hence the uncertain character of solar orientations, which we notice earlier.

## Occasional Orientations and Divination Rituals

So far, we have considered only those cases, where man impacts on an object using links of participation related to spatial directions. But it is impermissible to pass over those cases, where direction is not known in advance. There are special divination-rituals used to reveal it. Such divinations as well must be considered within the magical world-view, because their basis is constituted by the same notions about mystical relations between elements of space. Moreover, these rituals have a strong pragmatic component.

Among the examples of such rituals we could cite those mentioned by Matias Castren. The Samoyeds, among other ways to find lost deer, used the following custom. They made a circle with antlers, and placed a small stone in the centre of this circle. Then some piece of iron was located over the stone in such a way that it could easily fall on the ground. The Samoyed began to walk around the centre until the iron piece fell from the small stone. The direction of this falling signified the way in which Samoyed should seek the lost deer (Castren 1858: 291). Except searching for lost properties, a divination ritual was used in order to choose the right spatial direction for successful hunting. Thus, for example, a Sami sorcerer places several rings on his tambourine and begins to hit it with a mallet. In the direction, in which the rings begin to move, the hunter should go and find his prey (Haruzin 1890: 219).

Divination rituals are also used when it is necessary to find a direction for the next migration in nomadic cultures. Viktor Mikhaylovskiy describes a ritual, in which the body of a shaman, falling in ecstatic state, is hidden in clothes. Little by little, the objects, which symbolically mark the internals of the shaman, are taken out of the clothes. In the culminating moment the finger comes out from this. Samoyeds believe that it is no longer the finger of the shaman but a member of some spirit or animal, which directs the right way for migration (Mihaylovskiy 1892: 98).

In the archaic cultures of the North and Siberia the type of divination, which is known as scapulimancy (or divination by the agency of deer scapula) is very common and also used for searching for the right trajectory of migration. Vladimir Bogoraz describes such a ritual of the Chukchi people<sup>2</sup> in the following way. The Shaman

chooses some spatial direction for migration, and then he watches how the scapula is cracking under fire. If the character of cracks shows a negative result, the bone should be symbolically cleansed in deer fat. On the next day a Chukcha chooses another spatial direction and takes a new bone. These acts are performed until cracks on the scapula will appear in a way, which may be interpreted as positive by the shaman (Bogoraz-Tan 1939: 107–110).

### **Conclusions**

After these ethnographic illustrations several conclusions can be offered.

First, in its spatial aspects religious or magical rituals could be considered as actualizations of directions in space.

Second, the use of directions in magic is a mechanism for the establishment of participation, or to put it another way, it could be considered as a sign of this participation.

Third, the structure of sacred landscape includes intentional orientations, which have a constant character, and occasionally actualized orientations, which are illuminated every time anew by means of a special divination ritual. All of them are considered as realizations of the same mechanism of expressing a mystic link with spatial terms.

Fourth, the mechanism of orientation functions both in magic and in religious practices. Sometimes (predominantly in the case of cardinal directions) it is very difficult to determine a concrete status of an action. There we can talk about magical and religious aspects of a single action. The first one is related to the cosmological and moral-ethical stratum and also connected to the beliefs in reality of supernatural persons. The second one is related to the operational (actional) and pragmatic side of ritual.

Since the problem of spatial orientations has not been considered in such a complex way till now, it could be correlated with current classifications of magic rituals. At first glance, if we take into account the conceptions of Sergey Tokarev (Tokarev 1990: 426–432), then we can compare the examples given in this article with his initial class of magic, i.e. those types, where only the beginning of an action is

performed, but its ending and final effect are entrusted to magical force. However, it could be adequate only for those rituals, where the sorcerer points the direction to the object for striking it. But it is difficult to relate divination rituals to this type. On the other hand, using directions in magic could be related to the contagious type, which was first described in Frazer's work (Frazer 2014). In that case, the presence of a geometric relationship between different objects could be hypothetically considered as the symbolical substitution of their contiguity.

Anyhow, in sum, this paper proposes to enrich existing classifications with the special type of magic actions, which are based on spatial principles or, to be exact, on the mechanism of spatial orientation.

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### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Nivkh people live in the northern half of Sakhalin Island and the region of the Amur River estuary in Eastern Siberia.

<sup>2</sup> The Chukchi live in the extreme North-Eastern Siberia (the Chukchi Peninsula, the shores of the Chukchi Sea and the Bering Sea).

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## **Das Haus als geistiges Kraftfeld**

**Abstrakt.** In der volkskundlicher Fachliteratur sind die “heilige Hinterecke” bzw. der “Herrgottswinkel” geläufige Termini. Die historische Hausforschung zeigt, dass die Einrichtung der Bauerstube ihre eigene Geschichte hat. Es wird deutlich, dass die Bewohner an bestimmten Stellen der Stube bzw. des Hauses magische Handlungen ausübten. Diese Handlungen sind sehr komplex, zumal sie oft mit religiösen Elementen verbunden sind. Da das menschliche Handeln bzw. die Brauchtum kulturgeschichtlich bedingt ist, muss die Untersuchung des magisch-geistigen Kraftfeldes des Hauses, diesen Gesichtspunkt beachten.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Raumnutzung der ungarischen Bauernhauses, Entwicklungsgeschichte der “schönen Stube” und der “heiligen Hinterecke”, Glaube und Dekoration, Interpretationsmöglichkeiten.

In der volkskundlicher Fachliteratur sind die “heilige Hinterecke” bzw. der “Herrgottswinkel” geläufige Termini. Bekannt ist das Werk von Gustav Ränk “Die heilige Hinterecke im Hauskult der Völker Nordosteuropas und Nordasiens” (Ränk 1949). Durch ihn wurde der Begriff “heilige Hinterecke” in der deutschen und deutschsprachigen Volkskunde zu einem allgemeingültigen Begriff. Die Verwendung des Begriffes setzt eine urtümliche Denkweise der Bauern voraus, die unabhängig vom Wechsel der gesellschaftlichen Situation die Raumteilung der Bauernstube bestimmt hat. Die Brauchforscher entwickelten darauf aufbauend die These vom “geistigen Kraftfeld” des Hauses. Diese Forschungen lassen den Eindruck entstehen, dass die Glaubenswelt der unteren sozialen Schichten unabhängig von der sozialen Wirklichkeit als geschlossenes Ganzes existiert. Die Quellen für die “heilige Hinterecke” gehen auf die Darstellung von Bräuchen, die im Haus in verschiedenen geschichtlichen Epochen stattfanden zurück. Man vermutete, dass eine Ecke der Stube schon in der Vorzeit sakralen und rituellen Handlungen gewidmet war. Es ist auch irreführend, dass seit dem 19. Jahrhundert bei wohlhabenden Bauern die “schöne Stube” mit Bildern und Gegenständen religiösen Inhaltes dekoriert war. Die



*Illustration 1. "Schöne Stube" in Ungarn, erste Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts. [www.sulinet.hu](http://www.sulinet.hu). 158. kép.*

Brauchforscher, die sowohl die profanen wie auch religiösen Bräuche der Bauern erforschten haben jedoch die Raumnutzung nicht mit der gewünschten Genauigkeit beschrieben. Die ungarische Hausforschung sollte eigentlich wesentliche Erkenntnisse über die Lebensweise der unteren sozialen Schichten, ihre geschichtliche Entwicklung und ihre soziale Vielfalt beibringen (Schier 1966; Weiss 1959). Stattdessen beschäftigten sich die meisten Forscher mit Detail-Fragen der Architektur und nicht mit dem Leben im Haus (Bausinger 2006). Man beschrieb Bautypen und Hauslandschaften und brachte sie in eine vermutete Entwicklungslinie ein, die aus einer "Urform" nach der Landnahme im 11. bzw. 12. Jahrhundert entstanden sein soll. Eine historische Kontinuität in der Entwicklung des Bauernhauses ist aber nicht beweisbar. Die einschlägige Literatur lässt den Eindruck entstehen als ob es eine

autonome “Architektur-Sprache” ohne gesellschaftlichen Wandel gäbe (Balassa 2004). Die Hausforscher vernachlässigten, dass die Häuser auch Erbauer und Bewohner haben (Bedal 1978), die die Häuser auf verschiedener Weise nutzten. Die Hausforscher haben die Wohnungen der unteren Schichten, der Tagelöhner, Knechte, Dienstboten usw. vernachlässigt. Die Beziehung zwischen Haus und Familie, die in der deutschen und französischen Hausforschung berücksichtigt wird, ist in der ungarischen Fachliteratur nicht einmal zur Kenntnis genommen worden (Lamaison 1987). Die Frage, wer das Haus bewohnt, wird kaum berücksichtigt zumal die Großfamilie in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts nicht mehr die Regel ist. Es soll auch bemerkt werden, dass die Hausgemeinschaften bzw. das gemeinsame Vermögen im Jahre 1885 nach dem Gesetz aufgelöst wurden und nur an manchen Orten die Großfamilie bis zu dem II. Weltkrieg weiter existierte. Die sozialgeschichtlich orientierte Familienforschung gibt mehr Aufschluss über die Gebräuchsweise des Hauses als die volkskundliche Hausforschung. Der Lebensalltag wurde dabei nicht berücksichtigt. Im Jahre 1909 konnte zum Beispiel ein Volkskundler noch feststellen, dass die Großfamilie, die aus neun Männern und Frauen bestand und in einem Haus, das aus zwei Zimmer und einer Küche bestand, die Männer in der ersten, die Frauen in der zweiten Stube des Hauses wohnten. Diejenigen, die nicht bei den anderen schlafen wollten, verbrachten die Nacht im Stall. In späteren Epochen schliefen sie jedoch in derselben Stube, in der auch die Eltern und weiblichen Verwandten schliefen. Nach allgemeiner Einschätzung gehören diejenigen, die für sich kochen und gemeinsam an einem Tisch essen, zu einer Familie, unabhängig davon ob sie verheiratet sind oder nicht.

Im Jahr 1850 und 1857 wurde in der offiziellen Statistik statt das “gemeinsame Brot” der Begriff “Wohnpartei” eingeführt. Diese Betrachtungsweise wurde auch von den Forschern, die sich mit der Einrichtung des Bauernhauses beschäftigen übernommen.

Dem “Leben im Haus” wurde mit einigen Ausnahmen wenig Aufmerksamkeit gewidmet. Aber die historische Hausforschung konnte herausarbeiten, dass die Architektur und Einteilung der Räume von den materiellen Gegebenheiten abhängig war und die elementarsten Bedürfnisse der Familie von zwei oder mehr Genera-

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tionen erfüllen mussten. Die Raumaufteilung wurde so organisiert, dass sie funktional war und sich nach den immer wieder ändernden Notwendigkeiten richtete. Nur bei besonderen Gelegenheiten, wie Geburt, Hochzeit und Tod, bekamen bestimmte Räume eine neue Funktion. Die Architektur der Bauernhäuser hängt einerseits von dem Baumaterial, Holz, Lehm, Ziegel, Stein ab und andererseits von den ausgeübten Tätigkeiten bzw. Berufen

Die historische Familienforschung stützt sich auf verschiedene kirchliche und staatliche Statistiken (Familienbogen und *Status animarum*), seit dem 17. und 18. Jahrhundert. Aber es wurde deutlich, dass das Haus und die Familie sowie die Beziehungen zwischen Bewohnern eines Bauernhofs, die nicht auch Familienmitglieder sind, sehr komplex und nicht eindeutig waren (Faragó 1986). Nicht nur die äußere Lebensverhältnisse sondern auch die Lebenszyklen der Familie verändern sich von Zeit zu Zeit. Obwohl Haus und Wirtschaft des Bauernhofes im Allgemeinen identisch sind, gibt es jedoch Detail-Fragen, die nur schwer zu beantworten sind. Das Haus als Einheit von Wohnen und Wirtschaft ist nicht identisch mit den Bewohnern des Hauses, und es ist nicht immer klar, wie die Bewohner das Gebäude in der Realität benutzt haben. Noch im 20. Jahrhundert wurden die meisten bäuerlichen Tätigkeiten zum größten Teil nicht im Haus, sondern auf dem Hof bzw. auf den Feldern ausgeübt. Die Benutzung der Innenräume des Hauses war tagsüber Frauen, Kindern und alten und kranken Familienmitgliedern vorbehalten. Es entsteht die Frage, inwieweit das Haus als „geistiges Kraftfeld“ Bedeutung hat. Es gibt zahlreiche religiöse und magisch-rituelle Handlungen, die mit den verschiedenen Phasen der landwirtschaftlichen Arbeiten zusammenhängen. Bei historischen Grabungen hat man verschiedentlich Gegenstände, z. B. Münzen, die als Bauopfer betrachtet wurden, gefunden. Oft fand man auch Urkunden, die eingemauert waren und an den Gründer des Hauses erinnern sollten.

Zentraler Mittelpunkt des Hauses war der Herd, zuerst offen, später mit einem Funkenhut (Rauchstube) und noch später mit einem gemauerten Schornstein versehen. Jahrhundertelang bestimmte der Herd das alltägliche Leben, zugleich war er auch der Ort für magische Handlungen. Diese Handlungen bezogen sich auf Vorfälle des täglichen Lebens bzw. als Prophylaxe vor Krankheiten und

anderer Schäden. Die Stube hatte jahrhundertelang nur wenig Möbel. Die wichtigsten Möbel waren die Bänke, die ringsherum an die Wände gestellt waren und die wohl auch öfter als Schlafplätze dienten. Die Entwicklungsgeschichte des Hausrats zeigt, dass sie die grundlegenden Lebensbedürfnisse der Familienmitglieder sichern sollten. Erst mit dem Erscheinen der „schönen Stube“ wurde es möglich auch die nicht alltäglichen Bedürfnisse der Hausbewohner zu erfüllen.

Die „schöne Stube“ sollte den Wohlstand des Hauses zeigen, und sie wurde mit verschiedenen Gegenständen, wie Webereien, Keramiken, Heiligenbildern versehen. Der eigentliche Bezugspunkt aber war der „Herrgottswinkel“, dessen Mittelpunkt ein Kruzifix bildete. Wobei das Kruzifix in Ungarn sich zunächst nicht in der Stubbencke wie in Süddeutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz befand. Man sollte daran denken, dass der Katholizismus erst nach dem Türkenkriegen das alltägliche Leben der Bauern bestimmte und wann genau der Herrgottswinkel in die „schöne Stube“ einzog (Pócs 2001). Eine ungarische Eigenart ist, dass im Westen und Norden des Landes in der Heiligen Ecke sich ein Bild der Hl. Maria befindet.

In der „schönen Stube“ unter dem Herrgottswinkel war der Ehrenplatz für den Hausherrn bzw. für wichtige Besucher.

Mit der Veränderung der Stube haben die Heiligenbilder, das Kreuz, und andere dekorative Elemente ihren Platz verloren und mit der Vermehrung der Bilder und der symbolischen Gegenstände in der Stube, wurde nicht die Tiefe des Glaubens, sondern der Wohlstand der Familie zur Schau gestellt.

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# Innovations in Traditions



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## **Politics and Magic in the Ritual Year: Case Studies from Pre-Columbian Peru to the Present**

**Abstract.** Politics played an important role in Pre-Columbian and colonial Peru, as collective festivities performed during the ritual year were at the same time political rituals intended to strengthen the socio-political cohesion among the population and to foster the unity of the state. Although these official political rituals had and still today have an essentially religious character, traces of magical beliefs and practices may be detected in some festivities of the ritual year.

**Key words:** political rituals, Inca ritual year, colonial Peruvian feasts, present Andean ritual calendar, magical belief and practice

### **I. Introduction**

Rituals structured the agricultural as well as the political calendar of Andean societies and played an important role from Pre-Columbian times through the colonial era until the present. The Central Andes are particularly interesting with regard to the relationship of politics and magic in the ritual year. First, because two vast empires were established in the region in which political rule was legitimized by religion: The Incas pretended to be chosen as rulers over the other Andean peoples by their father, the sun god, and the Spanish king was considered to rule by the grace of God and to be a representative of God on earth. In such a system religion and politics cannot be separated and consequently collective rituals usually respond to these two dimensions, the religious and the political organization. Although the political rituals of both regimes had an essentially religious character, traces of magical practices may be detected, at least in some festivities of the ritual year. Secondly, it has to be noted that throughout the Andes, also in the non-Inca ethnic groups, political power was negotiated and confirmed in feasts of the ritual year.

In the following, first the political rituals of the Inca state will be brought into focus and we shall pose the question as to the way in

which magic was involved in the feasts of the Inca ritual calendar. The paper then seeks to trace magical procedures incorporated in or associated with festivities of the Andean ritual calendar during the colonial period. Finally, magical practices currently related to feasts of the Andean ritual year will be highlighted.

## **II. Politics and Magic in Festivals of the Andean Ritual year**

As Émile Durkheim (1981: 571) stated, collective rituals have at the same time a religious and a political dimension. Political rituals may be defined as ceremonial practices or repeating social events related to the political order, representing and constituting it (Gareis 2008: 99). That means these rituals do not simply show or reproduce the political order, but the ritual itself constitutes that order. As other rituals, they have basically two functions: symbolic communication and transformation. The latter is obvious in rites of passage as for example the coronation of an Inca ruler or early modern European monarch. On the one hand the ritual communicated the fact to the audience or participants; on the other hand it transformed the person into the ruler (Gareis 2010: 298).

Symbolic communication and transformation also characterized the political rituals of the Pre-Columbian Inca state in Peru. In only about one-hundred years the Incas established a centralized state, subduing most of the western fringe of South America until 1532. It was the largest empire of the Americas in pre-colonial times extending from southern Columbia to central Chile (Oberem 1990: 468, 473–486).

According to indigenous author Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, the Pre-Columbian Andean societies celebrated at least one major festival every month of the year (Guaman Poma [c.1615] 1980: 210 f.236-233 f.259). The festivities during the ritual year were usually performed in order to foster the well-being and cohesion of the ethnic group. After the incorporation into the Inca Empire festivals of the state religion were additionally introduced to the subdued regions. Furthermore, with few exceptions of some feasts which were held exclusively for the Inca families of the capital Cusco, the festivities were political rituals performed with the aim

of tying peoples, especially those newly-conquered, to the Empire and to tighten bonds with allies. Major festivities were held for the well-being of the Inca-ruler, since it was considered essential for the continuance of the Inca state and the welfare of its people (Gareis 1987: 64–67, 117, 137).

The majority of the different rites forming part of the Inca political rituals had a religious character, but some parts of the celebrations included magical rites, such as divination which was usually performed during great festivities. A great number of specialists in different divination techniques were busy finding out if sacrifices and other rituals had been accepted by the gods and especially to seek information about the future of the Inca ruler and the Empire (Gareis 1987: 72–75).

In April, the 4th month of the Inca calendar, Inca Raymi that is “the feast of the Inca” took place. It consisted, amongst other ceremonies, of public banquets to which the Inca invited the lords and authorities of the empire as well as the common people and the poor. Plenty of food and *chicha* (maize beer) was served and the Inca performed ritual dances. During this month, the lords of the empire were engaged in playing various ceremonial games. Little is known about these, but a game of dice, named Uayro (Guaman Poma 1980: 216 f.242-217 f.243) may well have been the model for a modern Andean magical game (Huairu) performed during wakes (Hartmann and Oberem 1968). May, the 5th month called Aimoray Quilla (“month of harvest”), was dedicated to the harvest festival. Ceremonial hymns of this month addressed “the magical maize” as the “magical mother” (Guaman Poma 1980: 218-219 f.244-245). Several other festivities of the Inca ritual calendar were characterized by some magical elements, but these were never prominent in the collective rituals.

In 1532 the Spaniards arrived and conquered the Inca Empire. Although the Catholic ritual year was introduced, many Inca festivities were performed as before, at least in the capital Cusco. Take for example Inti Raymi, the feast of the Sun, winter solstice and central political ritual of the Inca Empire. It was celebrated in June, thus coinciding with Corpus Christi in the Catholic ritual year. In Cusco, the capital of Inca Empire, the feast was celebrated in early colonial times in a similar way as before the arrival of the

Spaniards. On the other hand, in the Spanish realm Corpus Christi was at once a religious and a political ritual and soon became one of the most important politico-religious festivals in colonial Peru. The Spanish tradition contributed some carnivalesque elements to the Corpus Christi celebration, especially the figure of a dragon-like monster mounted on a carriage. In general it had various heads which snapped at the spectators. On top of the dragon called Tarasca a female actress performed cheerful songs (Gareis 2008: 100–105). The monster Tarasca is linked to the legend of Saint Martha. According to the legend, she rid Tarascon, a town in Provence, of a terrible dragon and led it with her sash to Arles where it was killed (Metford 1983: 168). Certainly, the actresses performing on top of the dragon bore little resemblance to the Saint, but in the early modern Hispanic world the legend was well known and Martha was a very popular saint. Probably her popularity was due to her role in love magic. Invocations of Saint Martha in combination with conjurations of the Limping Devil were considered to do wonders in bringing a missing husband back home or let a man fall madly in love with the magician or her client (Gareis 2013: 420–421). Of course this makes sense, because if she could have tamed a dragon with her sash or belt, she would also be able to tie the will of a man. The relationship of Saint Martha to magic in colonial popular belief suggests that some individuals may have associated parts of the Corpus Christi procession with magic, but there is no further evidence of magical procedures in this emblematic political ritual of the colonial state.

The non-Inca groups had simply added the Inca festivals to their own rituals, when they were subdued by the rulers from Cusco. This strategy proved also to be very useful when the Spaniards came. As they had done before under Inca rule, after the Spanish conquest the ethnic groups of the Andes continued with their cults under the veil of Catholic rituals. Consequently, for a long time, the Spaniards did not notice that in the provinces of the former Inca Empire the ancient rituals were still performed under the cover of Catholic feasts. Dances in honour of Andean deities were for example declared to be dances for the Virgin Mary or other saints. While attending Catholic mass and ceremonies, the Andean peoples at the same time tried to keep up with their duties to the ancient gods. The political leaders in particular had to fulfil certain obligations

during the Catholic ritual year, as well as in the Andean cycle of rituals and festivities (Gareis 2004: 271–272). At the beginning of the 17th century, the oral traditions of Huarochirí in the central Andean highlands reported that ceremonial dances in honour of the local ethnic deity were still performed by the indigenous authorities. It was common belief that if they failed to do their duty, they would have been punished with death (Taylor 1987: 169, 175, 177).

As in Huarochirí, also in other parts of the Andes, Pre-Columbian religious feasts for ethnic deities merged with the celebrations of Patron Saints. In the small North-Peruvian coastal town of Túcume since late colonial times, “The Dance of the Seven Vices” is performed in honour of the Immaculate Virgin venerated in the region and her “daughter”, a smaller itinerant image. The participants regard it as their obligation to the Virgin to assume their role as devils in the dance, which represents the fight between the forces of good and evil. They are opposed by the “Archangel Michael”, impersonated by a boy. Of course, the archangel always wins the battle. There are many stories about dancers who could not fulfil their obligation with the virgin for some reasons. Subsequently family members fell ill or nearly all the animals of the herd were killed. The local tradition reports the case of six musicians engaged by the villagers who refused to go on playing for the virgin, when the agreed sum of money had been spent. On their way home they were all killed by a truck (Millones 2008: 87–90, 92–94, 97–99).

The principal festivity for the Virgin of Túcume is held in January, but there is also a second festival season at the end of August and beginning of September. August is at the same time the most important ritual period in the Andean ritual calendar linked to Pachamama or Mother Earth, the Andean deity most often associated with the Virgin Mary (Mariscotti 1978: 53–55). During the month of August the earth is “open” and “hungry”, meaning that the deity demands sacrifice and may be very dangerous. If Pachamama gets angry, she may even kill people (Mariscotti 1978: 117). Similarly, the “negative wonders” of the Virgin of Túcume punish those who do not serve her cult properly. The parallels show the merging of the Andean and Catholic belief systems and that it is equally essential to meet the demands of Andean deities and Catholic saints.



Figure 1. The Inca feast of the deceased according to Guaman Poma [c. 1615]. Guaman Poma de Ayala, Felipe. [c.1615] (1936).  
*Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno (Codex péruvien illustré).*  
*Travaux et Mémoires de l'Institut d'Ethnologie 23.*  
*Paris: L'Institut d'Ethnologie, f.256.*

Another feast of the Andean Pre-Columbian ritual calendar was Aya Marcay Quilla, the “Feast of the Deceased”, which took place in November. The mummies of the deceased were taken from their vaults, dressed in rich cloth feathers were put on their heads, they were served food and drinks, their descendants drinking and

dancing with them. Following which they were seated on a litter and taken from door to door, carrying the mummies to the main square. Finally the dead were taken back to their vaults, where they received offerings of food, animals, and cloth (Guaman Poma [1615] 1980: 230 f.256-231 f.257).

Coinciding with Catholic All Saints' Day and All-Souls on 1st and 2nd November respectively, bearing furthermore strong resemblance with the Spanish Feast of the Dead, it is no wonder that these festivals of the ritual year eventually merged into a hybrid version. At present Andean people believe that during the three years after their death the "new souls", the more recently deceased, will come back to their houses on All Saints' Day to receive offerings of bread, fruit, flowers, and so on. The prayers address the dead as mediators between the living and the supernatural world, but also as potentially dangerous, if they get angry (Rösing 1987: 312ff.).

### **III. Conclusions**

The historical sources offer little evidence of magic linked to politics in public feasts of the Pre-Columbian ritual year, with exception of divination rituals which formed part of all major celebrations and perhaps some other less prominent magical procedures.

In colonial times, political rituals of Pre-Columbian Andean societies merged with festivals of the Catholic calendar, such as Corpus Christi. Celebrations dedicated to ethnic deities in the provinces of the Inca Empire continued in the feasts of patron saints. As in festivals under Inca rule, the colonial public festivities of the ritual calendar failed to show evidence of a link between politics and magic.

Nonetheless, magical belief may be involved in ritual dances and sacrifices persisting through colonial times until the present. Today the pre-colonial deities are often identified with Catholic saints. The Virgin is usually associated with Pachamama, Mother Earth. Therefore, Catholic saints eventually became part of the Andean retaliatory religious and magic economy.

While politics played an important role during collective festivities of the Andean ritual year in the past and do so until today, magic was only involved to a minor degree. Nevertheless, magic and poli-

tics had of course been linked in special cases, as for example in harmful magic performed against the Inca (Gareis 1987: 366–367). Magic was and still is more frequently linked to individual rituals.

The feast of the dead, an important collective festivity in the Inca ritual year, shifted after the Spanish conquest to a more private, individual celebration, at least to a certain degree. Magical procedures are involved in feeding the dead and performing other rites on their graves. In a sense, the Andean feast of the dead, today All Saints' Day, also bears relation to political aspects, as the members of the indigenous community join in procession to the local cemetery to make offerings to the dead ancestors. Food, flowers, and alcoholic beverages are offered to the dead in order to ask for their help as mediators with the spiritual world, and still more importantly, to prevent the “hungry” dead from punishing their offspring and the whole community.

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## **Motifs of Sacrifice in the Context of the Present-Day Search for Spiritual Experience in Latvia: Traditions and Innovations**

**Abstract.** Sacrifice has historically been an integral ritual form of religion in traditional societies. Sacrifice of animals, plants, food and various objects has taken place both in the context of seasonal festivities and family celebrations. Sacrificial rituals were used to communicate with the gods' world, to change one's social status, prevent upcoming misfortunes and to ensure the harmonization of one's own existence with the whole universe. Until the end of 19th century the sacrificing in Latvia still has been held in the traditional way. Ritual offering as a cultural phenomenon is also often seen in celebrations and various other situations nowadays. This article examines the interpretations and forms of expression of offerings in the Latvian context, their functions, grounds, and the participants' meanings in regard to this act of magic.

**Key words:** sacrifice, offering, traditions, spirituality, neopaganism

### **Introduction**

To introduce this article, I would like to share an event experienced by an acquaintance of mine. Once, after a long day of work when she was on her way back home, she boarded a trolley-bus but forgot to register her ticket as she was talking on her phone. As it happened, this was the time the authorities stopped the transport to conduct a check, and my acquaintance was made to pay her fine. Later, relating the event to me, she commented that she had curbed her disappointment by thinking: this money will be my sacrifice to the Mother of the Road. In Latvian mythology, there are more than 100 mythical Mothers that form an important part of the spirit world, and they are considered different manifestations of the Primal Mother, or the Mother of the Earth. So, in this woman's mind the act of giving away (sacrificing) her material goods (in this case – money) for the invisible, immaterial world, in order to ensure her success in her future voyages, is valued higher than that money

reaching the public transport company “Rigas Satiksme”, ltd., that is responsible for the passengers’ safety and comfort.

What is the present-day function of sacrifice – this ritual form that is inherent to the archaic and traditional communities? Does lack of interest in creating popular theories about sacrificing mean that the post-modern consciousness doesn’t find the subject of sacrifice important? It might seem that it has disappeared along with the changes in the society’s form, and changes in people’s lifestyle and beliefs.

### **Sacrificing in Latvian traditions**

First of all, I would like to point out the fact that in Latvian traditional culture, to describe the ritual of offering, the term ‘*ziedošana*’ is used, coming from the word ‘*zieds*’. The etymology of *zieds* is related to several meanings, like ‘to shine’, ‘to glitter’, and the ancient meaning of the term ‘to sacrifice’, *upurēt*, is ‘to endow’ (Karulis 2001: 1190–1191). Through an examination of Latvian wedding traditions one can observe that offering relates to communication with the ‘unliving’ world. “To living things bride offers gifts, to inanimate – offerings” (LTT, 14338, K. Jansons, *Plāni*).

Quite a wide variety of objects can be offered, for instance coins, mittens, woven bands, shawls, towels, jewellery, butter, beer, eggs, grain, bread, wax, including wax from flowers, but never blood sacrifices. On the other hand, the ritual sacrifice of living creatures (animals) is more related to the term *upurēt*, borrowed from the German term ‘*Opfer*’ and is mentioned in 17th century dictionaries (Karulis 2001: 1089). Sacrificing animals to Latvian gods usually means preparing a ritual meal for the feast.

In Latvian tradition, offering has usually occurred in certain places, at a certain time, and with a certain purpose. For this reason, there have been sacred trees, sacred groves, stones, springs, rivers, lakes, islands, caves, wooden or stone sculptures, the hearth of a home, the stove of a threshing-barn, and other sacred sites. In the 18th century church protocols one can find mentions about offered things found under trees, next to stones, in caves, in chapels, or on tombs (LTT 1941: 2071–2074).

Offerings to certain places were quite popular, explained as an establishment of good relations with a certain part of a space. This is clearly seen in wedding traditions in which a bride, upon her arrival at her new home – the groom's household – gives an offering to the cattle stall, the mill, the well, the sauna, the barn, the threshing-barn. A folk song says:

Dievaina, dievaina	<i>Full of spirits</i>
Tautinu sēta,	<i>Is my groom's household,</i>
Kur kāju spēru,	<i>Wherever I set my foot,</i>
Tur zieda vajag.	<i>An offering is needed.</i>

(LFK 25560-0 – Ērgli)

To gain success in fishing, offerings to rivers and lakes have been given, to forests when hunting a certain kind of game, to the earth at the beginning of sowing season, etc.

Offering has been an inherent part of pre-Christian seasonal festivities. As the sacrifice, there could be an animal – a goat, a buck, an ox, a pig, a rooster, a hen and others – later eaten as part of the festive meal. Prepared food could also be given as an offering – porridge, cheese, beer, eggs, fat, scrambled eggs etc., while during Midsummer, flowers could also be offered. Both during seasonal festivities and family celebrations, objects that were not edible could be given as an offering, for example, textiles. After giving birth in a sauna, a woman would usually offer a woven band or a pair of mittens to Mara, the Mother of the Earth:

Iziedama Mārai devu	<i>As I exited I gave to Mara</i>
Dzīparotu prievītiņu.	<i>An ornate woven band.</i>
Nem par ziedu, mīla Māra,	<i>Take it as an offering, dear Mara,</i>
Pirmo pādes dāvaniņu.	<i>The first gift of the new-born.</i>

(LFK, 1138-0 – Lutriņi)

Offerings were given during name-giving – for the water to wash the baby with and for the crib. During funeral processions offerings were given as well – mittens were placed on the cross and money, mittens, stockings or other textiles were placed on the coffin. “Every funeral guest must give an offering. Who doesn't, gets a serious affliction” (LTT 2155, J. Dāvids, Biksere). If driving past a tree, one would stop to tie red and yellow threads to it, and to carve a cross in its bark, so that the dead wouldn't return (LTT 2292, Rig.

Almanach, 1864. Des alten Andreas Tod, 53.). As was mentioned above, many offerings were given during wedding celebrations.

*The girls herding cattle would throw woollen threads on every footbridge and crossways as offerings along the way from the bride's home. The first neighbouring household would also be given a loaf of bread, woven bands and towels, and a bucket of beer. All of it was done so that no harm would befall the bride and her cattle.* (LTT 14459, A. Gēgeris, Vecpiebalga)

In Latvia, sacrifices beneath buildings have also been found. Underneath buildings that date from the 11th and 12th centuries, animal skulls and bones have been discovered. During the building of a stove, in its right corner three eggs would be placed, which could be viewed as a building sacrifice, but also as an offering to the Spirit of the House (Johansons 1995: 79–95).

There are accounts of offerings given to the Spirit of the House, or the Lord of the House, or the God of the House up until the 19th century: money, wool, bread, milk, roosters and other things (LTT 1941: 1178–1182). The tradition of offering the first morsel was observed, as well as offerings at the beginning and the end of housework. For healing purposes, kerchiefs, ribbons and money were left on sacrifice stones (Straubergs 1995: 47–78).

### Traces of the Offering in the Present Day

What of all this has survived until the present day? Today, similarly, there are a wide variety of rituals of offerings, or elements of this ritual, to be found in Latvia, in the context of individuals' search for spiritual experience. Firstly, I will note the range of those kinds of offerings that are obviously a continuation of the traditions of old. Up until the present day, offerings like pieces of fabric or ribbon, or money are left next to healing waters and sacred stones. For example, the spring of Boleni is known to have healing effects on afflictions related to vision.

Traces of the ancient cult – offerings to the ancestors related to requests for support – is recognizable in modern-day activities connected to graves. On certain days of the year – Days of the Dead that are usually celebrated during summer, or Candle Nights in autumn, or on other important days – flowers, candles and food



*Figure 1. Offering at the Boleni source.*  
<http://www.emadona.lv/?p=news2arch&fu=sh&id=649&m=3&y=2010>

are brought to graveyards. In the Eastern regions of Latvia, on the Days of the Dead the entire kin usually reunites and often meals are eaten next to the graveyards, a custom that might be related to the ancient tradition of having the funeral feast next to the grave.

The tradition of giving offerings to the ancestors that has merged with the tradition of giving offerings to certain places is clearly seen in occasions when flowers and candles are left at accident sites, for example, that of a car crash, or of a collapsed building.

The archaic offering for higher spirits, in order to placate them or as a mark of respect, nowadays is seen, for example, in the tradition of bringing flowers to school on the 1st of September – the beginning of a school year – when the part of the “higher spirits” is symbolically played by teachers. An offering as a symbol of gratitude reveals itself in giving flowers and presents to teachers when finishing school or to medics after leaving hospital. Based in the ancient beliefs about the natural order of the universe – the everlasting flow and change, the

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principle of exchange, there is perhaps a deep knowledge in every person about giving as a condition for receiving. Maybe in part due to this principle, people donate for sick children, poor people, the Christian Church and other causes that in a way take on the role of an intermediary between a person and higher powers.

Apart from the above-mentioned examples, taking place in wider circles of the society, there are rituals of offering in the context of neo-paganism. The term neo-paganism is used here to refer to a wide circle of events and adepts, including *dievturi* – members of spiritual renewal movement, folklorists – people, who learn and revive Latvian traditions, sauna attendants, healers, people, who practice esotericism and other people who find their ancestors' take on the world and ancestral traditions attractive.

The renewed interest in seasonal festivities and family celebrations at the end of the previous century caused a revival of various rituals, including the practice of giving offerings. Almost always a fire is lit at these festivities and offerings are given to the fire – grains, wax, flowers, wool, jewellery, cheese, bread, beer, milk, water etc. It is usually the leader of the ritual who is the giver of the offerings, but sometimes also other important participants of the ritual, such as the newlyweds at their wedding along with the witnesses, or godparents at a christening/name giving. As fire has a double nature – creativity and destruction – during seasonal festivities it is common to sacrifice the attributes of the previous year: the old flower crowns of the last year's Midsummer, the old wreathes of the previous *Apjumības* (autumn equinox), last year's willow branches or coloured egg-shells from Easter celebrations etc. Offerings for fire have gained a lot of popularity lately because of the spread of Yogic and Vedic traditions in Latvia.

There are ways of giving offerings without the fire. On *Lielā diena* or spring equinox (in March), before starting to swing, an egg is dug in the ground next to the swing pole. On *Meteņi* (in February) porridge is spilt across a hilltop. In the traditional culture, the Porridge Day was celebrated one week before the Ash Day, which now is known as Christian Ash Wednesday. It was believed that on that day, a pot of porridge had to be taken to a hilltop and poured over it, so that the shepherds would have enough to eat throughout the summer (LTT, 3204 – Nīca). On *Māras* day (in March) women



*Figure 2. Offering eggs in the earth for the swings at the spring equinox. Riga, 2014. Photo by Jordy NN.*

would give woven bands or woollen threads as an offering by tying them to tree branches – so that their wishes would come true. On *Ūsini* (in April or May) young men would give an offering to the god of light and fertility *Ūsiņš* by digging a hole in the ground using only an axe handle and placing a raw egg inside, or scrambled eggs. Both on *Ūsini* and *Mārtiņi* (in November) for both deities (*Ūsinš* and *Mārtiņš*) that are the patrons of horses, men would sacrifice a rooster. In autumn during the Days of Ancestors' Spirits, those spirits receive offerings in the form of food that is left during the night for them by those seeking their benevolence and support. Later during winter this kind of meal is offered to masks, but at Midsummer to *jāņabērni* or people who have come from nearby households.

The aforementioned acts of giving offerings and others, for instance an offering for the Mother of the Sea during Fishermen's festivals, or those celebrated by Livonians (an ethnic group living by the sea),

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or during full-moon rituals – are held in public space and involve a smaller or bigger number of people. Some respondents mention also rituals of offering that are performed individually or within a family. “If the ritual is of the individual kind, the place and the type of the offering is determined by the spirit to be contacted” (Survey 5, 2014). Among those, we can name neo-shamanic practices, healing rituals, and sauna rituals during which the Spirit of the Sauna receives an offer of scented water.

It doesn’t matter whether ritual sacrifices are deliberate or not, traditional or newly created, meaningful or incomprehensible, they keep occurring. The sociologist of religions Thomas Luckmann believes that religion does not disappear from our present-day world and that transcendental experience is a universal component of a person’s life. As the result of “privatization” of a religion, it has only shifted from the “large” transcendence of the Otherworld to other smaller experiences of the transcendent that give the individual himself the sacral status (Luckmann 1990: 127–138).

Survey respondents say that they give offerings for blessing, for fertility, for prosperity, for good luck, to ensure success (Survey 1, 2014), for health, in thanks for past events and experiences, for a prosperous future (Survey 3, 2014), to certain gods, to higher powers (Survey 6, 2014), to maintain the spirit world in exchange for maintaining themselves (Survey 5, 2014). In giving offerings, they ask for blessings not only upon themselves but also upon their relatives, their land, their people (Survey 4, 2014). One respondent admits he gives offerings in order to discover their purpose (Survey 7, 2014). For another, the reason and the meaning of the offering is an affirmation of their selflessness in front of their ancestors, because one offers things they have made with their own hands, while a sacrifice is performed to pay for a life, for instance, at the birth of a child. At *Ūsiņi*, a rooster is sacrificed, so that healthy foals would be born and raised (Survey 2, 2014). There are also many members of society who give offerings without giving much thought as to their meaning and with a considerably lower level of expecting a certain result, but do it nevertheless, to maintain a tradition and ritual order.

## Conclusions

Although the sacrificial practices in the historical cultural contexts of the world are very different typologically and structurally, their sacred function has always been to maintain the order of life. Sacrifices are meant to renew and maintain contact between two worlds – sacred and profane – and to ensure that the society functions normally (Rozenfeld 2006). Albeit the plane of sacrificial meanings is quite wide and uncertain in the contemporary person's mind, the many contexts are united in people's search for spirituality in the traditions of their ancestors, based on their sense of unity with their surroundings, their incorporation within the flow of life, and the desire to maintain a balance between natural and spiritual processes. Finally, it can be pointed out that nowadays the practice of giving an offering is creating a link, or opening and maintaining a channel, in a way, between themselves and a higher, a sacral reality.

## Abbreviations

- LFK (*Latvijas Folkloras Krātuve*) – Archives of Latvian Folklore  
LTT (*Latviešu tautas ticējumi*) – Latvian Beliefs

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## **The Destruction of Religious Monuments in Lithuania in Soviet Times: Stories, Magic and Beliefs**

**Abstract.** The article deals with the stories about destruction of crosses and shrines in Soviet times. Most stories have elements of magic that are associated with the fate of the destroyers of monuments. By telling such stories, people expressed their concern, their religious and ethical attitude towards acts of vandalism connected with crosses and shrines. These stories show, who destroy sacral monuments are acting against the moral norms of the community and will be punished by God for it.

**Key words:** sacral monuments, destruction, magic, punishment, Soviet period

Together with the building of small-scale religious architectural monuments, such as crosses and shrines, there have been two other processes in the history of Lithuanian culture: prohibitions on putting them up, and their destruction. In the 19th and 20th centuries, roadside crosses and other types of sacral folk monument were prohibited and destroyed by various occupying forces, as public displays of the Catholic faith and the national identity.

This article deals with the destruction of monuments in Soviet times. It was an extremely unfavourable period for religious life: atheist ideology was strongly inculcated, and people were prevented from conducting religious ceremonies. Visual signs of religious faith were also destroyed. Many churches were closed and turned into secular institutions. Small sacral monuments, especially crosses, standing in public spaces, beside roads and in town squares, were ruthlessly demolished, and it was prohibited to build new ones. The process started with the beginning of the Soviet occupation in 1940, and became especially active after the war, as the whole repressive apparatus of the occupying government started to function in Lithuania.

Crosses and other sacral monuments were destroyed by blowing them up, cutting them down, burning them, throwing them into rivers, and shooting at them. In the post-war period, roadside crosses became a target for members of local armed units called *stribai* by the Lithuanians<sup>1</sup>.

Those who made and put up memorial monuments were persecuted in various ways: by different punishments (warning notes, penalties and fines), by being put in psychiatric hospitals, by being prevented from studying in high schools, etc.

The destruction of sacral monuments was carried out by members of the Soviet administration, zealous members of local executive committees, activists of the Young Communist League (the Komsomol) and the Communist Party, the police, and other atheists.

The people regarded the destroyers of sacral monuments in a very unfavourable light. All those who destroyed monuments or encouraged their destruction were considered evil. Any such act of destruction aroused silent discontent, and sometimes resistance. People would respond to these evil acts by putting up a new cross in the place of the destroyed one.

Most acts of destruction were shrouded in mystery, and accompanied by stories of magic, spells and superstition. In this article, I explore stories with elements of magic that are associated with the fate of the destroyers of monuments and destroyed artefacts. The purpose of the article is to discuss attitudes and approaches to the destruction of sacral monuments and to its principles as well.

The article is based on field research carried out in Lithuania since 2003. Questions on facts relating to the destruction of monuments became especially important to me, and were included in my questionnaire since 2013 when I started a new research project<sup>2</sup>. During the field research, when asked about the destruction of monuments, informants quite often told stories about the tragic fate of those who had dared to destroy crosses or shrines.

We can find some articles in Lithuanian historiography which discuss the cross-crafting tradition from the point of destruction. Attention is paid to the circumstances of destruction and its impact on the survival of the tradition (Milius 1995; 1996); or destruction is shown as causing huge damage to the national cultural heritage

(Martinaitienė 2009). Attention has not yet been paid to people's attitudes to the destruction. Some facts about the destruction of sacral monuments (with elements of magic) in countries of the Soviet bloc have been recorded and presented in a publication including work by researchers from Poland, Hungary and Slovakia (Bedyński, Mazur-Hanaj 2011: 33–34, 115–116). It should be noted that Russian researchers have already discussed the theme of the destruction of sacral monuments and sacred objects (churches, shrines, bells, icons) in their country, which started in 1918 after the October Revolution (Babenko 1997; Dobrovolskaya 1997; Fadeeva 2003). According to them, stories about the destruction of sacred objects are intended to warn people about the punishment for the sin committed (Dobrovolskaya 1997: 77; Fadeeva 2003: 4).

### **Stories about Destruction of Monuments**

Stories about the unfortunate fates of the destroyers of sacral monuments circulated in Soviet times, and they are still alive today in Lithuania. People telling stories about the destruction of crosses and shrines always stress the consequences of these acts as being related to the fates of those who destroy them, and point to God's punishment. Stories about destroyed objects and those who destroyed them can be divided into groups.

According to one group of stories, the destroyers of sacral monuments face an unfortunate fate: death from shooting, explosion or serious illness. For example, an informant (a woman, born in 1927, Telšiai district) had recalled an event which occurred in her village in the post-war period. While passing by the village cemetery, members of a local armed squad (*stribai*) fired at the crosses. One of them hit a statuette of Christ. When they reached a forest they were attacked by Lithuanian partisans<sup>3</sup>. The man who had broken the figure of Christ was shot dead, another was injured. After these events, one person who had been injured left the armed squad, for he understood that it was divine retribution.

Another interviewee (a man, born in 1920, Ukmurgė district) told how in about 1970 a young couple had pulled down a wooden cross that was standing beside their house. He claimed that because of this they had both died young. Similar stories are told about the

destroyers of the Hill of Crosses<sup>4</sup>. People say that the destroyers of the Hill lived only until the age of 50; they suddenly fell seriously ill and died very quickly.

According to another group of stories, a destroyer is injured. Quite often, other people acted in such events. If another person refused to destroy a sacral monument, he remained safe or even converted. An informant (a man, born in 1936, Alytus) recalled an event from his childhood. The event was related to a pine tree, called Martin's Pine, which was famous for its miracles. People used to put various offerings, such as small crosses, miniature shrines, holy images and rosaries on it, pleading for God's grace. In the post-war period, two young members of a local armed squad (*stribai*) went to the holy place, to see if what local people said was true, that it was impossible to shoot the images hanging from the tree because the bullets returned to the shooters. Standing by the tree, one of them changed his mind, and began to discourage his friend from shooting at the holy tree. But his friend did not listen, fired, and hit an image of the Virgin Mary. The shot hit the shoulder of the Virgin. On returning to the town, they found a grenade. Suddenly it went off in the hands of the person who had shot at the image of the Virgin Mary. His hands were torn off, one eye was wounded, and his face was badly disfigured. But the other one, who had asked him not to shoot at the holy images, was unaffected, even though he had been standing beside his friend at the time of the explosion. The storyteller added that the locals believed it was God's punishment.

The third group of stories is about how an object that was doomed to destruction miraculously survived. People also tell stories about the desecration of a sacred place where a cross or shrine had once stood. According to traditional beliefs, the place where a cross or a shrine stands or stood is sacred. According to this belief, old ruined crosses and shrines should be rebuilt on that sacred spot. People used to say that only a cross or shrine could be rebuilt on the site of an old ruined cross. Remnants of this belief are noticeable from the Soviet era as well. Informants gave an example of a village 40 years ago where a block of flats was built on the site of a demolished cross. Locals said that it was a bad sign to build a house on the site of a cross, that the people living in the house would be unhappy, and they could suffer various misfortunes. And this prediction turned

out to be true: only alcoholic families lived in the block (recorded in 2013 in the Utena district).

### **Beliefs with Elements of Sympathetic Magic**

From the stories about destruction of sacral monuments, it can be seen that most superstitions related to the tragic fate of those who destroy crosses and shrines have elements of sympathetic magic that rely on similarity: an effect on one object can cause a similar effect on another. Principles of similarity related to sacred objects were very popular in traditional Lithuanian culture. Elements of sympathetic magic can be seen in actions to improve a person's health. In order to bring about a cure, people used to tie ribbons on sculptures of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and saints who are regarded as protectors from certain diseases. Usually, a ribbon or a strip of material was tied to the same part of the statuette which was affected, for example, a leg, a hand, the neck, the head, etc. There is much evidence of recoveries after carrying out such actions. Religious people believed that making such an offering would help a person receive God's grace, or cure a disease, and prevent other misfortunes. Magic elements were also used for marital intentions. For example, during a wedding, a bride, when leaving her parents' house, taped a sash or a ribbon to a roadside cross, in the belief that it would make for a happy family life. Girls adorned statuettes and crosses with ribbons and garlands of flowers in order to get a good husband. These acts were also performed by people seeking success in their everyday family life and business dealings. In order to have children, women used to tie tiny aprons to crosses. This custom was recorded in Soviet times as well. It was also believed that various small religious objects had protective powers. For example, a blessed candle, a holy image or a rosary was used to protect the house, the livestock and the harvest against natural disasters such as storms and lightning.

On the other hand, the magic elements in stories make them more imaginative and impressive; they reinforce the impression of a necessary punishment for breaking moral norms. Therefore, I presume that a story that is reinforced with elements of magic could have a stronger didactic effect. According to the storytellers, events which ended in the death or serious illness of someone who

destroyed monuments sometimes affected others, so that they would not dare to destroy monuments. Some people even began to attend church. Besides, by telling such stories to children and young people, the storytellers sought to teach them that immoral behaviour with sacral objects was inadmissible, because of their sacredness. In other words, such stories were an attempt or a way to encourage respect for sacral monuments, to prevent evil acts, and to protect other sacral objects from being destroyed in that period of strong anti-religious feeling. As in fairy-tales, these stories end with the tragic death of a negative hero (or anti-hero). If a positive hero acts in such stories, he remains safe.

Today, such stories sometimes serve to discipline children if they behave disrespectfully towards a sacral object. For instance, a woman (born in 1936, Šakiai district) said that she had noticed children throwing stones into a miniature shrine hanging from a tree by the roadside. She warned them, telling them that they could lose their hands by such behaviour ("the hand would dry off", she said, as if casting a spell).

It should be noted that all stories about the destruction of sacral monuments are related to a concept of divine retribution. According to Bronislaw Malinowski, "From the study of past religions, primitive and developed, we gain the conviction [...] that every religion implies some reward for virtue and the punishment of sin" (Malinowski 1935: viii). Religious people regarded any disrespectful behaviour towards a sacral monument, especially the intentional destruction of it, as a sin. Therefore, the traditional community paid great respect to sacral monuments, and small sacred objects as well. It was forbidden to keep and treat a sacred object disrespectfully. Because of this, a custom to burn all decayed wooden crosses and even small religious objects, such as old and worn prayer-books, still exists. According to Emile Durkheim, the religious interdiction "comes from the respect inspired by the sacred object, and its purpose is to keep this respect from failing" (Durkheim 1964: 301).

It was believed that the disrespectful treatment of a sacral object, especially its intentional destruction, causes appropriate divine retribution. As we have already seen, the consequences were very severe, mostly death from a similar action: if someone shoots at a sacral object, he dies in a similar way. If the sacral object is damaged

but not completely ruined, the outcome is connected to the part of the body which corresponds with the part of the damaged object: the person loses a leg or an arm, that is, he becomes disabled. Or the person succumbs to a serious illness, usually resulting in death.

### Concluding remarks

By telling such stories, people expressed their concern, their religious and ethical attitude towards acts of vandalism connected with sacral objects. The stories show the main moral attitude of religious people: fearing punishment, a good (moral) person does not act contrary to God's will. He faces divine retribution for violating established ethical norms of behaviour. In other words, a religious person believes that whoever breaks the rules expects to suffer retribution, that immoral acts will be punished by God. Evil acts are always punishable. The stories show, those who destroy sacral objects are acting against the moral norms of the community and will be punished for it.

The stories show the power of God over evil: those who destroy sacral objects are punished, or they come round to accepting God's authority. It is clear that, for the storytellers, the demonstration of the authority of God is the important part of the story. Also, the norms of Christian morality are important to the storytellers and the wider social group, as the stories are told to members of the community.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The word *stribas* derives from the Russian *izstrebitel* 'destroyer'.

<sup>2</sup> The research project "Lithuanian Cross-Crafting during the Soviet Era: Ideological, Socio-Cultural and Artistic Aspects" is funded by a grant (No. LIT-7-14/2013) from the Research Council of Lithuania.

<sup>3</sup> Lithuanian partisans were members of armed resistance movement who waged guerilla warfare in Lithuania against the Soviet Union in 1944–1953.

<sup>4</sup> The well-known holy site – Hill of Crosses – was several times (in 1961, 1973, 1974 and 1976) completely destroyed with the help of the Soviet

army. “Completely” in this case means that not a single cross was left (for instance, there were more than 2000 crosses on the Hill before the first destruction in 1961).

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Divination,  
Fortune-Telling



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## **Rebus – Charms – Evil Forces – Magic**

**Abstract.** Rebus is a worldwide genre that we can recognise if there are pictures and words connected and encoded in a culture. We know rebus already from Old Egypt and as far away as in Central America among the Mayas, as well as in many old and new cultures in Europe. There were epochs particularly favouring the “pictorial riddles” – as e.g. the Italian Renaissance and the late Renaissance in France and then in Germany, etc. Rebus went beyond simple language and was used as magic text. The text structure of some charms is inseparable from that of the riddle and rebus (e.g. reading back-and-forth, up-and-down, using letters and numbers as words and vice versa). Pictures, musical notes, typography of the texts, written sentences pronounced according to dialects or in different languages – all those play important roles in creating and deciphering both phenomena. Riddles and rebus have often been seen as a challenge from the evil forces, and both the rebus and its solving were understood within the framework of magic.

The author describes some famous rebuses from European (old) tradition.

**Key words:** rebus, genre, magic text, riddle genres, enigma, bigarrures of Tabourot

*Rebus* is a world-wide phenomenon: similar to genres like enigma, riddle, device, cartoon, doodle etc. It combines simple drawings with simple texts. In fact the text is the more important, but the drawing is more surprising or witty. If we draw a church building and a hill, it is the rebus for the English statesman: Sir Winston Churchill. If on the picture we see thick smoke, it is a witty allusion to his constant cigar smoking. Not only pictures, also letters, numbers, musical notes, mathematical or chemical symbols etc. will figure as drawings. *L / don* (the letter “L” over “Don”) is the clue for “London”. If the writing system is pictographic, the rebus is more effective.

The Old Egyptian *Narmer* plaque of more than 5000 years ago uses two drawings for the owner’s name: *nar* ‘fish’ and *mer* ‘chisel’,

which have very different further semantic references. Pictograms and hieroglyphs at Abydos (3400 BC) were in fact used as rebus. On the famous statue of Pharaoh Ramses II, his name is composed of three signs: the God Horus (as Ra), for *ra*; the sign for child, *mes*; and a plant the ruler holds in left hand, *su*. In this way the rebus can be deciphered: *Ra-mes-su*. The historical development of Chinese writing has also references to rebus-like decipherment. Hieroglyphs used the rebus principle in other cultures also. The noted Danish linguist Dienhart suggests a compound meaning of the Maya hieroglyph: *lem* + *ba* ‘flash of lightning’ where the first part of the word is *lem* ‘vessel’ and the second part is *ba(c)* ‘bone’ , which occurs in place names, city names and as the name of the Gate to the Otherworld.

Not all hieroglyphs use the “rebus”-principle, but it is very common among them.

The use of rebus in a number of world cultures is very inventive. For example, in Japan, during the Edo-period the rebus (*hanjimono*) was very popular. A piece by *ukiyo-e* artist *Kunisada* was named “Actor puzzles” (“*Yakusha hanjimono*”). Kabuki actors would wear *yukata* and other clothing, whose pictorial design, in rebus, represented their *Yagō* “guild names”, and would distribute *tenugui* cloth with their rebusified names as well. The practice was not restricted to the acting profession and was engaged in by townsfolk belonging to a variety of social groups. There were also pictorial calendars called *egoyomi* that represented the Japanese ritual year in rebus so that it could be “read” by the illiterate.

A well known and typical way of creating a signature is making a small drawing instead of writing one’s name. Cicero often signed his letters with three small circles: *cicero* means in Latin ‘pea’. Instead of closing a letter with the common greeting word “*Salutem!*” he drew three thin cups: *metulas* (using the letters in inverse form.) Albrecht Dürer signed his paintings with a small “covered door” (*Tür* in German means ‘door’). The Russian avant-garde poet V. V. Mayakovsky used a simple drawing of a lighthouse (in Russian: *mаяк*) for signature. Artists are clever in inventing anagrams or other visual + textual riddles.

This kind of signature is using the rebus principle.

Medieval heraldry gave good opportunities to associate a family with a picture. It was common in Italy. The coat of arms of the famous Orsini family shows a bear (*orso*). The inscriptions on coats of arms add a further dimension to “text–picture” correspondence. The text could be understood in different ways.

An often quoted typical personal-name rebus was executed by Hugh Oldham, Bishop of Exeter (early 16th century) who had it carved on the wall of the chantry of the cathedral. It depicts an “owl”, bearing a scroll in its beak, showing the three letters: *d o m*. The pronunciation of ‘owl’ + ‘dom’ makes ‘Oldham’, the Bishop’s name. Furthermore the three letters (*d o m*) refer to the well known Latin dedication: *Deo Optimo Maximo*.

The Italian and French Renaissance was the Golden Age for rebus. Witty rebus in Latin and Greek, pangrams, ROTAS-squares, palindroms, chronograms, tongue-twisters, double-meaning sentences, anagrams, verbal labyrinths etc. became very popular, and the writers usually dated the texts back to famous people in Antiquity. The invention of book printing, then woodcut made the rebus more prolific. The emblems, starting from about Andrea Alciati’s *Emblematum* (1531), were copied and closely followed. The famous novel by Francesco Colonna, “*Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*” (1499) contains a whole chapter in rebus, without a word. Egyptian hieroglyphs were thought to be religious rebuses in the 16th century and later. It is a well known fact that written charms were very popular also in the Renaissance time, and their variants also occur centuries later.

The famous artist Leonardo da Vinci paid keen attention to rebuses and riddles. In his “cifre” (*cipher*) texts he unifies the mentality of animals with specific letters looking like rebus. In the drawings he made an upper row of signs, and in the under row he gave the words. He used to include musical notes as rebus too. E.g. *L’amo; re; mi; fa; sol; ZA; re* = *L’amore mi fa sollazzare* ‘love made my entertainment’. It was not Leonardo who invented the O / A (“Opera”) fraction, but he used it several times. Andrea Baiardo published several poems in drawings+letters. Another poet, Giovan Battista Palatino published a *sonette figurato* (1540), which later directly influenced the formal development of early French sonnets. He created several cryptograms too.

The theoretical problems of rebus were raised by both Italian and French scholars: and they suggested several etymologies for the word *rebus*.

A well known sub-genre was called the *Rébus de Picardie* 1491–1506). The *Rébus de Picardie* displays a carefully elaborated structure. An often quoted example is the following: a nun beats with a whip the naked bottom of an abbot, and there is also a huge bone. The text will be: *Nonne abbé bat au cul; os*. It can be re-read in Latin (!): *Non habebat oculos*. It is a reference to Psalm CXV, speaking about “idols”, which have eyes, but they cannot see. As for generating a Picardian rebus text, in each rebus there are two drawing motifs: the first is a complete sentence: *Une nonne bat au cul d'un abbé*, while the second is a single word (*os*), which at the first look has nothing to do with the scene, and is in fact the end of the Latin word *oculos*. The first drawing depicts a scene; the second one is a drawing of a thing. The French texts read often in Picardian *patois*: also three languages – French, Picardian and Latin merge. To play back and forth with different languages is a typical phenomenon in rebus lore. We find the same phenomenon later in German rebus texts too. (According to some scholars the word *rebus* is also Picardian, from the word *ribus* ‘ribü’, which originates from German *ribe* ‘whore’.) Rabelais and his contemporaries knew such rebus-like texts well. In his novel there is a famous story about Master Pantagruel, who receives a ring (with a false diamond) with an inscription *Eli lama sabaktani*. Of course he finds the solution: Christ’s words on the cross can be understood in that case: a false lover left his fiancée.

The most important treasury of all extraordinary forms of texts + pictures in a collection is “*Les bigarrures et touches de Seigneur des Accord*” (originally in 1582) by Étienne Tabourot (1547–1599). There are hundreds of drawings and texts in his book. Usually they look like a common office seal of today. An example: there is the surrounding inscription: VOZ TOURS ME DONNENT PEIN. On the picture of the seal three birds throw feathers upon a man. [It is perhaps a further allusion to the French variant to the well known saying “Vultures give me feathers”. – Suggestion by Emily Lyle.] The text should be re-read as *Vos tours me donnent peines* ‘You give me pain’. The *Bigarrures* was re-edited several times during the

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following centuries, and if we find witty emblems, riddles, rebus etc. very often they stem from Tabourot's book.

I list here a Hungarian case.

A Hungarian writer, Mór Jókai in his short novel (1860) “*A debreceni lundátkus*” (“The lunatic in the town”) describes a curious exam in a Hungarian high school, where the professor asks the student in Latin for the meaning of the following letters:

*O quid tua te  
be bis bia abit*

The text is: *O superbe, quid superbis, tua superbia te superabit* “O arrogant person, your arrogance will overcome you”. The key is the writing of the words and syllables one ‘above’ (*super*) the other.

The second question of the exam is about the meaning of the following letters

*ra ra ra es  
& in ram ram ram ii*

The solution is: *terra es et in terram ibis* “You were taken from clay and will be clay”. Here the clue is the Latin word *ter* (“three times”) and *ii* (two “i” letters, *bis* ‘two times’). Here again the technique is the superposing of words and syllables. It is observable that Latin was used here, which is also a reference to the multilingualism of the rebus. The writer must have heard the story of the curious exam in his college time in Hungary. The oldest printed variant of the text occurs already in Tabourot (1603 edition, 18r), and the second part was referred to in England in the first half of 19th century more than once as a tomb inscription found in England and Germany.

I could continue the world history of rebus and similar forms, but I must return to magic formulas.

As it is well known magic texts are part not only of the history of magic and religion – they are also variants of a *genre*. The genre has its rules, and can be investigated according to that. Scholars of charms and magic formulas have often studied the literary (written) background of the texts. Experts like F. Ohrt, K. Straubergs, J. Van Haver and others have mentioned the formal characteristics of charms and incantations, but they did not refer to genre theory proper, and have not directly mentioned the rebus in this context.

The aim of my paper was to call attention to similarities between rebus and charms. Words used in double meaning, the orientation of the script (up and down, etc.), Latin words instead of national language, numbers and musical notes read as texts, words divided into pictures, abbreviations read as words or changed into full words – all such forms can be used in magic texts too. Puzzles in general combine text and drawing in unexpected ways, and as such are well represented in our mass media too.

Rebus studies are intriguing and complicated. I wanted only to stress here that if we study magic formulas, incantations, double-meaning expressions, multilingualism and similar forms, we have to check rebus studies too.

### Postscript

My paper is a shorter version of a lengthy survey of the history of the rebus.

I list here only the most important **publications**:

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## **Necromancy from Antiquity to Medieval and Modern Times**

**Abstract.** Scholars agree that necromancy is defined as a special mode of divination by evocation of the dead, while the similar term nigromancy became a synonym for black magic as opposed to white magic or the art of trickery or illusionary magic. Although the latter was often suspected of crossing the line to demonic magic, necromancy was always located in a forbidden area.

**Key words:** divination, necromancy, witch of Endor, conjuration of the dead

The art of necromancy is based on three premises:

- 1) The survival of the soul after death
- 2) The supernatural knowledge of the spirits
- 3) Communication between the living and the dead

Necromancy is found in all times and cultures and occurs in paganism as well as in biblical sources. One of the oldest accounts is a representative example. In Homer's "Odyssey", Ulysses evokes the spirits of dead in order to learn the future. Guided by Circe he performs several rites until two spirits appear but he waits for the expert Tiresias. Various instances of necromancy have been recorded by the Greek authors, Plutarch, Herodotus and Pausanias, and the Roman authors, Horace, Cicero, Tacitus and Dio Cassius. Poets like Lucan narrate horrific but impressive dramatic rituals based on necromancy.

Although necromancy is considered the most condemned divination practice, the Bible includes the necromantic episode of the woman of Endor which has given rise to much debate. In Christian thought necromancy holds an unsavoury proximity to demoniacal influence although it was believed that God allows the apparitions of dead spirits. The nature of spirits and demons who appeared in the guise

of dead relatives was an often disputed matter. Necromancy is defined as divination by the evocation of the dead. Medieval sources equate necromancy with nigromancy. Deriving from the Latin word *niger* = black, the term refers to black magic or the black art. Black magic is defined as employing the help of evil spirits, while white magic was based on human dexterity and trickery.

The three fundamental ideas behind necromantic practice are 1. the concept of the survival of the soul after death, together with 2. the presumption of a superior knowledge by the disembodied spirit, and 3. the possibility of communication between the living and the dead. Communication with the spirits requires certain conditions as there are special times, places and rites that have to be observed.

### **Necromancy in Pagan Countries**

More or less elaborated forms of necromancy can be found in every cultural area of antiquity, and according to antique sources the practice is reported as common in all known pagan countries. Where necromancy originated is not known, although the historian Strabo is convinced that this form of divination was used in the land where all magic was supposed to come from, Persia (Strabo *Geographica* 1961–2005: XVI: ii, 39). The practice was also recorded in Chaldea, Etruria, Babylonia and Egypt. Moses warns the Israelites against engaging in the practice of divination with the help of the dead like the Canaanites (Deuteronomy 18: 9–12).

In Greece and Rome, evocation of the dead took place especially in caverns, in volcanic regions and near rivers and lakes which, according to the common opinion, were the boundaries with the otherworld. Consequently the oracle site in Thesprotia was near the River Acheron that was supposed to be one of the rivers of hell. The cavern oracle of Laconia near Taenarus also claimed that it was a hell entrance. (Ogden 2001: 29–61) The most famous Italian oracle of Cumae is situated in a cavern near Lake Avernus in Campania. (Ogden 2001: 61–74).

The oldest Greek account of necromancy is in Homer's tale of Ulysses' visit to Hades (Odyssey 2014: IX) and of his evocation of souls by means of the various rites indicated by Circe. It seems remarkable that, although Ulysses tries to consult only the expert



Figure 1. *The Witch of Endor* (Master of Otto van Moerdrecht).

in prophecy, the seer Tiresias, a number of unnamed spirits appear, together or successively, until the desired seer arrives.

Besides poetical and mythological sources, Greek and Roman historians record several instances of necromantic practices. At Cape Taenarus Callonda evoked the soul of Archilochus, whom he had murdered (Plutarch 1844: XVII; Plutarch 1927: 560; Ogden 2001: 29–42). Periander tyrant of Corinth, and one of the seven wise men of Greece, sent messengers to the oracle on the River Acheron to ask his dead wife, Melissa, where she had put a stranger's treasure (Herodotus 1974: 5. 92; Ogden 2002: 188–189).

Necromancy is mixed with incubation in the case of Elysius of Terina in Italy, who desired to know if his son's sudden death was due to poisoning. He went to the oracle of the dead and, while sleeping in the temple, had a vision of both his father and his son who gave him the desired information (Plutarch 1927: xiv). Among the Romans, Horace miscallaneously mentions the conjurations of the dead several times (Horace 1994: I, viii, 25 sq.), and so does Cicero (1971: I, xvi). Even emperors were rumoured to have practised necromancy: Drusus (Tacitus 2004: II xxviii), Nero (Sueton 1998 vo. II: xxxiv; Pliny 1963: xxx, v), and Caracalla (Dio Cassius 1955: lxxvii, xv). The grammarian Apion pretended that he had conjured up the soul of Homer, whose country and parents he wanted to discover (Pliny 1963: xxx, vi). Sextus Pompeius consulted the famous Thessalian

magician Erichto to learn from the dead the issue of the struggle between his father and Caesar (Lucan 1992: VI).

### Rituals of Blood

Concerning necromantic rituals in Antiquity we do not have detailed information about rites or incantations apart from the account in the *Odyssey*. This record says that Ulysses dug a hole and poured libations around it. Then he sacrificed a black sheep and spirits or shades who were attracted by the blood came forward, and eventually Tiresias appeared. Lucan describes a horrific scene (1992 *Pharsalia* VI) in which his cruel sorceress Erichtho performs her bloody craft. While murmuring incantations, she drags the corpse around pouring blood into its veins to reanimate it.

Christian authors drawing from pagan sources assumed the above-mentioned characteristics of necromantic rituals, and added their own conclusions. Isidore of Seville, following Lucan (1992: VI) states that necromancers conjure up the dead with their magical charms to learn the future.

*They dare to offer for sale the demon they summon, so that anyone can destroy his enemies with evil arts. They enjoy blood and sacrifices and often touch the bodies of the dead. By the imprecations of necromancers the resuscitated dead seem to prophesy and answer questions. [...] In questioning them, blood is poured on the corpse, for it is said demons love blood. Whenever necromancy is performed blood is mixed with water, so that they may be called forth.* (Isidore of Seville 2008: Book 8: 10–11)

Medieval theologians subscribed to the same views, and only rarely is a deviation from the common opinion be found (Harmening 1979: 20sq).

### Conjuration and Raising Dead Prophets and Speaking from the Belly: Necromancy in the Bible

The prophet Isaiah provides us with the first Biblical account of necromancy. It is generally recognized as pre-exilic in date and the earliest description of the Hebrew practice of necromancy (Schmidt 1994: 147–154).

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*and when they say to you / ‘Consult those-who-return and the Knowers who chirp and mutter! Do not a people consult their Gods the dead on behalf of the living? (Isaiah 8: 19)*

The identity of the so called Knowers has been disputed: are they the dead, the ancestors who have special knowledge about the future? Who are these the practitioners who have the special knowledge enabling them to communicate with the dead?

The Hebrew term ‘*ōbôth*’ indicates the spirits of the dead in its first meaning, and a second connotation concerns the divining spirit the texts are talking about when referring to the Pythia, who possesses or is possessed by a Pythonic spirit. The Vulgate adopted the term, (Deuteronomy 18: 11; Isaiah 19: 3) and also applied it to diviners who foretell the future with the help of Python. In the latter case it is not clear if the spirit is a spirit of a dead person or a demon. A third meaning of the term ‘*ōb*’ connects it with a leather bag holding water (Job xxxii, 19), a denotation that could be linked with the Pythonic spirit talking from the belly of its host. This reference can be explained as an indication of an assumed deception: the diviners do not really communicate with the spirit of the dead, they imitate it only. On the other hand, belly-talking had been a faculty accepted in antiquity since the voice of a medium would change when possessed by a spirit and would sound as if it came from a cavity. Isaiah’s remark (8: 19) makes sense then, when he says that necromancers “murmur” or “mutter”.

Many references in the Bible only mention necromancy as an offence against Mosaic Law. According to Leviticus the Mosaic Law forbids it (Leviticus 19: 31; 20: 6), proclaiming that divination by evoking the dead is detested by God and is punishable by death (Leviticus 20: 27; cf. 1 Samuel 28: 9). In 6 occurrences in the Bible diviners are reported to have a Pythonic spirit. In Acts 16:16 the female slave meets St. Paul announcing that he comes from the true God, but he seemingly does not want to hear this message from a heathen slave and exorcises her.

The most disputed and at the same time the most famous case of necromancy in the Bible is the evocation of Samuel by the so called witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28). King Saul, who was at war with the Philistines, asked God whether he would be victorious in the battle that was about to take place. He did so by legal means of divination,

but God did not answer him and so he sought answers through the practice of necromancy that he had himself forbidden. He went to Endor to a woman who allegedly had a divining spirit and she called forth the soul of the prophet Samuel and spoke to him. The woman told him the prophet's word, that God had abandoned him and that he would be defeated. This dramatic narrative has given much room to diverse interpretations. Some exegeses deny that the risen dead is really the prophet Samuel and say that the woman of Endor has deceived the desperate king, while others claim that it has been the devil who took the form of Samuel. Finally others deem Samuel's appearance real (Kleiner 1995: 27–136; Wagensommer 2010: 68–76; Schmidt 1994: 201–227). The necromantic questioning of Samuel through the woman of Endor sparked a wide and very diverse range of responses from Christian and Jewish scholars alike. Among others, Josephus, Justin Martyr, Origen, Augustine, Tertullian, Jerome and later Martin Luther and John Calvin offered interpretations of the scene at Endor. Over the centuries theologians have disputed about the apparition: was it truly Samuel's ghost or rather a Pythionic spirit that was permitted to assume Samuel's form? Even among those who have chosen the view that it was Samuel, there is disagreement over the source of the power behind his conjuration. Some view Yahweh as the source while others hold the opinion that there was demonic deception behind the scene.

### **Between Demon Evocation and Evocations of the Dead: Necromancy in the Christian Era**

During the first centuries of the Christian era, the Church fathers reported that necromancy was still in use among the pagans (Tertullian, *De anima* 1947/2007: LVI, LVII). As necromancy was associated with demon evocation like other forms of magic Christians were warned against demonic intervention. Since it was common among pagans, even converted Christian still practised this old form of divination (Tertullian, *De anima* 1947/2007: LVII). Therefore the pronouncements of church authorities in synods and councils, and papal edicts, and laws laid down by Christian emperors like Constantine, Valentinian, Valens, Theodosius and others are directed against practitioners of pagan magic. Old German glosses link the word *helliruna*, with the root *hel* meaning 'death' with

Middle High German *heln* ‘to conceal’. To call the soul back from hell = *selo von hello kihalota* (Graff 1963: 852). Old German *galdre* and Old Norse *galdr* refer to ‘necromancy’ or ‘the evocation of the dead’. In the Old so-called Poetic Edda, in the Grógaldr, Svipdagr calls his dead mother Groa, a *völvu*, back from her grave to learn her charms. She helps him successfully in a task set by his cruel stepmother (Edda 1991: 235–238).

Medieval necromancy hovers between the connotation of black magic and conjuring up the dead. A paper manuscript of Zurich shows that alongside the more commonly accepted meaning of necromancy as black art (= nigromancy) the older meaning of conjuring up the dead is still in existence (Grimm 1968: 866; 3: 411).

### **The Old Norse Ritual of Sitting out in the Open on Nine Squares**

In the Old Norse saga there is peculiar technique of divination called *utiseta* that is practised on burial mounds. There were three method of isolating the magician from the world around himself or herself. One was the ox-hide, which was marked with nine squares and was stood or sat upon. A second was the setting out of hurdles, or lengths of wood, to form a skeletal nine-square arrangement, with the centre square being occupied. The third method was the platform, usually supported by four posts, which was called *sejd hjallr* ‘magical platform’. The first and second methods interest us here. In the Mariusaga, a man sat on a freshly tanned ox-hide in an enclosed part of the forest to learn the outcome of battle (Parpola 2004: 263). He had to draw nine squares on the hide and the devil or the dead would answer the question.

“Faereyinga Saga” (“Färinger Saga”) chapter 40 narrates the story of Thrand, who draws a structure with nine squares and then he sits calmly beside the fire and three dead people appear to join him (Thrand 1994: 92–95; Lecouteux 2009: 68–63). In Norway the ritual of *utiseta* serves to wake up the dead or trolls (*útiseta at vekja troll upp*). In the Balder’s dream in the Poetic Edda Odin allows the dead to rise up from the ground. After Balder’s death he wakes up a *völvu* to learn Balder’s fate in the afterworld. “Magic he spoke and mighty charms / Till spell-bound she rose and in death she spoke” (Edda 1991: 196–197).

All conjurations of the dead start with the same formula: “Wake up, wake up, good lady”, sings Svipdag: “Wake up Angantyr, Hervör calls you” in the *Hervor Saga*. In his “History of the Danes” Saxo Grammaticus adds further details. The giantess Harthgropa wants to know the future of her charge Hadingus. Since a dead man lies in the house where they both spend the night, she scores runes on a piece of wood and demands that Hadingus should put them under the dead Man’s tongue. The corpse wakes up and is furious because they have disturbed him, cursing them angrily: “Perish accursed he who hath dragged me back from those below, let him be punished for calling a spirit out of bale!” (Saxo Grammaticus. 2006, I, VI: 4).

The Old Norse sources agree that the awakening of the dead is painful for them; they only reluctantly appear and often take revenge on the living. Groa rebukes her son Svipdag although she had promised to aid him. The awakened *völv*a shows Odin Balder’s fate but constantly tries to sink back into the ground. Anantyr tells her daughter that it is madness to wake up the dead and threaten them. The *Färinger Saga* gives a strange death ordeal: Thorgrimm the evil had killed Sigmund to steal his golden ring. Thrand visits him and makes a big fire in the living room and has four wooden grates put into a square. Nine fields are placed on each side of the square. He sits on a chair and demands that no one should speak to him. He sits for a while. And then a man comes into the room all wet, warms himself and disappears, another man shows up and disappears, the third man is Siegmund carrying his head in his hands. Thrand is able to reconstruct the crime that has happened and tell how the three men came to die. The golden ring is also found and Thorgrim is disclosed as murderer (Lecoutex 1987: 97; Lecoutex 2009: 68–73).

Apart from Scandinavian death rituals, the medieval reporter Caesarius of Heisterbach mentions necromancy as the most common kind of conjuration practice. The 5th book of his dialogue of miracles deals with a cleric who demonstrates to an incredulous knight all kinds of magic rituals including conjuring up the dead and demons. The purpose of necromancy is now extended to all kinds of answers to problems and enigmas (Caesarius 2009: 298–303, 952–953, 961, 965, 967, 1011, 1013, 2180). Interestingly enough, Caesarius mentions a closed circle for the magician to conjure the dead, while the

ritual of *utiseta* required the nine squares. Possibly the magic circle is a more southern kind of ritual magic not prominent in the North (Ellis 1968: 161–162; Raudvere 2002: 113).

In confession books necromancy is rebuked as a sin. In a 14th century treatise about the seven sacraments necromancers are compared with heretics: “Weder das sacrament sunden die ketczer [...] Vnd die do swarcze kunst treiben alszo nigromancia, dy man treibit mit den toten vnd erem gebeyne, is sei mensche adir fie.” (Pietsch 1884: 190f.).

In Hans Sachs’s history “*Ein wunderbarlich gesicht keyser Maximiliani*” the conjuration of the dead is motivated by curiosity. The spectators want to know, what shape and appearance the dead have in their altered state. So the dead wife of Emperor Maximilian, Mary of Burgundy, is conjured up. In the version ascribed to Tritheimius (1462–1516) an unknown magician calls up the empress and two other dead persons. When Maximilian tries to speak to the ghost of his wife it vanishes. Luther’s version identifies the magician as Tritheim himself who asks the spirit the question the Emperor was keen on, whom he should take for his second wife (Sachs 1870 vol. XX: 483.485; Luther 1883: Nr. 4450). The “*Wagnerbuch*” of 1593 mentions necromantic practice on several occasions and the diabolic spirit Auerhahn explains how he has to get into a dead body in order to speak from its mouth (Das Wagnerbuch 2005: 193, 15).

In recent times, necromancy, as a distinct belief and practice, reappears under the name of spiritualism although the narratives about necromantic rituals show that the dead are made to appear by force and in many cases come very reluctantly while in Spiritualism they seem to come willingly.

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## **Magic or Entertainment? Marriage Divination and the Ritual Year in Lithuania**

**Abstract.** The article seeks to reveal how young people's attitude towards marriage divinations has changed over time in an area and how they function in the perspective of the ritual year. The conclusion was reached that marriage divinations are an inseparable part of the adolescent ritual year both in tradition and in contemporary culture. Marriage divinations passed down orally from generation to generation are valued to this day. Even today they retain a staggering diversity of forms, but the circle of festival days during which they are performed is becoming smaller.

**Key words:** ritual year, marriage divination, youth, Lithuania

The majority of the seasonal festivals in an agricultural society were inseparable from the marriage omens and divinations of girls (very rarely also of boys). In Lithuania in the late 19th – first half of the 20th century they were made on St Andrew's day, Christmas, New Year's, Midsummer's Eve, and less commonly on other calendar festivals, harvest festivals, and weddings.

In Lithuania, few ethnological investigations have been especially devoted to marriage divination. Of them, V. Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė's article on Advent-Christmas beliefs should be noted. According to it, the bulk of the Advent-Christmas marriage beliefs creates a double opportunity to foresee the future: some beliefs are connected with foreseeing the fact or time of a marriage, others with the possibility of glimpsing a future husband in a dream, in a mirror, or in reality or at least learning his name. The article's author is interested in the second group of beliefs and thinks that dreams perform the function of solving certain impulse problems (Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė 2010: 42–65). Using this approach, the author focuses on fieldwork that allows the special features of

performing and interpreting a specific marriage divination to be understood.

The present author, in investigating the features of the everyday life of rural and urban youth in the late 19th – first half of the 20th century as well as that of the present-day and in conducting areal investigations of customs, also investigated marriage divinations by asking respondents participating in his fieldwork to tell about their experiences. Based on the 1988–2013 investigations conducted in Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and Belarus, it can be seen that the goal of girls in guessing their marital future is achieved in a few cases. According to the respondents, the dreams on the eve of St Andrew's Day are fulfilled the most frequently, less commonly those on Christmas Eve. The article seeks to reveal how young people's attitude towards marriage divinations has changed over time in an area and how they function in the perspective of the ritual year.

### **The “Power” of St Andrew**

A 1550 book written by Johan Lasicii compared the Lithuanian pagan gods to the Christian saints, who, it said, Christians also “unjustly” honoured. For example, “girls invoke St Andrew, fasting on the eve of his feast day” (Lasickis 1969: 24–27).

People tell about this saint's help to this day. A case in point is data from a 2001 investigation conducted in Dzūkija National Park. A respondent born in 1916 stated that her sister had fasted the entire day before St Andrew's Day. That evening, she bound a handful of hemp seeds in a bundle. She then took three men's trousers and placed them together with the hemp seeds under her pillow. About midnight, she poured the hemp seeds into the well. That night she dreamed about a man. At first, she was not very happy because he had a big nose. But three months later she met such a young man and they soon married (Šaknys 2002: 179). A woman born in that area in 1934 told that she had sown hemp around a well. At midnight, she used to go around it three times while saying the prayer “St Andrew, Hemp Seeds, let me know who I need to marry”. Although she was going with his brother at the time, she nevertheless married the man she had dreamt about (Šaknys 2002: 179). The young people surveyed in this area said that they used to perform

divinations more frequently on Christmas Eve. They used to draw out papers with the names of boys, count fence pickets (if an even number, they would marry that year), listen for barking dogs (the groom to come from that direction), etc. While New Year's and Mid-summer's Eve divinations were widespread, divinations were also performed on St Andrew's Day, but on that day they only used to place papers with boy's names under their pillows and pull one out in the morning. The younger respondents also told about several divinations, but nothing about a successfully fulfilled divination (Šaknys 2002: 180). Based on the investigations conducted in this locality, it is possible to state that the success of divining the future depends on the complexity of the performed actions. On the other hand, sowing hemp around a well, fasting, placing men's clothing under a pillow in order to see the one chosen for you, and saying a prayer are known in a fairly wide area. They were recorded by the author during expeditions in Belarus and Poland. Similar divinations are also known in Germany and sowing hemp during various celebrations is known even in England (Šaknys 2009: 78). But the analysis focuses on the somewhat older customs of St Andrew's day. According to 19th-century data described by A. Vyšniauskaitė, a necessary condition in sowing hemp is to do it naked (1993: 127). This last condition, under Lithuanian weather conditions, can endanger one's health, if not one's life. A girl determined to perform such actions should definitely believe the results.

### **The Diversity of Traditional Marriage Divinations**

Nevertheless mostly Christmas Eve divinations were recorded in Lithuania. But the oldest marriage divinations are marked by the diversity and simplicity of their performance; the first such collection describes New Year's customs. An 1842 publication by L. A. Jucevičius presents seven New Year's divinations. In order to learn whether they would marry soon, girls used to count the posts in a fence (if they were even, they would marry), catch an animal in the barn at night (if they caught an ox or a ram, they would marry), catch sparrows in the storage barn with friends (the first to catch one would marry), place rolls near the threshold (the one whose roll the dog took first would be the first to marry), and listen to the barking of the dogs (the groom would be from that direction)

(Jučevičius 1959: 453–454). In later times, many of these divinations were performed on Christmas Eve. The West Lithuanian marriage divinations published in 1941 include 125 Christmas and 29 New Year's divination groups. These divinations, according to its author, were still "somewhat" believed when the data was collected (Mickevičius 1941: 96–112). Alongside very ordinary divinations about where a future husband (more rarely a wife) lived, his mannerisms, his wealth, the time of the wedding, and the succession of the weddings, it also presents complex divinations, which must be performed naked, under extreme conditions, and while risking death (for example, at the hands of the man in the mirror) or predicting death. On the other hand, which of the girls would marry first was frequently divined. The family used to gather on Christmas Eve and if there were several single sisters, the question of which would marry first did not arise as the oldest single girl would marry first (Šaknys 1996: 73–81). Therefore it is likely that many of these divinations were only for entertainment. Midsummer's Eve divinations were even more ordinary, being usually connected with braiding a wreath and tossing it into a tree, placing it under a pillow, or laying it in the water, after which the girls were able to see the future in a mirror (cf.: Vilmantienė 1941: 119).

Similar divinations were also performed on Pancake Tuesday and Mid-Lent Sunday (Balys 1993: 93; Marcinkevičienė 2008: 124). Some divinations encompass several festivals. For example, it is believed that if a cherry twig put in water during Pancake Tuesday blossoms by Easter, the girl or boy will marry, but if the blossoms fall off during Easter, the young man will die (Kudirka 1992: 50). A girl who sees a flying stork on 25 March hoped to marry (Marcinkevičienė 1998: 97). Divinations characteristic of both Midsummer's Eve (laying wreathes in the water) and St Andrew's Day (sowing poppies) were also performed on St George's Day (Balys 1993: 173). Meanwhile, divination symbols for the future that were used during these two festivals could be combined into one divination on St Mark's Day, e.g. at night a girl used to drop wreaths into the well and sprinkle hemp seeds on them in hopes of seeing the one chosen for her (Balys 1993: 187). Divinations connected with wreaths and, sometimes, an image in a mirror is performed during Pentecost (Balys 1993: 205–206). On St Bartholomew's Day they would divine the groom's name from a card pulled out from under

the pillow (Miškinis 1926: 464). In autumn, many divinations characteristic of St Andrew's Day exist. Divinations connected with scattering hemp seeds in order to dream about the one chosen for you were also performed on St Michael's day (Vyšniauskaitė 1993: 115). In order to see the groom (sometimes the bride) in a dream, they used to fast on St Martin's, St Catherine's, and St Ambrose's Days; divinations similar to those on St Andrew's Day used to be performed on St Sylvester's and St Barbara's Days (Vyšniauskaitė 1993: 123–124, 132). In addition, it was possible to divine one's marital future while working. During the rye harvest, girls used to try to find double-headed rye or to throw their sickle farther (Balys 1986: 195) and after finishing pulling up the flax plants, whichever girl threw her last handful of flax up the highest was destined to marry first, while the bachelor who got the last flax sheaf to card could expect to marry (Dundulienė 1991: 236–237). Divinations for the sequence of weddings were performed during weddings by throwing the bride's wreath or veil (Šaknys 1996: 86–87). Thus it is possible to state that divinations about future marriages were made in all of the seasons, but most rarely in summer (except on Midsummer's Eve). But even after becoming engaged in a dream or seeing a young man in a mirror, he had to first of all to meet the expectations of the girl's parents. Among wealthier farmers, the girl's opinion was rarely heeded. Girls had the greatest freedom to decide their fate in Southeast Lithuania (Vyšniauskaitė 2008: 164–165), where St Andrew's Day divinations predominated and the largest number of fulfilled divinations were recorded.

### **Features of Marriage Divination in 21st-century Culture**

Only Christmas Eve and Midsummer's Eve marriage divinations predominate in 21st-century Lithuanian villages and towns. They are very rarely performed on New Year's or St Andrew's Day. Marriage divinations performed on Pentecost, the "Russian New Year" (the New Year according to the Julian calendar), and even Valentine's Day have also been recorded and are likewise distinguished by their diversity. In villages and small towns, in many cases it is 14–16 year-old girls rather than the children who divine their marital future (Šaknys 2007: 85). Somewhat younger girls do this

in Vilnius, where such divinations are more often performed only on Christmas Eve.

The majority of the marriage divinations performed in both the city and the countryside are based on analogies recorded in the past. It is possible to explain this by the fact that such information was trusted more (Šaknys 2007: 85). In seeking to answer the question of how much these divinations are believed, respondents were requested to compare the divinations made during several festivals. During the 2008–2009 investigations, it was discovered that the respondents were inclined to distinguish “more important” divinations. For example, a sixteen-year-old respondent stated that marital luck is divined on Christmas Eve, while laying wreaths in the water on Midsummer’s Eve is “only something of a tradition”. Some of the respondents said that their grandparents had told them about Christmas Eve divinations, while cultural workers had directed group marriage divinations on Midsummer’s Eve (Šaknys 2012: 101). This is obviously why the prognostic value of these divinations differs. The main thing was that the ability of the girls to compare several marriage divinations showed that they were inclined to believe some divinations. It should also be noted that in many cases, it is not just the beliefs handed down from generation to generation that predominate, especially in the city.

In analysing the ethnographic material, the author focused on the connection of marriage divinations with enchantments. Contemporary girls also resort to them. In traditional culture, enchantments were very rarely connected with a specific calendar date. But it is now possible to watch the transformation of marriage divinations into enchantments. For example, in Southeast Lithuania a belief has been recorded that at midnight on Christmas Eve you need to run naked around the old house three times, turn about the left shoulder, and speak the name of the boy to be enchanted. Or on Christmas Eve night you need to stay awake, look at the sky, and think about a boy you like. He will then pay attention to you. The periodic press also gives a way to enchant a boy by dripping wax into water at midnight on Christmas Eve while looking at the boy’s photo (Šaknys 2009: 79). St Andrew’s night customs that have marriage divination and enchantment features were also recorded near Vilnius. On the eve of this festival, instead of using a mirror, a girl

puts a photo of the desired boy under her pillow and, if she dreams of him, expects him to now be hers (Šaknys 2007: 85). Thus marriage divinations are ever more connected with the goal of marrying a specific person. On the other hand, widespread participation in well-known, visible marriage divinations, such as placing a simple cherry or other twig in water so that it blossoms at a foreseen time, is a continuation of the traditional customs and can act as a sign to the boys who see it.

### Conclusions

Marriage divinations are an inseparable part of the adolescent ritual year both in tradition and in contemporary culture. Even today they retain a staggering diversity of forms, but the circle of festival days during which they are performed is becoming smaller. Marriage divinations passed down orally from generation to generation are valued to this day. People place their trust in them, but sometimes the aspiration to see a future groom is being replaced with the aspiration to “enchant” an already foreseen person, thereby giving the marriage divination enchantment features. On the other hand, entertainment divinations, which are performed among friends and show the aspirations of young people to find a partner and to also have a good time during the festival, predominate both in the early 20th century and today.

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### Fortune Telling in the Modern Greek Ritual Year

**Abstract.** The article describes fortune-telling or divination rituals in Modern Greek calendar folklore. The structure of calendar divinations is very typical and is characterized by a certain set of criteria. The main feature of Modern Greek traditions, in contrast to those of ancient Greek, is the fact that these predictions are no longer official religious practice. Most of these examples have been taken from sources from the XIX–XX centuries, and some of them have become a part of modern urban culture.

**Key words:** Modern Greek folklore, divination rituals, Greek popular culture

Fortune-telling or divination rites in the modern Greek folklore calendar can be found in an expanded or truncated form in many holidays of the Ritual Year. The most significant are the ritual events which are called “rites of passage,” like Christmas, New Year, Epiphany, Carnival, and Prophet Elijah’s Day. But the most interesting period is *Klidonas*, St. John’s Day (July 24), which can be called the fortune-telling festival.

The structure of calendar divinations is very typical and it is characterized by a certain set of criteria: time and place, items which will be used, actions performed, and verbal formulas. Modern Greek fortune-telling calendar rituals can be divided into categories based on the items used in the process of divination: food from the holiday table, pyromancy (by fire), hydromancy (by water), catoptromancy (by mirrors), botanomancy (by herbs), oneiromancy (by dreams), meteorological divination, etc. There is a great deal of information about this in the books of Megas (Μέγας 1975: 217–218) and other scholars of Greek calendar customs (e.g. Abbot 1969: 95–117; Lawson 1964: 318–332). Fieldwork materials gathered by the author of the article (from Rhodes and Karpathos (1999), from Mani, Peloponnesus (2000, 2001), and from Perachora, Corinthia (2008, 2009) can also help to evaluate approximately the current state of the rites.

## Divination Using Food from the Holiday Table

There are many groups in this category, which can be divided by the kind of food used in divination:

- Bones of the animal which had been eaten at the common ritual dinner (mutton, “full” or “empty” chicken bones, and so on). This is a direct continuation of the famous ancient traditions of divination based on omens obtained from sacrifice, on the appearance of its various internal parts (Lawson 1964: 319–326). On St Basil’s Day (January 1), there was a custom of reading bones. If the bones of the chicken eaten were “full, complete” – the harvest that year was supposed to be good (Μέγας 1975: 73). In Perachora still today (fixed in 2009) they read the bones of the main dish, which is a goat. If they are light, it is a good sign (from personal archive).
- Bread specially baked for the holiday (*vasilopita*, *βασιλόπιτα*) on New Year, St. Basil’s Day, *christopsomo* (*χριστόψωμο*), ‘bread of Christ’ at Christmas, *fanouropita* (*φανούροπιτα*) on the day of St. Fanurios, and so on).
- The festive table as a whole (if the table is rich, the entire year will be rich).
- By indirect signs associated with the table.

During the carnival period there was divination by insects – if an ant or other insect runs under the table during a meal, the year will be fruitful (Μέγας 1975: 115).

In Greek Thrace (Skopos), they used to put a metal object, a dogwood twig, and a straw into the festive pie. They believe that the person who gets the metal object – will receive a new house, the person who gets the twig – a vineyard, and who gets the straw – a good harvest at his farm. (Κυριακίδου 1982: 23). But the most well-known example of this kind of divination is a coin hidden inside the *vasilopita*. On New Year’s Day, Greeks use the *vasilopita* to bless the family and bring good luck for the New Year. During the holiday dinner, they slice the *vasilopita*, saying: “The first piece is for St. Basil, the second is for Christ, the third is for the House,” then for all the family members, beginning with the oldest member and ending with the youngest (Λουκάτος 1984: 124–133). This custom has been documented during fieldwork in different parts of Greece:

in Rhodes and Carpathos in 1999 (Ponomartchenko 2001:186), in Mani in 2001, and in Perachora in 2008. The structure of modern Basilopita divination is common among all Greek regions, even in big cities.

On Skyros on St. Basil's day, a special bread for domestic animals used to be baked, named *vodoklora*. Farmers put this bread on a cow's horns, and when the animal threw the bread onto the ground, they guessed about what kind of grain would flourish the next year (wheat, barley, etc), based on the way the bread fell (on the side or on the top). Then the cow ate half of the bread, and the shepherd ate the other half (Μέγας 1975: 67).

The distinguishing feature of this type of divination is their clearly-expressed orientation toward results, since many times merely the fact that the divination is performed during a ritual holiday can be perceived as a guarantee for prosperity and happiness in the family for the whole subsequent calendar year (e.g., just the fact that a Greek family makes *vasilopita* for the New Year dinner, they cut the cake in a particular way, and then they guess who will get the coin – all this process is seen as a good sign for the welfare of the family).

### **Pyromancy (Divination by Fire)**

This is a kind of divination where different objects are thrown into a fire (beans, leaves, sticks etc.). On Christmas day they take wheat, or green olive or walnut leaves, and throw them into the fire of the hearth. By the way they move in the fire, they guess the fate of the people of the house – who will live a long time, or who will live in a foreign country (Μέγας 1975: 55).

On Cyprus on St. Basil's day, farmers guess by olive leaves, which they throw into the fire, saying: "Holy Basil-king (a play on words), you rule the world; show me if so-and-so loves me." Then they watch the movements of the leaf – if it is "alive," jumping, this means "lively" love; if it is sluggish – "sluggish" love; if the leaf burns without moving – no feelings (Κυριακίδου 1982: 22).

During the carnival period in Thessaly, farmers put eggs into the fire. If the egg cracks – the person who put it in would not be healthy, if the egg “sweats” – the person will be healthy (Μέγας 1975: 116).

This kind of divination also can be done using the smoke from the ritual fire (by the direction of the smoke, by its colour, by its thickness, and so on).

### Hydromancy (Divination by Water)

There is a type of divination by water using a well. For example, on St. John’s Day (June 24), girls look into a well, where they believe they can see the face of their future husband (Κυριακίδου 1982: 80). Other interesting forms of hydromancy in Modern Greece can also be observed (Abbot 1969: 51–57).

On St John’s Day, a special kind of divination using specially-prepared water and personal belongings is done, called *Klidonas* (Κλήδονας). This name comes from the ancient Greek *κληδῶν*, meaning ‘prognostic sound’, but in the Modern Greek language the word *klidonas* is associated with the words *κλειδί* (‘a key’) and *κλειδώνω* (‘to lock’), so this folk etymology provided a new rite for locking the *klidonas*.

The preparation of *klidonas* was always accompanied by special actions. On the eve of the holiday, girls went to a well or other water source and got “silent” water (they brought it in perfect silence). Each of the girls put a personal belonging into it (for example, a ring or an earring), and then the vessel was covered with a red cloth, was “locked” and was left for the night “under the stars” (Λουκάτος 1981: 47–49). While closing the *klidonas*, the girls said: “Close the *klidonas*, in the name of St. John, and who is to marry, tomorrow morning we will see.” The next day they opened it, saying:

Ανοίξετε τον κλήδονα με τ’ αι-Γιαννιού τη χάρη  
κι όποιου είναι καλορίζικο τώρα θε να προβάλει!

*Open the klidonas for St. John’s grace,  
And who is to marry now we will see!*

Σαν τι τραγούδι να σου πω πουλί μου να σ' αρέσει  
πού' χεις αγγελικό κορμί και δαχτυλίδι μέση!

*And what a song my bird, I will sing to you,  
You have an angelic body and a wasp waist!*

These ritual songs may also have the character of a joke:

Σα φουρτουνιάσει η θάλασσα και βγούνε τα χταπόδια,  
τότε θα παντρευτείς και συ με τα στραβά σου πόδια!

*As a storm breaks out and octopuses come on shore,  
then you will get married, with your crooked legs!*

(Κυριακίδου 1982: 80)

This divination rite is not a living tradition in Greece any more. During fieldwork studies, it was very difficult to find an informant saying that he remembered this custom. It was noted only in Mani, one of the most conservative regions of Modern Greece, in 2001: “Young girls gathered in a house, put their personal belongings into a jug and then pulled them out, while saying various names: Yannis, Costas, Petros... This indicated the name of their future husband” (from personal archive).

### **Catoptromancy (Divination Using a Mirror)**

On Corfu, unmarried girls stood naked in front of a mirror at midnight, and said: “St. John, show me... who will I marry.” The first man’s name they would hear the next day was supposed to be the name of their future husband (Μέγας 1975: 217).

### **Sciomancy (Divination Using Shadows)**

On St. John’s day as soon as the sun rose in the morning, people looked at their own shadow. If the shadow was without a head – it was a bad sign; but if it was with two heads – for an unmarried girl it meant marriage, and for a married woman – the birth of a child (Κυριακίδου 1982: 79).

## Botanomancy (Divination by Different Plants and Seasonal Fruits)

This type of divination is one of the most frequent in Modern Greek culture and there are many examples of it, such as divination by walnuts on Prophet Elijah's day – if the first nuts picked from the tree are “full,” then the next year will be “full,” rich, and prosperous (Μέγας 1975: 226). On St. John's day, farmers used to do a very interesting divination rite – people cut a cucumber in half and left it for the night. If in the morning both halves of the cucumber were “connected” – it was a good sign, if the halves were separated – a bad sign (Ibid: 218).

**Molybdomancy and oomancy** (divination using molten lead or fresh egg dropped into water). On St. John's day, people poured molten lead into cold water or egg white into boiling water and predicted the future by interpreting the outlines which they made (Μέγας 1975: 218).

**Oneiromancy** (divination based upon dreams). Divination by a dream was used not only within the calendar cycle. Almost all the divinations by dreams are associated with predicting the name, the appearance, and the character of the future husband of an unmarried girl. We should mention some subtypes of divinations by a dream:

– Divination using ritual food or bread (it was believed that in order to see her future husband in the dream, the unmarried girl had to put under her pillow a piece of the main dish from the festive table / piece of ritual bread, or before going to bed had to eat a specially-baked salted bagel (*αλυροκούλλούρι, αρμυροπιττάρι*).

On St. Basil's day, girls used the first piece of the *vasilopita*, or a piece from a dish from the festive table (Μέγας 1975: 73). In Patras, part of the dough for the *vasilopita* was richly sprinkled with salt and baked separately as special bread. In the evening before going to bed, an unmarried girl had to eat this bread, and it was believed that she could see in her dream that night the young man, bringing her water, who would become her husband (Ibid: 73).

– Divination with the invocation of the Fates / Moiras (before going to bed a girl spoke a specific text, appealing to her personal Moira

(fate) or to Moiras as a whole, so that they would reveal to the girl which man she was destined to marry).

In Bithynia a girl took a piece of *vasilopita*, chewed it, and then put it under her pillow, saying:

Άγιε Βασίλη μου καλέ, καλέ και αγαθέ, από την έρημο περνάς, και τις Μοίρες απαντάς, αν δεις και τη δική μου, να μου την χαιρετάς. Αν κάθεται, να σηκωθεί, κι αν στέκεται, να περπατεί, να'ρθει να θερίσωμε σιτάρι και κριθάρι, και χρυσό μαργαριτάρι.	<i>St. Basil my dear,            Good and kind,            You cross the desert            and you meet Moiras,            if you see my own,            greet her for me.            If she is sitting, say to get up,            if she is standing – to walk,            to come to reap            wheat and barley,            and gold pearls.</i> (Μέγας 1975: 73)
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It was believed that after this the girl would see her future husband in a dream.

This divination rite has now become a kind of popular folklore practice, and you can find a great variety of receipes for almirokulori in different internet resources (see in references).

– Divination using other objects (a comb, hair collected from a comb, a mirror, a wild artichoke, etc.) A girl placed these objects under her pillow in the evening to cause a prophetic dream. In Aegina, a girl combed her hair before going to bed, and then put the comb with the rest of her hair and a mirror under her pillow. She put a gold kerchief around her waist, tied the kerchief in three knots, and said, “I tie you, my Moira, to come today to me in my dream and tell whom I will marry; and if you do not come, I will not untie you” (Μέγας 1975: 73–74).

**Weather divination** (weather prediction). This is most typical on certain holidays, such as Candlemas, March 1, and August 1 (for example, it was believed that on August 1, each hour of the day corresponds to a calendar month – if the weather was observed on this day, it was possible to find out what the weather would be for the whole next year). On Candlemas Day, February 2, people predicted the weather – if the sun does not come out on this day, it will rain for forty days, and if the sky is clear – the weather will be good for

the whole year (Κυριακίδου 1982: 33). In Mytilene, it was believed that the first six days of August are *Drimies*, which can predict the weather for the following year – each of the six days was divided into two parts, and each half-day predicted the weather for a particular month of the year (Κυριακίδου 1982: 104). In Thrace, they used to say that as much snow as there is on Christmas – there will be this much harvest in the summer (Μέγας 1975: 53).

In the Russian school of ethnolinguistics, we apply the term “code” or “codes” to the study of ritual to mean the different “languages” of one ritual – like the verbal code, musical code, gestures, objects, movements, etc. During the investigation of divinations in Modern Greek calendar customs, we find elements of different types of *codes*:

- *the verbal code* (special verbal formulas to call Moiras, to cause a prophetic dream etc.)
- *the object code* (water, mirror, bread, salt etc.) Most of the examined subjects which play a special role in the divinations are multifunctional, as they can be used in preventive magic, as talismans, etc.
- *the actional code* (to look into the water, to look in the mirror, to tie, to untie, etc.).

Very often the divination rite is the gradual layering of different types of codes. For example, in the rite of *Klidonas* discussed, we see a deliberate repetition of producing symbols: items, actions, verbal formulas. All these elements of the three codes, on the basis of their general semantics, can be regarded here as cultural synonyms.

The continuity of Greek culture, which is rooted in antiquity, can be clearly seen in the example of Modern Greek folk calendar divinations. The main feature of the Modern Greek tradition, in contrast to that of ancient Greece – is the fact that now these predictions are not official, not a strictly ritual instrument of formal religious practice. Most of these examples have been taken from sources from the XIX–XX centuries, and some of them have become a part of modern urban culture. Contemporary Greek rites and customs have changed under the influence of internal and external social, historical and political factors. There is a strong tendency for forgotten traditional culture rites to be “reborn,” and to reconstruct calendar customs or other traditional rituals. The day of *Klidonas*

has become an additional opportunity to attract tourists, and this fortune-telling festival can be organized by local political authorities or even by the management of a luxury hotel in Greece. On the other hand, some other divinations have retained their grass-roots popularity; fortune-telling by a coin in *vasilopita* has become as much an integral part of the celebration of the New Year as a Christmas tree. Now you can find a great variety of special coins for *vasilopita* for sale in supermarkets, and even pies of St. Basil cooked with a lucky coin inside.

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## **The Types of Divination Used by the Don Cossacks: Highlighting Areas of Distribution**

**Abstract:** The paper describes a calendar rite of divination at Christmas and outlines some local cultural types in southern Russia. It examines factors contributing to the variability of prognostic practices (e.g. the option of substituting certain symbols with others, with identical symbolic meanings and a particular type of economy). It shows the cultural originality of the northern and southwestern areas of the Don Host Lands and the cultural similarity of those territories where the Cossacks and the Ukrainian peasant population had lived in a long-term contact.

**Keywords:** calendar rites, divination, mapping method, Don Cossacks

Southern Russia in general and the pre-revolutionary lands of the Don Host in particular are interesting objects for an ethno-linguistic research. In this area, successive migration flows have been recorded for 500 years. People came from Eastern Ukraine and the southern regions of the Russian Empire. In addition, the steppe nomads – the Kalmyks and the Tartars – participated in the ethnogenesis of the Cossacks. It is often difficult to determine the ethnic structure of the various parts of the region and, consequently, to establish the local variants of traditional culture. In addition to the percentage of settlers from various regions, other factors led to the formation of such variants in the Don Host Lands: environmental conditions (the area stretches from the forest-steppe zone to the desert-steppe zone); types of economy (agriculture, cattle breeding, fishing); the special status of the Cossacks as a separate estate with its own rights and obligations; the correlation of the Cossacks and peasants in the region.

In this paper, I will describe a calendar rite of divination at Christmas, introduce its potential for the study of interethnic relations, and determine some local cultural forms in the former Don Host

Lands based on a database of interviews describing divination practices. The database includes approximately 700 entries (140 from the Volgograd region and 560 from the Rostov region). This research summarises the data collected in the 1990s–2000s in the Rostov region by the author with the help of Tatyana Vlaskina and Natalya Arkhipenko, as well as the staff and students of the Department of General and Comparative Linguistics of the Institute of Philology, Journalism and Intercultural Communication of the Southern Federal University.

Researchers have used the mapping method or its components for the study of divination practices for a long time. In 1927, while studying folk fortune-telling practices in the Kostroma region, Vassily Smirnov realised the complexity and distribution of these ritual actions and noted their territorial variations. He wrote, “The expanses of forests, snow, fields and rivers of the great Russian plains, through which folk belief rolled, is really infinite. But it set some geographic limits for some divination practices. There are individual local features of divination” (Smirnov 1927: 38).

The possibility of using an area-based approach to the analysis of texts about fortune-telling in Polessie has been thoroughly substantiated by Marina Valentsova (Valentsova 1995). The spatial distribution of the types of Russian divination was traced by Klara Korepova based on the Nizhny Novgorod material (Korepova 2009: 133–165) and by Tatiana Makhracheva on the Tambov material (Makhracheva 2008: 23–25).

When applying this approach to the Don folklore, one inevitably faces the necessity to divide the material into groups. However, the task of identifying the characteristics and the spatial distribution of fortune-telling rituals prevents us from classifying them according to a single criterion, because in this type of practice, like in many other rituals, the elements of several cultural codes may have their own symbolic meanings.

For this paper, texts about fortune-telling were grouped by frequency, similarity of symbolic characters, the symbols for objects and places, and so on. This work focuses exclusively on divination varieties of which there are multiple examples forming compact distribution areas: the types recorded just once or the types dispersed

evenly are beyond the scope of this study. Analysis of the database provides an opportunity to highlight the typical divinatory forms specific to the Don region.

The most common practice is divination with a cockerel (sometimes with a hen), which is designed to give young women an indication of the character and the occupation of a future husband. Ninety-five of the 560 entries in our database describe this ritual. It is also widespread in the vast Slavic territory.

Several factors contribute to the variability of divinatory practices. For example, occasional features may appear due to the multi-component character of divination and the option of substituting certain symbols with others, with identical symbolic meanings. For instance, the young women could lay out objects in front of a cockerel on the floor, on the table or at the mouth of the Russian stove. Wheat, a symbol of a farmer husband, could be replaced with corn, bread, or cake. Traditional objects in this ritual are grain or wheat, water (signifying that a husband will be a drinker) and a mirror (a husband will be a fop, a cultured man, he will be unfaithful to his wife, a braggart, an intelligent man, etc.). In addition, one could place in front of cockerel a golden ring (the husband will be rich or marriage will take place soon), money, a hammer, scissors, sunflower seeds, tobacco, a broom, keys. People's attention to the gender of birds could be characterised as unsystematic. There are some variables: young women use cockerels in their divination, while men use hens. A cockerel in female divination is a sign that a fiancée will marry for the second time. The cockerel's behaviour during divination with these objects was deemed important only in a limited area. In the lower Don (Azovsky district) it was believed that should a cockerel defecate during divination, the young woman's life will be bad and she will have no luck.

A particular type of economy may also influence the variability of mantic practices. In the Rostov region with its coal mining districts, coal is used in divinations with a cockerel to predict a miner husband (Tarasovskiy, Krasnosulinskiy, Kamensky districts). In the Azovsky district, where economy is based on fishing, girls could put a needle for knitting a fishing net in front of a cockerel. If the needle is chosen, the husband will be a fisherman. In the Zimovnikovsky

district, where sheep breeding dominates the economy, the symbol of wealth in divination with a cockerel is wool.

With varying degrees of regularity, one can see manifestations of these factors in other types of divination as well.

Divination based upon dreams was extremely popular in the Don area, as well as in other territories (72 entries in the database). This type of divinatory practice is common to all districts of the Rostov region.

Young women would lock a padlock, hang it on a belt (or its imitation), a bucket, a bed, a model of a well made of matchsticks, or firewood, or sticks. They would place a key from this padlock under their pillow or give it to a girlfriend or mother, or put it near their heart. The groom would come to them in a dream and ask for the key. Other objects could be placed under a pillow as well, such as a comb, a ring, or clothes: a belt, stockings, or socks.

To particular localities, only several variants of oneiromancy are limited. These include the elements of “feeding-coaxing” and the divination with a model of a bridge over the water. In the first case, one would put dumplings, bread, or sugar under a pillow, sow wheat or barley, or eat a salted crumpet or bread before going to sleep. These variants are common in areas with long-term contacts between the Cossacks and the Ukrainian peasant population, namely in the Azovsky, Bagaevsky, Krasnosulinsky and Zimovnikovsky districts. Detailed versions of related verbal formulae with a clear structure are often recorded on the middle and upper Don (in the Tsimlyansky, Sovetsky, Sholokhovsky districts with permanent and more or less homogeneous Cossack population).

There are numerous records of divination with shoes (65 entries). In this type of fortune-telling, different kinds of footwear are used, for example high boots, felt boots, rubber boots, slippers and shoes. In half of the cases the shoes are thrown over a roof. It is noteworthy that in most of the texts people not only mention this action, but also specify the name of a building. Most often it is a hut (“hata” in Russian) (in the Bagaevsky, Verkhnedonskoj, Oblivsky, Orlovsky, Semikarakorsky, Sovetsky, Tarasovsky, Tsimlyansky, Sholokhovsky districts). To illustrate their point, interviewees sometimes mention that huts were long, low and covered with straw. It is

important for the analysis that in the Don dialects, the word *hata*, originally borrowed from the Ukrainian, could mean 'buildings with different purposes and design features'. A *hata* could be a house of one or two rooms made of laths or mud brick with a thatched roof, or a three-chambered extended construction, or a small house near the main dwelling, or a kitchen (in the Aksaisky, Verkhnedonskoy, Tsimlyansky, Sholokhovsky districts). In any case, it seems that a *hata* would have been a fairly low building. In the Zimovnikovsky district, girls threw shoes over a dugout (*zemlyanka* in Russian). This type of building without foundation, made of clay bricks, with the roof of thatch and soil, was very typical of the arid southern districts of the Rostov region. In the Verkhnedonskoy, Kamensky, Sovietsky districts one could throw footwear over a barn or a summer kitchen, in the Sholokhovsky district we found evidence that they threw felt boots or slippers over a house or a Cossack house (*kuren* in Russian), since "they used to be low". In nine cases, while engaged in divinatory activity, girls hurled shoes over their heads (in the Azovsky district, few records in some other districts); in eleven cases they threw them over a gate or a fence (mainly in the Verkhnedonskoy district, also in the Krasnosulinsky, Semikarakorsky, Ust-Donetsky, Tsimlyansky, Sholokhovsky districts).

Divination by tying ribbons to pegs in a fence at night is regularly and widely recorded (65 entries). The appearance of the peg was associated with different qualities of a future husband: a peg without bark or (rarely) a straight peg symbolised a poor husband, and a peg with bark or a crooked peg indicated a rich one. In some districts a straight peg could be a sign of a young and slim husband, while a crooked and knotty one was a symbol of an old or a humpbacked man. A peg composed of two parts was a sign of a remarried husband in the Krymsky hamlet in the Ust-Donetsky district.

Divination which requires that one stands by a window and enters into a dialogue with the owners of the house with a purpose of learning the name of the groom is frequent in the region studied (56 entries). This type of divinatory ritual, found in different areas of East Slavic territory, was systematically recorded in the Nizhny Novgorod region (Korepova 2009: 138). The performative component of the ritual varies little, but the content of the verbal formulae allows us to divide the records into two types:

1. On the Lower and Middle Don, girls learn their *fate*. There are such texts as, “Tell us about our fate”, “What is my fate?” “Aunt, tell me, what is the name of my fate?”, “Head of the family, tell me about my fate” (the Azovsky, Bagaevsky, Kagalnitsky, Konstantinovsky, Krasnosulinsky, Oktyabrsky, Semikarakorsky, Ust-Donetsky districts).
2. On the Upper Don, the figure of the *groom* is a constant part of verbal formulas.

This type of divination has a distinctive feature. It is rather more embedded in a complex of Christmas ritual actions than others. In the interviewees' recollections, the Christmas visiting rounds and divination exist as a single unit. This is largely due to the unity of time and place of the ritual actions: both were performed at night, on the borders of the living space (by a window or a door).

Divination with a mirror, popular everywhere in the Rostov region (34 entries), is also the most detailed as regards the conditions of performing the ritual. A girl was instructed to remove her belt, any safety pins, nails, cross, and to let her hair down. It is the only type of prognostic practice that was always characterised as frightening. The contact with the evil spirits is recognised and described by our interviewees as follows: “the devils come”, “some evil spirit comes”, “someone horned comes” etc. Stories about divination with a mirror often have features of mythological narratives: they describe a meeting with an evil spirit, which takes the image of the groom. Breaking the rules of divination (particularly the instruction to turn the mirror away immediately after you see the groom) is punishable. An evil spirit can hit a girl in the face, and a bruise or black spot will stay on her face for a long time or even for her whole life. A kind of divination when a mirror is placed in the Russian stove is attested to a compact area in the northern districts (the Verkhnedonskoy, Sovietsky, Sholokhovsky).

Along with divinations, which are widespread throughout the entire territory of the Rostov region, a group of prognostic rituals exists with more or less limited areas of distribution.

One of these is divination with a sheep, in which different features of an animal had symbolic meanings, e.g., the colour of its wool (determines the colour of the groom's hair), behaviour (nimble or

calm), gender (a ram was a sign of a good husband, a sheep symbolised bad life or idleness), the amount of wool (a lot of wool foretells a rich husband). This divination is characteristic of the Upper and Middle Don, of the Dubovsky and Zimovnikovskiy districts, which were famous for sheep breeding. But it was not recorded on the western left bank of the Don.

The Azovsky district – the territory, where the Cossacks constantly came in contact with the Ukrainian peasants, – is a region with several types of mantic practices which only sporadically occurred in other areas. For example, there is a divination by dog barking, which belongs to the type of “feeding-coaxing” (Vinogradova 1981: 14–20). Girls carried the leftovers of Christmas cereal (*kutja* in Russian) and of the evening meal out on the threshold or threw them into the yard, or threw them over their heads, or shook out a tablecloth at a crossroads. A husband was supposed to arrive from where she hears a dog bark. It seems that the popularity of this type of divination in the Azovsky district can be explained by the higher status of Christmas cereal among the Ukrainians as compared to the Cossacks. In particular, carrying the Christmas cereal during visiting rounds is the main element of Christmas rites that distinguishes the Cossack and the Ukrainian traditions in the memoirs of our interviewees. Another type of divination, which is widespread in the Azovsky district, is divination by a cherry branch, put into water on the day of St. Andrew or St. Catherine (one watched if it blooms before the Old New Year (January 14)). This type of fortunetelling is also characteristic of Polessie and the Western Slavic area (Valentsova 1995: 216).

As mentioned above, the records of divination show that the southwestern territory can be considered to be a separate ethno-cultural area. Another area of this type is the northern territory of the Rostov region. The divination by snow is known mainly in the Sholokhovsky and Verkhnedonskoy districts. Girls tumbled into the snow and looked at the prints: if folds were visible, it meant that a husband would beat his wife; grass in the snow predicted a rich husband. Divination with a mortar, a bucket or a pot is also characteristic of this territory. If a girl managed to catch one with her eyes closed, she would marry that year.

Summing up the results of this analysis, one may observe the rich potential of divinatory practices in the identification of local features of the Don calendar rites. The areas of different actions with prognostic meanings are superimposed on each other and allow us to determine the cultural originality of the northern and southwestern areas, as well as the cultural similarity of those territories where the Cossacks and the Ukrainian peasant population had lived in a long-term contact.

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Astral Objects,  
Plants,  
and  
Magic  
in  
Healing Strategies



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## **The Moon, Astronomic Objects and Symbolic Rites in Healing Strategies**

**Abstract.** Astral beliefs have retained practical value in healing rituals. Modified astral beliefs are an important part in new healing practices, media-mediated medical knowledge and traditional family heritage. A significant renewal has taken place in sun-related beliefs where medical information competes with the modern trend of sun-shine trips and sun curing.

Moonlight not only cured, but also caused certain diseases and general ill feeling; the sun and excessive sunbathing were also considered dangerous, and stars caused some diseases.

The article analyses symbolic rites in healing strategies (incl. settings for space and time, physical objects, sex, age, dress-code, etc.) and incantations connected with celestial bodies (using moonlight for curing, transfer of disease to the moon, etc.).

**Key words:** astral beliefs, astral rituals, healing, incantations, Moon, new spiritual healing, symbolic rites

Magical texts include references to the sun, planets and stars (constellations). Texts concerning lunar magic comprise content-coherent (but sometimes contradictory) sets of beliefs and practices. It is obvious that the importance of the sun or sunlight for health, as well as the influence of the moon and lunar phases on the success of the domestic activities, was widely recognized wisdom for centuries.

Starting in the late nineteenth century, but more so since the early twentieth century, social and economic conditions have changed very quickly, with modernisation setting a fast pace. Innovations in agriculture and economics decreased the need to appeal to astral objects for help, or to even consider the phases of the moon. However, during the second half of twentieth century, the importance of annual critical times (equinoxes and solstices) and the belief in the powers of the Sun, the Moon and other astronomical bodies started to increase again. They gained value in the teachings of various new spiritual movements and representatives of alterna-

tive medicine. These movements comprise a variety of traditions, but use also Estonian traditional knowledge, gained either through oral heritage or text-book sources. Eric Hobsbawm has declared that the most interesting feature of the phenomenon of invention is the use of ancient materials to construct invented traditions of a novel type for quite novel purposes (Hobsbawm 1983: 6).

### Sources, Methods

Folklore collecting in Estonia was initiated in the nineteenth century by well-known Baltic German and Estonian cultural figures. Specifically, the call to collect folk astronomical wisdom came from Jakob Hurt in 1880s. In the twentieth century, folklore collecting was carried on by various academic societies and folklorists, but also astronomers and for example the physicist Paul-Egon Prüller (Kuperjanov 2003). The results presented here are based on material in the Estonian Folklore Archives, the dialect archive of the Mother Tongue Society and other folkloristic archive texts that have been digitised by the Folkloristic Department of the Estonian Literary Museum. Currently, there are more than 9700 texts pertaining to astral topics. The texts date from the early nineteenth century to the twenty-first. Statistical and topographic analysis on the data presented here was carried out with the set of scripts –“Scriptorium” – written by Andres Kuperjanov. Scriptorium is by its nature the opposite of a database: the material is presented as an array of single-line strings, allowing fast processing of large text corpora. Out of more than 130,000 full texts from 27 archival collections, astral beliefs were sieved out: yielding 9794 texts. For the remainder of the analysis, folkloristic indexing, text classification and comparison were used. The discussed phenomena are found with fairly similar patterns among all European and other nations, leading to the conclusion that the results can be generalised for other nations as well.

### Subjects of Astral Beliefs in the Data Corpus

The material comes largely from the largest four collections: H – 1860–1906, E – 1880–1934, ERA 1920–1944, and RKM – 1945–1996. Statistical analysis of belief texts indicates that although the content

varies, the proportion of astral beliefs has been over the past 100 years constantly around 10±2% of all recorded beliefs.

Astral beliefs in the four largest collections, listed by location of origin, indicate that in the nineteenth-century astral beliefs are dispersed roughly equally. More astral beliefs come from regions that have yielded more folklore material in general (South-Estonia, northern coastal area). The exception here is Rõuge parish (mid-southern Estonia) where a few enthusiastic correspondents concentrated primarily on astral folklore, leading to a spike in our data. The twentieth century displays more inequalities in geographic distribution of astral beliefs. For one thing, annual professional fieldwork resulted in significantly more material, more informants and local correspondents. More material is recorded from parishes that were targeted for fieldwork (incl. South-East Estonia) and had eager local correspondents. Sadly, regions poorly represented in nineteenth-century recordings became even worse off.

Astral beliefs and magic pertained to several important spheres of life (economy, health, etc.). Looking at records spanning more than 100 years, we can see that astral phenomena were considered important first of all for meteorology, agronomy, medicine, incantations, tree lore, and veterinary medicine.

The most numerous group is astronomy-related records, followed by meteorological omens for both short-term and long-term weather forecasts.

Surprisingly, a very popular subject of astral beliefs is agronomy (1917 texts). The positions of astral bodies, when and how they appear, etc. is used for agronomic prognosis and timing magical procedures. These beliefs have seen fairly little change over the past 100 years, probably because it was only in late twentieth century that astrological plant-growing tutorials appeared in Estonian. Archived belief records reflect which agricultural crops were central for daily life: by far the most records concern the potato (the most popular food culture since the 1850s, losing importance in the twenty-first century), followed by grain crops, and then to equal extent peas, turnip, cabbage and general planting advice. When new cultures, like tomatoes or cucumbers, are introduced, an effort is made to match them to the old rules, and they appear in recorded astral beliefs.

Another large group is astral belief and magic records related to trees (1607 texts in the digital corpus). Most of the records teach how to fell and process trees correctly, to recognise times when trees are alive or dead, when you get the strongest wood, etc. – practical knowledge that is still considered valuable. As expected, most records concern acquisition of wood useable for house-building – depending on the species, the tree needs to be felled during the waxing or waning of the moon, in a certain direction, with certain type of wind, etc. Many records also concern the broom (which was an important artefact in family tradition, housekeeping and magical procedures) and whisks (an important part of the sauna traditions; a whisk made at the proper time gives health to the whisked person, deters itching; the whisk is more durable, etc.).

Veterinary medicine instructions (1473 texts in the digital corpus) concern healing, mostly of sheep (also dictating times of shearing), pigs and cows. For all other domestic animals, lunar phases and other astral phenomena carried little health significance.

References to human healing (651 texts in the digital corpus) concern general rules for recuperation, followed by tips for warts, hair care, various skin ailments (called generally *maa-alused* 'the undergrunders'), rheumatism and similar diseases, some contagious diseases, small tumours.

### Symbolic Rites in Healing Strategies

The Sun and the Moon were believed to have specific influence on health. According to belief records, both heavenly bodies can cause specific ailments; certain problems are caused specifically by moonlight: headache, torpidity and sleepwalking ("moon disease") or feeling bad.

*For me, if the moonlight falls onto me, I feel sick. I feel nausea, my head aches, I feel woozy and... Like with too hot sun. But I have not started to [sleep]walk, I only feel sick.* (RKM II 446, 326 (7) < Torma, 1991)

Old disease-cause rationale has in part persisted – astral bodies should not be pointed at with a finger, nor badmouthed unless you were looking to get ill.

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*But sleepwalking was also said to be caught if you say something bad about the moon or to the moon in moonlight. This was told by our neighbour's shepherd Aleksander, 13 years old, from Luunja, and he seemed stupid, perhaps he had said something bad to the moon. (RKM II 391, 281/2 (45) < Võnnu, 1984)*

The appearance of the Moon could be an omen of disease. It was believed that if the new crescent moon lies on its back many will fall ill that month, or that if the moon was gibbous (in the first quarter) then many will die that month.

One of the best known magical healing methods was the symbolic transfer of disease to the moon and washing the disease off with moonlight (in case of skin ailments, rashes, tumours, sprains). Central to these short symbolic rituals was imitative washing or whisking. Healing with moonlight called for exposing only the afflicted portions of the body to moonlight. For example, sprains and warts were treated by folk healers by symbolically palming moonlight and "washing" the affected area with circular motions; sometimes the patient was told to wash hands with moonlight, imitating hand washing. Moonlight was also important for curing chicken-pox by whisking in moonlight – the patient was in the moonlight, the charmer in the shadows, shaded from moonlight, and performing the whisking with a specially made whisk.

*And once my own grandmother comes to visit us: "Oh, poor child, your hand is bleeding, oh, god, oh, how do you manage. Washing laundry – and the laundry gets bloody. At full moon go to the window, sweep with your hand, but don't show yourself, stay behind the window."*

*And I did this and, see [shows], nowhere any sign of it. It started to vanish, vanish, I did not notice when it disappeared. The full moon helped this. And I also did like that, I did not tell anyone. (RKM II 395, 301/2 (10b) < Võnnu, 1985)*

There were some exceptional healing rituals that called for healing in full moonlight, for example to cure fright (*ehmatus*) by spinning the patient three times in moonlight (ERA II 28, 216 (11) < Lüganuse, 1930).

The few veterinary records we have indicate that healing methods are similar to those used for humans. Moonlight was used to heal bone tumours and skin disease.

The healing power of sunlight was well known: “Those that were in poor health and ill had to be kept in sunshine for a long time. Sun on St. John’s Day restores the weak and ill, it also loses parasites from kids and cattle.” (ERA II 291, 580 (2d) < Martna, 1941).

A number of generalisations corroborated that the sun must not be gazed at in order to avoid eye diseases, and sunburn along with excess sunbathing were to be avoided.

Astral bodies, including moonlight and sunlight, are used in healing rituals according to general rules for ritual performance. The rules include chronological order, time anchors, prescribed duration and performance frequency as well as a typical pattern of pauses during which no observable treatment or charming takes place. Holding pauses is characteristic of traditional folk healing in general and it is as important as the ritual crying, laughing or swearing performed as part of traditional customs (cf. Kõiva 2014).

For healing with sunlight there was often no time anchor; sometimes time anchors included the time before sunrise, before sunset, after sunset (so-called *koivalge*). It is interesting to note that drinking water before sunrise and after sunset was prohibited in order to avoid accidents. Also, clothes of babies and young children were not to be left to dry outside, that is, in moonlight, setting or dawn sunlight; otherwise the child was in danger of loose bowels, the cure for which was addressing an incantation to evening light (*eha* ‘sunset’) and dawnlight (*koit* ‘dawn’).

Although each rite has predefined requirements for space and place (usually a forsaken place near the house, one of the household edifices, the sauna, cross-roads), physical objects (a sauna whisk, rope, knife), is participated in by people specified by sex (e.g., children’s diseases and moonlight cures fell in the women’s domain), age (middle-aged and older) or dress-code (wearing clothes, naked to some extent, totally naked; for example, washing with moonlight calls for exposing naked flesh), an important time anchor is the day of the week. The general belief held that healing is to be performed on even days of the week (Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday), but Thurs-

day was clearly the preferred one. Often, two time anchors were combined: the week day and the lunar phase. If there was time to delay with the healing ritual – e.g. to heal congenital developmental problems, joint problems and rheumatism as well as other chronic diseases – a Thursday of a suitable lunar phase was chosen. Approximately 80% of Estonian records of wrist joint and congenital problem healing rites were performed on a Thursday (or rather, on three consecutive Thursdays).

While a good time to exterminate pests, charming and healing (and planting plants) was forbidden when both the moon and the sun were in the sky. Most healing rituals were performed during the waning moon, many records indicate that the full moon was just as suitable, and in some cases the new moon was called for. For deterring disease, the waning moon was the best time period; to promote economy, heal broken bones, sprains, guarantee subsistence, a favourable court ruling and plant growth, the waxing crescent moon was addressed.

*I take the old moon very much into account. To get rid of all kinds of skin problems: swellings, warts. I have also anointed my bones and I draw a cross sign on them.* (RKM II 455, 358 (6) < Pilistvere, 1993)

A sample of the rules would say that a disease contracted during a waning moon is complicated and lingering while falling ill during the waxing crescent moon you get well easily. A wound gotten during waxing moon tended to fester while a waning moon wound healed fast. The Thursday of a waxing crescent moon was the time to prepare medicines, and treatments were more effective during the waning moon phases. Cupolas were applied during, and sauna evenings timed for, the waning moon phases. Sauna whisks were also made during waning moon phases to be less itchy and “helps against nine dangers”. A waning crescent moon was best for “returning” congenital children’s problems to the animals that “caused” them (wolf, dog, etc.), also to cut the so-called devil’s hobble (*äiokammits*, *kuradikammits*), to help a child start to walk.

The new moon period when no moon is visible was believed to be a good time for massaging dorsal sinews, cupping, healing skin disease and general witchcraft.

## Incantations and Their Time Anchors

The Sun, stars, the sky are named, collated, or referred to in various healing incantations.

*For chest pains.*

*Mother of under-chest, pain of under-chest, be as still as the sun, as the stars, as the sky. Like the moon in thunder and God is pleased, like the king is pleased with his soldiers, be as clear, as clear as a spring. Bone pain, bone rot. Bone, do not rot. In the name of God x, the Son x and the Holy Ghost x. Amen. XXX. (ERA II 115, 283/4 (35.1) < Sangaste, 1935)*

In the early twentieth century it was still common practice to “send away” small tumours during the full or waning moon phases, when they were offered to the moon with the words “Look what I have and you don’t – take it!”, or a symbolic throwing gesture was made towards the moon with similar accompanying words.

One of the fixed cure formulae using moonlight was “Go like the waxing moon goes from the sky!”, repeated three or nine times. The same incantation formula was often used as the final phrase of a longer curing formula. The lunar phase was on the same principle used in Bulgarian, Udmurtian, Lithuanian, etc. incantations (Amrojan 2005, Panina 2014, Vaiskeviciene 2008).

The most common incantation, however, is one appealing to the Moon for young looks.

*When you saw the new moon crescent for the first time you had to say three times: “I will grow young, you will grow old!” After that you could not talk to anyone that night and had to go to sleep silently, then the wish was fulfilled – the girl stayed young. (RKM II 106, 575 (51) < Iisaku, 1960)*

The moon was addressed, for example, in order to dismiss sleepiness and laziness (cf. E 47310 (107) < Rõuge, 1910).

## Conclusion

Analysis of the Estonian digital corpus of astral beliefs shows that astral phenomena have, during the past hundred years of written records, remained a stable portion of all folklore recorded, with a

surprisingly small sub-portion dedicated to medicinal records. The system of beliefs relating to agrarian practice and general practical housekeeping centring on lunar phases is popular to this day and has persisted fairly well.

Astral beliefs have retained practical value also in healing rituals: some reports indicate the importance of using moonlight for curing, some concern transfer of disease to the moon, some the moon and lunar phases as time anchors. A significant portion of curing was performed during daylight hours with exceptions specifying a time either before sunset or sunrise. Moonlight not only cured, it was also the cause of certain diseases and general ill-feeling, just as looking straight into the sun and excessive sunbathing were considered dangerous. For choosing the best time for a ritual, in addition to illumination, the day of the week was important, as well as spatial anchors and other settings (wind direction, magical objects). In contemporary times, those who believe in the moon's health influence face the most difficulty in choosing the best time for surgical operation in order to get rid of the disease and to ensure that the wounds heal fast.

Modified astral beliefs are an important part in new healing practices (cf. Kõiva 2014). In the Estonian case, media-mediated medical knowledge and traditional family heritage are blended with international new religious practices. A significant renewal has taken place in sun-related beliefs where the medical information that excessive suntan causes skin cancer competes with the modern trend that considers solariums and sun-shine trips an inseparable part of Nordic lifestyle.

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## **Lunar Magic in the Modern Greek Folk Tradition**

**Abstract.** The paper refers to the Modern Greek folk beliefs connected with the moon which is supposed to influence human health and routines and to “lunar magic” – various folk practices and rituals (usually timed to a particular lunar phase), which are performed with an intention to take advantage of the Moon’s strength and power.

**Key words:** ethno-linguistics, folk astronomy, Modern Greek folklore, the moon, charms, lunar magic

The paper refers to the basic areas where lunar magic is used, i.e. folk medicine practices, agricultural and household magic rituals, as well as in the different kinds of divinations.

Traditional culture treats the moon as an extremely powerful creature, often personalized as a human-like being or as an animal. Appealing to the moon and asking for its help can be found in the incantations of folk healers, in the texts of the charms used by girls wondering who their match is going to be, and also in the special formulas people tend to pronounce to welcome a new moon.

**1. Folk medicine** believes that human health is in a large measure influenced by the moon, which is considered to be a source of malady and, on the contrary, a healer. Such relation of the moon and diseases can be sometimes either “read” in the very nomination of the disease (e.g. *σελνιασμός*, *φεγγάριασμα* ‘epilepsy’ <*σελήνη*, *φεγγάρι* ‘the moon’), or mirrored in the explanations of the illnesses’ origin and reflected in the ways of treatment (frequently coinciding with the time of a precisely chosen lunar phase). The same co-relation is also shown in the texts of the spells pronounced by folk healers. Obviously not every disease is said to be ‘sent’ by the moon. ‘Lunar’ diseases tend to include skin diseases, yellow disease (icterus), toothache, epilepsy and some other mental affections. The reason may be that their symptoms and signs correspond to the specific moon characteristics and features, some distinctive motives of

the lunar discourse (the lunar spots, yellow colour of the limb, the “weird” nature of the Moon and harmfulness of the moonlight).

**1.1.** According to the records from Naxos, one will definitely get warts if he/she does not properly greet the new moon, i.e. does not give it a bow. See in this respect the following song performed by the children when they notice the new moon:

Βρε καλως το νιό φεγγάρι  
Προσκυνώ Τον που σε κάνει  
κι'όποιος δεν σε προσκυνήσει  
αγιαθόνοι να γεμίσει  
ή στο μάτι ή στο φρύνι  
ή στο μεσακό δαχτύλι

*Welcome, new moon!*

*I pay homage to Him, who creates you,  
and let those who don't give you a bow  
get covered with warts  
either on the eye, or on the eyebrow  
or on the middle finger.*

(Κεφαλληνιάδης 1965: 8)

Therefore in some local traditions (e.g. in Crete) the treatment of warts tends to be carried out with the first appearance of the new moon. At the same time there is a common belief that the procedure of “getting off warts” should be done when the moon is on the wane, so that the disease gets lost (note the following line from the incantation text: *ως λι(γ)αίνει το φεγγάρι / να λι(γ)αίνει τ' αθυμάτι* “how the moon is getting smaller, should the wart be getting smaller” (Σόφος 1986: 65). We can see a specifically Greek motif in the texts against warts in the motif “the warts are sheep / goats of the moon”, the patient “shepherded” them and asked the moon to take them back, e.g.

Καλώς το φεγγαράκι μου,  
το νιό παλληκαράκι μου,  
τα πρόβατα, που μούδωσες,  
για να σου τα βοσκήσου,  
τα βόσκησα, τα πότισα,  
πάρ' τα, δόξ' τα κι αλλονού.

*Welcome, my moon,  
my brave young man,  
You gave me sheep  
to shepherd them for you,  
I shepherded them, I watered them,  
Take them and give them to somebody else.*

(Peloponnesus) (Κάσσης 1981: 49)

Apart from the warts, other “lunar” skin diseases include tetter, furuncles and skin sloughs. It is remarkable that King’s evil, scrofula, also is taken as a “skin disease” (Ψυχογίος 1989: 147), a fact that may be explained by the symptoms of this illness – big knotty tumors appear on the patient’s neck and hands (inflammation of lymphatic nodes). That is to say that in Greek folk medicine the key symptom of skin disease appeared to be a skin growth, a tumor. Perhaps that is the reason why Greeks do not address the moon when they “get off” freckles and moles (birthmarks), although this practice is common among the Balkan Slavs.

**1.2.** Icterus (yellow disease) is called *φεγγάριασμα* (< φεγγάρι ‘the moon’) (Οικονομόπουλος 1999: 246) or *λιόκρουνση* / *λιόκριση* (liter. ‘the full moon’) (Αραβαντινός 1909: 66), because the face of the patient gets yellow as the moon (Γρηγόρη 1953: 161). For fear of being taken ill with icterus there is a strict prescription to stand up to welcome the new moon and prohibitions on drinking or urinating facing the lunar body. The person suffered from icterus is referred as a “person under the influence of the moon or full moon” – *φεγγαρισζεται* or *λιοκριζεται* (Μέγας 1941: 144) – and is given tea made from an herb called *φεγγαρόσκονη* ‘moon powder’ (Ασβέστη 1962: 206). See also the text of the prayer addressed to the moon:

Φεύγει το φεγγάρι φεύγει  
από το χρυσό μου παλληκάρι  
το κιτρινοφορεμένο  
και το κιτρινοβαμμένο.  
Του Οβραίου το ταψί<sup>1</sup>  
τηνε παίρνει τη χρυσή  
Στα Βαθεία τηνε πάει και στα νΤάρταρα νερά,  
και δε θα γυρίσει επά.

*Go away, the moon, go away,  
from my golden young brave man,  
yellow-dressed  
and yellow-coloured.*

*Put the golden disease [i.e. icterus]  
on the baking tray of a Jew.*

*Let her go to the Inferno, into the waters of Tartarus  
and never come back again.*

(Κάσσης 1981: 137–138)

**1.3.** It is a common belief that the moon causes human mental affections and epilepsy<sup>1</sup>. The Cretans used to say that during the period of the neomenia when the moon cannot be seen, it spoils the water; and if a man happens to taste this water, he will lose his mind (Πολίτης 1921: 169). On lunar influence upon the human spirit, see idioms like *είνι στα φιγγάρια τ'* (liter. ‘one is at the their moons’) ‘to be angry’ (Ταστάνη 1998: 69), *καλόφεγγος* (liter. ‘good mooned’) ‘easy going person’ (Κόμης 1996: 163), etc.

**2.** The changes of the lunar phases (the lunar calendar) also regulate agricultural works. Usually either the beginning of the lunar month (waxing moon) or the time of the full moon are supposed to be perfect to start most works. Even to imitate this start if there was no possibility to start it actually. Quite often the prescriptions can be explained by the “verbal” or “etymologic magic” – when the inner form of the term (lunar phase nominations) influences the agricultural activities, e.g. seeding used to start in the period of the full moon to make the grains full. Thus in Petrokhori (Greek Thrace) birds were caponized at the time of the waxing, growing moon, so that the cocks “grow and get as fat as pigs” *στ γιόμις τ φεγαριού, για να γιομώσ-νε και να παχαίν-νε σα da γροννάκια* (Χουρμουζάδης 1938: 339) and *στ σώς τ φεγαριού σώντανε και δε bρόκοβαν* “never during the period of the waning, coming to an end moon, because otherwise they were believed to come to an end as well” (ibid: 339).

**2.1.** In Greece and in Cyprus, women do not put eggs under the brood hen on the first part of the lunar month so that the chickens do not lay in the same lunar month. If the chickens were to lay by the end of the month they got a special name “one-moon-chickens” – *μονοφεγγαρούδκια* or (less common) *μονομηνούδκια, μονομηνίτικα* (Λουκόπουλος 1938: 25; Παναρέτου 1967: 242) – and were considered

to be of extremely bad health. Consequently, there were several actions to be made to protect them, e.g. in Peloponnesus the birds were drawn through the door knockers at sunrise to make them “as iron as the doors knockers” (Κυπριανού 1976: 38). Another option was to pretend that you were going to fry them. In Northern Greece the mistress of the house brought the chicken to the crossing of three roads where she would set a tripod and put a fry-pan with the chickens over it. A friend of hers who accompanied her would ask: What are you frying? And the mistress of the house would answer: The one-month-chickens, the-one-year-chickens. The dialogue had to be performed thrice and afterwards the women cut the chickens’ nails and returned home (Λουκόπουλος 1938: 25–26).

Another thing that backs up the point of how important the lunar calendar and the moon itself was for Greek poultry keepers is the fact that the only non-curative incantation addressed to the moon<sup>2</sup> is the Cretan incantation for protecting hens from vultures and wild cats:

Φεγγάρι μου λαμπρότατο καὶ λαμπροτιμημένο,  
εἴντά κουσες κι' εἴντα μαθες 'ς τὸν κόσμο ποῦ γυρίζεις;  
Δὲν εἶδα ἄλλο τίποτα  
παρὰ κάτω 'ς τοῦ Μουετῆ τάλωνι  
εἶδα χῆλια ἀλόγατα δεμένα  
μὲ τὴν κατακουρκουμωτὴ κατακουρκουμωμένα.  
Ἐτσά νὰ κατακουρκουμωθῇ  
οἱ λούπαρδος κι' ή λουπαρδίνα,  
οἱ γάττος κι' ή γάττα,  
καὶ νὰ λείψουν ἀπὸν το' ὅρνιθες τοῦ δεῖνος.

– *My brightest moon,  
what have you heard and learnt in the world you cross?*  
– *Nothing have I seen but a hundred of horses at the  
Moueti's corn floor,  
that a halter is put upon.*  
– *Then let a halter be put upon  
a vulture and a female vulture,  
a cat and a female cat,  
let them be kept away from the hens of name-to-be-spoken.*  
(Κουκουλές 1926: 488)

**2.2.** Other activity largely regulated by the lunar calendar appears to be winegrowing, especially when it comes to the planting and cutting of the grape-vines. All over Greece and Cyprus they know the proverb *Γενναριώτικον φεγγάρι κλάδενε καὶ μέραν μη ξετάζεις* “During the moon of January cut vine and do not pay attention to the moon” (Πολίτης 1963–65: 540), that advises to cut a vine during the period of January because only in this month both waxing and waning moon were considered a good time for that activity. In line with the above-mentioned verbal magic (growing moon – growing animal or plant) the Thracian vine dressers used to start planting the grapes at the time of the growing moon – “Like the moon that will grow bit by bit and get full, so will the vine grow and bring us grapes” *Ὅπους τὸν φιγγάρη, ποὺ θὰ τρανέψ’ σιγὰ -σιγὰ κὶ θὰ πάρ’ γιόμ’ ση, ἔτοι κὶ τὸν κλῆμα θέμε νὰ μιγαλώσ’ κὶ νὰ μᾶς δώσ’ σταφύλια* (Τζομπάρης 1945: 158).

Note also the winegrowing terminology derived from *φεγγάρι* ‘the moon’, that was recorded in Rhodos: *φεγγάρισμα* ‘cutting of the grape that should be started at the time of the waxing moon’ (Παπαχριστοδούλου 1969: 279), *φεγγαριασμένος / αφεγγάριαστος* ‘(referring to the vine) cut during the period of the waxing moon’, *φεγγαριάζω τ’ ἀμπέλι* < to cut the vine during the time of the January moon < *σφογγαριάζω* ‘to cut the vine for the first time’, *σφογγάριασμα* ‘the first cut of the vine’ (ibid: 80).

**2.3.** The last corpus of prescriptions refers to wood-cutting. The best time for that, as well as for construction works, for basketwork and bow nets was considered to be the second half of the lunar month. It seems that behind prescriptions like these, there is a vision of the waning moon as an “old” creature (while the waxing moon is a “young” one), and a binary opposition ‘young – old’ // ‘wet<sup>3</sup> – dry’.

It is also worthy of note that in Cyprus the recommendations are supported by the legend about Noah, who is said to have built the ark from the wood cut at the time of the waning moon: “A hundred years did Noah cut the trees for constructing the arc, but it constantly rotted. Finally, God took pity on Noah and ordered him to cut the trees between the 17th and 27th lunar days because the trees cut during this period don’t rot” (Παναρέτου 1967: 54, 246).

The next group of magic rituals relate to the common belief that the moon, that crosses the world every night, can see and learn everything. Folk songs and fairy tales contain a great number of mentions of how people ask the moon questions and get answers. The same concept of the all-knowing moon can be found in the divination practices and in the texts of the “true stories” about the witches, who are believed to be able to talk to the moon and even milk it.

3. An appropriate time for **divination** was supposed to be the first appearing of the new moon. In Arcadia a girl, after having seen the new moon for the first time, took off her belt or kerchief and threw it to the ground with the following words:

Καλῶς τὸ νιὸ φεγγάρι,  
καὶ τ' ἄξιο παλληκάρι  
κι ὅποιος εἶναι τῆς τύχης μου  
νά ρθῃ ἀπόψε 'ς τὸν ὑπνό μου  
νὰν τὸν ιδῶ.

*Welcome, new moon,  
brave young man,  
let the one who is my destiny  
appear tonight in my dreams  
let me see him.*

Then she put the kerchief under the pillow and believed she would have a dream about her future husband (Αθανασοπούλος 1921: 566). In some local traditions the time of the full moon seemed more preferable, e.g. then Cretan girls in the hope of seeing their future husbands would take a basil stalk in their hand and look at the mirror where the lunar body was reflected, pronouncing the following:

Φεγγάρι φεγγαράκι μου ποὺ μυστικά γνωρίζης  
φανέρωσε τὸν ἄντρα μου, ἀνὲ ντονὲ γνωρίζης  
καὶ πέ του πὼς ἐπᾶ 'μαι ἐγὼ καὶ πολὺ τὸν πεθυμῶ.

*The moon, my moon, who knows all secrets,  
Show me my husband if you happen to know him,  
And tell him my words that I am here waiting for him.  
(Φραγκάκι 1949: 9)*

Quite often the girls waited for the new moon of January or of March, i.e. the first moons of the new year, more powerful than usual ones. In Thrace in March they tied three knots in a kerchief

in the moonlight and then addressed the moon with a question: “Who will I get in with to loose the knots?” Afterwards the girl put the kerchief under the pillow and was supposed to dream of her match (Παπαθανάση-Μουσιοπούλου 1979: 189). In Skiathos at the time when the new March moon appeared, girls soaped their faces and said to the moon the following:

Καλῶς τοὺς νιὸς τοὺς φιγάρου  
κὶ τοὺς νιὸς τοὺς παλληκάρου.

Τοὺς σαστ’ κὸ π’ θὰ πάρου, νὰ τούνι ιδῶ ἀπόψη στοὺν ὕπνου μ’,  
νὰ ρθῇ νὰ μ’ δώσ’ πιτσέτα νὰ σκουπ’ στῶ.

*Welcome, new [young] moon,*

*Young brave man.*

*Let him who I’ll take (in marriage) appear in my dreams*

*Let him come to give me a napkin to clean my face.*

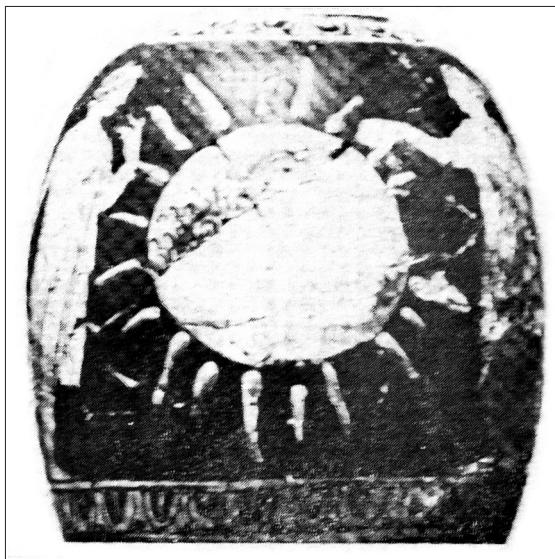
Then they went to bed with the soap on their faces and hoped to see in their dream their future husband with a towel in his hands (Ρήγας 1970: 426).

In Skopos (eastern Thrace) there were not only girls who took advantage of the March new moon. It was believed that if after noticing the new moon in March a man would stick a pin or a handkerchief in the wall and say *Νὰ διῶ στ’ ὄνειρό μ’ τ’ ἀ μὲ γέν’ ὡς τῇ χρόνῳ* “Let me see in my dream what is going to happen to me this year”, they would indeed see that in their dreams (Καλοκάρδου 1946: 160).

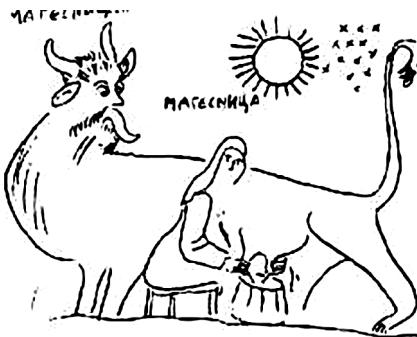
With reference to the incantations addressed to the January moon (which are less common) see, for example:

Τοῦ Γενάρη τοῦ φεγγάρι,  
τὸ καλό τὸ παλληκάρι,  
πᾶσα μῆνα γεννημένο,  
πᾶσ’ αὐγή χαιρετημένο [...]  
Ν’ ἀρθει βράδυ νὰ μὲ ιδεί,  
νὰ τὸν ιδῶ  
νὰ μοῦ εἰπεί  
καὶ νὰ τοῦ εἰπῶ.

*Moon of January,  
brave young man,  
who gets born every month,  
and greets every dawn [...]  
Let (my husband) come tonight to see me,  
let me see him;  
let him speak to me,  
let me speak to him*  
(Πολίτης 1912: 48–49)



*Figure 1. Lekythos (end V, BC. Exposed at the British museum). Depiction of two women that are about to draw down the moon. In the center there is a full moon with its “head” turned right. Published in: Μουσόπονιλον Ν.Κ. 1991. Οι Μαϊστρες της Μακεδονίας και της Θράκης. “ΣΤ” Συμπόσιο λαογραφίας των βορειοελλαδικού χώρου: η ιστορική, αρχαιολογική και λαογραφική έρευνα για τη Θράκη, Κομοτηνή-Αλεξανδρούπολη, 7–10 Μαΐου 1989: πρακτικά.” 293–322. Θεσσαλονίκη. Ιόρνυμα Μελετών Χερσονήσου του Αίμου.*



*Figure 2. Depiction of the witch milking the moon that had turned into a cow with a red tongue in St. Prophet Elijah church (XIX century), community Buranovo, Bulgaria. Published in: Lyubomir Mikov. 1992. *Luna / Krava: Lamya / Vyatr – metamorfoza i tzhdestvo. "Izvestiya na istoricheski muzei,"* IV: 153–159. Kyustendil.*

4. The last group of texts referring both to the moon and magic and therefore worth being mentioned in the paper are the narrative stories about witches who turn the moon into a cow or a calf, pull it down to milk or question it about the future. The former beliefs are agreed to be of an ancient origin and the collection of the texts from Epirus published by Benekos (Benekos 1992) contains the old variants of such stories – witches dressed in white play musical instruments, dance, offer the moon some food and invite it to come down to question it about the future. The references to the stories of that kind are found in Hellenistic literature and in pottery fragments. Modern Greek tradition contains, however, modifications of the story – witches milk the moon turned into a cow. This motif seems to be recently new and came from the traditions of the Balkan Slavs, first of all from Bulgarian tradition where the former plot is presented not only in narrative form but also in church paintings.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Hence the following epilepsy terminology: *σεληνιασμός* ‘epilepsy’ < *σελήνη* ‘the moon’ (Μπαμπινιοτης 2002: 1597); *φεγγάριασμα* ‘epilepsy’ < *φεγγάρι* ‘the moon’ (ibid: 1897).

<sup>2</sup> According to the records in the possession of the author.

<sup>3</sup> With reference to the interpretation of the new moon as “wet”, note recommendations to plant herbs, greenery and trees in the first half of the lunar month, otherwise they may dry up.

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## **Where Do You Come From, Ash? – I Come From a Pure Place. Magical Healing Practices from the Region of the Thracian Cult Center of Starosel, Plovdiv region, Bulgaria**

**Abstract.** This paper presents several magical healing practices using ash from the region of the Thracian cult center of Starosel. The rituals were recorded during field work in this region that had the aim of interpreting them through the application of interdisciplinary scientific method. Semantic analysis is done through comparison with other typologically similar magical practices from Bulgarian traditional culture. The paper draws attention to the concept of a connection between ash and the sun. An interpretation of the ash as material for a new creation according to the ancient literary sources of Orphism is proposed.

**Key words:** healing, ritual, Thracian, Starosel, ash

During my field studies<sup>1</sup> in the region of the Thracian cult center of Starosel<sup>2</sup> I had the opportunity to observe and record some living magical healing practices that are connected with the use of ash as a main carrier of purifying power and thus of healing. The rituals discussed below were recorded in the period 2010–2011. The women practising them currently – Radka Kakanasheva and Mariya Kabadzhova – are perceived as healers by the local people; they have a good reputation and their help is sought not only by locals, but also by people from other villages. Before going into detailed comments on these healing practices, let me first present the ritual actions as they were described to me by those performing them. Here I would like to point out that the healers did not show any embarrassment at sharing them; on the contrary, they cooperated willingly and explained in detail both the text and the actions connected with it. Both women are hereditary healers, as the passing on of this type of knowledge was done by an elderly female relative while they were at a premenstrual age. They do not share the belief that pronouncing the words of the magical formula,

as well as explaining the actions, will cause their effectiveness to wither. Radka Kakanasheva is currently the most well-known healer in the village and she recalled one case in which she even wrote down the text of the incantation and in that way transmitted it to a child who wanted to learn this kind of healing.

### **Healing fear with ash Nr. 1**

I recorded this incantation on 15th January 2010 from Mariya Kabadzhova, who was born on 5th March 1940 in Starosel and had a secondary education.

*Ash is taken from the hearth and is sieved. A wooden board and a chain from the hearth are also used in the ritual. Upon starting the incantation, a pile of ash is made and the board is placed over it. Then the healer takes the chain from the hearth in her right hand and, holding it over the board that covers the ash, pronounces the ritual formula:*

*“From dog fear, from cat fear,  
from wolves fear, from bear fear,  
from women fear, from men fear,  
from children fear, from trucks fear,  
from falling fear, from standing up fear,  
fear from everything,  
from electricity fear, from water fear,  
from abyss fear, from crash fear,  
from blood fear, from dead man fear,  
from police officer fear, from physicians fear,  
fear from everything!”*

*After the incantation has been repeated three times, the board is lifted up and the healer examines the figures imprinted in the ash and on the basis of those identifies the cause of fear. After that nine pinches are taken from the ash in the following order:*

6	1	8
4	2	5
7	3	9

*The ash is put into a spoon with some water and this is given to the ill person to drink while standing at the door, but outside the doorstep, with the healer inside, saying:*

*“Fear outside, heart in its place!”*

*Afterwards she throws the spoon over the person’s left shoulder so that the spoon falls behind his or her back and watches: if the spoon lands face down there is fear and if it lands face up, that means that the fear has been healed. This procedure is repeated three times, as the incantations are performed on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.*

### **Healing fear with ash Nr. 2**

I recorded this incantation on 5th January 2010 from Radka Kakanasheva who was born on 31st March 1934 in Starosel.

*Ash is taken from the hearth and is placed on a wooden board and over the ash another wooden circle is placed. This is put in front of the person for whom the incantation is performed and he or she must be facing east – “towards the sun”. The person places three fingers of their right hand on the round board over the ash; the healer stands behind the person and while making the sign of the cross (as in the consecutive movement in taking the ash) over his or her head, repeats the following incantation:*

*“From mother fear,  
from father fear,  
from dog fear,  
from cat fear,  
from wind fear,  
from water fear,  
from thunder fear,  
from bullet fear,  
from a dead fear,  
through bones,  
through joints,  
through veins,  
let the heart of (name) gather to its place!”*

*After that the person stands up and goes round the ash starting from the right, i.e. they walk clockwise like the visible movement of the sun. After three rounds the circular board placed on top is lifted and the ash is taken<sup>3</sup> in the following order:*

6	1	8
4	2	5
7	3	9

*Then the ash is given to the person to put it in a spoon with some water when they come home and to drink it in the place where they sleep i.e. in their bedroom. When they drink it, they should throw the spoon back over their left shoulder and observe how it has fallen – if it is with its back up – “it shows a grave” and the healing ritual must be repeated. According to the healer, ash is used for healing because nothing impure can stay in the ash – everything burns and so the fear and whatever is bad there burns too.*

It is not by chance that I have chosen as the title of the present paper a fragment of a Hittite ritual text that discusses the mythologem about ash. This fragment, which originates from the first records of Indo-European ritual tradition, attests to the concept of a connection between ash, purification and the sun, or more precisely, the God-Sun. The fragment is as follows:

- “– Where do you come from, ash?
- I come from a pure (place).
- From what pure (place)?
- From *zahānittenna* (place).
- From which *zahānittenna* (place)?
- From the temple of the Sun.
- From which Sun?
- His statue is new, his chest is new, his head is new, his potency is new. He has the teeth of a lion. He has the eyes of an eagle. And he sees like an eagle. These are the words of the ash.”<sup>4</sup>

In spite of the different translations of this fragment and the variations in the interpretations between ash and cleansing powder, i.e. the powder from a specific plant,<sup>5</sup> what is important in this text is the record of the mythological concept, which has also been preserved in the traditional culture of the South-East of Europe,

as can be seen from the ethnographic material. The connection between ash and the sun is expressed through the pure place from which the ash comes and which is interpreted as the home and/or temple of the Sun-God. It is the idea of renewal contained in the semantics of the ash and in the traditional folk culture that stands out in the cited fragment along with purity.

It has been observed in academic studies that cosmological concepts can be preserved in healing incantations (Georgieva 1990: 5–18), which in my opinion is the case here. Among the incantation formulae with ash there is a connection with the sun even nowadays. This connection of ash with the Sun-God, known thousands of years ago and attested in the typological similarity with the Hittite ritual text, is also preserved in some magical healing practices with ash from Bulgarian traditional culture. In these rites, the connection is expressed through several elements. One of them is the requirement that the ritual act should be performed only while the sun is ascending, i.e. during its movement till midday. The upwards movement of the sun corresponds with the idea of the person “going up”, getting better and attaining the strength and health of the sun. An additional element in one of the rites is the clockwise movement of the person around the circle with the ash, as well as the spinning of the hearth chain over the ash in the other rite. In one way or the other, these cases both represent the movement of the sun by means of the circle. This solar circle is included in the rite once more through the wooden board, which in the past was also circular and was used for placing the bread in the oven, i.e. the hearth. Nowadays this board is replaced by an ordinary wooden board because of the changes in the way of life (e.g. not using the hearth for baking bread any more) but the former usage and semantics of the circular board are still remembered.

Other ritual practices from Bulgarian traditional culture that use ash also preserve this connection with the sun. Here are some examples. The first one is for healing fear and its procedure is as follows:

*The healer fills a *fldzhan* [type of small coffee cup] with ash from the stove, wraps it in a cloth and spins it in front of the chest (the heart) of the ill person, chanting in a whisper the given text. During the spinning a hole appears in the cup from*

*where the fear goes out. These actions are repeated three times on three consecutive mornings before sunrise (Ribnovo):*

*“The sun comes up, the heart comes up,  
behind the Perin mountain,  
behind the green forest,  
behind the cold water.*

*There you eat, there you drink,  
build your nest, hatch your chicks.*

*There you eat, there you drink.*

*Behind green forest,  
behind cold water, pines:*

*there is a banitsa [traditional pastry dish]*

*there is a loaf of bread,*

*there you may eat, there you may drink.” (Rodopi 1994: 71)*

The second one is aimed at healing a sore spot on the body, which is smeared with ash, while pronouncing the ritual text:

*“Bismillyahi rahman i rahim!*

*Timryo, timryo karanzha, birinzhi saranzha!*

*I will give it dinner,  
so it doesn’t wait for breakfast,  
as the sun hides,  
so it should hide,  
and never come here again,  
it has nothing to do here!” (Sbornik Rodina 1940: 140)*

The opening formula here is a mis-spelled Islamic opening prayer formula “*Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim*”, but it should not be allowed to mislead us about the nature of the ritual text, which has a completely folkloristic character and has a number of parallels in Bulgarian traditional magic. The second sentence (“*Timryo etc.*”) seems to be in Turkish. The ethnographic context of the cited rite is the region of Beden village, Devin Municipality, Rhodope Mountains, and the informants are Muslim Bulgarians. I specify this because it represents the adaptability of this type of rituality and its vitality in the context of Islam, as well as in the context of Christianity. This adaptability does not destroy the old pagan layer in this type of ritual.

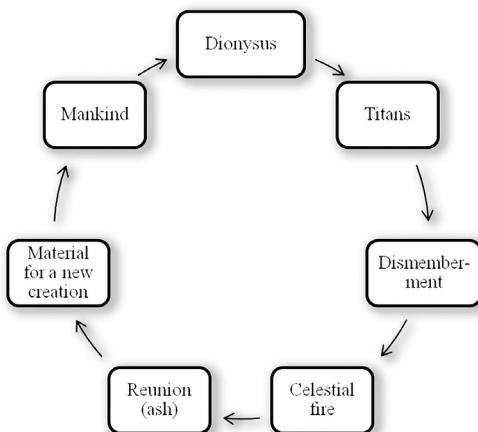
In these two examples the connection between the sun and healing is to be seen again, but here it is expressed in the verbal part, in

the ritual text – “The sun comes up, the heart comes up”; “as the sun hides, so may it [i.e. the sore spot on the body] hide in the same way.” The role of the sun and its summoning are not accidental because it has been believed to be a carrier of health since antiquity. Purification and healing are interconnected in folk belief, because usually the illness is considered to be the consequence of a contact with something impure or with something which has led to imbalance, i.e. chaos. This imbalance in the examples cited is the result of a strong emotion – fear. In order to overcome the imbalance the primal elements are asked for help and new creation is performed, where the roles of the sun and its earthly projection, fire, are emphasized, along with their sub-product ash.

Ash and fire are in a close semantic relationship and because of that they are often considered as a unity. During my fieldwork I asked one of the healers why she specifically used ash and her answer was based on the concept that everything impure burns in fire.

It is known from the archaeological researches done in the region of the Thracian cult center of Starosel, that the idea of a cathartic function of ash was known in the cult context in this area from ancient times. In this connection I can mention the *Eleshnishka* tumulus (for a description of the archaeological context see Dimitrova 2005: 185–201), where the walls of the chamber were exposed to extreme heat from fire, and this happened before it was sealed. The situation is similar with the nearby *Roshava* tumulus (for a description of the archaeological research see Velkov 1927: 171–179; Paunov 2002: 82–92), where traces of a layer of ash and charcoal are found in the chamber, which according to the excavators were brought from outside and were not from burning done inside. Finding ash in archaeological environments with similar contexts and semantics has been commented on and interpreted in a similar way so far. However I would venture one assumption concerning the semantics of ash in this case, which in a way complements and builds up the explanation for purification. Fire as one of the four cosmogonic elements is also a creative element and in Thracian belief it is the terrestrial face of the Sun-God. In this connection, ash itself is known from antiquity in the written sources of literary Orphism as the material from which people are created:

*Then Dionysus succeeds Zeus. Through the scheme of Hera, they say, his retainers, the Titans, tear him to pieces and eat his flesh. Zeus, angered by the deed, blasts them with his thunderbolts, and from the sublimate of the vapors that rise from them comes the matter from which men are created.* (Olympiodorus In Phaed. I.3, cited in Edmonds 2009: 514)



The ancient fragments metaphorically ascribe to the ash, i.e. to what is left after the smoke, the property of unifying and possessing creative potential. The celestial fire destroys the titans who dismembered the god, i.e. Dionysus, but it also reconnects the parts of the divine in the ash and thus it possesses the power for new creation. A connection has been made between healing and initiation rites, i.e. in the seeking of a new birth in order to acquire healing. In this case the role of the ash has similar semantics. In the rite it serves for the new formation of the person from primordially pure matter. The role of the ash in the masquerade rituals is similar and it has been commented on in relation to the traditional Bulgarian masked ritual known as *Kukeri*, especially the very archaic form of the so called *kuker without mask*, where the ash is used on the one hand for marking the bodies of the ritual participants (they smear it on themselves), and on the other hand is an element of the rite – the ash in the hearth is stirred, ash is used for scattering, etc. (Fol,

Raychevski 1993: 98, 122). In the rituals for healing fear discussed here, ash is precisely the material for the new creation after the fear has been taken out of the body by the text of the incantation. First the healer names the fear according to its origin and thus exerts control over it; and after that takes it out “*through bones, through joints, through veins*”. It is striking to see the actualization of the reasons for the fear and their adaptation to present-day reality. So the fear is now believed to be caused by car, by police officer, etc.

The use of symbols and the experiencing of them in the ritual aim at identification with a cosmogonic unity, which is presented through the terrestrial and celestial fire – through the movement of the ill person in the direction of the visible motion of the sun and around the ash that was left by the terrestrial fire. All these actions aim at saturating the prepared cure, i.e. the ash, with power. Its consumption is supposed to bring an internal purification and, when entering the body of the ill person, to take out and eliminate their fear.

### Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to Ekaterina Ilieva for her help with the English translation of this paper.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> I started those field studies in the year 2010 as part of the team of Dr. Ivan Hristov from the National Museum of History, Sofia, during interdisciplinary research on the region of the Thracian cult center of Starosel. The results of this initial research were published in Mishev 2010, 185–197. Subsequently I continued research in the region during the preparation of my master’s thesis on “Thracian tangible and intangible cultural-historical heritage in the region of the Thracian cult center of Starosel”. The practices discussed here are part of my Ph.D. thesis “Bulgarian traditional culture as informational resource for magic in ancient Southeastern Europe”, with academic adviser Prof. Valeria Fol, defended at the State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, Sofia, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> The term “the Thracian cult center of Starosel” was introduced by Dr. Georgi Kitov. The village of Starosel, municipality of Hisarya, district Plovdiv, South Bulgaria, became very famous in the year 2000. Dr. Georgi Kitov and the team of the Thraceology Mound Research Expedition excavated many temples, tumuli and settlements there in the period 2000–2003.

<sup>3</sup> For more about the proper way for taking the ash, see Mishev 2012: 272–273.

<sup>4</sup> The translation is from the German publication by Haas 2003: 91. For other readings see Tjerkstra 1999: 48–49; Watkins 1995: 138–140.

<sup>5</sup> See previous note.

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## **Circumscription Ritual in Russian Herbals of the 17th–early 20th Centuries**

**Abstract.** Russian herbals are collections of short texts which describe various plants and their uses. This manuscript tradition existed from the 17th to the early 20th century. The manuscripts include a variety of ritual instructions for picking plants, in particular prescriptions concerning the time at which they are picked, various actions which are to be carried out and the use of particular objects and verbal formulae. These elements have analogies in the manuscript, print and oral traditions of various European peoples from antiquity to the 20th century. In the paper we consider one of the most frequent rituals of collecting plants described in herbals – the ritual of circumscription (the action of circling a plant before digging it out or pulling it through various perforated objects).

**Keywords:** herbals, medical manuscripts, ethnobotany, magic, folklore

Russian herbals are collections of short texts which describe various plants and their uses. This manuscript tradition existed from the 17th to the early 20th century. The manuscripts include a variety of ritual instructions for picking plants, in particular prescriptions concerning the time at which they are picked (point in the ritual year, church holidays, days of the week, phases of the moon, time of day), various associated actions (circumscription, buyout, and others), the use of particular objects (for example rings, coins, gold, silver, crosses), and verbal formulae (charms and prayers). These elements have analogies in the manuscript, print and oral traditions of various European peoples from antiquity to the 20th century.

In Russian herbals, there are approximately 70 plants, for which the time or rituals related to their picking were mentioned (about 15% of all plants from herbal books – see details in (Ippolitova 2008: 129–168).

We may now consider one of the most frequent rituals of collecting plants described in herbals – the ‘ritual of circumscription’.

We use the term “circumscription” to define the action of circling a plant before digging it out (outlining, drawing a line around, strewing something around) or pulling it through various perforated objects. The variety of such rituals in herbal books (11 plants and a number of individual and corrupted texts) allows us to identify on the one hand the paradigm of objects used in the ritual and on the other the paradigm of actions with these objects. Here are some descriptions:

prezhde rvat', kak naidesh tu travu, i ty eya **ocherti** s molit-  
voyu srebrom ili zolotom

*before tearing, when you find the herb, you **draw around** it with a prayer with silver or gold (45.8.168, 10r., herb *det-lovina*)*

a koli eya hotyat imati, ino **ochertiti** krug lugu ili gde kuet detlevin, stoit pri chem ni budi, a govoriti: “Est’ tut Matka travam, a mne zhe ili nam nadobe”

*and if one wants to have it, one should **draw around** on the meadow or where a woodpecker is heard [...], and say: “There is a Mother to all herbs here, and I or we need it” (Lakhtin 1911: 73, herb *detlevina*)*

A kak eya okopyvati, pervee lyatchi i obmeryati, kak chelovek lyazhet, i na drugoy kray krugom, i **ocherti**

*While digging around it, first lie down and measure, as man lies down, and to the other edge around, and **draw around** (RSL. 218-785.2, 12r., No 78, herb *zemlyanye oreshki*)*

I ta trava imat’ na Ivanov den’ v Kupalnicu vvecheru ili na zore, ili poutru rano, pronyat’ skvos’ **zlatu grivnu ili srebrenuyu**

*This herb is to be taken at Midsummer on St. John’s Day in the evening or at dawn, or early in the morning, to pass through a **golden or silver grivna**<sup>1</sup>” (Und. 1072, 26, herb *adamleva glava*)*

A rvat’ eya ne prosto, prigovarivat’ i **pronyat’** eya **skvoz’ sotovoi vosk ili skvoz’ zlato**

*Pick it up not in a common way, speak and **pull it through comb wax or through gold** (RSL. Mus. 4492, 46r., herb *odolen*)*

A tu travu rvat' skvoz' **serebryanuyu nitku**

*This herb is to be picked up **through a silver thread** (45.8.175, 13r., herb molchan)*

A kak eya stanesh imat', ot solnca steni ne navodi i **polozhi krug ei po kopeike so vse 4 storony**

*When you start to pick it, avoid being in shadow and **around it put a kopeck** on each of **the four sides** (Uvar. 114, 6r., herb cemravnaya)*

A kak eya kopati, ino **polozhi** na zemli s **chetyreh storon serebra**, skolko izvolish, i **vynimai skvoz' serebra** to, a govori "Gospodi, blagoslovi menya seyu dobroyu travoyu [...]"

*While digging it, **put on the ground on the four sides silver, as much as you want, and pull it out through this silver, and say "Lord, bless me with this good herb [...]"** (RSL. 722-521, 3r., herb paporotnik bez serdca)*

A brat' eya v den' svyatyya muchenicy Agripiny iyunya 23-go dnya **skvoz' serebryannuyu grivnu**, to est' sto **kopeek serebrenyh krugom** eya **oklad** i beri

*To be taken on June 23rd, Saint Agrippina's Day, **through a silver grivna**; that is, encircled by a hundred silver kopecks and then removed (KP-4281/2, 90-91, herb napaht)*

I ta trava brat' nakanune Ivana Kupalnika na zore [...] I **obvesti** tri razy po solnyshku i vykopat'

*And take this herb on the eve of St. John's Day at sunrise [...] **circle round** three times clockwise then dig it out (Bars. 2257, 5r.-6, herb belaya kasha)*

I tu travu emlyut v velikoi chistote **ochertya** po zemli okolo koreniya desnoyu rukoyu, sirech pravoyu, krestaobrazno trizhdy i togda **okapyvayut** eya, a ne rvut, berut s koreniem

*This herb is taken in great cleanliness<sup>2</sup>, drawing on the ground near the root with the right hand, make a cross-shape three times then **dig around** it. Do not tear the plant off; it is to be taken out by the root (Travnik 18 veka 2004: 51, herb prostrel).*

Brat' na utreney zore, levoyu rukoyu, sh[v]atya za pravoe uho, a pravoy rukoy **pronyat'** tut, i takim obrazom vzyat' chrez levoe pleche nagomu

*To be taken at sunrise by one who is naked; the left hand holds the right ear, and with the right hand the plant is pulled through<sup>3</sup>, and in this way it is taken over the left shoulder (Deystvuyuschiy travnik 1998: 434, herb **lastovichya**).*

The objects for making the magical circle are most often made of silver and gold, although in relatively late texts wax and incense also appear. When the texts mention specific objects (rather than silver or gold in general), the latter are represented by two groups:

- a) perforated objects: neck grivna (without mentioning of material; gold, silver); thread, yarn (gold, silver); chains (gold, silver); in later texts of the late 18th – early 20 c.: silver chains, gold or silver rings; a silver cross; *gaytan* (lanyard for wearing a neck cross);
- b) money: 4 kopecks or 100 silver kopecks to put around the plant.

A circle could be created in other ways: a plant was outlined by a circle with a radius of a human height (*zemlyanye oreshki*); drawn around three times clockwise (“as the sun goes”, *belya kasha*); by the right hand in the shape of a cross (*prostrel*) or pulled by the right hand through a hole made by the left arm touching the right ear (*lastovichya*). The text describing *detlevina* (see above) is not quite clear; it perhaps suggests that one should draw a circle in a meadow or where a woodpecker can be heard.

Thus, the action paradigm of the circumscription ritual has three main variants:

- a) a circle was drawn around a plant (incorporating silver or gold; without using tools; with a radius of human height; clockwise; with the right hand);
- b) the plant was pulled through a hole in an object or the space made by bending the left arm and touching the right ear and the body.
- c) money or silver was put around the plant (on the four sides; in a circle).

These actions and objects constitute the minimum core of the ritual. Other elements may be added to it, such as verbal or temporal ones.

The specific relevance of this type of ritual is underlined by the fact that almost all variants mention its confinement to St. John's Day.

This circumscription ritual has analogies in European tradition (Gr. *περιγράφειν*, Lat. *circumscribere*). It is first mentioned by Theophrastus (3rd c. BC), in a text on gladwyn which says that “one should cut it with a double-edged sword, first making a circle round it three times” (IX.8.7)<sup>4</sup>; that “one should draw three circles round mandrake with a sword, and cut it with one's face towards the west” (IX.8.8); that “one should also, it is said, draw a circle round the black hellebore and cut it standing towards the east and saying prayers” (IX.8.8). Pliny the Elder wrote that one should circle black hellebore with a sword (25, 49), verbena and ragwort with iron<sup>5</sup> (25, 107, and 167), and circle the roots of quince (the tool is not specified (Delatte 1961: 93)). Scribonius Larg mentions the ritual of circling clover with the left hand (163) (Delatte 1961: 93).

Pseudo-Apuleius' “Herbarium” (5th c. AD) says that cinquefoil should be outlined thrice (2, 12); while picking up polygonum, a circle should be drawn around the plant with a golden ring (18, 13); and while picking up rue this circle should be drawn with gold, silver and ivory (90, 34); to outline basil, one should use gold, silver, ivory, boar tusk, deer horn, and bull horn (130, 16) (Delatte 1961: 93).

A similar ritual is described in German medieval manuscripts and early printed herbals. Thus, in a 13th century German manuscript there is a text about vervain (*Verbena officinalis* L.):

Der diselben wurz [verbena] graben wil, der sol sie umberizen [ringsum einritzen, d.h. einen Kreis um die Pflanze ziehen] mit golde unde mit silber [...] Desselben nahtes [in derselben Nacht] solt du lazen ligen bi der wurz silber und golt unz [bis] des morgens, e din sonne auf ge, so grab die wurzen, das du sie mit dem isen nine ruerst.

*Whoever wishes to dig up the root must outline the plant with gold and silver. [...] That very night, you have to leave the gold and silver to lie near the root till the morning, and when the sun rises, dig the root out – but do not touch it with iron.* (Cit. from: Marzell 1963: 77)

Many other similar examples from the European manuscript tradition can be given<sup>6</sup>.

Rituals of pulling plants through perforated holes in various objects are also known in Slavonic folk tradition. For example, near Leskovac, before digging out the first lily of the valley, Serbian women placed over it a baked *kolce* (ring-shaped bread with a hole in it) (Chaykanovich 1985: 271). In the same area, healing properties were attributed to corn which had sprouted through a ring (Usacheva 2004: 36). A remote parallel is a Slovenian belief about a fern picked on St. John's night: if one pulls it out of the ground, a golden ring will be found at the end of the root (Agapkina 2002: 547).

In Slavonic tradition, there also exist other rituals associated with pulling something through a ring or a loaf of bread with a hole in the middle, as well as drawing a circle with a ring. These examples mainly belong to folk medicine and veterinary medicine, and agrarian rites (the first milking and spring sowing), i.e. the ones associated with natural forces. Thus, the Russians outlined the affected areas with a wedding ring to heal a stye on the eye or scrofula; a ring taken from a dead man's hand was used to stop bleeding: as soon as a drop of blood from the nose falls through it, the bleeding should stop (Valencova 1999: 564). To prevent disease which produced blood in milk the cow was milked into a golden ring (Rus.). The same was done if the blood in milk has already appeared (Ukr. Transcarpath.) as well as after calving (Ukr. Gutsul.) (Valencova 1999: 564). On St. George's Day Bulgarians milked the first sheep through a bride's ring to protect the flock against evil forces and to encourage milk production; Serbs milked through a roll, reed, silver ring, and needle with the same purpose (Valencova 1999: 564). During such milking, the roll was put onto the bucket, and the milking was done through the hole in it (South-Slav.) (Gura, Plotnikova 1999: 439). A sheep after first lambing was milked through a ring and other perforated objects: a wreath, bread, a holed stone (Serb.) (Valencova 1999: 564–565). The grains for ritual of sowing were poured through a ring while saying: *Da se rodi zhitoto chisto kak zlatovo* “Let the corn be born as clean as gold” (Maced.). While selecting seeds for sowing, they were poured through a ring with words: *Kako shcho ne se previra nishcho preku prstenov tak da ne se previra ni magijata* “As nothing passes through the ring, so let no magic pass” (Maced.) (Valencova 1999: 564). Bulgarians baked a loaf of bread on the first day of sowing, sifted grain through it,

and then hung it in the barn to save the crop harvest (Gura, Plotnikova 1999: 440).

Comparing the circumscription ritual from herbal books to other materials allows for the advancing of some conclusions. The materials of manuscripts and those of the oral tradition, while being rather similar, exist in different registers. Manuscript tradition (both Russian and European) is generally more refined. It mentions precious metals (gold, silver), rare materials (such as ivory), jewellery (grivna, ring, chain), silver (not copper!) money. The only decoration the oral tradition mentions is a ring, but its role can be played by a perforated bread loaf.

The following may be proposed as a working hypothesis. In ancient European tradition there existed various rituals surrounding the picking of plants (in the form of outlining, drawing around, passing through objects with holes, pouring around them, etc.). The writings of ancient authors (Theophrastus, Pliny the Elder, and others) outlined specific instructions for these rituals; later they were translated in manuscript tradition, gradually mutating and acquiring new details. In the 17th century some motifs associated with circumscription rituals or whole articles about some plants entered the Russian manuscript tradition, where they began a new life, also varying, changing and supported by oral tradition, where circumscription rituals continued to exist. This process may be judged by observing changes in tradition of Russian herbal books from the 17th to the 19th centuries; in later copies circumscription rituals are recommended not only for picking the plants to which they are usually attributed, but also for those for which it was not typical earlier.

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## Manuscripts

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45.8.175 – Library of Russian Academy of Sciences (Sankt-Petersburg). Manuscript department, 45.8.175. *Herbal*, middle of 18 century.

Bars. 2257 – State Historical Museum (Moscow). Manuscript department. Coll. of E.V. Barsov, 2257. *Charms and herbal book*, late 18 century.

KP-4281/2<sup>7</sup> – Kizhi-museum (Petrozavodsk), КИ-4281/2. *Herbal*, 1900-s.

RSL. 218-785.2 – Russian State Library (Moscow). Manuscript department. Coll. 218, 785.2. *Medical book*, middle of 18 century.

RSL. 722-521 – Russian State Library (Moscow). Manuscript department. Coll. 722, 521. *Medical book*, late 17 century.

RSL. Mus. 4492<sup>8</sup> – Russian State Library (Moscow). Manuscript department. Museum coll., 4492. *Medical book*, late 18 century.

Und. 1072 – Russian State Library (Moscow). Manuscript department. Coll. of V.M. Undolsky, 1072. *Collection of extracts from medical book, herbal and astrological works*. 1703, 1705.

Uvar. 114 – State Historical Museum (Moscow). Manuscript department. Coll. of A.S. Uvarov, 114. *Medical book*, second half of 17 century.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Grivna* – in the Old Russian language a neck-ring or torc (a neck decoration) (*Slovar' russkogo jazyka* 11–17 vv., 4: 135).

<sup>2</sup> Here “great cleanliness” means that the performer should be in a state of ritual cleanliness.

<sup>3</sup> One should hold the right ear by the left hand thus creating a symbolic aperture. Through this hole, the right hand reaches and removes the herb.

<sup>4</sup> There is a hypothesis, that Book IX does not belong to Theophrastus, but was added to his work after the author's death, and is based on a lost herbaria of the Alexandrian era (Singer 1927: 2–3).

<sup>5</sup> A. Delatte proposed that the expression *circumscribere ferro* in Pliny could mean ‘outline with a sword’, not just with iron (Delatte 1961: 92).

<sup>6</sup> For more details on circumscription rituals in European traditions see Delatte 1961: 92–105.

<sup>7</sup> Herbals from Kizhi-museum are published: see Travniki. 2010.

<sup>8</sup> See publication: Licevoy travnik konca 18 v. 2002.

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## **The Magic Herbs in the Modern Greek and Italian Calendar Customs**

**Abstract.** The texts of ancient poems, tractates and appeals to the gods abound in mentions of the magic herbs which are able to heal wounds, turn humans into animals, arouse passion, put a person to sleep, etc. The idea of certain “magic” herbs is preserved in Modern Greek and Italian Folk Culture, although some “magic” plants correspond with the real botanic species, determination of others is challenging and some remain completely mysterious. Since the important aspect of application and picking of magical herbs is herborisation timed to certain calendar holidays, some herbs are named after the holidays (for ex., St. John’s Herbs). This communication is dedicated to the magic herbs and the rituals with these plants associated with calendar customs.

**Key words:** Italian and Greek calendar customs, magic herbs, traditional culture, St. John’s herb

In the texts of ancient poems, tractates, and appeals to the gods, there are scattered mentions of the magic herbs which are able to heal wounds, turn humans into animals, arouse passion, put a person to sleep, etc. The idea of certain “magic” herbs is preserved in Modern Greek and Italian Folk Culture. Although some “magic” plants of Greek and Italian Folklore correspond with real botanic species, determination of other ones can be challenging and they remain completely miraculous. An important aspect of application and picking of magical herbs is that the herborisation is timed to certain calendar holidays and some herbs are named after the holidays (for ex., St. John’s Herbs). These herbs appear to be an instrument and an *object* of different magic practices. The first one refers mainly to the magic herbs, while the second one is common for the calendar rituals. Some advice regarding the use of similar herbs passed into modern manuals of practical magic and led to creating the magic herbs shop.

The name *St. John herb* (*l'erba di San Giovanni*, *Βότανο του το βότανο του Αγίου Ιωάννη του Προδρόμου*) is associated with the day of St. John the Baptist celebrated in Greece and in Italy on June 24th. In folk culture, this is a day of the summer solstice and is considered the most favourable for the collecting of herbs which have healing and magical properties. In magic, heavenly bodies and plants were always connected. For example, in Folk culture the growth and planting were timed to the full moon, because it was considered that the growing moon and plants are connected. The herbs and dew collected on St. John's Day are particularly powerful, because they have the energy of both luminaries – sun (fire) and the moon (water).

The following song was recorded in Greece:

Επ' Αγιο Γιάννη βοήθα με, να πλέξω το γαϊτάνι  
 Και πλέγοντας και λέγοντας και ψιλοτραγουδώντας,  
 στη μέση πλέγουν το Χριστό, στην άκρη το βαγγέλιο,  
 και στο καλό το γύρισμα πλέγουν του Αγη-Γιάννη το βότανο

*On St. John Day, help me, I'll make the belt.  
 They make the belt and talk and sing quietly,  
 In the middle they put Christ, on the edge – the Gospel,  
 And on the backside of the beautiful belt they put the St. John  
 herb.* (Καραπατάκης 1976: 191)

The song tells us about “a charm belt” with St. John's Herb. What kind of plant is mentioned in the text? In some languages and traditional cultures we know *Hypericum perforatum* by the name of *St. John's herb*: Eng. *St. John Wort*, Russian *Ivanova trava*, Italian *Erba di S. Giovanni* and Greek *το βότανο του Αγίου Ιωάννη του Προδρόμου*. However, in the last two traditions, this is the name of many other plants (optional – *flowers of St. John*).

In the Greek tradition the plant *υπερεικό* was mentioned by: Γαληνός, *Περί Κράσεως και Δυνάμεως των Απλών Φαρμάκων*, 12.148, Διοσκορίδης, *Περί ύλης γιατρικής*, 3.154 as a sedative, diuretic and hemostatic agent. The scientific name, according to one theory, derives from *υπερ εικών* ‘above icons, figures’, because the Ancient Greeks decorated the images of their gods with the plant<sup>1</sup>.

In the Modern Greek Folk Tradition *Hypericum perforatum* has the following names: *το Βάλσαμο*, *Βαλσαμόχορτο*, *Σπαθόχορτο*, *Περίκη*, *Λειχηνόχορτο*, *Χελωνόχορτο*, *Κοψοβότανο*, *Ψειροβότανο*, *Θαύμα / Χάρη του*

Θεού, Μαστίγιο του Διαβόλου, Μαγιολούλουδο. Most of the folk names refer to the therapeutic functions attributed to the herb. The herb is used as the material for various balsams (*Βαλσαμό, βαλσαμόχορτο*<sup>2</sup>) to heal the skin disease lichen (the name *Λειχηνόχορτο* exactly means 'lichen herb'). In ancient times it was a medicine for sword wounds (*σπαθόχορτο* 'sword herb') and now from all kinds of wounds and cuts (*Κογοβότανο – κόβω* 'cut'). The effectiveness of St. John's herb as a medicine is proved by the names *Θαύμα / Χάρη του Θεού* 'God's Miracle' or 'God's Joy'.

It is used against depression, sadness (we will see later that it is the common property of many St. John Herbs) or against some mental illness which was interpreted as diabolism, possession (the name *Μαστίγιο του διαβόλου* 'Devil's whip'). In this case we turn from merely "medical" use of the herb to the magic associated with mythological characters and weird forces. So the Greeks use St. John's herb against evil forces. They use it against the evil eye. And in our times the herb is sold with text of incantations, sewn into a bag in some special stores<sup>3</sup>. In the Italian tradition, according to Cattabani, author of the book "Florario", dedicated to the symbolism and mythology of plants in different cultures, St. John's herb is also mentioned with the other herbs that should be put in so-called "St. John's water". Its folk name – *cacciadiavoli* – is based on the same idea as the Greek "Devil's whip" and indicates its special apotropaic and exorcism function. Both names have the medieval Latin equivalent – *fuga demonium*. According to the testimonies recorded in folklore archives, people stick the herb on windows, sew it into clothing as an amulet (together with garlic, artemisia<sup>4</sup> and rue<sup>5</sup>), especially during Midsummer Night, when evil forces intensify. The magic use of the herb was connected with divination. For example, at the Midsummer Night, Greek girls prepare water with different herbs (St. John's herb, *Hypericum* is obligatory), collected at sunrise, they cover the vessel with St. John Water's with a cloth, leave it to infuse under the moon, then they put their heads under the cloth to see the future husband. In modern times this rite is used mostly in the form of a game or it is staged at various folk festivals on 24 June. The rite is called *klidon*, and the water derives from the name of the festival – "St. John's water".

The same elixir could be used for washing and bathing babies with preventive and therapeutic aims in the Greek and Italian tradition. Washing and bathing was connected with the idea of “purity” as literally “cleanliness”<sup>6</sup> and was supposed to remind of the baptism of Christ in the Jordan River by John the Baptist, like the many ritual actions with water that have acquired Christian symbolism in traditional culture. Folk legends “explain” some characteristics of St. John’s Herb. According to one legend, the plant grew from the saint’s blood, beheaded at the request of Salome, so if you rub St. John herb, your fingers become red. Another version of the legend tells that the drops of the saint’s blood fell on the petals, so now they have red or brown spots. By the way, another “official” name of the plant is *ανδρόσαμον* ‘blood of man’ and it refers to the colour of its sap and to its property to stop haemorrhage. Probably the name *Χελωνόχορτο* (‘Turtle Herb’)<sup>7</sup> is also explained by colour of the petals (yellow with spots).

The second herb that can be identified as St. John’s Herb (Flower) is oregano (*Origanum vulgaris*), especially in the Greek tradition. Saint John the Baptist acquires a “herbal” epithet – *Πηγανάς* (*το ρήγανι* ‘oregano’) because at Midsummer oregano used to be collected. The functions of oregano are similar to the functions of *Hypericum*: it heals cuts, repels evil and so on. The Italian sites refer to folk tradition, ancient magic, ancient sources, and propose to use oregano for strengthening family relationships, recovery of one’s health, purification and serenity of hearth.<sup>8</sup>

A special kind of oregano is Cretan oregano, the scientific name of which is *Origanum dictamnus*, folk – *ερωντας*. In the description of its abilities the Greeks will certainly refer to the antiquity of the tradition. This plant is mentioned by Hippocrates, Euripides (the goddess Eileithyia wore it in her crown), Pliny, Theophrastus. The etymology goes back to the mountains of Crete – Dictamo. In the “Aeneid” Virgil in several verses talks about Venus who goes to Crete to take the so-called “Cretan oregano” and heals the wounds of Aeneas with the help of this herb.<sup>9</sup> I doubt that the Greek or Italian peasants read the Aeneid but the folk name of the herb (*έρωντας*) in the Greek tradition is related, in a certain sense, with “Venus”: love, passion, desire. The plant grows in remote places that require a really strong desire and perseverance from a man in love who

wishes to find it and to present it to his lady. The Dictamos has exceptional abilities of healing wounds and cuts. The other names *στοματόχορτο*, *στομαχοβότανο* (literally “mouth herb”, “stomach herb”) represent its use in folk medicine (Οικονομάκης 2003). A kind of oregano is mentioned in popular songs-advice:

Να κατέχαν οι κοπέλες πως κάνουν τα μαλλιά:  
 Αντωναϊδα και λουλάκι κι έναν άλλο χορταράκι  
*The girls knew how they can treat their hair*  
*Oregano and indigo and another small herb...*  
 (Καγωμένοο-Χατζιτάκη 1997: 169)

Αντωναϊδα και λουλάκι	<i>Oregano and indigo</i>
κι άλλο ένα χορταράκι	<i>and another small herb...</i>
αν τα ξέραν οι μανάδες	<i>If the mothers knew it</i>
δεν εχάναν τα παιδιά τους.	<i>They wouldn't lose their children</i>

(Καγωμένοο-Χατζιτάκη 1997: 169)

Αντωναϊδα is identified as *Origanum microphyllum* (*Lamiaceae*) and *Teucrium polion*.

As the *loulaki*, it may be *Hyacinthus orientalis* or a perverted Greek word *louloudi* ‘flower’.

Another “small herb” remains as a mystery. The omission of the plant name can be explained by its sacred nature. The unknown herb has a special power. The similar herbs in Greek traditional culture can be termed “herbs of immortality”:

Τόσα βουνά περπάτησες, ουδέ κι αητός αν ήσουν,  
 γιατί δεν ηύρες στα βουνά τ' αθάνατο βοτάνι,  
 που στο σκοτάδι μυριανθεί και την ημέρα κλείεται,  
 να φας κι εσύ βαριόμοιρε, ποτέ να μην πεθάνεις  
*You crossed a lot of mountains,*  
*Where the eagle did not reach.*  
*Why didn't you find the immortal herb?*  
*That redolent in the dark and close by day,*  
*If you had it, you would never die...* (Ρηγάτος 2003)

The Italian tradition also mentions a small unknown herb. Its “name” is “invisible herb” which can be seen only on St. John’s Night. In both traditions only the mythological characters know this herb (Greek “Neraides”, Italian “Fate” and *folletti*, spirits, demons of the forest and nature). However, magic herbs like the herb

of immortality or invisible herb do not belong to “practical” magic and medicine and remain entirely in the traditions, legends, and myths. They are connected to the ancient typological motifs and have characteristics of the world tree and its variants (the tree of life, tree of knowledge, etc.). However, esoteric shop owners and local people try to “identify” such plants.

We should note activation of certain abilities of the “herb of immortality” or “invisible herbs” by night. It is a characteristic feature of many “magic herbs.” In the book of legends the “father of Modern Greek folklore” N. Politis provides a legend about the miraculous herb “Lampedusa” (*λαμπεδούσα*) or “lampredona” (*λαμπηδόνα*), which turns everything that it had touched into gold. According to folk beliefs, animals which chew this herb have golden teeth. It is very difficult to find this plant; it is possible only at night when it shines. However, it is not so easy to pick this herb, because it may lose its shine when someone touches it (Πολίτης 1965). The Italian *l'erba lucente* has the same abilities and they are activated on St. John's Night. And it is a real “herb of knowledge”. The person, who brings this herb under his shirt, can know “all the truth”. According to some legends only some domestic animals (calves) can see *l'erba lucente* and find it for its owners.

Politis mentions one more “mysterious herb” – *σιδερόχορτο* ‘iron herb’, that can be found only by a hedgehog. You must smoke its hole and close the entrance. The animal would start to look for iron herb to open the hole, because this plant can open every door, every lock. When the hedgehog comes out, you should try to take away the herb (Πολίτης 1965).

Both herbs – lampredona and iron herb – are related to hidden treasures. The one turns everything into gold, the other unlocks locks. By the way, the colour and the golden dust of the *Hypericum* may be associated with gold. These herbs are related to mythologem “plant – a key” that is present even in ancient mythology. Here we can recall the mythological motive highlighted in the well-known work of J. G. Fraser: Aeneas, before descending into the realm of the dead, takes with him, at the instigation of the Sibyl, the golden bough, which he must sacrifice to Proserpine. The Golden Bough becomes a kind of “key” that opens the entrance to the realm of the dead. This motif is interpreted in fairy tales, where we can find

the image of gold twigs, opening and closing doors, fairy palaces, basements, and it also became the “golden key” of many studies. Nevertheless, the luminous herbs and flowers are often identified as fern in many other traditions.

The idea of luminous herbs suggests their connection with fire, and St. John’s herbs are also associated with the fires of St. John. People burn the plants at the fires, and the ashes of fires are then used as a fertilizer. *Hypericum* is often used as a medicine against burns, and the yellow colour of its petals was associated with the fire and sun.

Among other herbs of St. John there are mint, rue, sage, sorghum, *Vitex* sacred. All these herbs have similar psycho-physical effects. They are popular in the treatment of “depression” and love magic. In Modern Greek folklore, for example, Our Lady chews sage leaves to temper her sorrow for her crucified sun. In Italy, all these herbs can be found in the markets, arranged on St. John’s Day. In Rome, for example, the sale of St. John herbs was arranged at the Roman Basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano. In general, the use of the “miraculous” herbs extends to love magic, divination, luck, healing, and to a lesser extent to agrarian magic.

In conclusion, all the above mentioned herbs acquire magical abilities in other periods and calendar holidays, but St. John’s Day is the most important for magic herbs. At the head of the list of the St. John’s herbs are *Hypericum* (really St. John’s wort) and oregano. The use of magic herbs concerns more traditional medicine, divination, apotropaic magic and less agrarian magic.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> On one of the Russian sites dedicated to therapeutic properties of *Hypericum* an interesting interpretation of this name was found. It goes back to the later tradition of keeping St. John’s wort behind icons for expelling evil forces (Malankina E. L. *Lechebnye svoystva zveroboya*. [http://www.green-info.ru/grassy/hypericum.html/Article/\\_aID/5512](http://www.green-info.ru/grassy/hypericum.html/Article/_aID/5512)). The Greek informants confirm this tradition.

<sup>2</sup> In this sense the literary name coincides with the Eng. *St. John’s Wort*. The etymology of *βαλσαμόχορτο* may be explained by the word ‘embalm’, because they put the plant near the dead.

<sup>3</sup> An advertising text from the site of the magic herb store proposes the wonderful bags for the environment and personal purification. The magic action that helps to escape jinx, purify your energy etc.

Kismet shop: [http://www.kismet-shop.gr489212\\_7835237.aspx](http://www.kismet-shop.gr489212_7835237.aspx) (29.08.2014).

<sup>4</sup> In Italian Folk tradition this plant also has the name St. John's herb.

<sup>5</sup> By the way, in the Greek tradition mostly rue performs a similar function; it is reflected even in language clichés like *εξορκισμένος με τον απίγανο* 'driven away with rue'. This is said about the persona non grata. In a proverb from Salento (Italy), rue is also mentioned: *Ruta ogni male stuta* 'Rue reduces every evil'.

<sup>6</sup> By the way, another folk name of *Hypericum* *Ψειροβότανο* 'Louse Herb' indicated an ability of the plant to drive out the lice which were often caused by dirt.

<sup>7</sup> In the lexicon of plants of Heldreich-Miliarakis *Hypericum* has the name *Χελωνοχόρταρο*, but *Χελωνόχορτο* is the name of *Crepis Bulbosa*. The same lexicon mentions *Χελωνοβότανο* – *Cotyledon Horizontalis* Z (Χελδραιχ-Μηλιαράκης 1926: 269). We are talking here about the ordinary practice of giving different names to plants which have similar abilities. The same can be seen in relation to *Ψειροβότανο*, named *Delphinium Staphis Agria* by Heldreich-Miliarakis (Χελδραιχ-Μηλιαράκης 1926: 271).

<sup>8</sup> *Origano – pianeta Mercurio, giorno Mercoledi se si vogliono favorire divinità associate a Mercurio o alla magia planetaria. Può comunque essere bruciato anche tutti i giorni. Della stessa famiglia della maggiorana, ha un forte potere protettivo sulla famiglia, sulla salute e si usa nelle pulizie per propiziare la serenità del focolare.* (Arte e magia 2014).

<sup>9</sup> *Hic Venus indigno nati concussa dolore  
dictamnum genetrix Cretaea carpit ab Ida,  
puberibus caulem foliis et flore comantem purpureo;  
hoc Venus obscurò faciem circumdata nimbo detulit,  
hoc fusum labris splendentibus amnem inficit occulte medicans,  
spargitque salubris ambrosiae sucos et odoriferam panaceam.*  
Liber XII, 410–424

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Shamanism and Neo-Shamanism,  
Paganism and Neo-Paganism,  
Cults and Wicca  
in  
the Old and New Traditions



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## **The Magic of Performance in Korean Shamanic Ritual – *gut***

**Abstract.** In this paper I will discuss the Korean shamanic ritual, *gut*, from the perspective of Peter Brook's work "The Empty Space" showing its various historical transformations, from a State ritual described in The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty and performed by Confucian officials to a Shamanic context after it had been banned during the Japanese colonization. The third transformation is within a touristic context, where the aim is to make the ritual attractive for tourists in the form of an aesthetic and quasi-theatrical product, staged to allow them an enjoyable encounter with one unique aspect of Korean culture.

**Key words:** ritual, performance, theatre, transformation, tourism

Shamanic rituals in Korea have always permeated and still permeate the consciousness and way of life of Korean people. On many occasions, divinations spoken by shamans in a *gut* guide their acts. As a manifestation of hidden connections between *sin* 'spirits', *mudang* 'shamans', and *dangol* 'common people', *gut* is performed to bring good luck, health and prosperity to the family and the community. As one of the essential layers of Korean cultural expressions, *gut* is a very vivid way of presenting and reproducing substantial values and views of the Korean culture. Furthermore, it is an experiential event of altering states of consciousness and crossing thresholds, which divide the different worlds of all of the participants – that of *mudang*, clients and gods/spirits.

In the first section of this paper, I briefly introduce the main concepts of the shamanic *gut*, such as *mudang* / *mansin* / *paksu*. Then I continue to present some of the important spirits that are commonly invited to appear in the ritual. In the second section, I provide an outline of certain parts, *gori*, of the Dodang event, while emphasizing their ritual, performative and theatrical aspects, i.e. focusing on what the ritual actually does through the medium of music, singing and dancing. In the third section, I offer some interpretive

perspectives on rituals which I refer to as *events*, and elaborate on the instability of this concept and its discursive transgressions through “empty spaces” between ritual, performance and theatre by using the concepts of Deadly, Rough and Holy as proposed by Peter Brook in his work “The Empty Space”.

The reason I have chosen this structure lies in the initial question of whether there are magic elements in the *gut* and how the chosen structure shapes the understanding of the meaning of ritual. I would contend that depending on the intention of the ritual performance (which refers to the meaning attached to the ritual event), one and the same ritual procedure creates different events – theatrical, performative or ritualizing ones – which allow different characterizations of the ritual and may or may not lead to its transformations.

## I

*Gut* is the Korean term for shamanic ritual. Depending on the context, ritual in Confucianism is referred to as *jerye/jesa* and in Buddhism as *euisik/jae*. *Gut* can be performed as a seasonal ritual on certain fixed dates of the lunar calendar as is the case with the *Dodang* ritual, or it is performed according to the various needs of people who are requesting the ritual, e.g. in an unexpected life crisis. Apart from this, *gut* is always about establishing a relationship between people and their natural environment, while its performance can be acted out in various places. The performance of the *Dodang* ritual, for example, begins in front of an altar under a tree in an open space, and subsequently all of the participants start walking around the whole area in a procession. Depending on its intention and the needs of those who order the ritual, *guts* can be performed on a small or large scale. In a big *gut*, it is more than one *mudang* that participates, while musicians accompany them on their journeys to the world of spirits. Usually *mudangs* are specialized in one particular part (*gori*) of the ritual because the performance of each one of them requires exceptionally high skills. Traditionally, a *gut* used to go on for several days and nights, therefore more than one *mudang* was needed. Today, the duration of a *gut* is reduced to one day and is not performed at night-time at all.

The shaman – *mudang* or *mansin* in the case of a female, and *paksu* or *mugyeok* in case of a male – is not solely responsible for the performance; equally important are the spirits and clients. To become a shaman in Korea, it is necessary to receive a calling from the spirits, which is manifested through various changes in the behaviour of the shaman-to-be. Koreans call it *sinbyeong* ‘illness of the spirits’. When spirits unexpectedly take hold of someone, the person is urged to convey messages from them, to divine and accept them as their guardians. The *sinbyeong* can only be “cured” through an initiation ritual (*naerim gut*), after which the symptoms of the *sinbyeong* and the disease itself will disappear.

The possessed shaman performs the *gut* as a synergic interaction between gods/spirits, ancestors, and audience. The most important part of it is proclaiming it as *sasil* ‘truthful’, which means proving the ritual is effective and accepted by the spirits. If this purpose is accomplished, the ritual fulfils its pragmatics. *Sasil* was not performed during the *Dodang* event.

Another very important concept for understanding *gut* is referring to *dangol* ‘clients, which are ordering the ritual’, since the *mudang* can only act on behalf of others. As a mediator between spirits and clients, *mudang* shapes and guides the communication between them and their worlds, one visible and the other invisible.

Gods/spirits are, apart from the spirits of nature, mostly the deceased ancestors of the clients. They can be dissatisfied for various reasons, thus causing their descendants troubles from the realm of “beyond” and demanding proper treatment in order to be able to rest in peace. The gesture of reciprocity is manifested after a successful ritual, when good luck is sent from them to the client and their family. Apart from these ancestral spirits, there are other spirits which inevitably appear in a *gut*. I will mention some of those relevant for the *Dodanggut*: One is *Sansin* – the spirit of the mountain. *Sansin*’s iconographic representations on the *taenghwa* paintings depict him as an old man holding a fan, with a tiger by his side. He is the guardian spirit of the mountain and mediates between men and the mountainous environment. According to The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty *Dodangje* was initially performed as a prayer of supplication to the *Sansin* for protection from being devoured by tigers. Spirits of Generals and *Daegam* are also powerful spirits,

while their *goris* are highly performative and magical in terms of possession as well as the oracles provided by them.

## II

*Dodang* ritual is held every third day of the third lunar month. Its theatrical décor consists of traditional altar arrangements in a spatial scenery which narrates stories about the nature of the invited spirits, the shaman's own protective spirits, their food preferences and ways to satisfy their needs. Early in the morning, the event begins with a *Samgaksanje* or *jerye* to greet the ancestors and offer them wine and food. It is quite unusual to observe a Confucianist rite before the performance of a *gut*. The reason for this double *mise-en-scène* is based on historical facts which, according to the aforementioned *Jeoson* Annals, show that the original *Dodang* ritual was a State ritual performed by Confucianist officials and was later forbidden during the period of the Japanese colonization. Current sponsor and organizer of the *Dodang* event, Cha Seung Hyeon, is also the founder and chairman of the association which aims to re-establish the original form of the ritual. The first part, which took place early in the morning, was a *Samgaksan dodangje* and was reconstructed following the old texts; it was meant as an evocation of its original form that was performed as a State ritual in *Joseon*. Its 21 *gori* are performed by two *mudangs* and some helpers, *gidae*. As far as the ritual is concerned, the most exciting performance and theatrical part of the *Dodang* event is the one incorporating the spirit of the General, *Jangun*, and his rite of *jakdu*, which consists of the shaman dancing on double blades, bound together and placed on a box containing uncooked rice on top of a clay jar filled with water. This is a kind of ritual culmination as this *gori* contains the most dangerous moments in which the shaman could potentially get hurt, although during the *Dodang* event, *jakdu* was performed in a somewhat simplified form. Before climbing on the *jakdu* knives, the *mudang* slowly enters an altered state of consciousness, while the helpers play drums or pray. When feeling ready, the *mudang* climbs on top of the knives and dances on the sharp blades. Then she divines using the flags of the divine generals, *Sinjang*, while waving the *obangsinqjanggi* in the air. These are five banners of five different colours, each symbolizing a different aspect of human good



Figure 1. *Dodangje*. *Ui-dong*, Seoul.  
March, 2014. Photo by S. Zoric.

or bad luck which will affect a person's life according to the flag they choose during the divination. Black colour symbolizes death but has been replaced by a green one in recent times, in order to diminish the imagination of deadly consequences associated with this colour. Yellow represents unsatisfied ancestors who demand more prayers and ritual engagements of their descendants. Blue is the colour of anxiety and worries. White indicates connections with heavenly gods. The most auspicious colour is red, as it brings the greatest of luck. *Daegam* brings about the resolution of divining tensions. This spirit is responsible for household, business and material welfare. During this part, people from the audience are allowed to enter the ritual space, put on the *Daegam* robe and invite the spirit to take possession of their bodies. What follows is frantic dancing by the participants and general exhilaration caused by a good deal of obscene and lascivious remarks of the spirits aimed at their descendants.

## III

Looking for auxiliary interpretive devices, which go beyond the observed parts of the ritual event, as well as grounds for contextualization, I found out that this ritual had actually sunk into oblivion at the beginning of the 20th century and had been replaced by the shamanic *gut*, but was ultimately put back on stage recently due to the interest of the local community in keeping it alive. Furthermore, it was obvious that the usual relationship which is essential for the *gut* – i.e. the relationship between *mudang* and her clients who order the ritual – was missing, while the audience consisted of enthusiasts who are anxious to keep cultural memory alive as well as of people who came to the *gut* just for the sake of entertainment. Through the speech of the organizer I came to know that *Samgaksan dodangje* and *Samgaksan dodanggut* have also become an item of Intangible Cultural Treasure (no. 42) of the city of Seoul.



Figure 2. *Dodanggut*. *Ui-dong*, Seoul.  
March, 2014. Photo by S. Zoric.

How then is this *Dodang* event to be defined, characterized and interpreted at all? I would argue that there is no fixed and unambiguous definition of the *Dodang* event. To approach it as a multi-layered permeation of ritualizing, performing and using theatrical elements, I will follow Brook's idea of empty space as applied by him to theatre, and reconceptualise it by thinking further in the discourse about ritual, showing its performative and theatrical metamorphosis. This means that the data I collected on *Dodangje* and *Dodanggut* in the field open up room for reflections about its nature "between" ritual, performance and theatre. Following Brooke's description of the nature of theatre, this slippery area of "in-between" is described, as mentioned above, with concepts of Deadly, Rough and Holy. Their meanings are to be taken metaphorically, as they cannot be transferred to the *Dodang* event exactly as they were conceptualized in "The Empty Space". Rather, we shall examine how they can be appropriated and applied when explaining and understanding *Dodang* practices and their meanings. Brooke emphasizes that in the nature of empty space lies the ability to relate the visible world to the invisible. In *gut*, all spaces are full, so by 'empty space' I refer to the door between two worlds, the visible and the invisible, which is open only for duration of the ritual. And it is only during this limited time that participants/spectators can immerse themselves in the wholeness of Space (visible and invisible space) and – united in this communicative and interactive encountering event – play with gods/spirits who are channelled by the shaman's divination, *kongsu*, and narrate cultural stories or transmit transcendental truths through him or her. What is experienced in this openness is real for each and every participant – the same is true for gods, shamans and clients alike. Empty space between them manifests the invisible in various ways: in the shamanic visual images and thereafter articulated imagination in the words of spirits, and in the inter-playing, *nolda*, of audience with spirits and shamans respectively. However, empty space may also be potentially deadly because the open door between these worlds creates a space filled with danger. This atmosphere can be sensed during the shaman's dance on the *jakdu* knives which can seriously harm the *mudang* if spirits consider the performance of the *gut* as insincere. Brook is also very much aware of the dimension of the Holy and considers it unavoidable in theatrical acting. Shamans do the same, claiming to

be able to establish a relationship with this sacral world. Nevertheless, in theatrical acting of *gut*, the sacredness is not necessarily always present. The difference between theatrical and ritual sacredness in *gut* in rehearsing and learning processes of “twice-behaved behaviour” is that the first is a free choice of the individual, while the other is a forced, constrained and inevitable commitment to serving the spirits. The dimension of Rough manifests itself through the motivations and intentions of the *gut*, but also through the usage of low and vulgar type of language which breaks the boundaries of etiquette of prescribed Confucianist social communication.

#### IV

Ultimately, what is the *Dodang* event? For the sake of argument in this paper I called it an event, as each other concept ascribed to *Dodangje* and *Dodanggut*, such as ritual, performance or theatre would reduce its multitasking nature. I used “empty space” as a metaphor for the point of intersection where this “event-ness” could be realized.

*Dodang* event started as *Dodangje*, a State ritual prescribed in *Joseon* books and performed by Confucianist officials, not just as a symbolic acting out but also as an invocation of the Mountain Spirit for help. After the ritual had been banned during the Japanese colonization, it was then transferred into the shamanic context, and *Dodangje* transformed into *Dodanggut*. In this form it lived a second life and succeeded in surviving on the cultural margins in secret places hidden not only from the eyes of Japanese officials, but also of officials of the subsequent Korean military dictatorship, which oppressed all practices of shamanic ritual expressions because they were regarded as primitive and backward, thus, in their view, hindering the modernization process in Korean society. However, the performances of the ritual could not be prevented during these hard times. As performativity in the text was understood in terms of somatic/corporeal practices connected with transforming potentials, shamanic ritual discussed here as an event of communication between spirits, shamans and clients/audience doubtlessly fulfilled this function, albeit in secrecy. After the 1970's, while searching for unique characteristics of their national identity, Koreans returned to their shamanic roots, which they now considered to be representa-

tive, and started to look for the “original” meaning of *Dodangje* and *Dodanggut*, changing its nature twofold: 1) introducing Confucianist parts into the event, 2) performing the ritual not only for clients but for independent audiences as well.

Currently a third transformation of both *Dodangje* and *Dodanggut* is being discussed. The aim is to make them attractive for tourists, which disconnected/uncoupled from the Korean cultural context and self-understandable manifested meaning of the event for Koreans means that tourists engage with it in a very different way. The tourists are supposed to become familiar with the event in the form of an aesthetic and quasi-theatrical product, staged to allow an enjoyable encounter with one unique aspect of Korean culture. The question that arises with this third coming to life of *Dodangje* is whether it will remain a living part of Korean tradition or become cultural heritage as a “deadly theatre”, as Brook called it. *Dodangje* is not a *Joseon* ritual anymore; *Dodanggut* is not only a shamanic *gut* because it can be performed in an “as if” mode without the magic elements of divinations for clients, but it has also not yet transformed into a fixed theatrical form of a cultural heritage item.

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## **“The Earth’s Unseen Powers of Growth Need to be Nourished”<sup>1</sup> – on Images of Seasonal Pagan Rituals in Popular Culture**

**Abstract.** The changing of the seasons is linked to the cycle of vegetation that can be enhanced by magical means. This nexus was popularised by Frazer’s “The Golden Bough” whose influence can be traced in many fields. The last 60 years have seen an increasing interest in and growth of the neo-pagan movement. Ever since the 1973 British film “The Wicker Man”, the notion that (neo)-pagan rituals are centred on human sacrifice to enhance fertility has become widespread in popular culture. One recent example is “The Stonehenge Legacy” by Sam Christer – a conspiracy theory dealing with the survival of a pre-Christian cult where human sacrifice plays a central role, thus emphasizing the need for the earth to receive nourishment in order to continue in the eternal cycle of the rhythm of the seasons.

**Key words:** neo-Paganism, popular literature

The changing of the seasons in the course of the year is linked to the cycle of vegetation that can be enhanced by magical means to further the fertility of land, crops, beasts and men. Culmination points of the ritual year are formed by the solstices that are signalled as important festival dates.

The nexus of seasons and fertility was heavily popularised by “The Golden Bough” of Sir James George Frazer (1854–1941), the first edition of which appeared in 1890. “The Golden Bough” has to be considered a seminal book of the 20th century whose influence can be traced in many fields (Vickery 1973: 3, Brown 2010: 7).

The last 60 years have seen an increasing interest in and growth of the neo-pagan movement. Neo-paganism often understands itself as a religion of nature with possible pre-Christian roots. Popular culture quite frequently offers an unsympathetic treatment of such neo-pagan or pagan groups and presents their practices as

dangerous. One important source for this interpretation of (neo)-paganism is the British cult/horror-film "The Wicker Man" (1973). The popularity of this movie led to a US-American remake of the same name and a sequel "The Wicker Tree" after the millennium.

It is noteworthy, however, that since this 1973 British film the notion that pagan or neo-pagan rituals are centred on human sacrifice to enhance the fertility of the land has become more widespread in popular culture and can be found in a variety of films, books and music.

The first part of this paper will outline the origins of this notion. The second part will focus on the book "The Stonehenge Legacy" (2011) by Sam Christer that follows this route closely.

### Influences

Frazer sees the rhythm of the growth, death and rebirth of vegetation as embodied in the notion that gods and goddesses – with priests, priestesses and kings as their representatives – symbolize the cycle of birth and death. Gods and spirits of vegetation are therefore imagined as mortal. For him, this realisation presents the starting point and centre of every religion.

His vision was deeply influenced by the work of the folklorist Wilhelm Mannhardt (1831–1880) among others. In "Wald- und Feldkulte" (1875/77), Mannhardt interpreted many of the peasant customs of the 1860s as expressions of pre-Christian cults of vegetation that were later on fought by Christianity and driven underground. Mannhardt wrote about the great influence of Jacob Grimm's "Deutsche Mythologie" (1835) for his understanding of popular or folk customs as remnants of the pagan past (Mannhardt 1905 (1877): VI). He specifically saw harvest customs as central sources for the interpretation of the customs and mythology of pagan times. In order to tap into these sources, he developed one of the first folkloristic questionnaires and sent out 100,000 copies. In the 1960s, the folklorist Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann (1918–1993) was able to demonstrate in relation to Mannhardt's material that the facts or customs seen as evidence for the pagan past were rather an expression of technical and social changes in the agriculture of the

mid-19th century (Weber-Kellermann 1965: 287–290, Kippenberg 1997: 120–128, Ackerman 2002 (1991): 48).

Mannhardt understood the frequent appearance of bonfires in agricultural customs as an attempt to capture the regenerative forces of the sun. He was thus an advocate of the solar mythology that originated in the 1850s with Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900) and quickly gained popularity (Koven 2007: 273f.). This interpretation of bonfires can also be found in “The Golden Bough” where their symbolism is quite central to the argument. In the first edition, Frazer understood them, like Mannhardt, as an attempt to capture the regenerative forces of the sun, but in later editions he began favouring the interpretation that these customs are purifying in character; they are either intended to ward off evil or they are reconciling both approaches: “In this way we might conclude that, while the imitation of sunshine in these ceremonies was primary and original, the purification attributed to them was secondary and derivative.” (Frazer 1993 (1922): 642f.).

Fast forward to the year 1973 and the film “The Wicker Man”. The film is considered a horror film, although it belongs to a special subgenre: folk horror. Folk horror can be described as a mixture of folklore and paganism – the menacing forces predating Christianity (<http://www.folkhorror.com/> 5.9.2014).

The film is set on a lonely Scottish island called Summerisle where, in the mid-19th century, a pagan religion inspired by the Celts was reinstated. A policeman, Sergeant Howie, comes to Summerisle in search of a missing girl. Howie is presented as a rather unlikeable character – he is shown as an uptight, rigid Christian who has to deal with the, in his view, degenerate practices of an isolated community; whose customs contain elements of “traditional” folklore and elements of the contemporary hippy counterculture. Hence, what the film is showing is a “disturbed vision of British folk culture” (Newland 2008: 119).

The film portrays a clash of belief systems and values with Howie ending as a sacrifice for the goddess Nuada to be burnt in the “wicker man” of the film’s title to guarantee the fertility of the island and its inhabitants. This case is a reminiscence of the double character of bonfires as understood by Frazer. The film shows the burning of

the wicker figure as an attempt to capture the regenerative forces of the sun, but it is also cleansing in as much as Howie, with his rather rigid Christian views, is a disturbing element on the island. One could even go as far as to say that he is to blame for his own end because he was not able to cope with the community and their differing moral and ethical codes.

Although the film is based on the horror book “Ritual” (1967) by David Pinner (b. 1940), the most important source for the reconstruction of the pagan religion is Frazer’s “The Golden Bough”. The director Robin Hardy (b. 1929) and the scriptwriter Anthony Shaffer (1926–2001) were persuaded that they could trust Frazer to reconstruct a pagan Celtic past. Following Frazer and stating that Lord Summerisle founded the new or old religion in the mid-19th century, they are not reconstructing pagan ways but a Victorian vision of the distant past and its religion, interspersed with contemporary countercultural elements. By referring to the legend of the wicker man they are lending credit to a Roman view of the Celts. Caesar reported this custom in “*De Bello Gallico*”, in which he tried to justify his war campaigns in today’s France against the Celts. Not only Caesar but also many writers and historiographers of Antiquity portrayed the Celts and their priests – the druids – as indulging in bloodthirsty rites, including human sacrifice. These reports must not be taken at face value, but should rather be understood as attempts at “othering” different cultures (Koven 2007: 270–273).

The rediscovery of the past in the early modern age and beyond led to a new popularity of Celtic culture and the druids. Two different modes of reception of the Celts were common. Either they were considered bloodthirsty barbarians or nature-loving wise men.

### **“The Stonehenge Legacy”**

“The Stonehenge Legacy” (2011) contains all the elements mentioned above. It is the first thriller by Sam Christer. The dust jacket hails it as “perfect for fans of Dan Brown”. Unsurprisingly, his book contains some similarity to Dan Brown’s “The Da Vinci Code” (2004) – it is a conspiracy theory dealing with the survival of pagan wisdom. At its centre is a mental and physical pursuit or chase, with the main character sporting the name of Gideon Chase.

The ancient wisdom is kept by the secretly surviving society of the builders of Stonehenge – called the “Sacreds” – who demand human sacrifices at the summer and winter solstices as the only way to guarantee the fertility of land, crops and inhabitants: “Farmers since time began have learned this primary lesson. The crop we see depends on what we cannot see. [...] The ancients knew – and their children know – the earth’s unseen powers of growth need to be nourished. They need blood meal, the richness of bone, the coolness of the grave. Scientists say blood on soil provides vital nitrogen, but it obliges with much more than just chemicals. Blood contains something else. Soul. And the more the soil has, the more it wants” (Christer 2011: 141).

The book and its invented cult of the builders of Stonehenge emphasize the need of nature to receive nourishment to continue in the rhythm of the seasons. We meet two central elements of (neo)-pagan external perception: Firstly, the notion that (neo)-paganism and its ritual practice are centred on human sacrifice is common. Secondly, Stonehenge is considered an impressive witness of ancient wisdom. This interpretation is furthered by the lack of certainty about its precise use.

“The Stonehenge Legacy” presents Stonehenge as a magnet for all kinds of people. As the summer solstice is nearing, people are flocking to Stonehenge: “The air buzzes with excitement. White-robed druids rehearse their prayers. Bare-chested pagan men dance with pensioners in anoraks and hippy women with beads and flowers in their hair” (Christer 2011: 230).

Their excitement is harmless; they gather to celebrate nature and be part of a large like-minded community. The purpose of the brotherhood of the “Sacreds” is quite different. They are preparing their next sacrifice: “In the centre of the megalithic portal a bonfire flickers in the darkness [...], illuminating the Henge Master as he raises his hands. ‘Great gods, I feel your eternal presence. Earth Mother most eternal, Sky Father most supreme, we gather in your adoration and dutifully kneel in your presence. [...] We thank you, all you great gods who look over us and bless us. In respect to you and the ways of the ancients, we dedicate this sacrifice.’ [...] The bearers begin their final journey, out through the giant stone

archways towards the sacrificial point that lies on the line of the solstice. The Slaughter Stone” (Christer 2011: 5).

The Slaughter Stone – originally upright – is now lying at the entrance of Stonehenge. In 1799 Edward King proposed in *Monumenta Antiqua* that its original purpose was to serve as a place of human sacrifice, thus introducing a long-lasting notion (Hutton 2009: 229). The knowledge that the megaliths and the Celts are separated by several thousand years was scientifically established around 1900, but the notion that the Celts built the megalithic monuments or at least worshipped there still has a compelling hold on the popular imagination (Hutton 2008: 254).

The brotherhood of the “Sacreds” is the pure invention of Sam Christer. It contains some peculiarities that set it apart from most contemporary neo-paganism: It is open only to men. In this, it has some similarities to older new druidic orders in Freemasonry.

In the brotherhood, there was an argument about how to respect the ancient ways and who should serve as human sacrifice. This dispute ultimately helps to stop the unholy dealings of the brotherhood. As the Henge Master explains to Gideon Chase: “Your father [...] believed that the unalterable doctrine of the Craft was that those who received the gifts of the Sacreds were the chosen ones, the ones who should be sacrificed. [...] The Inner Circle disagreed. They believed that this ancient practice needed to evolve. That the Sacreds should pick their own sacrifices” (Christer 2011: 287).

The new custom to let the stones of Stonehenge choose the victims – people who touch them – is shown as a sign of perversion because the leaders are no longer willing to pay the price for the thriving of the brotherhood and nature. There are other signs that reveal the brotherhood as dangerous. It has its branches in all classes of society; it has even infiltrated the police to prevent any questions concerning missing persons. Society’s infiltration by a secret brotherhood is an important element of many conspiracy theories.

The whole affair can be stopped when the former Henge Master – Gideon Chase’s father – kills himself, probably as a sacrifice to the “Sacreds”, and leaves his son clues to enable him to bring the brotherhood to an end. Besides they have overestimated their power with their latest victim, the daughter of the American vice-president who

puts all his might into the search for her. Gideon Chase is able to decipher his father's secret notes and can infiltrate the brotherhood. So he can stop the sacrifice in the nick of time and the brotherhood and its unholy dealings are stopped for good.

### Conclusion

There are resemblances between "The Wicker Man" and the thriller "The Stonehenge Legacy". Both emphasize the need for human sacrifice in order to guarantee the thriving of nature, animals and humans.

The film "The Wicker Man" is most often labelled a horror film, though it is of a special subgenre – folk horror. As has been shown Frazer's "The Golden Bough" is one of the important sources for the portrayal of the old or new religion of Summerisle, thus presenting a 19th-century vision of pagan religion as centred on perpetuating the eternal cycle of the fertility of land, crops, beasts and men.

The thriller "The Stonehenge Legacy" employs this notion to tell a bloodthirsty tale of a secretly surviving society celebrating human sacrifices since the time of the creation of Stonehenge. I am persuaded that we have here a reflection of Frazer and his thoughts, although I tend to see his influence in this case as more oblique and indirect. Christer probably is more indebted to "The Wicker Man" and similar products of popular culture than to "The Golden Bough." Nevertheless the book is a witness to a trend that can be found in many other books and films of the last 20 or 30 years.

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<sup>1</sup> Christer 2011: 141.

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## **Magic as practised by the Brotherhood of Wolves (Czech Republic)**

**Abstract.** The *Wolves*, members of the Brotherhood of Wolves, a unique group of Czech pagan practitioners, practise magic in two distinct contexts. One context is the situation of a problem arising in the life of a member, friend or client. This problem needs to be solved and the magical ritual is believed to complement effectively the struggle for solution on the ordinary (non-magical) level. The second context is that of seasonal rituals, celebrating but to some degree also ensuring that the change of the seasons takes place. The goal of the text is to demonstrate the understanding of magic within the group, present the variety of its forms, outline its role in the ritual practice and discuss its connection with religion.

**Key words:** Brotherhood of Wolves, magic, primitivism, shamanism, mystery drama

Magic as practised by the Brotherhood of Wolves, a unique group of Czech pagan practitioners, is eclectic as it follows the changing needs not only of the group but also of its individual members. Following the ideas of Lila Abu-Lughod (1991) and her concept of 'ethnography of the particular', my aim is not to present the group and their magical activities as fully developed and fixed, which they are not, but rather as a magical tradition in the making. The group presents itself as shamanistic in nature but searching for the unique form of shamanism. Due to the fact that in reality the group is not as homogenous as it looks from the outside and that there are many contradictions between the members about how things should and should not be done, even their magical practices are and perhaps will be 'under construction'.

The Brotherhood of Wolves is a group small in size but rich in history. Officially it was established in 1998 but its origins fall into the 80s of the 20th century, when the originators of the cult were drawn to the skinhead movement and the Czech nationalist scene of that time. Attracted by the romantic ideals but missing

the spiritual component, the Wolves-to-be discovered Ásatrú<sup>1</sup>, then well established in the USA and began practising rituals in Ásatrú style. Later these early practitioners came to the conclusion that the most appealing being in the Eddas was not Odin or Thor but Fenris, the monstrous wolf<sup>2</sup> and the group moved from practising an established tradition to creating something new and called it Wolf mysteries. When the first Czechoslovakian Wolfdogs came into the cult in 2008 and two years after that the first children were born everything “became more real”<sup>3</sup> and the Brotherhood of Wolves acquired a more concrete form.

The *Wolves* practise magic in two distinct, though overlapping, contexts. One context is the situation of a problem arising in the life of one or more members. This problem needs to be solved and the magical ritual is believed to complement effectively the struggle for solution on the ordinary (non-magical) level. The second context is that of seasonal rituals, the sole goal of which seems to be celebration connected with the particular phase of the ritual year.

The first noticeable thing is that the Wolves do not speak about magic much, especially in comparison with other pagan practitioners (e.g. Wiccans or eclectic witches). Second, the purposes of these two kinds of rituals differ only at first sight – one is practical, the other celebratory. After several years of research I realized that this distinction is purely artificial and does not make much sense in the context of the Brotherhood’s magical practice. I stopped seeing a conceptual boundary, for example, between the following problems: making sure that one of the human *Wolves* recovers successfully from a divorce and making sure that the sun will rise tomorrow. Both are important matters and need to be taken care of. Third, magic (in the sense of the formula “I do”) and religion (in the sense of the formula “I pray”) merge in the Brotherhood’s practice. The Wolf priest is also a magician and that is true in all contexts. The Wolf shaman is also a sorcerer. The *Wolves* both *ask* gods for help and *do* things to help themselves. For the purpose of the present text I have selected three examples of pragmatic magic and three examples of magic as part of celebratory ritual.

## Pragmatic magic

Pragmatic magic<sup>4</sup> is used when somebody is in trouble or in need. To solve the problem, multiple sources of inspiration are used. These are usually consistent with regular shamanic work (shamanic healing) or Nordic religion (Blót) or else are things that just come in handy and fit the problem.

### 1. Shamanic healing

In preparation for the shamanic healing the shaman dresses in the full shamanic gear and sets up the altar in his place which is decorated with a variety of objects: the figure of Hildegard von Bingen, as she is connected with folk wisdom and the knowledge of herbs, skulls of animals<sup>5</sup> that the shaman knew when they were alive, as they will also participate (as helpers) in the ritual, an antler, photos of forest animals, the vial with the oil called Miro, a present from a friend living in an Romanian monastery, a stone and candles. Living dogs also participate and their behaviour is monitored – they might or might not interact with the client, e.g. when a young dog touches or rests his head on the client's body, it is taken as a sign that the dog might be ritually “sensitive” and even useful.

The ritual begins with drumming and invocation of Wotan. When I asked what roles in the ritual are played by the deity and by the shaman himself, I got this answer:

*The act of power in accordance with one's will is greater than an act of power from the will of the other – then it is an act of power of the slave. However, a voluntary act of power in accordance with the will of someone more powerful lends us part of his power. I prefer using the method of being the tool in the hands of the powerful one when I do healing. People often do not know what they should know when they come for healing and I don't want to step into their lives as a master of their soul. I am the mediator of their meeting with the real power being. Nevertheless, sometimes it is necessary to do the work by myself and on my own behalf, to express the will.<sup>6</sup>*

The invocation is followed by cleansing with the smoke of burning local herbs. Next the shaman prepares a drink to honour Wotan

in an ancient-looking animal horn. Before the participants drink the shaman plunges a knife into the drink and anoints the animal skulls with it, plunges again and repeats the process until he is satisfied. Then they drink.<sup>7</sup> Afterwards the shamanic journey begins. The patient had already been told that he would be taken to the magical island Bujan, a Slavic mythical island of eternal life, where (s)he will recover or find answers to the problem. Then the drumming continues supplemented by singing and animal sounds.

After the ritual has ended, the shaman and the client reflect on their experience of the journey. As I was told by the shaman, sometimes they get stuck in the middle when a hostile entity appears and stands in the way; sometimes they have to fight when the patient has enemies in the astral zone. Sometimes the journey is slow with nothing much happening; at other times it is a 'wild ride'. The healing is sometimes considered successful, sometimes unsuccessful; sometimes a strategy to obtain the solution is offered and communication between the shaman and client may continue to see whether the ritual brought some changes into the client's life.

## 2. Fenris Blót

When a member was unable to get over a divorce from another member, his Wolf brothers and sisters decided to help him recover by performing Fenris Blót for him. The intention of the ritual was to induce a change in his personality, which was understood as too rigid, as confirmed also by himself: "I am not very spontaneous, I cannot go wild and rave"<sup>8</sup>. This stiffness (considered a problem also in the ritual) was seen as connected with his obsession with only one woman and being closed to other options. The ritual was deemed successful as the question he asked himself before: "Am I good enough for her?" changed into "Is she good enough for me? I suffered until then but everything turned around after the ritual"<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, his confidence and success with other women for some time after the ritual was noticeable.

The semi-structured ritual was preceded by an instruction from the shaman to the man in question to bring a precious offering. The ritual began with drumming while the shaman gave instructions no one clearly remembered afterwards; to take away his clothes

(the ritual took place in January and it was freezing) and encounter the elements; to wash in the lake; to roast himself at the fire, while drinking considerable amount of whisky brought as an offering. The ‘patient’ remembers dancing wildly round the fire and then there is a blank. Apart from considering the ritual successful from the profane perspective (gaining confidence and getting rid of the obsession) it was also considered from the mythical perspective: “Fenris chewed me up and spat me out”.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. Voodoo

The reader might be surprised as much as I was when I discovered a half-burnt voodoo doll hanging on the tree in the garden. What is the story attached? When moving to the present location, the leader of the group and his wife got into financial arguments with the owner of the original house. Apart from contacting the lawyer they made a doll and stuck pins into it in a simple ritual. The intention was not to kill the person, only to stop him from doing harm. This magical technique was combined with asking local entities and Wotan for help.

Naturally I asked: “But you are *Wolves*, why voodoo?” The shaman replied: “Well, our ancestors, the hunters, created figurines of animals and shot at them to bring the desired effect into existence in reality.” So he actually pointed at the similarities with hunting magic.

## **Magical aspects of the seasonal ritual**

### 1. Cleansing

The Wolves usually open their ritual by cleansing with a fir branch on the way to the ritual place in the middle of the forest. It is a habit they found documented in the book about the traditional religion of the Laplanders<sup>11</sup> and its purpose is to get rid of the smell of civilization and become part of the forest which makes very good sense in the ritual practice of the Brotherhood and also corresponds with what on another occasion I was told by a female member of the cult:

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*We believe in other worlds but we don't argue about where they are. When we walk through the forest in an altered state of consciousness, the forest is the other world.*<sup>12</sup>

The place where the cleansing is performed therefore symbolically marks the boundary between the two worlds and at the same time it magically serves as a passage through the gate from one to the other.

## 2. Songs, statements and sounds

Songs in the Czech and Gothic languages serve the purpose of identification of the members of the cult with wolves and strengthen the group solidarity and the unity of the clan. The key song sung repeatedly in the ritual is called *Ik im wulfs* (I am wolf) and it is a kind of prayer to the Great Wolf:

*Ik im wulfs in riquiza  
Ik im wulfs in liuhada  
This hvaruh sokja  
This hvaruh rinna  
Thar swe ist swa skal wisan  
Du thamma raihtis ufarwulfs  
Bairgai uns.*<sup>13</sup>

The song can be translated as follows: "I am wolf, we are wolves, wherever we are, we are under the protection of the wolf gods." The identification with the wolf is strengthened even more by other things, one of them being the commands given by the priest at various points in the ritual, e.g. "Follow the great Wolf" or "Become the wolf" which even acquire additional power through the way in which these commands are given; they are not merely recited but are accompanied by the phatic cries and gestures of the priest. The participating members confirm their wolf identity and belonging to the clan by howling. Apart from creating a strong group spirit, the active ritual elements – drumming, singing, dancing, phatic cries, howling – serve the ultimate goal of attaining the desired altered state of consciousness.

Needless to say, the identity of the *Wolf* may penetrate into the lives outside the ritual. On various occasions when chatting with the leader and confessing my troubles in daily life I was encouraged by him: "Don't get defeated, be the gray wolf beast".<sup>14</sup>

### 3. Mystery drama

Unlike with rituals of pagan groups where mystery drama takes on symbolic form, the *Wolves* tend to do things “for real” – all rituals take place in the forest regardless of the weather and when the mystery requires the mythical being to spend the night in a cave, then this is done in actuality. When fertility is to be celebrated then a couple retires to the cave to perform what needs to be performed – in actuality. Yet the magic does not lie merely in the outer form of the performance. As I was told by the leader:

*Magic happens in case the actors become or want to become / or become possessed by gods. They become for the moment shells through which the Gods speak and act like in the times of mythical events.<sup>15</sup>*

When discussing the problem in person the leader of the *Wolves* complained that sometimes people misunderstand and go in search of Peter.<sup>16</sup> “But we went in search of the God!”<sup>17</sup>

As an example of the mystery drama I would like to mention the Green Man ritual at the springtime ritual (Ostara). One of the members clad in spruce tree branches and painted green spent the night in the small cave near the farm and in the afternoon he was called out and asked to bless the spring and thus bring about the successful renewal of nature after winter.

Was this only a game? A symbolic expression of what happens anyway? Is ritual magic to ensure the sun will rise or nature awaken at spring, in the form of ritualized prayer combined with an offering or mystery drama, mere folklore, performative remembrance of what was done by our ancestors, who did not know as much as we do now? I asked the WHY – why do you do it when we *know* that the sun will rise tomorrow? The priest replied: “We don’t know. We don’t know what will happen tomorrow. You are here now and in a while you can be gone, you can die.”<sup>18</sup>

The shaman reacted similarly: “Of course we don’t know, you might not wake up tomorrow, perhaps we only say to each other that we will, so that we are not scared...”<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusion

Unlike with magicians and witches, when the participant observer cannot make a mistake about when magic is done – there might be *magic making* part in the ritual or they meet to *do magic*, to *do the work* (a new term for magical operation) and an adept is trained in *magical techniques*, learns to use *magical tools*... To put it simply, I knew what magic was. The *Wolves* unclarified the phenomenon for me. The rituals of the Brotherhood of Wolves are very loosely organized, the ritual speech contains some set formulas, e.g. “you spirits and entities of this place, harken to us... I consecrate this place and banish all that’s evil...” which is a clear bit of magic, but these are combined with spontaneous words of the priest usually associated with the season, e.g. “the leaves turn golden” as well as phatic cries, singing and howling. What seems to be magic making looks more like prayer: “let there always be plenty of flowers that the butterflies have something to fly around...” Yet this is also an act of power, magic making. The *Wolves* are rational beings knowing very well that these things happen naturally and will happen without their assistance. Yet, the flow of time, changes of seasons, renewal of nature, birth and dying, are still understood as mysteries. The *Wolves* wish to enter and participate in these mysteries.

When I tried to get to the bottom of this as-if-concealed magic I started to ask direct questions about what magic was. Not even once did I get an answer close to the well known Crowleyan definition understanding magic as the science of causing change to occur in conformity with will, so beloved by the contemporary Witches. Instead, after some thinking, the *Wolves* wrote to me:

*Magic is contained in everything, present in everything you do.  
You live in the supernatural world, you believe in everything  
that might happen... It is good to gain the favour of the Gods...  
Magic is not separated... Magic is everywhere around us and  
I am in awe even when I fall into the grass and open my eyes.  
The old small gods deserve something from our inner power  
as they have been starving for centuries.<sup>20</sup>*

To conclude, I would emphasise three of my findings. First, the *Wolves*’ magic merges with religion; in other words, magic making is always connected with communication and relationship with the

gods. Second, although the Wolves rarely speak about doing magic, they do it. Third, it is possible that they use the word *magic* rarely because they do not understand it as a phenomenon to be clearly defined and thus cut out the reality.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> A pagan reconstructionist movement based on Old Norse religion.

<sup>2</sup> ...son of Loki, who grew too fast, was bound but not killed and according to the prophecy killed Odin, swallowed the sun and finally was killed at Ragnarök.

<sup>3</sup> Leader and priest of the Brotherhood of Wolves, 16th November, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Not an insider term.

<sup>5</sup> Mainly dogs but also a cat and a pig. One of the skulls belongs to the dog I knew well also as the dog fur the patients lie on.

<sup>6</sup> The shaman, sms conversation 17th August 2014.

<sup>7</sup> On a more personal note, this is a tough moment for the anthropologist as not drinking is out of the question. The solution I use is temporary suspension of hygienic persuasions, and belief that in that moment magic is more powerful than bacteria.

<sup>8</sup> Male member, 14th February 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Male member, 14th February 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Male member, 14th February 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Václav Marek, Staré laponské náboženství, Pavel Mervart 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Female member, 14th November 2012.

<sup>13</sup> <http://carpathiana.wz.cz/modlitby.html>

<sup>14</sup> Leader and priest, sms 17th May 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Leader and priest, sms 22nd September, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Fictitious name of a member of the Brotherhood.

<sup>17</sup> Leader and priest, 5th July, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Leader and priest, 3rd September, 2014.

<sup>19</sup> The shaman, 5th September, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> The leader and the shaman, 3rd and 9th September, 2014.

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## **Magic in Everyday Life of Polish Wiccans**

**Abstract:** Wicca, one of the fastest developing neo-pagan movements, reached Poland in the 1990s and has been gaining popularity ever since. This article, based mainly on interviews with Polish Wiccans, provides a brief introduction to Wicca's history in Poland, as well as a view of magic in lives of the believers. Magic – understood as force which can affect reality – appears in two contexts: magic in ritual and tool/operational magic. The latter is orientated towards something specific and considered to be a way of helping in everyday situations (from getting a job to catching a tram, as examples prove).

**Key words:** Wicca, magic, everyday life, Poland

Wicca has become one of the fastest developing and most global Neo-pagan religions since its inception in the middle of the 20th century. Often called “religion of magic”, it eventually reached Poland in the 1990s and has been constantly gaining popularity. This article draws from my on-going research among Polish Traditional Wiccans, carried out since June 2014. The main sources of data presented are: interviews with thirteen Polish Wiccans (representatives of all Polish covens), conducted from July to September 2014, participant observation at Wiccan conference (“Spiritual Alchemy”, Kraków 22–24.08.2014) and Internet sources: forums, websites and blogs run by the believers.

As all my respondents are initiated Wiccans, this article concerns only the followers of Traditional Wicca (Gardnerian, Alexandrian and mixed traditions). Other witchcraft traditions are not discussed, and references to Eclectic Wicca stand for religious practice, held in most cases by non-initiated people, who follow syncretic ideas, often choose a solitary path and obtain knowledge and scenarios for rituals from books and the Internet.

## Wicca on the Net

Wicca entered Polish borders at first virtually – through the Internet, around the mid-1990s, after the fall of the Communist regime. In that period many other “imported” religious traditions appeared in Poland, such as Asatru, Druidry or Neo-Shamanism (Witulski 2013: 298). Most of my respondents encountered the term “Wicca” while browsing the Web, reading about magic, spells and the occult – like Wietrzny, who recollects:

*I practised occultism and while reading about occultism, it appeared: Wicca, Wicca, Wicca... at last, Internet [connection] has improved and it was possible to check something.<sup>1</sup>*

My respondents drew their knowledge first from various English websites, then from Polish ones. The first Polish witchcraft-orientated website (literally *Pierwsza Polska Strona Czarostwa* “First Polish Witchcraft Website”) was established around 1997 (Furman 2002: 62). IRC channels and mailing lists followed: IRC channel #wicca-pl appeared at the end of the 1990s, mailing lists (wicca-pl, wiccaplklub and Wicca-ABC) were established in the beginning of the 2000s (Furman 2002: 53, Enenna 2014). Many of my respondents were active in those lists. Later in the 2000s the discussions were transferred to more popular forums. Nowadays, there are three of those: “Forum Wicca” (<http://forum.wicca.com.pl/>, since 2010), “*Tradycyjne Wicca*” (“Traditional Wicca”, <http://tradycyjne-wicca.pl/>, since 2011) and “*Wiccański Krag*” (“Wiccan Circle”, <http://forum.wiccanski-krag.com/>, since 2012).

The first Polish entirely Wiccan websites were wicca.pl by Enenna and “*Na brzozowej korze spisane*” (“Written on birch bark”), birch.wicca.pl by 3Jane – both appeared in 2003. Apart from those, there are currently about a dozen on-going and more or less regularly updated websites and blogs.

What is worth noticing, is that the first to arrive in Poland was Eclectic Wicca. There are rumours about Eclectic covens which consisted of foreigners in the beginning of the 1990s (Furman 2002: 62), yet no records can be provided to prove their existence or further activities. As Maciej Witulski observes (Witulski 2013: 301), discussions on the net held in the second half of the 1990s centred mostly on Eclectic Wicca. In that time the first books with

“Wicca” in the title were published, such as Cunningham’s famous “Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner”. Only a few years later, Traditional Wicca arrived: the years 2004–2007 may be considered as a starting point (Witulski 2013: 303), as finally the first Polish people were initiated in England. Maciej Strutyński notes that it happened also due to the emigration movement – seeking a job abroad was combined with a spiritual search (Strutyński 2014: 73). Also, in 2007 a pair of Gardnerian Wiccans, Dagda and Boan, conducted a workshop for people interested in Traditional Wicca (Jelonek 2014).

### **Polish Wiccans, Wiccans in Poland**

The distinction between Polish Wiccans and Wiccans in Poland is very important. My research included not only believers actually living in Poland, but also Polish people initiated into Wicca who are currently living abroad, but remain in contact with members of their covens in Poland or influence the community (or a part of it) through forums, blogs, websites, articles published online.

It is widely assumed that the first Polish Wiccan was Enenna, initiated in Alexandrian Wicca in England in 2005. At present, she is a high priestess in her own coven and another two have “hived-off” from it (such “amoeba-like fissioning” appears to be a quite natural process of birth of new covens, see Luhrmann 1989: 37).

As for numbers, there are five covens in Poland at the moment (the last one appeared in August 2014). They come from three different lineages, two Alexandrian and one mixed, Gardnerian-Alexandrian. It amounts to a few dozens of initiated Polish Wiccans and includes also those believers, who do not practise in a coven anymore, are currently in search of a coven or consider establishing their own. Most of them are in their thirties, with a university education and live in big cities. This is a very young community – hardly to be called a community, as a matter of fact. Polish Wiccans are not quite on good terms with one another. Poetically speaking, as Enenna told me, “Polish Wiccans are like planets – they need to stay at some distance from one other, otherwise they would collide”. Another high priestess, Agni, compared the current situation to a child growing up: first teething, then childhood, then adolescence (this would be

happening now) and becoming mature. Time will show what this maturity will look like – for now it is enough to say that for the past few years Wicca in Poland made quite a progress.

### **Magic in Theory**

As for the actual definition of magic, most of my respondents either literally quoted or consciously referred to Aleister Crowley's definition of magic: "MAGICK is the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will" (Crowley 2004: xii). Some additional features were given as well, but changing the reality/world/consciousness while using one's will appears to be crucial. For example, Enenna defined magic as "the art of changing consciousness according to will".

Apart from references to Crowley, another aspect of magic has also been emphasized: magic is considered to be an instrument and cannot be divided into white and black magic. Only the will and intention of the person using magic determines its effect. The distinction between black and white magic (black magic – used to harm or to affect other people, white magic – used to help or to affect one's own life) was mentioned, but in most cases it referred to someone else's point of view. As for their own opinions, most of my respondents do not see the distinction. According to Sheila:

*Magic is a tool, like a hammer. You can nail something to the wall; if you're desperate, you can use it instead of a mallet to tenderise meat. You can also hit someone and harm them. [...] It depends on you, how you use [magic].*

As for magic in Wicca itself, opinions varied. Most of my respondents presented magic as similar in all systems and religions. Only one of them gave the definition of specific Wiccan magic, referring to polarisation and presence of a male and female participant:

*[Wiccan magic] includes participation of at least one woman and one man. [...] If a person is doing it alone, this is not a Wiccan magic. That does not mean this is less effective or it cannot use techniques used by Wiccans. But I was taught that Wiccan magic is based on a polarisation of two sexes. That this is the component, which distinguishes Wiccan magic from*

*other kinds of magic. [...] In my line, if you want to do Wiccan magic, those two components are a must.* (Jelonek 2014)

It might be supposed that in different lineages views on magic might slightly vary, including forming a proper definition of Wiccan magic in theory. Nevertheless, a certain distinction and categorisation appears on the practical level: the distinction between magic in ritual and “tool” magic. We shall soon have a closer look at this aspect, but now one last remark seems to be in order. My questionnaire did not include a question about the actual belief in magic and its effect on reality. The respondents sometimes mentioned that they started to treat magic more seriously after engaging in Wicca, sometimes they claimed to have believed in it all the time, but I considered a question “so do you *really* believe in it?” inappropriate.

### **Magic in Practice: Rituals and Everyday Magic**

As already stated, magic which appears in the lives of the Polish Wiccans can be divided into two categories: magic in rituals and individual magical practice in everyday life. The latter was often referred to as “tool magic” or “operational magic” (in Polish: *magia narzędziowa, magia operacyjna*). This distinction was clearly given by many of my respondents. Arek compared it to a distinction between high and low magic:

*In Wicca we have elements of high magic and low magic. Therefore, in a ritual, when we invoke deities, [...] this is the element of high magic. Whereas when we do magic in a specific purpose this is the tool magic – for example, when we want to heal somebody.*

Therefore, magic in ritual consists of communicating with deities, invoking guardians or elements – and that would be the part drawn from high, ceremonial magic. The circle is cast, the elements are invoked, the gods are asked to come and take part in the ritual – this all constructs the purely magical experience.

Tool magic, or operational magic, would rather be a domain of everyday spells, a sort of supply. Respondent no. 10<sup>2</sup> explained that “[when a witch] wants to have something – with Gods’ help she asks for it. And she does everything she can to achieve it in a physical way”. This tool magic can also be a part of a ritual – when

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the whole coven casts a spell during a ritual gathering. As Mojmira states in her book:

*Either magic or re-enacting stages showing element of mythological background of the festival can make the centre of the ritual. The choice and constructing the centre depends of course on the needs of the people assembled, but also on skills and intentions of the participant.* (Antonik 2011: 94)

That said, tool magic more often happens in everyday life, as a solitary and very individual practice.

### Tool/Operational Magic

Tool magic can be compared to cooking (a lot of Wiccans use cooking metaphors!): some ingredients are needed, a cookbook might be used, but the final “dish” is a result of the cook’s will and acting. Key factors of tool magic are intention, precision and real physical action. Using magic alone is considered as insufficient, because – according to one of my respondents – “It’s not that we make some magic and all of sudden we’ll pass all exams or become rich – we work, we study, we do everything in a natural way, but we help ourselves, do magic as a supply and send the energy for what we want” (respondent no. 10). More straightforwardly: if you want to get the job, cast a spell, but still seek the job, as waiting home alone will never do. Precision matters even more and various examples have proven it. Wiedrona told me that she used a phrase “I want to lose 10 kilos” and only after casting the spell she realised that 10 kilos might as well equal losing a leg. Another priestess provided me with an example of a successful, yet unsuccessful love spell: an ideal man turned up in her life, but married and with children, as she forgot to mention “I want him to be single”. Magic works in the simplest way possible, so that is why specification of intention is crucial.

Most of my respondents admitted they do not use tool magic that often. When one is satisfied with his life, using tool magic is considered unnecessary. If a need occurs – seeking a job, healing someone, then yes – but there is no use in “getting side-tracked into minor issues”, as one of the priestesses told me. Defining such “minor issues” depends entirely on an individual – a fundamental

case for one person may be irrelevant for another. As for general magic practise, techniques from other magical fields are also used as everyday training – for example The Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram or Middle Pillar (both developed by the Order of the Golden Dawn).

As an illustration of a personal, individual practice of Polish Wiccans, I have chosen two short examples from a whole range of magical experience (both spells for oneself and for the people who asked for it) I was told about. First, a recipe for a job spell, given by high priestess Sheila (cooking metaphor still applies):

1. Specification of the intention: what job is needed
2. Sympathetic magic as a technique: obtaining something, which would connect with a person for whom the spell is cast
3. Text of a spell: easy to remember, short and catchy, can be rhymed
4. Additional factors, such as positions of stars, moon phases, proper day of a week etc.
5. Peaceful place, right time: no phone ringing, no people entering the room
6. Casting a spell and visualisation that everything is going according to the intention
7. Energy: “Then, the energy is freed or sent to the world, so it could act”.

This would be just the basis, various symbols or “collocations” may be added. In case of a job spell, a green candle could be lit for concentration as green is associated with money. However, it is entirely up to the person casting the spell.

A second example is what I called “tram magic”, a perfect example of everyday magic, as this particular person uses trams a lot. As one of my respondents told me,

*It may be a strange example, but when I run to jump on a tram and I see one and I want to make it, then I say “I will surely make it”. And when a tram comes, [I say] “it’s not my tram,*

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*mine will be the next one". And it turns out to be so. [...] This is doing magic here and now. (Respondent no. 10)*

My respondent stressed that in case of tram magic, conviction matters: not "maybe" but "it must". Just like the famous scene from "Star Wars IV: A New Hope", when Jedi Obi-Wan Kenobi uses the Force and persuades the Imperial storm troopers with "These aren't the droids you're looking for".

## Conclusion

Magic plays an important, but not an overrated role in the lives of Polish Wiccans. It is seen as a force, which can affect reality, yet still is neutral in itself: it depends solely on a user, how it would be used. Distinction between black and white magic is therefore not applicable, unlike the distinction between magic in ritual and tool/operational magic. The first one consists of elements of high magic (ceremonial aspects, invoking deities, guardians, elementals). The second is orientated towards something specific and considered to be a way of helping in everyday life. Still, it is not overused, as when someone is satisfied with their life, using tool magic and "tinkering with reality" is not that important. Of course, it can still be used for someone else, if a person asks for help. Polish Wiccans do have many inspirations from numerous fields of magical practice and apply a great deal of personal adaptations (from Golden Dawn to Star Wars). What is interesting, one does not need to believe in magic and can still use it, as Rawimir told me:

*Many people use magic not knowing they do so. In most cases, they use it in a negative way, as they persuade themselves 'It's not going to work, that's not going to work'. And indeed, it doesn't work.*

## Interviews

All the statements marked with a respondent's name are quoted from interviews with Polish Traditional Wiccans, recorded and transcribed by Joanna Malita.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> From interview with Wietrzny, Polish Traditional Wiccan. All quotations from interviews and books in Polish were translated by Joanna Malita.

<sup>2</sup> This respondent preferred to remain anonymous.

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Reasoning of  
Supernatural:  
Theory  
and  
Practice



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## **Reasoning Supernatural Experiences: Rationalism and Intuition**

**Abstract.** The case study, based on primary (direct) and secondary (indirect) supernatural experiences of Lithuanian university students, reveals specific circumstances when two models of human thinking (logical and analogical / associative / intuitive / magical thinking) are used, the proportion of rationalism and intuition in explanations of the phenomena related to the supernatural sphere, as well as the role the person himself/herself plays in the process of creation of his/her magico-religious worldview.

**Key words:** supernatural, primary and secondary experiences, intuition, senses, rationalism

### **Introduction**

The systematic analysis of magic based on its comparison with religion and science has a long tradition in the Western world (J. G. Frazer, E. B. Tylor, F. B. Jevons, M. Mauss, L. Levy-Brühl, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, etc.). In order to define magic, religion, and science as separate systems of world understanding, researchers focused on an analysis of various models of human thinking (logical and analogical / associative / intuitive / magical thinking), sought to explain the domination of different models of human thinking in specific cultures, among different age groups, genders, etc. However, today, scholars tend to think that both rational and intuitive ways of thinking (two different orientations to the world) are more or less common to all people at all times (for example, K. Aarnio 2007, J. S. Tambiah 1990, S. Greenwood 2009, M. F. Brown 1997, etc.). In this way, magic can be seen as a universal experience, which means that every person can experience it when he or she intuitively interprets sensory perception relation to the Otherworld.

This case study, based on primary (experienced directly) and secondary (experienced through stories of other people) supernatural experiences of Lithuanian university students<sup>1</sup>, reveals specific circumstances when these two models of human thinking are used,

the proportion of rationalism and intuition in explanations of the phenomena related to the supernatural sphere, as well as the role the person himself/herself plays in the process of creation of his/her magico-religious worldview. The survey can help to explain the causes that affect the particular aspects of worldview, attitudes towards the Supernatural, beliefs about its existence or nonexistence formation. It discloses magic as a wider concept (magic as a worldview). This way of perceiving magic helps to reveal a contemporary person's attitude towards the Supernatural, which depends on direct and indirect Otherworld experiences, and enables us to observe how these experiences form attitudes towards one or another supernatural phenomenon.

Theoretical works of S. Greenwood were of great influence on the research. She perceives magic as a common to all mankind category of worldview, one of the orientations to the world, which is based on a form of associative thinking through sensory patterns of interrelatedness (Greenwood 2009: 69). This research focuses on the person's experiences and concepts, and on the meaning of the phenomena to the respondent, without looking for any universal laws or a scientific truth.

Students share various supernatural experiences, which influence people in different ways and, therefore, may be interpreted differently. Supernatural experiences may be divided into primary (direct) and secondary (indirect) according to their nature.

### **Primary (Direct) Experiences**

In this research, magico-religious experiences are understood as experiences that are related to the Otherworld and confirm the existence / non-existence of supernatural powers. It is noteworthy that experience (feeling, senses, intuition) is the basic element not only of religion but also of magic. Therefore, in this article the concept of magico-religious experiences is not limited to seeing saints, various religious images, symbols, and prophecies. All intuitive and direct Otherworld experiences, which are interpreted by students are defined as magico-religious experiences. Explanations of the Otherworld order, offered by religion, do not necessarily coincide

with individual interpretations, stimulated by concrete Otherworld experiences and vice versa.

Primary (direct) Otherworld experiences may be unique (happening rarely or once in a lifetime) or repetitive. The influence of repetitive direct Otherworld experiences is especially great if a student has been oppressed by them since childhood. The ability to see or feel certain supernatural phenomena (for instance, see spirits) is related to exceptional intuitive abilities (the sixth sense, clairvoyance) and in these cases it is impossible to avoid a close relationship with the Otherworld. A person often tries to understand and explain the existence of a supernatural phenomenon both in rational and irrational ways. Both an analytical and intuitive way of thinking finds its place in a person's mind depending on the situation that he / she has to handle.

Students also encounter the Otherworld in their dreams. More attention is given to particular dreams that shock from inside or to repetitive dreams when certain current patterns are noticed.

Direct Otherworld experiences of certain students determine their Otherworld conceptions and the worldview. An encounter with a wandering spirit, constant haunting at home, anxious dreams, where the natural and supernatural worlds join, destroy the well-established image of the world, and the system of beliefs related to the existence / non-existence of a deity, the existence / non-existence of the afterworld, links between the natural and supernatural world, and ability to communicate with the dead. However, an encounter is not always necessary in order to feel what it is like.

Otherworld experiences stimulate the student to take what he / she is given, to accept abilities, to learn how to live with them and, consequently, create a sensible relationship with the Otherworld. Today a direct experience of a person is the best proof for the existence of the Otherworld for him / her. Direct Otherworld experiences not only destroy the knowledge that a student had before but also open new horizons of knowledge, raise new questions, and encourage looking for the answers.

## **Secondary (Indirect) Experiences**

Students' primary (direct) experiences most often evoke strong reactions, which may even change the attitude towards the world and the self, as a part of the world, whereas secondary (indirect) experiences, when friends or acquaintances tell about their encounters with the Otherworld, do not always have a strong impact. Therefore, students who have encountered secondary (indirect) Otherworld experiences can be divided into two groups: 1. students who sensitively react to the Otherworld experiences of someone else; 2. students who try to explain experiences of other people rationally and do not accept them as real.

Secondary (indirect) contacts with the Supernatural and rationally unexplainable world undoubtedly influence students in a way similar to primary (direct) contacts and help to create a certain alternative conception of a worldview, which exists and does not disappear, even though students sometimes avoid speaking or thinking about it. Rational explanations of supernatural phenomena prevail among those who have not had direct encounters with them. However, belief revealed itself as something closely related to experience. If a person has never experienced supernatural phenomena, he / she may not have a clear opinion of the Otherworld and, therefore, may not be able to express it.

A person may meet indirect Otherworld experiences not only when he / she hears about them from their friends, acquaintances, or parents. Students' image of the Otherworld is also shaped by the press and films. Much information on the supernatural world is available on the Internet. Today information is easily reachable, even though it may cause the problem of selection. Depending on a person's interface with the Otherworld, he / she selects publications carefully or absolutely freely, as if willing to take it all. A student who has encountered the supernatural world views practicing magic and qualitative collecting of knowledge about it with respect. Practicing magic without enough knowledge generally is viewed as an irresponsible and a dangerous act. However, it's noteworthy that most students do not practice magic seriously (for instance, do not call spirits), do not see ghosts, and do not have anxious dreams. While conducting magico-religious practices, students try to verify and renew their relationship with the Otherworld.

Summing up all the data collected during the survey (students' magico-religious practices and Otherworld experiences)<sup>2</sup>, which reveals different ways of viewing magic, it is possible to state that the nature of the collected data and the methodology that is used to collect it in the academic discourse, influence the borders of understanding magic. The analysis of students' magico-religious practices revealed magic as a technique oriented towards a concrete result. This kind of magic is inseparable from experimentation and trying to convince oneself that supernatural forces really exist and can be tamed. The analysis of Otherworld experiences and unusual events revealed magic not as a technique but rather as a directly or indirectly experienced relationship with the Otherworld that does not need any concrete practices in order to be felt. Intuition-based interpretations of Otherworld experiences, emotions that manifest themselves when the Otherworld is encountered, and actions that come afterwards (for instance, interest in specialized literature) demonstrate that magic, understood that way, makes part of the worldview, and personal Otherworld experiences undoubtedly contribute to its formation. Thus, a wide vision of magic is especially necessary in the context of contemporary research because today a person is an active participant in creating and re-creating his / her magico-religious worldview.

### **Reasoning Primary (Direct) and Secondary (Indirect) Experiences**

Belief or unbelief in the existence of the supernatural world often depends on the direct encounters with it, though indirect experiences can also arouse questions and fear that something superior and unknowable exists. Despite the fear, today's human being wants to assure himself / herself about the existence / non-existence of the unexplainable phenomena and demands proof. And the strongest contribution to prove something is someone's own experience:

*Yes, my experiences are the strongest proof, and for the others – their experiences are the most important proof, and, I suppose, these experiences affect their thinking. For me, for example... I accept it [secondary experiences] as a source of information, but I don't think that it can affect me. I have to experience it myself. I am such a person, who would rather fall*

*off the bicycle and get to know what it means to ride a bike by himself / herself, than listen to somebody explaining about how to ride it. [...] This is the most forceful thing.*

In this example, one of the respondents, interviewed on 9th July 2012 (Vilija, 29 years old, studied Sociology in Vilnius University), confirms that her own experience is the only true experience. Only it can confirm or disprove some kind of a truth, and more exactly saying – only “I can” (through my experience) confirm or disprove that something is true or false. This example reveals the rational approach to the supernatural experience, because empirical data is demanded as the basis of truth. Individualism is clearly expressed also: nobody can give me the right knowledge or affect me with that knowledge, only I can affect myself. However, direct experience of supernatural phenomena does not always lead a person to recognise it as a sufficient proof to admit that some kind of supernatural phenomenon does exist. The other example illustrates Vilija’s direct encounter with something unexplainable:

*I doubted once...doubted strongly and got frightened a little bit. Later, I forgot everything and that's all, but it was only one time I “wished” for somebody something bad and an accident [car crash] happened before my eyes. So, in some way, maybe, I am circumspect with this... maybe, I noticed that it is not good to do so. Maybe, it was a coincidence, but something teemed inside me that, maybe, those relations do exist... I don't know, energies, not energies, magnetic fields... I try to explain it rationally.*

In this example Vilija explains her experience as a coincidence. On the one hand, she wants to explain her experience to the researcher rationally and tries to approach the experience rationally, but, on the other hand (through explaining it rationally), also to protect herself from scary thoughts related to the experience and just ignore it. It seems that the idea that this experience could possibly destroy the established world order evokes fear and the feeling of instability to the respondent. Here, we can notice the four levels of cognition when a person encounters the Otherworld, marked out by François P. Mathijsen: 1) Cognitive disturbance; 2) The fight for cognitive control; 3) Cognitive disruption; 4) Paradigmatic growth (Mathijsen 2010: 356–357). The first cognitive level, cognitive dis-

turbance, appeared when the respondent encountered the situation that was difficult to explain: she “wished” something bad for a person and a car crash happened. That evoked fear. The second cognitive level appeared when the respondent tried to convince herself that it happened only once. So, she is still fighting for cognitive control. The third level of cognition is revealed in the respondents’ reasoning that she should be more careful with this: maybe, it is not good doing so, and, maybe, some relations do exist. Though Vilija seeks to stress that she explains everything rationally, she also talks about energies, magnetic fields, etc. It becomes clear that, when something bad happens, a person starts insensibly thinking about the existing relations between people, orally transmitted thoughts and the leading consequences. And, finally, the last level of cognition is related with the respondents’ widened horizons of cognition.

So, people can try and usually try to explain supernatural experiences rationally, but it also happens that after such “experiments” they return to explaining those experiences through sensory patterns of interrelatedness. For example, a person bases his / her explanation on his / her own senses, intuition, intuitively felt associative relations.

The same level of cognition can be noticed while analysing secondary (indirect) magico-religious experiences, but it is hard to catch the right moment to record respondents’ reactions during the first time he or she is listening to somebody’s frightening encounter with the Otherworld. So, at the moment when they are interviewed, some respondents may talk about several supernatural experiences in general as if everything is clear without saying. It means that they have already passed through those four levels of cognition and at the moment their boundaries of cognition are already widened. In this example one of the respondents, interviewed on 14th December 2012 (Giedrius, 25 years old, studied Sociology in Vilnius Pedagogical University), expresses his approach to the Otherworld and bases his knowledge on his friends’ supernatural experiences:

*I believe in those things and some Otherworlds really exist, because I have common friends, who encountered that and I believe in spirits completely. [...] Black and white magic I believe also, because I had friends, who practised black magic,*

*and the people got into trouble [...]. In general, those other spirits pump out energies from people.*

Of course, not all students admit others' supernatural experiences as absolutely true. However, this information remains in their heads and participates in the future cognitive processes, in discussions related to the supernatural sphere.

## Conclusions

The principal means that is used to explain the Supernatural is the person him or herself. Students' own (direct) supernatural experiences are the fundamental element in the formation of their magico-religious worldview. Direct encounters with the Otherworld destroy the image of the world that a person had before as well as his / her system of beliefs related to the existence / non-existence of a deity, the existence / non-existence of the afterworld, links between the natural and supernatural world, the ability to communicate with the dead and the relationship with the Otherworld, and, therefore, stimulate looking for new answers and means.

Primary (direct) experiences are the strongest proof of the existence of the Otherworld, supernatural phenomena, and mainly those experiences strongly influence the paradigmatic growth of cognition. Depending on a person (his/her sensibility), secondary (indirect) supernatural experiences can also influence the paradigmatic growth of cognition.

Rational reasoning about the Supernatural is mostly common to the respondents, who have never encountered Supernatural phenomena. So, they particularly struggle for cognitive control when they encounter the supernatural experiences of others.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In 2009–2012 a survey was carried out in different universities of Lithuania (Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas University of Technology, Šiauliai University, Klaipėda University, and etc.). The researcher strived to ascertain the concepts of magic and religion, different Otherworld conceptions, mystic experiences, and various practices and their interpretations spread among Lithuanian students. In order to reach this goal, the methods of interview, structured interview, semi-structured interview, and focus

groups were applied. Files containing empirical data, collected and prepared by the author, are preserved in the Archive of the Department of Cultural Studies and Ethnology at Vytautas Magnus University (VDU ER 2288).

<sup>2</sup> The fieldwork was carried out in four stages (the first stage in year 2005, the second in 2006, the third in 2008, and the fourth from 2009 until 2012). The author collected empirical data combining several methods: questioning using questionnaires (a questionnaire with open questions), semi-structured interview, and questioning in focus groups. Quantitative data, related to students magico-religious practices, was collected from 2006 until 2012 (VDU ER 1195; VDU ER 1394).

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## **The Magic of Traditional Games: From Anthropological Theory to Contemporary Case Studies**

**Abstract:** The article first recalls how magic has been conceptualized by anthropologists at the end of the 19th century. It then insists on the evolution of the notion of magic. The example of traditional games is used here to understand how the definitions of magic have progressively changed. The article comments on the older anthropological theories which used to postulate strong relations between traditional games and magic. A report on contemporary games and on their new meanings and social functions opens a discussion concerning the evolutions of the meanings of magic.

**Key words:** magic, traditional games, anthropology, France

Magic has been conceptualized by anthropologists as early as in the end of the 19th century. However, since then, the evolution of the notion of magic in common sense has led the anthropologists to change their own definition of magic. The example of traditional games is used here to understand how the definitions have progressively changed. First I will comment on theories and especially on the older anthropological theories which used to postulate strong relations between traditional games and magic. Second I will report on contemporary games and on their new meanings and social functions. Last I will discuss the evolutions of the meanings of magic and the new role of anthropology in a world where the understanding of magic has dramatically changed.

### **1. Anthropology and Magic**

Let us first recall several definitions of magic in the accepted anthropological theories. At the end of the 19th century, Sir James Frazer made an important distinction between “homeopathic” and “contagious” magic (Frazer 1911). In his views, homeopathic magic refers to the law of similarity and contagious magic to the law of

contact. The first of these two laws contends that “like produces like”. According to the second law, “things which have once been in contact continue to act on each other at a distance”. In this perspective, the anthropologists focus in priority on the ways the magic works and on the things and references which are used in magic actions. They develop an intellectualist approach of magic.

The French school of sociology, with Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, brought the first change in the conceptualization of magic (Durkheim 1912; Mauss 1950). Instead of focusing on the magic itself, Mauss insisted on the people in charge of the magic. In the centre of any magical process, he suggests, is the magician, a person who always has special prerogatives. According to this perspective, the performer of magic is central; rites and representations only come afterwards. The power of magic comes first from the magician himself, who in most cases has something special and different from the other members of the group where he practices his magic. Mauss observes that magicians are often strangers, lame or blind persons, or anybody liminal or different from the community.

Structuralism brings some more changes in the anthropological definitions of magic. Claude Lévi-Strauss for instance uses magic as a clue to understanding the ways the world is structured (Lévi-Strauss 1958). He identifies metaphors and metonymies behind the different magical behaviours. He then progressively conceptualizes magic as a part of language. Magic would then be a means of communication or a special form of meaning able to fit into various cultural worldviews.

This structural shift is not the only one trying to go further in the conceptualization of magic. According to the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, cognitive schemes, emotions, corporeal experiences and affectivity also have to be taken into account (Bachelard 1938). Later, in the 1970's, Jeanne Favret-Saada (Favret-Saada 1977) concentrated on the magical process itself and avoided all external conceptualization of magic, reaching the internal logic of the magical processes themselves.

## 2. Games and Magic

Once this theoretical background has been settled up, what about the games? In the older anthropological theories, traditional games were often connected with magic. For instance, Mauss commented on Franz Boas's Innu material (Mauss 1950). He considered the tug of war as a divinatory practice and believed the result of this seasonal and competitive game was used to predict the hunting and the fishing in the coming year. The tug of war was practised on the sea-shore at the Equinoxes. The two competing teams were respectively connected with the earth and with the sea. If the sea people won, the game would predict a good fishing season. If the earth people had the victory, the hunting season would be more profitable to the community. It has been suggested that the game could either be used to predict the future, or that it was a practice which could influence it in itself (Lyle 1990).

At the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th, it was the main stream in anthropology to use such interpretative theories. Lady Alice Gomme's books on children games also comment on their divinatory aspects, especially insisting on the games using the numbers 7 or 12 and supposing they were respectively connected with the days of the week or the months of the year (Gomme 1894). In most of the cases the divinatory aspects of the games were believed to be related to fertility or fecundity cults, building on older theories, which used to see fertility cults almost everywhere.

A few decades later, in the 1930's, French anthropologist Marcel Griaule used the same theories to explain the meanings of the games he observed on the Eastern coast of Africa and among the Dogon people in Mali (Griaule 1935; Griaule 1938). Griaule identified special props and objects which he believed to have a special magical cosmological meaning. For instance, he described the little pieces of wood and the stones used in the games. The pieces of wood and the stones are put on the sand where they form special figures, and the ways they match or not with each other lead the players to predict the future. The games are conceived as labyrinths and the players try to guess what they mean and where they lead. This art of guessing through sand figures is called geomancy in Northern Africa. It is reminiscent a lot of European games. In different cultural settings and in various historical times, similar sorts of

games have been practised. For instance, the goose game, a board game with uncertain origins, figures a labyrinth which can clearly be interpreted as a metaphor of human life. As a microcosm, the game reflects the macrocosm and may bring luck if it manages to influence real life.

Comparing different kinds of games, it is easy to find their relation to magic. Dice, spinning tops or playing cards have often been used to choose persons or to build up teams. Furthermore, games and magic can share the same logic. Most competitive games are based on the interaction of two contrary pairs or halves. Sometimes they use the law of similarity, for instance when they identify the players and the symbol they play with. In some traditional ball games, the ball is identified as the head of a player, as if there was a relation of similarity between the players and the ball used to play the game. In Ashbourne, England, the balls are decorated with scenes depicting the life of the person who will have the honour to throw up the ball at the beginning of the game. This case uses the magic law of similarity by considering the ball as the metonymy of a player's life. In other places like in Kirkwall, Orkney, local myths identify the ball to the severed head of an enemy, which can be considered as another way of applying the magic law of similarity in a game (Fournier 2009).

Last, but not least, building on Mauss's theories, magicians often play special games in order to reach the sacred. In this respect, games are themselves metaphors of magic. In shamanistic settings, the games can be manipulated for divinatory purposes by the shamans who try to control the hunting or the well-being of their community (Hamayon 2012). All these different examples show a strong connection between games and magic. However, the theories behind these examples are often interpretative or speculative. What do they mean in today's world? Should they be adapted to modernity or are they still valid?

### **3. Fieldwork Evidence**

Comparing the old anthropological theories and more recent practices brings interesting results. When doing fieldwork on traditional games today, a research question could be: what do the players

know about anthropology? And if they do not know anything, does it really mean that the games' meanings have changed? Since 2011 the French Ministry of Culture has launched a general inventory of traditional games in France (Fournier 2012). Players have been asked to report about the traditional games they still play and pass down from one generation to another. More than 120 games have been identified in the different French regions, a special emphasis being put on traditional sporting games. Most of the descriptions have been proposed by the practitioners themselves, so that they reflect their own views on the games.

The different files in the inventory globally show that there is not any clear connection between games and magic in the people's eyes. The descriptions often insist on the rules, on the techniques, sometimes on the social or educational settings of the games, but their magical or sacred meaning is almost absent in these files. There seem to be a disconnection between the old theories and the contemporary practices. However, such an absence can be explained in different ways, following three different hypotheses. The first hypothesis would connect the absence of magic in contemporary games and the evolution of the games themselves. The second one would connect it with the evolution of the conceptions of magic. The third one would connect it with the changes in the ways the anthropologists look at the whole problem.

In the first hypothesis, the idea would be that the games have lost their magical charge. In the second part of the 20th century, indeed, games have strongly been influenced by leisure, education and sports. Being a part of these broader sectors they have progressively become profane activities and do not have anything more to do with magic.

The second hypothesis insists on the changes in magic itself. Due to secularization, magic would have been progressively cut off from religion and belief and would have joined the kingdom of childhood, fairy tales and imagination. The notion of magic would then have been commoditized to take part in a more global entertainment business. On the way, the magical laws would have been forgotten by the greater number of those who are not aware anymore of their social meanings and functions. In this context magic is no longer connected with facts: it is just connected with imagination. With

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these changes, actions previously deemed magical are now identified as ordinary. Things have to glitter and to resemble fairy tales motives to be considered as magic. In today's world, the magic is in computers, electronic devices, speed, noisy music, etc., but nobody would identify traditional practices as magic.

The third hypothesis would be that we do not see the magic anymore because our way of sorting out the problem has changed. Here, it is important to remember how anthropology has been progressively transformed into a "serious" social science. Being a scientific discipline, it became more and more difficult to deal with the irrational. In the last century or so, anthropology has become more empirical, more critical, less interpretative and imaginative. It was asked to solve practical problems in the fields of health and security, with strong social and political consequences. Even cultural anthropology is now applied to fields such as local development, heritage or tourism studies. In such a context it is more and more difficult in scholarship to hold tight to the older intellectual and humanistic traditions and to keep magic in the anthropologist's research agenda.

All these factors have played a role in the progressive disconnection of games and magic. However; it would certainly be wrong to think that the people in the past knew more about the magical charge of their games. Asking a 19th century Innu about it would certainly have had no more result than asking a French player today. As in most cases, people are usually unaware of the cultural meanings of what they do. But in the 19th century it might have been easier for anthropologists and for society at large to think that some people still used magic in everyday life. In our globalized and highly networked world, it might be more difficult to think about magic and to suppose that some people still have a privileged relationship with magical beliefs, superstitions and the supernatural in general. Rather, the modern point of view postulates that rationality and economy have definitely won and that magic is now confined to the past. To summarize, magic is now too much connected with the idea of primitiveness to be seriously taken into account to explain contemporary practices.

#### 4. Understanding Today's Magic

In order to bring back magic in the public and in the scientific debate, it might then be useful to make a point on the differences between the old and the new conceptions of magic. Here, I would contend that the coexistence of these different conceptions might make the whole concept of magic uncertain or hazy. Empirical field-work, investigations and questionnaires are needed to know more about what the people understand by magic, inside as well as outside scholarship. Does magic still match with the 19th century accepted definitions of the term or has it been modified under the influence of the 20th century media industry? Today it is commonplace to connect magic with the ideas of beauty, fame or success, but who still knows about the similarity and the contagion laws identified by the anthropologists more than one century ago?

As a conclusion, I would say it might be the right time to open the Pandora's box and to ask the question: "What is really magic for ordinary people in the Western world today?" It would then be useful to compare the outsider anthropological vision and the insider vision of magic, leading to a combination of external definitions and internal ones, thus eventually enabling a more comprehensive interpretation of magic. If we want to understand magic in a changing world, I would suggest that we pay attention both to the ways the people fit in the accepted anthropological definitions, and to the things and behaviours they consider themselves as magical.

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## **Embodiment and Gender: Constructing Balkan Masculinities**

**Abstract.** This article focuses on discussing the relationship between magic *tradition* in West Balkan countries and contemporary art. A tradition-based mythological worldview is one of the foundations of the dominant sexual and gender constructions often explored by artists in the region, such as Zlatko Kopljarić, Marijan Crtalić, Marko Marković, Martina Miholić and Bojan Gagić. It is they who, in their works, deconstruct gender and mythological paradigms, discuss the problem of witchcraft, ritual and fertility archetypes, questioning thus the entire social and cultural matrix of the Western Balkans.

**Key words:** masculinity, ritual, performance

In this article I will explore the relationship between the role of folklore and magic tradition in the former Yugoslav countries and the construction of a gender order in contemporary art. Representation of gender issues and Balkan masculinities is discussed drawing on the examples of performance, body art, site-specific installation, and interactive ambient video work by contemporary artists from the region. The majority of these works reflex directly to the gender construction, as well as to the representation of Balkan masculinity.

The most important incentives for a change in attitude towards body and gender order definitely came through the classic anthropological researches of the cultures of the *Others* (non-European, oriental culture) at the beginning of the twentieth century, especially of what we call *shamanic* practices in so-called *primitive societies*. After the period of physical performance, Body Art and the new shamanism, the attitude towards the gender and body in art began to change.

Artist practice inspired by magic tradition and rituals, like in the works of Viennese Actionists, Joseph Beuys and Marina Abramović established itself in the modern era. Radical body practice inspired by science, plastic surgery and cyber space as seen in the works of

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Mireille Suzanne Francette Porte known as Orlan, Oleg Kulik, Ron Athey and Stelios Arcadious known as Stelarc established itself in the postmodern era.

In my previous research on this topic I concluded that ideas of the “masculine” are the most complex traditionally-determined cultural constructions in Croatia and other former Yugoslav societies. In order to understand this construction, we must explain and redefine mythological image of the world.

The appearance of mythical images is related to the formation of Slavic ethnic groups. Scientists Vitomir Belaj and Radoslav Katičić reconstructed the lost Slavic myth, taking as a starting point the Kiev Annals, created around the year 1113, researches by the Russian scientists Vjačeslav V. Ivanov and Vladimir N. Toporov, and their own researches of the tradition, folk songs and customs of the Slavic and Baltic countries. The reconstruction of a myth, as a discovery of a lost mythical text, the hierarchy of gods and sacral order in the landscape, is important for all Slavs.

On the one hand, the ancient Slavic religion is based on the fertility myth (legend of Jarilo and Morana), and on the other hand, on the supreme god Perun who ruled the people. The Slavic religious system is symbolically represented by the tree of the world (*Axis mundi*), the oak tree with eagle sitting on the top of the highest golden branch, surrounded by nine small eagles and a cuckoo bird. In this religious concept the eagle represents the god Perun, the nine small eagles are his sons and the cuckoo bird is his only daughter Morana (Katičić 2010). Such a genealogical representation demonstrates the importance of dominant masculine construction in the Slavic myths; the female exists as the bearer of fertility in a male world. In the ritual sense, the god Perun is often shown in four forms.

When describing Perun’s shrine in Peryn near Novgorod, and in comparing its structure with Lithuanian oral tradition, Katičić says: “That is how it was discovered that Perun is actually represented by four figures. They are facing the four sides of the world. That coincides with the arrangement of sacrificial fireplaces at Perun’s shrine in Novgorod. It was also discovered that they are brothers, which emphasizes the unity of their quadrality. It was also

explained why there are four, i.e. more of them. That is because he can thunder everywhere at the same time" (2007: 102).

It is also interesting that Perun's enemy is the god of the underworld, cattle and earth, Veles, god of undefined sexuality and gender, thus he is sometimes defined as a man and sometimes as a woman, or is shown in an androgynous form as transgender person. The myth also tells us about the tenth son of Perun and Mokoš, Jarilo, who lived in Veles's underworld. In spring, Jarilo came out of the underworld and after crossing the bridge, seven mountains, and seven waters he reached the tree of the world. In a green grove, by the bend of the river, was beautiful Morana sitting under the tree of the world. When they saw each other, they fell in love and made love under the tree, not knowing that they were brother and sister. The brothers, who came afterwards, together with Morana, killed Jarilo. They cut his body into pieces and scattered it around the field. Thus Jarilo brought the fertility to the field, cattle and people (Belaj 2007). This myth can be associated with the famous Egyptian legend of Isis and Osiris (Plutarch 1993), but also with other legends of ritual death and renewal of the nature. The myth of Juraj is based on the interpretation of the driving force of nature.

A tradition-based mythological worldview is one of the foundations of the dominant sexual and gender constructions often explored by artists in the region, such as Zlatko Kopljar, Marijan Crtalić, Marko Marković, Martina Miholić and Bojan Gagić. It is precisely they who, in their works, deconstruct gender and mythological paradigms, questioning thus the entire social and cultural matrix of the Western Balkans.

In my research I have used the statements of the artists themselves, their interviews published in newspapers, theoretical texts that deal with contemporary art as well as exhibition reviews, but also experience of my own artwork. I will explore dominant masculine archetypes and the culturally constructed gender order.

In the performance *K8*, created in 2012, artist Zlatko Kopljar allows nurses to take his blood which is afterwards put into small relic-container-ampoules, which are stored in a glass cube. The artist refers to blood as life, a magical and religious substance. Finally his blood is material for creation of his own artwork. It is the holiest of

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the holiest substance. Blood symbolised eternal kingdom and good order the material world. It is the one that breeds life and brings it into him.

His blood is his personal grail in which the artist has become new Parsifal through initiation. Through this act, the Fisher King turns into nurses, deconstructing gender order described in legend and embodied in famous Wagner opera “*Parsifal*”.

For the installation entitled “Devil Seed” (from the year 2000), Marijan Crtalić made an ambient work consisting of two videos and wall on which the artist hung used condoms containing his semen. Both videos show the artist’s face in close-up. On first video Marijan Crtalić is very angry in a masculine way. He speaks blasphemies and vulgar anathemas in traditional Balkan style.

On the second one his face is peaceful and calm. He speaks in silent mode trying to say sorry for a verbal crime. The fact is that Marijan Crtalić often uses body or body fluids like tallow, blood, semen in many performances, installations or public actions. He referred to Joseph Beuys’ recounting of his plane crash in WWII. As a Luftwaffe pilot, Beuys survived a plane crash in the Crimea and was, as he claimed, nursed back to health by Tatar shamans who wrapped his body in tallow and felt (Denegri 2003). After this *adventure* tallow and felt became key materials of Beuys sculptures and installations.

Crtalić makes numerous references to Beuys’ choice of organic materials and concept of social transformation (social sculpture) in his artistic practice. He reshapes it into the world of patriarchal gender order and converts artist from a liminal into macho universe.

“Selfeater” is a title of a documented performance of the Croatian artist Marko Marković in which the artist made references to cannibalism, human sacrifice and comments on the connection between the concepts of male body and blood as religious symbols (Tretinjak 2009).

In the first part of the performance the artist gave the visitors soft red-coloured cotton candy, the colour of which can simulate blood. In the second part a nurse assisted placing a tube in his vein. The artist then drank his blood, turning himself into a symbol of political, but also traditional masculine hero.

Marko Marković points to the traditional patriarchal cultures of South Slavs and social construction of sacrificial acts. In performing “Selfeater” on his own body, Marković also refers to a male initiation or a coming-of-age rite of passage. These practices are very often imaginative, inspired by anthropological field work in the so-called “primitive societies”.

In her work “Ambitious Toys” installed in Karas gallery in Zagreb Martina Miholić plays with the Barbie industry based on stereotype of gender conception. She installed numerous pink objects like toys, a refrigerator, plates, a blender, alcoholic drinks and a cake in a gallery. On the upper floor of the gallery she created a sleeping room of an imagined Barbie with a male superhero placed on the blanket but also with a computer on left side showing explicite sexual acts.

Touching of two bodies created a sound but also explained the hidden message of this exhibition. Martina Miholić is deconstructing the social conception of dominant male and female gender which is in *biopolitical* society transformed into a highly eroticised consumerist object, part of free-time industry (Hardt and Negri 2000).

In her work Martina Miholić directly refers to the famous Marina Abramović video “Balkan Erotic Epic”. In this video Marina Abramović engages with fertility symbols, mythological characters and Balkan tradition. Personifying the character of a traditional storyteller, Abramović narrates about ancient times when “the people of the Balkans used phallus and vagina as a tool for fighting against disease and evil forces” (2005). References in this video are being made to various traditional rituals creating a conceptualisation of dominant rural masculine, fertile feminine and *archetype gender order*. In the Martina Miholić’s artistic language, such a world is transformed into a consumerist Barbie paradise.

Together with the artist Bojan Gagić and the group of assistants, I have created an interactive ambient performance entitled “*Mirila*” (*mirila* means ‘measurement’ in a Croatian dialect), dedicated to complex phenomena (Gagić and Zanki 2009). At the beginning of last century deep in the Velebit Mountain, there were still places without church and cemetery. When somebody from that realm would die the body would be wrapped with linen cloth and carried on a wooden stretcher to the cemetery, before sunrise.

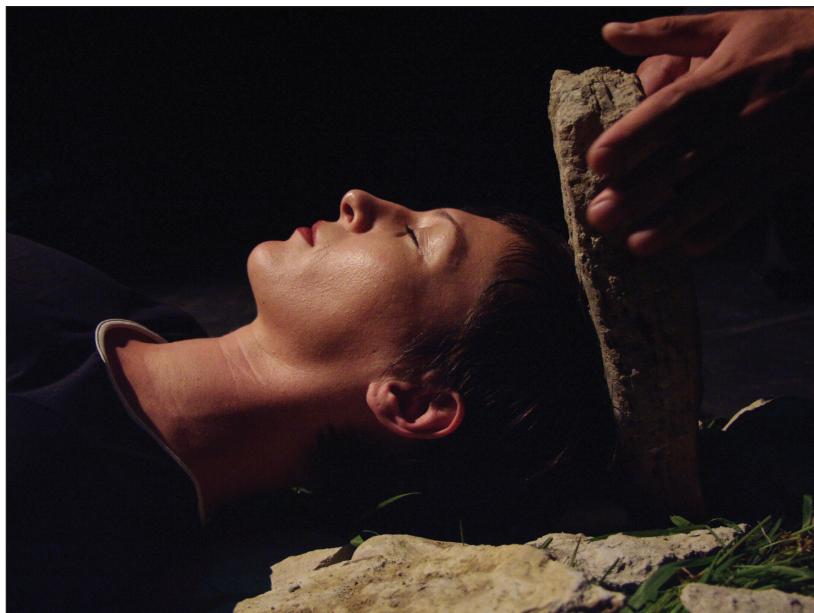


Figure 1. Performance “Mirila”. Photo by Josip Strmečki, 2001.

The funerary procession would stop at a special place which was usually situated on the crooks. Velebit Mountain is extremely steep and the crooks are only places where procession could take rest. They would take flat stone boards and place them on the ground and the body of the deceased would be laid there. After that, one more regular stone would be placed vertically next to a head (touching the top of a head) and next to the feet a smaller one (touching the top of the feet). Those two stones were the measure of the deceased and made his or her *mirilo* (‘measurement’). The head of the deceased was facing east, towards the rising sun. After that, the body was taken to a cemetery where it was buried. A few days later, an even more regular and carved stone with an engraved symbol was put in place of the headstone. According to the traditions “Mirila” are aligned by the ancestry and the family of the deceased, without any caste or gender separations.

Those were the places where people used to rest, and in the old times they were decorated with flowers and were offered food (Trošelj and Zanki 2012). The custom has completely decayed with the arrival of roads, the growth in tourism and the change of ways of life. All researchers know examples of the disappearance of the memorials themselves and of the *mirila* custom, and in their statements tellers document them on sites where they *no longer exist*.

What we may not know is the possible theoretic foundation that lay behind the reasons that led to the fact of oblivion. Guy Debord considers that the religions which evolved out of Judaism were “abstract universal acknowledgments of an irreversible time that had become democratized and open to all, but only in the realm of illusion. Time is totally oriented toward a single final event: “The Kingdom of God is soon to come.” These religions were rooted in the soil of history, but they remained radically opposed to history” (Debord 2006: 47).

The *mirila*, on the other hand, were a *pseudoheretic* antithesis to the dogma of irreversible time which unquestionably leads to the Kingdom of God. All these aspects were elements which inspired us to create interactive ambient “Mirila”. In the galleries where we performed this ritual we have built *mirila* replicas out of soil, grass and stone we collected from our surroundings. People who wanted to take part in the performance took their shoes and jewellery off, as we had suggested. After that, they would lie down on the replica *mirilo*; they would close their eyes and wait.

We measured them, meditated for some time, and after that opened their eyes and helped them get up. Our approach could be justified by the fact that the contemporary art in region is based mainly on body cult, predominantly stereotypical gender conception and traditional masculine poetic.

Unlike that kind of art work, we have decided not only to create our work with other bodies, but also with the different emotional and mental matrixes of the participants. The essence of our project was bringing the participants of interactive ambience into the experience of death. Such a ritual produced with an art form will delete any dominant gender order and masculine conception.

According to the participants own statements, all of them had some kind of abnormal experience, in a highly-elevated emotional state. The visions were different, but very often they had a memory of a person close to them who is dead. Also, in today's world, where any kind of thought on death is lost in consumerist hedonism, it is of great significance to bring people to a state of questioning about death.

Michael Foucault wrote: "Death is therefore multiple, and dispersed in time: it is not that absolute, privileged point at which time stops and moves back; like disease itself, it has a teeming presence that analysis may divide into time and space" (2003: 142). This elasticity and spatiality of death developed into a dogma of western medicine, because of which today people die in appropriate death institutions, such as hospitals, where there are only pathologists to *measure them*.

As seen through the example of the work of contemporary artists discussed in this chapter, originating from a traditional cultural matrix, the issue of *dominant masculine gender dualism* continues as one of the indestructible ideological constructs in Balkan society.

Artworks based on gender issues and magic traditions not only create a relationship towards the content, but also towards the personal inner experience of the artist, participants and the observer.

These works do not compare needlework when drinking the blood or the method of transforming participant's emotions into symbolical death. Formalism has been completely rejected, ceding its place to the experience of *embodiment*, physical presence in the ritual/artistic act.

The above given examples lead to the conclusion that contemporary art questions and redefines the relationships between bodies and gender construction, through media. The artistic creative act has been turned into the *ritual of transformation* of the artist him/herself and his/her work taking the shape of an object or artist's body, as well as all those who observe and experience it through direct contact with it. This changes the socially-determined gender conceptions and representation of masculinity in contemporary visual art.

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Sorcerers,  
Witches,  
and  
Magic Practices



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## **Constructing the Image of Witch in Contemporary Russian Mythological Beliefs and Magical Practices**

**Abstract.** The essay examines some types of contemporary beliefs about people with supernatural abilities (witches, healers, mentalists, etc.) who practice magic, and some of the strategies for constructing their image in the Russian urban community. The author discerns five types of witches as demonological personages according to the mythological model used by people in their everyday life. Urban witches are included in the modern community both as “professionals” and as ordinary people, women for whom witchcraft has become a modern hobby. Meanwhile, the mass media has been making witchcraft fashionable.

**Key words:** witchcraft, Russian beliefs, contemporary witch, urban mythology, contemporary legend

“Earlier, somebody on my mother’s side was a witch. I was told so by my mom and grandmother. It was probably somebody with very strong abilities. So, in the past everyone was a witch” (A.B.),<sup>1</sup> according to a girl from Tyumen. Some of my contributors told me about witches that they had seen in real life, but what do they mean by the word *witch*? It is a very vague notion. Today, many townsfolk are nostalgic about a *golden age* when everyone was close to nature, which is tied up with a positive idea/conception of the witch. It also illustrates the current tendency to represent the witch as a human, non-demonic creature. On the one hand, therefore people deny the demonic and dangerous nature of witches and, on the other, they recognize their function as evil (for example, harming or robbing someone with the help of hypnosis).

Often in modern society the image of the witch is maintained by the media, an image derived from American pop-culture notions about witchcraft and sorcery, or rather our *idea* of these notions, to be more precise. In spite of the influence of globalization, contemporary Russian mythological discourse on the witch varies considerably.

There are some traditional beliefs about magic specialists while some new models are created as well. A similar situation found in contemporary American society.

*Witchcraft may mean something very different, and an interest in it may be sustained for completely different reasons, depending on one's cultural heritage, politics, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender, or simply on whether — like L. Frank Baum's witches in "The Wizard of Oz" — one is from North, South, East, or West. America's diversity means that it might be hard even to agree on a working definition of 'witchcraft' with a Bostonian descendant of Lowells and Mathers, a Pennsylvanian Wiccan influenced by 'Dutch' hexenmeisters, a parent challenging the inclusion of a Harry Potter book on a school syllabus, a practitioner of African-American "hoodoo" in Alabama, a Harvard historian, a lesbian Dianic Witch from San Francisco, a Jewish New Yorker playwright, and a teenage Floridian goth (Gibson 2007: 4).*

The present paper analyzes some contemporary portrayals of people with supernatural abilities (witches, healers, mentalists, etc.) who practice magic, and some of the strategies for constructing their image in the Russian (primarily Tyumen) urban community.

## Data

The research is based on three groups of materials:

1. Interviews (about 230 texts) collected in West Siberian towns (mainly in Tyumen, also Khanty-Mansiysk, Yalutorovsk, Tobolsk) in 2009–2014. There are three groups: those who habitually visit witches, those who have an idea about the phenomenon of witchcraft or sorcery and different magic specialists, but have not visited them, and reports of the magic specialists.
2. Data from the Internet. This group consists of conversations in Tyumen forums<sup>2</sup> along with materials and discussions from social networks such as Facebook and Vkontakte<sup>3</sup>;
3. Participant observation of some rites conducted by contemporary witches and New Age communities in Tyumen.

		Domovoi	Communication with Domovoi	Domovoi as a cat	Witch	Evil eye	Spirits of the dead	Communication with the spirits of the dead	Chortik (some type of devil)	Genius loci	“Energy” of urban places	gipsy as demon
Sex	Female	55	25	15	14	51	53	11	14	26	27	11
	Male	9	3	1	1	7	12	3	0	11	7	2
Age	6–15	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
	16–25	50	20	8	8	46	49	5	11	28	28	3
	26–59	12	7	6	5	11	21	6	3	5	6	7
	60 <	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	1	2	0	3

Table 1. *The most popular mythological beings in which Tyumen people believed. Survey, 2011.*

It is important to note that our data are typically Siberian (from Tyumen) but the analyzed categories of witches are common for the Russian modern society as well.

According to a preliminary study of urban beliefs in Tyumen, the data show that about 14% of the respondents believed in existence of witches and 51% believed in evil that can hurt (see Table 1). The overall number of respondents included in these statistics was 149 persons.

Several anthropologists, folklorists, and sociologists say that the idea of the evil eye is prevalent in contemporary witchcraft in Russia (Foster 1972; Dundes 1981; Petrov 2014). A sociological organiza-

tion, the Levada-centre, published the results of its survey showing that in January 2010, 66% of respondents, and in August 2012 59% of respondents, respectively, believed in the existence of evil eye (Levada 2012). Roughly the same results are given by different sociologists and anthropologists. Nikita Petrov investigated this phenomenon in contemporary Internet discourse and found that sorcery and the action of putting the evil eye on someone were not distinguished in modern society, while magic specialists and the evil eye are closely connected. Furthermore, belief in the hex is very widespread (Petrov 2014: 335–350). Materials from Tyumen confirm this thesis: “One can be hexed anywhere, on the bus as well! [...] For example, last time, one of my flowers is withering and dying every time after sighs [of admiration] by a particular person. What am I supposed to think?” (T.A.). In this case, the woman supposes that her acquaintance has an evil eye and that such abilities mark her as a magic specialist. She can only conclude that her friend is a witch. It is important to note that the beliefs about evil eye are more wide-spread than beliefs about witches. For example, a person who puts the evil eye on someone may be not only a magic specialist, but a person from another ethnic group (Arabs, Gypsies, etc); in contemporary society some narratives about the evil eye and witches are intermixed: “In the UAE, the Arabs put a whammy on me. Generally evil eye – a phenomenon known in all traditions and religions” (C.D.); “[Who can put an evil eye on somebody?] It is said that special people with strong energy and black eyes can do it. I think that those who are jealous also” (F.G.).

### **Definition of a Witch**

The problem of interpreting the definition/idea of witch is connected with the context in which it is used. In the urban space, the word *witch* (Russian: *ved'ma*) is used to express the most general and abstract ideas about magic and those who practice it; according to the respondents, people do not use this word in everyday discourse. So, the notion *witch* *ved'ma* has a negative connotation as a term of abuse for some women and this makes more difficult to use it as a term for magic specialist.

Nowadays, on one hand, we have a complex of magic beliefs and various mythological ideas. On the other, there are numerous no-

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tions about specialists with magical abilities, though the word *witch* is, as a rule, omitted in everyday language.

The most popular name for *witch* is not a special word at all; the majority of people use *woman*, *grandmother*, *she/he*, or simply use the first name and surname. One can understand these meanings just from the context: “I believe [in traditional medicine]. In my childhood, I was treated by the grandmother. And now, I will drink better herbal tea rather than eat pills” (H.G.); “There was a woman, who could tell about something without knowing it. I believe [what she tells] about me. All of that she said came true” (J.K.).

There are also such names for magic specialists such as *healer* (Russian: *celitel'*), *psychic* (Russian: *extrasens*), *fortune-teller* (Russian: *gadalka*), *sorcerer* (Russian: *koldun*): “In my childhood, my mom went with me to the granny-healer [Russian: *babushka* – M.B.]; I had a hernia, so she treated me/healed it” (H.J.).

The respondents have difficulty distinguishing these personages from each other, and especially from the image of witches as demonic creatures; so also under our consideration are those who have supernatural powers or special esoteric knowledge, perhaps named as magic specialists. These magic specialists are not intermingled with the folklore image of some hags as fairy personages (or “mythological” beings). It is important to note we analyze only *actual mythology*, or actual beliefs and practice about witches (or magic specialist), that is the complex of coherent beliefs that existed in one synchronic slice of local tradition and transmitted within the major part of the community (Levkievskaya 2012: 4). In our case it means contemporary urban (2009 to the present, Tyumen) mythological beliefs about magic specialists.

### **Imagining the Witches: Some Portrayals of Contemporary Magic Specialists**

Usually witches are categorized into the five types:

1. Demonic creature.
2. Modern witch as part of a subculture (neo-pagan community).
3. “Professional” witch (psychic, fortune-teller, healer).

4. “Amateur witch” (an ordinary person, usually female, practicing magic for fun).
5. Woman as a witch (all women are witches by nature and can either develop their skills or not).

These variants do not exclude each other, but some classification is inherent to folk beliefs – among more reflexive people – as well:

“Well, that’s according to the literature, they have some category. There is the category dedicated to healing, for example, *grandmothers* who treat with help of herbs and prayers. They call themselves *healers*. There are those, who call themselves *white magicians*, also those, who relieve only some pain, predict the removal of damage. I believe only *black witches* can do that action. The [*black* – M.B.] *witches* are those who can do all of it. Pay them money and they will promise you that any person who you want, will be buried alive or a disease will be put on them, ‘black band’ or something worse” (T.A.).

In this text we have a folk classification of magic specialists; at the end of passage the first variant of our typology is represented: the hag as a demonic creature and mythological personage. Generally a witch is closely associated with evil spirits. According to folk belief, she may make a deal with the Devil in exchange for some favours, or the evil spirits may serve the witch because the witch has secret knowledge of how to force them to work for her. Such a person uses his/her supernatural, demonic abilities mainly to put a spell or curse on someone to cause damage to people or their things. In modern terms, the demonic nature of witch can be expressed in the fact that she can harm by means of black magic. Moreover, these actions are the result of free, conscious choice, not simply the nature of a hag. East Slavic witches originally have a half human, half demonic nature, but the freedom of choice makes it more human than demon and exemplifies the modern idea of witches as human, without demonic characteristics. It is interesting that earlier concepts of witch was as some demonic or mythological being (they had a half-human, half-demonic “nature”), but now they are thought of as human with some special abilities to spoil, damage, etc. The conception of witch is changing from the folkloristic personage to that of a normal human with special abilities, or sometimes an even

more “rational” explanation: “It [magic practice] is their profession, only business” (M.O.).

Thus, the second type of witch is a subculture associated with the neo-pagan community and can be defined as people who have the power to manage natural energy as a way to practise magic. In this case, we see significant influence of modern, western witchcraft – Wicca. The most popular stream in the Russian neo-paganism is the appeal to the Slavic roots and “old Slavic beliefs” of popular culture and imagination. These witches have periodic rituals in the forest or other wild natural settings, worship pagan (usually Slavic) gods and have also some idol of them in the home. Often Slavic folklore is mixed with popular culture and “western” folk tradition (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1. A pumpkin porridge for domovoy (Slavic home spirit) at Halloween; personal blog by a person from Tyumen. 30.10.2014.*

The most popular, widespread and distinct types of witches are “professionals” (psychics, fortune-tellers, healers, etc). These magic specialists-healers earn money for their and organize their work according to a personal timetable and “medical fee schedule” like regular doctors. They are very popular and accepted in Tyumen: “In principle, those who sit with you, talk with you and take 500 roubles... I do not take offense them. They make their money by sitting and talking with you for 30–40 minutes. Psychologists are more expensive” (T.A.).

The forth type are amateur witches. These are ordinary persons, usually female, who practise magic for recreation. They have no supernatural abilities, but they like it and practise it as they imagine it to be. There are no functioning associations or organisations, just some internet groups interested in studying and practicing all sorts of magic. They gather in virtual communities and engage in the resolution of complex problems together, and practise magic to achieve this result. Also, this type may include some ordinary women who do magic only for themselves and occasionally, often because of some accident or negative event in their life. “I believe that they [witches] exist, yes. All women must have such potential. My wife is involved in such things. They have some special internet forums. Then, they give each other a magical quest: find a lost thing or predict something. They even made them.” (C.L.). This is about women (in this case the informant’s wife) who are very interested in magic, leading her to post on special local forums; her “colleagues” then gave to her the tasks and she successfully solved the problem with the help of magic, in her estimation.

The last variant of the image of the witch is the description of a common woman as a witch. Hence, all women are witches by nature and can either develop their skills or not: “So, in the past everyone was a witch” (A.B.). This type of witch may derive from archaic beliefs about female sacral impurity, or the danger and demonization that result from it. Often this option complements the second and fourth points.

## **The Strategies of Constructing the Image of Contemporary Witches**

There is a range of mythological models that can help us understand the image of contemporary witches and the main five descriptions of contemporary magic specialists outlined earlier depend on several of these mythologizing strategies. There is East Slavic traditional, Western traditional, mass-cultural, neo-pagan (or New Age) and Christian models. The mythological strategy or model is a set of traditional or other popular beliefs and characteristics that lead to specific interpretations of everyday happenings as magical.

So, the first and third understandings of the witch are typical for the majority of people. In this case, the first type is common to people who are not personally involved with, or interested in, witchcraft. That is to say, they are not active participants in magic discourse. Their stories and representations are constructed according to the traditional mythological subjects and motifs, and are connected with the East Slavic traditional model.

The second and fourth types are specific to people who believe themselves to be witches, or who want to become such; they are definitely involved in the magic discourse. In many ways, such representations are constructed under the influence of popular culture and contemporary as well as traditional (western) notions, for example, Western traditional (folk), mass-cultural and neo-pagan (or New Age).

We also have the Christian model of perception of witchcraft in the form of demonology, a doctrine of demons and evil spirits, which is characteristic of western traditional patterns of interpretation due to the historical campaign against witchcraft in Catholic Europe.

The demonization of the image of the witch as an outsider with an underlying role of relieving social tensions is becoming much less widespread. Urban witches are included in the modern community both as “professionals” and as ordinary people, women for whom witchcraft is a modern hobby, the fashion for it stimulated by the mass media. Moreover, the attempt to rationalize mythological ideas is common, mainly interpreting magic as interaction with, or manipulation of, different types of energy. The existence of this

energy, according to informants, is scientifically proven, and therefore magic is real (the New Age or neo-pagan model).

Thus, the witch is a very indefinite figure, one which has a variety of names (while the word witch is often avoided) and descriptions, but always defined on the basis of their actions.<sup>4</sup> The construction of these images is based on mythological tropes: East Slavic Traditional, Western traditional, mass-cultural, neo-pagan (or New Age) and Christian, and according to their actions, witches can be categorized into the five types: demons, modern sorcerers, “professional”, amateur witches, and ordinary women.

## **Informants**

Data description scheme: sex, date of birth, ethnicity, birthplace and place of residence (if it is different), date of recording (code number in the author's archive).

**A.B.** – f., 1989, Russian, Artsyz, Ukraine, Tyumen, 2009 (41).

**T.A.** – f., 1969, Russian, Mineralnye Vody, live in Tyumen, 2013 (229).

**C.D.** – f., 1987, Russian, Tyumen, 2012 (56.36).

**F.G.** – f., 1987, Russian, Tyumen, 2012 (56.36).

**H.G.** – m., 1953, Russian, Ishim, Tyumen, 2010 (120 4.5.3).

**J.K.** – f., 1992, Russian, Tyumen region, Tyumen, 2011 (133.4.5.1).

**H.J.** – f., 1991, Russian, Astrakhan, Tyumen, 2011 (55. 4.5.1).

**M.O.** – f., 1987, Russian, Tyumen, 2010 (6).

**C.L.** – m., 1974, Russian, Tyumen, 2012 (231).

## **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Informants' register see at the end of the article.

<sup>2</sup> <http://reibert.info/threads/derevenskie-bajki-vedma.283335/> (Date of access: 29 July 2012); <http://www.nashgorod.ru/forum/viewtopic.php?t=409293> (Date of access: 29 December 2004); <http://72.ru/forum/theme.php?id=602186&p=9#msg10044369> (Date of access: 15 September 2014), etc.

<sup>3</sup> [http://vk.com/m\\_veresk](http://vk.com/m_veresk), <http://vk.com/event48256431> (Date of access: 15 September 2014) and information from some personal accounts of Tyumen's people.

<sup>4</sup> About function of demonological personages see E.E. Levkievskaya (2003).

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## **Magical Beliefs for Stealing the Milk of Animals. A Case-study on the Romanian Villages in Transylvania (18th–19th Centuries)**

**Abstract.** This paper examines the magical beliefs related to deprivation of animals' milk in the Romanian villages of Transylvania, relying mainly on folklore texts and on visual representations. The first part focuses on the connection of different practices with the ritual year, namely the spells and the gestures undertaken by the milk-stealing witches during certain festivals. The second part analyses the iconography of the sinners accused of stealing the milk of cows, included in Last Judgement compositions. These paintings certify the frequency and the predominance of the beliefs associated with milk-theft.

**Key words:** milk theft, magical beliefs, rural sorcery, Transylvania, folklore, iconography of Hell

The aim of the present paper is to analyse the magical beliefs and practices related to milk theft in the Romanian villages of Transylvania, during the 18th and 19th centuries. In researching these beliefs, I have relied mainly on folklore texts and on visual representations. If the documentation of folklore offers important details regarding the magical actions, the iconography certifies the frequency and the predominance of the beliefs associated with snatching milk.

The reports, legends and popular stories collected by ethnographers at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century attest to a great diversity of magical beliefs related to milk theft. In Romanian magical folklore, a very important role is occupied by the narratives which describe the procedures performed by the milk-stealing witches, the actions that aimed to cure their damage and also the magical methods practiced by the villagers to keep the animals safe or to prevent the milk theft. For example, the ethnologist Gheorghe Pavelescu, analysing the popular beliefs in magic from the Apuseni region, has reached the conclusion that the

magical charms regarding the stealing of the yield (*mana*, in Romanian) from cows represent the most frequent subject (Pavelescu 1998: 57). Snatching the milk of animals was considered “a serious crime in an agricultural society” (ed. Golden 2006, vol. 3: 766). Belief in the capacity of witches to thieve milk represented a general and widespread theme, a kind of harm associated with system of village sorcery throughout Europe (ed. Golden 2006, vol. 3: 766).

But this study, due to the vast amount of folkloric material, will focus only on the connection of different magical beliefs with the ritual year, namely the spells and the gestures accomplished by the milk-stealing witches during certain festivals. Even so, to cover so much ground in one paper demands a highly schematic approach.

At certain times of the year magic is known to be overwhelming: special dates of the year are associated not only to individuals witches, but also to harmful magic connected to groups of witches (ed. Golden 2006, vol. 2: 383, vol. 3: 760–761, vol. 4: 1178–1179). Romanian folklore presents rich descriptions regarding magical activities related to certain festive occasions. Among the many bewitchments thought to happen during various holidays the milk spells play an important role, being mentioned very often. In the case of Transylvania, the sources mentioned above accentuate the fact that the milk witches were considered to be very dangerous and active on St. John’s Day, St. George’s Day and St. Andrew’s Day, being accused of taking away the animals’ yield and bringing it to their own cows (Taloş 2001: 167, 138; Gorovei 1915: 176–177, 311; Kádár 2005: 95).

The analysis that I have undertaken on the folklore texts led me to the conclusion that St. George’s Day was the feast when bewitchments related to milk theft were the most frequently practiced. An explanation of this frequency could be related to the fact that during this period the cattle were taken to depasture and the seasonal transhumance of sheep began. The Romanian literature dedicated to the study of the ritual year presents this day as the most important spring holiday, when according to popular beliefs all charms can be made. The folklorists Ioan Toşa and Simona Munteanu have reached the conclusion that at the end of the 19th century, the belief that *mana* was stolen during this celebration was present in all the Romanian villages (Toşa & Munteanu 2003: 108, 116).

For example, a belief states the fact that, during this festival, the milk sorceress took the water from the river which was crossed by sheep flocks. The woman was accused of giving this water to her sheep that aimed at increasing their milk. Other rites were more complex, implying a combination of practices, spells and the touching of the animals. It was said that on St. George's Eve, witches are walking naked in their neighbours' stables. Meanwhile they were saying the name of cows and a spell in which it is mentioned that the animals will only be left with whey and hair, while the witch will get their milk and butter. The woman cut with scissors the hair from the tail and udder, afterwards throwing it in the fire (Toşa & Munteanu 2003: 115–116).

The scholar Eva Pócs mentions that “The correspondence between milk magic and rain magic is most clearly shown through the wide spread beliefs in and rituals of dew picking in central and mainly southeastern Europe” (ed. Golden 2006, vol. 3: 765). Furthermore, she points out that “Throughout the region “picking dew” was a widespread method for taking milk from a neighbour’s cow or grain from his fields on St. John’s Day, St. George’s Day, or on other important agricultural festivals’ (ed. Golden 2006, vol. 2: 528). Regarding the case of Transylvania, the folk narratives present many magical methods of this kind. The rite was taking place either during the night or just before dawn, being performed by naked women. It implied the use of different objects, such as a strainer or a piece of textile, which were pulled over the grass with the aim of collecting the dew. Sometimes, the witches said the following words: *Cum se adună roua de pe câmp aşa se adună mana de la toate vacile numai la vaca mea* “As in this manner the dew is picked from the grass, likewise the milk yield is collected from all the cows bringing it only to my cow” (Toşa & Munteanu 2003: 115–116). The witch took the water from the strainer and gave it to her own animal to drink. In other cases the collected drops of water were putted into a wooden milking bucket (Toşa & Munteanu 2003: 115–116).

During the same festivals, not only the bewitchment practices were thought to be very great in amount and potency, but also the counter-sorcery rites. In order to protect their animals from this type of maleficium, the villages’ inhabitants engaged in a wide variety of magical practices. Some ethnographic reports present the practice



Figure 1. Second part of the eighteenth century, wall painting. The village church of Dobricu Lăpușului. Photo by Raluca Betea.

of burning incense upon cows (Papahagi 1925: 160). Oral tradition attests to one of the most frequent activity: the villagers greased the houses with garlic, the doors and windows of the shelters, and other objects. This procedure stopped the witches entering shelters and touching the animals (Papahagi 1925: 160; Gorovei 1915: 5–6, 112). Among other components, protective magic also involved the custom of hanging branches of briar on gates or on the doors of shelters with the aim of impeding the witches' access (Kádár 2005: 95; Gorovei 1915: 311). Another interesting action is related with St. Andrew's Eve, when Romanian women circled the cows in the direction of the sun, at the same time spreading poppy seeds



Figure 2. End of the eighteenth century, the painter Tiple Popa (?), wall painting. The village church of Corund. Photo by Raluca Betea.

(Gorovei 1915: 349). A further practice implied the gathering of the men, who divided themselves in two groups. From two hills, during the whole night, the villagers were screaming various threats at each other in order to discourage the witches from taking the milk away (Kádár 2005: 95).

If the folklore collected during the 19th and 20th centuries provides us with important information about milk theft beliefs in Transylvanian villages, another source – namely the iconography – will help me to present a more detailed image of this research subject. The iconographic programs of the Romanian village churches to be found in this region are characterized – especially during the 18th century and the first half of the 19th – by a widespread presence of the Last Judgment theme. The quantitative analysis of the sins painted in Hell highlights the depiction of the damned which are guilty of practicing sorcery. The inclusion of sorcery is very relevant, taking into consideration the fact that sinners accused of this transgression are only exceptionally painted among the damned serving their eternal punishment in traditional Byzantine compositions of the Last Judgment. Furthermore, the depiction of sorcery among the sins is not a very common practice in Post-Byzantine compositions of the Last Judgment, a higher frequency of this representation being noticed only in the regions of Galicia, Transcarpathia, Partium, Transylvania and Oltenia.

Up to now, the iconographic analysis I have made on the 18th and 19th century compositions of Hell in Transylvania points out the depiction of 39 representations of the damned performing sorcery. This iconographic study points out that there are several kinds of representations associated with sorcery: the most frequent are those women who steal the milk of cows (18 representations), the depiction of the sorceress/sorcerer (13 representations), the enchantress/enchanter (3 images), the voluntarily childless women who practice magic (3 images), the revenant (1 depiction) and the fortune teller (1 image). These images offer insight into discourse concerning sorcery at village level, providing important information regarding the local practices related to magic. As it may be observed from the outlined statistics, the representations depicting persons who are guilty of snatching cows' milk prevail. The painters from Transylvania incorporated in the scene of Hell those sins which were popular and relevant for the rural communities. But the analysis of these images will also address briefly gender issues, by engaging with the problem of the gendering of sorcery. Of the 39 representations that have been identified, most images (34, that are 87.18%) represent women, and only five of them are men (12.82%). It has to be noted that none of the men is depicted as a milk stealer. This aspect is very

interesting taking into consideration the fact that the Romanian folk narrations often present men accused of bewitching animals.

The majority of those women blamed for stealing the milk of cows are designated through inscriptions which state this fact, as for example “the one who takes the milk of cows” (*care ia laptele vacilor*), “who takes the milk yield” (*care e mana*). In the main, milk sorceresses are depicted receiving punishment individually. But there is one exception: in the church of Almaş-Sălişte the sorceresses, enchanters and women accused of milk theft are painted in a group, together with the robbers and those blamed of sexual sins (Pop-Curşeu 2003: 466).

The majority of the milk stealers are painted with a vessel on their head. An interesting representation is the one in the wooden church of Dobricu Lăpuşului (Figure 1). The woman who deprives cows of their yield is depicted wearing a milk bucket on her head while a devil is sitting on this vessel. This sinner receives also another torture: a snake bites her chest. These two manners of depiction are not singular in the Post-Byzantine iconography. They are to be found in the Carpathian Rus' iconography beginning with an earlier period (Himka 2009: 66, 104–106, 122–123). Besides these manners of representations mentioned above, the painters from Transylvania developed three peculiar designs. Some of these women are accompanied by demons that squeeze their breast milk in a pail (Cehei, Corund, Orţăta, Ulciug) (Figure 2). In the case of the wooden church of Rotăreşti, the sorceress' hands are enchained on the chest while a milking bucket hangs from her neck (Dudaş 1999: 34). In two cases the sinners are attacked by cows: in the church of Poienile Izei two cows butt the body of the sinner, while at Bicaz the woman is strangled with the help of the same animal. Up to now I haven't observed these types of depictions in other geographical regions. That is why they could be considered elements of innovation which singularize the iconography of sorcery to be found in the regions of Transylvania.

The many depictions which present persons who stole the cows' milk wearing a bucket on their heads, emptying the milk container and sometimes attacked by cows, or accompanied by demons who squeeze their breast milk in a vessel, are directly associated with the sin committed. So in this respect there is a tendency to match

the torment with the transgression. Furthermore, it is most interesting to notice in these paintings the presence of the same objects, animals and actions which are to be found in the folk narratives. Accompanying the witches, these characteristics play an important role in the identification process performed by the viewers.

These visual representations played an important part in the moralizing discourse of the church which made use of the believers' fear of Hell to preserve them from sin (Minois 1998: 98). Especially during the 18th century when the majority of the paintings were produced, the visual discourse initiated by the Eastern rite Churches from Transylvania was determined to produce a negative image of sorcery, which was considered a great sin, leading to eternal damnation. But in order to reveal the whole religious discourse related to the sin of sorcery, which was made known by means of the visual images and to understand all its aspects, I now propose to examine briefly the religious texts.

The lack of studies dedicated to the written discourse of the Romanian Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches makes it difficult to reach firm conclusions. The analysis I have made points out that, in comparison with the visual discourse, until the beginning of the 19th century the written discourse of the Church proved to be quite tolerant. The issues of magical beliefs, sorcery and their condemnation were rarely mentioned in the religious texts, revealing the fact that during this period, the condemnation of sorcery was not a subject of organized propaganda. Only with the beginning of the 19th century an increased number of religious texts record a critique against those practicing magic (Mușlea 1972: 403; Brătescu 1988: 306, 309; Șincai 1964: 34, 36).

The study I made in this paper led me to more conclusions. As the analysis of both the folklore and the iconography has shown that, in the region of Transylvania during the 18th and 19th centuries, the magical beliefs related with milk theft were the most important and frequent, this being a typical misdeed in village communities. The spells and the gestures used by the milk-stealing witches show a great diversity, implying not only individual but also collective actions, from touching, symbolic actions like mimicking milking and the usage of different objects. The analysis I made proved the fact

that different motifs – the cow, the wooden bucket, milking – were present not only in the oral tradition, but also in the visual discourse.

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## **Treasure and Drache. Ritual and Economy in the Early Modern Period**

**Abstract.** The paper compares two sets of magical beliefs that had to do with the economic aspects of magic: treasure hunting and the belief in the Drache, a household spirit in the shape of a snake or dragon. The paper focuses on German sources, mostly trial records, from the early modern period. The courts treated treasure hunters very leniently, even though they used ritual magic. Alleged Drache owners were sent to the stake as witches. The reason for this was that aggressive economic behaviour was seen as evidence of witchcraft.

**Key words:** devil, dragon, economy, treasure, witchcraft

This text will compare two sets of beliefs and practices associated with economic magic: treasure hunting and Drache lore. The German word *Drache* could mean ‘dragon’. However, the term was also used for a spirit very like the Hungarian Lidércz or the Baltic Aitvaras. This Drache was said to bring its master money, grain, or other readily saleable or usable goods. All my source materials were written in the 16th to 18th centuries. They include German criminal trials as well as learned texts by theologians, lawyers and scientists. This paper aims to discover what role magical rituals played in treasure hunting and Drache beliefs.

In the early modern period, treasure hunting was a magical activity. Treasure hunters used a host of magical implements, including divining rods, swords, mirrors, as well as lengthy incantations. Treasure magicians indiscriminately called on demons and saints. Both types of non-human agents had to be invoked, placated, urged to help and to be dismissed in much the same ritual manner. There were innumerable versions of the so-called St. Christopher Prayer, an often lengthy litany-like spell which implored Christ and the saints, especially the popular holy giant Christopher to help the treasure hunters. St. Christopher was asked to protect the treasure hunters from any harm, to keep evil spirits away from them and

to lead them safely to the treasure. Treasure hunts often started with a hunt for the right magical text. Like many other magicians, treasure hunters seem to have felt a desperate need to get things “right”. The ritual employed was of paramount importance for the success of the treasure hunt. A magician leading a treasure hunt near Swabian Böblingen in 1679 discovered the treasure site with a divining rod over which he had said a secret spell. Protected against evil spirits by a lead tablet, he drew a magical circle with some symbols in it on the ground with a sword, put birch twigs on the edge of the circle and recited a lengthy conjuration in a foreign language. Only after this ceremony were the other treasure hunters allowed to start digging but they had to observe the strictest ritual silence. Before a treasure hunt could even start, treasure hunters were advised to pray together regularly and to engage in ritual fasting. The expert treasure magician, the leading figure in every group of treasure hunters, took on a role resembling that of a priest. Indeed, Catholic priests were said to be the best treasure magicians. Obviously, the rituals used by treasure magicians were not those of the church. The leadership of both churches condemned the treasure hunters’ rituals as most blatant abuses of liturgy. Arguably, treasure hunting was the most elaborate and most ritual type of folk magic (Dillinger 2012: 85–113).

With all of that elaborate ritual, the need to find the “right” incantation and the “right” expert magician or priest, treasure hunters were easy to spot. The rather obvious magic treasure hunters used attracted the attention of the authorities. Of course, in the early modern period magic was unlawful and – at least in legal and theological theory – a punishable offense. Most of the things we know about the treasure hunters’ rituals we know from trial records. It is one of the most remarkable results of the historical research into treasure hunting that treasure seekers were as a rule not regarded as witches. Even though they clearly used elaborate magical rituals, even though they abused liturgy, even though some of them indubitably tried to invoke demons, treasure hunters were usually not accused of witchcraft. Many treasure hunters had to stand trial. However, apart from very few exceptions, magical treasure hunting was punished very leniently. Most culprits were condemned to a fine, short spells in prison or a couple of weeks of forced labour for superstition or non-malevolent magic (Dillinger 2012: 114–146).

The first reason for this very lenient treatment was that the ritual magic of treasure hunters served innocuous purposes. The rituals were about finding the place where a treasure might be hidden and about coming into contact with the treasure's spirit guardians. The rituals were – in the literal sense of these words – harmless and otherworldly. The treasure hunters' magic was supposed to give them knowledge and power. However, that power was power over parts of the spirit world; it did not include any direct tangible advantages in the everyday world. Even though the point of treasure hunting was material gain, the treasure magic as such did not interfere with the material world. What is more, treasure hunting and the rituals connected with it did not interfere with anybody's property. Where the treasure actually came from was hardly ever discussed. It was a gift from the spirit world or had belonged to some person that had died so long ago that nobody could claim the inheritance. At any rate, before it was discovered, the treasure was not regarded as part of the pool of material goods available to society (Dillinger 2012: 190–203).

At first glance, it might seem questionable to compare the treasure hunts including their rituals with Drache magic as treasure hunts really took place while the Drache was merely a figment of the early modern imagination. Still, we might analyse the imaginary rituals implied or suggested by the Drache belief itself.

People claimed to have seen the Drache fly over the night sky. The Drache supposedly had a massive head and a long tail that looked like a pole. Even though the Drache did not breathe fire like a medieval dragon, it threw sparks and looked like fire against the dark night sky (Friedrich 1995: 56–58). The Drache flew through a window or through the chimney into its master's house. It spat out money or goods that could be used directly or sold like grain or milk. The Drache did not bring the goods for free. It expected some kind of reward, usually food. The Drache was fed like a household spirit i.e. a plate of food had to be left for it to find somewhere in or near the house. If the master of a Drache spirit failed to reward it, it could burn down the house thanks to its fiery nature. Where did the goods the Drache brought come from? The sources are very clear about this point. Indeed, they emphasize this detail: The Drache stole the money and all the other goods it brought to its master

from somebody else. In a way, the Drache was the embodiment of transfer magic: It took goods magically from their original owner and gave them to the person it was in league with. Some early modern German peasants used counter-magic to keep the Drache from taking their belongings (Staatsarchiv Coburg, LAF 12534, 12535, 12542, 12546; Luven 2001: 86, 148–156; Hammius 1650: no page numbers; Schmidt 1988: vol. 1, 15–16, 26–27, 177–180, 460–463; Linhart 1995: 213–267).

Other than the feeding and the predictable behaviour of the Drache, Drache beliefs did not imply any rules or rituals. The sources never mention that anyone claimed to have seen alleged Drache owners engaging in mysterious behaviour one might understand as a ritual. The defendants themselves did not mention any rituals connected with the Drache. Rituals of any kind did not play any role in the genesis of rumours about a certain person having a Drache.

It was desperately easy to interpret the Drache as a demon. The Biblical term *δράκων* that was used as a metaphor for Satan was translated into German as *Drache*. Most of the sources mentioning the Drache are trial records from witch trials. Owners of Drachen were said to be in league with the Devil. In Saxony and Northern Bavaria owning a Drache was a common accusation brought against men and women suspected of witchcraft (Dillinger, forthcoming). When a woman from Saxony explained the term *Drache* as ‘milk devil and grain devil’ (*Milch- und Kornteufel*) in 1652, she stressed the diabolic nature of the spirit. A witch trial that took place as early as 1536 in Brücken in Saxony identified the Drache and the witch’s demon lover, the Buhlteufel: The culprit confessed that she had had “sex with the Drache which came to her once every week on Thursday evening in the shape of a handsome young man whom she fed butter and cheese which the Drache itself had always brought to her and when it wanted to fly away again, it laid a handful of money on the table.” Apparently, this Drache could transform into a human being (Wilde 2003: 113–114, 204, 267). In stark contrast to treasure hunters, alleged masters or mistresses of Drachen were condemned as witches and suffered the death penalty.

How did rumours about the Drache originate? Any rituals that might have invited suspicion did not take place, so why did people think that one of their neighbours had a Drache? At first glance,

people seem to have thought that one of their fellow villagers had a Drache simply because they had seen the Drache. Witnesses in witch trials explained time and again that they had seen the Drache fly into the defendant's house. In a 1611 trial from Coburg alleged contact with the Drache played an important role: The Drache was said to go "like a friend to and fro" from the defendant's house, indeed to come to her "every day in the evening" (Staatarchiv Coburg, LAF 12542). A woman from the Rodach region was rumoured to be a witch in 1670 because "the Drache had come flying often and at various times into her father's house [...] Thus the longer the more a general suspicion had been voiced that the culprit could not be free of witchcraft." (Friedrich 1995: 95).

Contemporary scientists explained Drache sightings as meteorological phenomena (Francus 1624, Hammius 1650, Lagerlöf 1685, Mylius 1653). We might follow their lead here. However, on a deeper level, we find social characteristics alleged Drache witches shared. All people said to have a Drache had recently enjoyed some economic success. They produced more milk or butter than the livestock they actually owned seemed to allow. They were well-off and even able to lend money at interest even though they only worked in rather humble professions. A good example would be Hans Adam Gemeiths from a town near Eisenach who was said to have a Drache in 1672. Though Gemeiths had gone from door to door begging for bread only a few years previously, he had purchased a number of fields recently and was even able to lend others money at interest (Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar, EA, Rechtspflege, Nr 1563). The Drache helped to explain why some householders did a lot better than their neighbours: They had a Drache working for them. As the 17th century lawyer Goldast wrote: "The common man usually says that people who become rich swiftly and without any problems have a Drache ... that helps them to win honour and riches" (Goldast 1661: vol. 1, 26–27, 177–180). In 1636, the theologian Paul Einhorn explained that Drache spirits that bring "grain and goods" were "today still owned by many" people in the Baltics. Einhorn regarded the Drachen as demons the apparent economic desirability of which made them "evil and horrible idols of wealth" (Luven 2001: 145–156). The village was not willing to accept that some people enjoyed greater economic success than others because of their skill, frugality or hard work. Rather, the village explained the

surplus wealth as gifts brought to them by the demonic Drache. To make things worse, all the goods the Drache brought to its master it had stolen from someone else: The Drache witch directly harmed his/her neighbours. Drache rumours were radically negative interpretations of profit-oriented behaviour.

The true difference between the treasure magician and the Drache magician was that they stood for different economic outlooks and styles of behaviour. People who used magical rituals in order to find treasure wanted to get rich, but they did not take anything away from anybody else. Indeed, they seemed to have found ways of improving their economic situation that even avoided competition. The money they hoped to get came from the spirit world. It was not taken out of the pool of goods and money available to society. In contrast to that, Drache rumours literally demonized “selfish”, one might say proto-capitalist economic behaviour. They explained material gain in the most negative way as magical thievery. When courts and communities punished magic, they indirectly sanctioned not rituals, but economic behaviour. Indeed, our results suggest that concrete, practical witch hunts – not the witchcraft theory – were not about magic but rather sanctioned unwanted behaviour interpreted as evidence for a pact with the devil.

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## **Magic versus Rational Reasoning in Anecdotal Tale**

**Abstract.** The paper analyzes an international plot known in different regional versions. The text focuses on the trickster tale about the silly woman who after a series of absurd actions suddenly gets rich by winning a pot of gold. The individual episodes of the story are compared with field recordings. The paper reveals their original meaning as magical practices. Special attention is paid to smashing of pottery and its symbolic value. After the analysis of the short story a particular direction in the definition and description of the anecdote as an oral genre is proposed.

**Key words:** healing, magic, smashing pottery, shamaness.

The definition of the anecdotal genre is fraught with a number of difficulties that are exacerbated due to the different meanings of the term in various European traditions (see for discussion Moeser 2002: 31–38; Meletinskij 1998: 319–324). Diverse approaches were used by literary critics and folklorists, but there is no commonly accepted description, which outlines the main characteristics of this genre.

In this paper I discuss a short story, which is known in many regional versions. The text is a combination of N 1009, 1381, 1385, 1386, 1387, 1653G in the Aarne-Thompson tale type index.

The different versions include between 4 and 10 episodes, usually about seven. All of them are encountered either separately or in combination with other stories in Europe and Asia. The elements of the plot are compared with field recordings. An attempt is made to analyze their original meaning as healing practices, elements of funeral rituals, of shamanic initiation, etc. The symbolism of the practices is presented, as well as the variety of the codes used. Special attention is paid to the use of verbal magic.

The summary of the plot runs as follows. A stupid woman leaves her husband's shirt on a rose hip bush and orders that they should be taken to him in the field. Angry at the lack of results, she takes

an axe and cuts the bush, but at its roots she finds a pot of gold that she takes for yellow shit. Her husband brings the fortune home, telling his stupid wife that in fact her finding is overseas lentils. In order to hide the gold, he puts the silly woman in a pit, covers it with a rug and afterwards he disperses grains over the mat and lets the hens peck the grain.

The woman is told that a bloody, large, hen's hail is on. She looks through a hole in the rug out of curiosity. The hens peck out one of her eyes. On the next day, with the hidden money she buys a whole cart of pots, puts them on the stakes of the garden fence and breaks them, because they don't want to squeeze and make room for the last jagged pot. Her angry husband takes her to the forest, buries her in a pit, blurs her eyes with tar in the hope to blind her and get rid of her.

The pit, however, proves to be among a robbers' gathering place. The fire set by the criminals melts the tar, she begins to see and her inappropriate shouts chase the robbers away; she becomes the owner of their stolen gold. She comes back home, where her husband leaves her to guard the door while he goes to provide an explanation for the treasure found. Meanwhile she takes off the door, puts it on her back and heads for the *qadi* (the Turkish judge). She states before him that the gold has been found during the large hail, which has beaten out her eye, and evidently his as well, as he happens to be one-eyed. Declared insane because of her foolish talk, she arrives home undisturbed and retains the gold (for a detailed bibliography on all Bulgarian versions see Daskalova-Perkovska et al. 1993: 544–546).

Because of the limited space I will discuss in detail only the symbolism of the actions associated with smashed pottery. The other episodes will be analyzed in further publications.

### Healing by Smashing Pottery

I will just start with a few words about the motive of the rose hip bush. In the 20th century a number of field recordings in Bulgarian lands were made of the following healing practices. People who suffered from a long-lasting disease or delicate children went out of the village accompanied by a closed relative and stripped

naked. After that they squeezed through a rose hip branch three times. Meanwhile the companion put their old clothes on the bush. Both the ill person and the companion ran fast away. Near the village the sick put on new clothes and returned home (*Bulgarska narodna medicina* 2013: 29, 59). Obviously, the plot of the stupid woman's follies cited above represents healing practices popular at the time the anecdote was recorded. For lack of space I will not discuss interpretations of semantics, but I will focus on the next motive – the smashed pottery, which is also known from records of the twentieth century.

The breaking of a clay jar in the aforementioned story is very similar to the ritual of healing a Dragon's love. Here is a typical field recording in this respect:

According to the informant the dragon has wings. As a handsome young man he appears at night in the dreams of a pretty maiden, who begins to fade and turn yellow. Such a maiden is taken to a sorceress. In order to heal her, the old woman picks the herb Dahlia, willow gentian, sweet clover, common tancy and cooks them together in a pot. In the black vault of night the maiden, her mother and the old woman go to the river. There the girl is stripped naked. The old woman fills three times a spoon and gives the portion to the girl. The ritual is performed in total silence. The maiden gets startled and the dragon cannot visit her any more as she smells like those herbs. Finally the old woman breaks the pot on a rock by the river and says:

*Water brought it.*

*Water took it away.*

*As the pot cracks, the dragon cracks too. So they put on the fence of the yard broken pots to crack evil.*

(Todorova-Pirgova 2003: 500)

Here the smashing of pottery is aimed at breaking off the relationship between the maiden and the dragon. For the analysis of its semantics I will pay attention to the spreading of this practice in other rituals, mainly on the basis of Slavic folklore material.

Smashing of dishes is present at the folk wedding. In Ukraine, the morning after the wedding night the groom breaks the pots with a stick, and his best men go on breaking them to smaller

pieces (Potebnya 1865: 70). In Poland, while the women are putting a hat on the bride, the best men are breaking jars and bowls on the closed door and even shooting (<http://tradycjepodkarpacia.pl/obrzedy-rodzinne/obrzedy-weselne/149-oczepiny.html>). When the mountaineers of the Czech wood are taking the newly married to their own house, the driver breaks a pot on the drawbar (Żmigrodzki 1907: 221).

Smashing pottery is not only part of weddings, but also of funeral rituals. In Ukraine, in the villages in Transnistria, when the deceased husband is taken away from home, his wife breaks a new dish and strews oats throughout the house; this is interpreted as the loss of fertility in the family (Potebnya 1865: 71). Smashing of a pot, used by the deceased, or the jar where the candles were put during the wake, is practiced also in East Serbia and Montenegro. It is believed that the sound of broken pots has a protective function and wards off evil forces, including the souls of the departed (Lozanova 1989: 135, 222).

Besides in family rituals, an analogue of the stupid woman's actions can be found in calendar rituals. On Christmas Eve, for example, after dinner men take out glowed pots in the yard, break them in the ground and/or bang them with sticks to drive poverty away (Potebnya 1865: 71). In Poland, in the period before Easter a symbolic funeral of *jur* (a traditional Polish vegetable dish) is performed as youths smash pots of *jur* (or ashes and dirt) against the walls or doors of the house (Kolberg 1867: 214). In Bulgaria, a clay pot is smashed when the farmers start for the field to sow, and after the completion of the harvest (Nikolova 1999: 73, 93).

We find the motive in various Slavic healing practices. In Eastern Polessie stolen pots and pitchers are thrown in a well to induce rain (*Slavyanskie drevnosti* 1995: 529).

From the foregoing it is clear that breaking pottery is part of actions at weddings and funerals. It is also present in sowing and harvesting rituals, as well as in rituals aimed at inducing rain. It is seen that some of the practices almost entirely replicate the actions of the healer in the magic ritual (from the field recording), as well as the inadequate behaviour of the stupid woman.

Let us focus on their semantics. The pot is one of the symbols of the human body because of the analogy between the clay it was made from, and the material from which the first man was created. Although in the Old Testament, this role is assigned to God the Father, more ancient versions of the same myth (of Mesopotamia) always involved female deities in the creation of people (Antonova 1984: 121–123). The analogy between pottery and human body is clearly seen in proverbs. Anthropomorphic pottery found at archaeological excavations support these language considerations (Rybakov 1987: 78). The pot is not just an analogue of the human body; it is directly related to the female bosom as a shell of certain content that gives life (Antonova 1984: 125). The pot is related to motherhood, the creative principle and hence it is associated with the heavenly water supporting fertility in agricultural societies. Clouds are perceived as containers storing and pouring the grace of rain on the earth.

This connection is evident in numerous prohibitions and regulations in agricultural societies.

Each healing is a particularization of the creation myth (Dow 1986: 60). It is considered as travelling to the underworld, accompanied with reduction of the body, and a subsequent return and creation of a new healthy body. The healing practices repeat the basic creation myth (the formation of the first humans from clay). With the breaking of the pot mentioned in the field recording, the sick body of the maiden is destroyed in order to get rid of the disease. At the same time the pot substitutes the body of the dragon.

Such magical practices were carried out between the third and second millennium BC in the East. In ancient Egypt, for example, jars and clay figures are preserved bearing texts aimed at the destruction of the Pharaoh's enemies, threatening the borders of his kingdom. After saying the corresponding curses the jars were broken (Korostovcev 1976: 36).

As Watkins showed convincingly, the Indo-Europeans practiced three types of magic healing – knife magic, herbal magic, and formulaic magic (Watkins 1995: 537–539), the latter being the most powerful and curing all diseases, physical or metaphysical, which were deemed controllable by the spoken word (Watkins 1995: 540).

In our field record two of the old Indo-European types are preserved. The herbs Dhalia, willow gentian, sweet clover, and common tansy play a great role in healing practices, because of their chthonic nature. It could be supposed that the herbs obtain their apotropaic function because of their strong aroma. Propp's analysis of the smell of the living and dead will be appropriate here. As the living and dead are invisible to each other, they identify each other's presence by the smell of their bodies. Because the stink of death is unbearable for the living, it is reciprocally considered that death could not stand the smell of those who are alive (Propp 1946: 165–166). Our sorceress is breaking the relationship between the maiden and the dragon by masking her through the change of her smell.

Although the herb magic is performed in total silence, the breaking of the pot (the action code, which was already analyzed in details) is accompanied with an incantation. The utterance of the sorceress is formulaic in nature. It has a typical bipartite structure, in which the two sentences are connected by syntactic parallelism. Each of the word strings consist of two separate items, and the second phrase repeats the first, altering only the prefix of the verb by replacing it with its opposite: *voda donelo* 'water brought **it**', *voda zanelo* 'water took **it** away'.

This word organization assures also the rhythm of the phrase. The name of the supernatural creature, i.e. the dragon, is tabooed and is intentionally skipped in the text. A perfect verb form is used in order to announce the termination of the illness as well as the fact that the result has already taken place. Euphemistically a neuter form is employed, which is used when speaking of the dead and the forces of the other world in order to diminish and neutralize them as inanimate.

It seems that the relationship between pottery, rain, snake and conjugal relations is known not only among Indo-European and Semitic tribes. Lévi-Strauss (1996: 30) quotes a myth of the Hidatsa – (a tribe in North America), which justifies the ritual aimed at provoking rainfall. The practice was initiated by the lake wife of the hero, who visited him at night. The procedure was performed with two jars – one masculine and one feminine.

The Hidatsa stretched skins over the openings of their secret jars, which they used as drums; the name of the ceremony came from the tying of these drumheads on the jars. This ceremony was a ritual asking for rain. The performers ran a vibrating instrument along a tree trunk carved to represent a snake with notches on its back; the noise produced sounded like the Snakes when they bring rain. Drummers also played on the two jars.

Smashing pottery on the fence is a weather magic. Obviously, we wrongly ignored the assumptions related to noise from broken pottery and the ritual function of the sound of breaking jars. Banging pots with a stick is imitative. It reproduces thunder itself, imitating its sound in order to induce it. Smashing pottery provokes precipitation.

That magical practice is used as a cure of Dragon's love, which corresponds to certain neuropsychological disorders (as epilepsy, schizophrenia, and others). It is noteworthy that the healing herbs have a beneficial effect on the nervous system. Based on all these considerations, we can make the assumption that in the story discussed the stupid woman is a shamaness possessed by ritual madness. She performs rituals aimed at ensuring favourable climate conditions. Perhaps the same ritual was used as a magical practice for the treatment of a certain type of disease (particularly mental illnesses).

### **Conclusion: Towards a New Definition of the Anecdote**

Although the anecdote has been defined by comparing two types of thinking (Ruskova 1987: 164–198), such as the collision of two ideological positions, analysis of the magic layer in the plot showed that there is no sharp transition between the magical and the rational mind. A notion of ritual madness as foolishness is developed within traditional culture and it is one of the signs of magical thinking.

One third of the anecdotes in the catalogue of Aarne-Thompson can be analyzed, I suggest, as ritual practices, which the story presents as moral conflicts. For example, the anecdote of the evil daughter-in-law who forced her mother-in-law to plow, harnessing her like an animal, corresponds to the practice of relieving severe agony by having the patient wear a harness. In another anecdote

the laziness of Gypsies is illustrated with a story as follows: when God was giving land to people, they sowed boiled wheat so that it would not grow and thus get rid of the heavy agricultural work. This story corresponds to the custom to sow boiled wheat on the grave a few days after the funeral as a measure against transmigration. What is the reason for such a correspondence, and whether can it serve as the basis for a new type of definition of anecdote, given its origin, is a task for future research.

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Magic and Rituals  
in  
Family Tradition



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## **Ritual Year of Godparents and Godchildren in Contemporary Society in Lithuania**

**Abstract.** In analysis of the functioning of the institution of godparents, I attempt to reveal some of the features of the interaction of godparents and godchildren during festivals. In recent years, the relations of godparents and godchildren is ritualized not only with the godchild going to First Communion, graduating from school or getting married, but also through annual recurring holidays. During these holidays, the ties between godparents and godchildren are strengthened much more, which creates the opportunity for the concept of “the ritual year of godparents and godchildren” to function.

**Key words:** ritual year, godparents, godchildren, Lithuania

In traditional society, there was a common belief that the future of a newborn child may be determined by the behaviour, appearance, moral values of his/her godparent as well as by the gifts for the godchild. Their future contact was considered as an important factor in the past and it is still significant nowadays. Godparents play an important role in crucial moments of their godchildren’s life. The role of godparents is also given prominence during calendar festivals.

In this article, in analysing how the institution of godparents functions in the perspective of the ritual year, I will endeavour to reveal some of the features of the interaction of godparents and godchildren during festivals. This study is based on previous research, archival material, and the ethnographic fieldwork conducted by the author in recent years.

### **The Institution of Godparents in Lithuania**

Ariane Kemkes, analyzing godparent-godchildren ties in East Prussia, came to the conclusion that fictive kin, when carefully selected, can play an important role in securing mutual assistance and protection (Kemkes 2010: 47–54). We can find analogies in Lithuania.

At the end of the 19th century – beginning of the 20th century the functioning of the institution of godparents in Lithuanian culture consisted of several moments: 1. The selection of the godparents, solemn invitation and consent to participate, 2. Preparation for baptism (preparation of the gifts), 3. Participation in the church ceremony, 4. The ritual actions undertaken before and after baptism, by which one sought to protect the godchild from possible dangers, 5. The duties of the godparents to their wards throughout their lives. All these aspects are related to folk beliefs and magical actions, allegedly able to determine the future of the godchild and godparents (Paukštytė 1999a: 173).

Already seeking to be invited as a godmother, a girl avoided sitting on a log, was afraid that someone would sweep her feet with trash, would strike her with a mop or rag. She herself would try to eat the ends of bread or after bread was placed into the oven to bake, rushed to carry outside the baker's peel and kneading trough. Until now, the invitation to be godparents is considered a great honour, but it is thought that a justifiable reason to refuse to be a godmother is the pregnancy of the woman (Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2007: 52; Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2009: 50; Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2012: 64). At the end of the 20th – the beginning of the 21st centuries, studies of urban and rural situations showed that among the young respondents the beliefs are still known that the refusal to become a godparent may have negative consequences for the child and the person declining. It was claimed that in the case of refusal, the life of the baby may be unhappy or he may become sick. In some areas of Lithuania, the beliefs are related that in the case of a refusal to be a godparent one may be unsuccessful in one's life, or his house "can be attacked by mice" or "be plagued by rats". The magical power of godparenthood is associated with girls avoiding to be the godmother of a girl for the first time, because of the fear of remaining an old maid. Or it was believed that after the girl marries, her married life might not be successful. The prohibition of a dating couple from being godparents so that they do not separate was also known (Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2007: 26; Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2009: 26, Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2012: 30–31).

Both in the past and now, considerable significance was attached to the formation of further mutual interaction between the godparents-

godchildren. In recent years, as migration abroad increased, it has become more difficult to ensure this cooperation, so therefore immediate family began to be invited as godparents more often, further reinforcing the links of “spiritual kinship” (Paukštytė-Šaknienė 1997: 24). On the other hand, up to the present day in society, the belief remains that the godchild inherits the attributes of the godfather and godmother. So, loving parents, even when inviting close relatives (to be godparents of their child) draws attention to their moral characteristics (Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2009: 24). When selecting godparents, one aims for the future godparents and godchild to agree well and to cooperate as often as possible.

### **Easter of Godparents and Godchildren**

Ethnographic sources of the end of the 19th – beginning of 20th centuries often mention the role of the godparent when the godchild is receiving First Communion, marrying or dying, however, there is only fragmentary mention about the annually occurring calendar and family holidays, bringing godparents and godchildren closer to each other. In Lithuanian villages, from all annually occurring calendar and family holidays only Easter was an exclusive calendar holiday when the godparents and godchildren communication was important.

Many ethnologists link the symbolism of eggs with pre-Christian beliefs. In the opinion of N.M. Listova, the ritual gift of an egg, like other products of the world in which there are embryos of a future life, had a magical meaning (Listova 1983: 164). On the other hand according to Agapkina and Belova it was the most widespread Easter gift (Agapkina, Belova 2012: 628). In Lithuania, as in many European countries, according to the ethnologist I.R. Merkienė, this gift could be provided as an intimate gift for a boy, as a required gift for the godchild, one's own children and those of neighbours, or with holy hymns, greetings to a group of visiting people (Merkienė 1999: 199–201). However, in these cases, we would distinguish the Easter eggs given to godchildren. This custom at the end of the 19th – the beginning of the 20th century was spread with the same frequency in all the ethnographic regions of Lithuania (Paukštytė 1999: 124).

The ethnologist Juozas Kudirka states that it was the Easter duty of the godmother to give an Easter egg to her godchild. In some places, the godfather also had to give gifts to his godchildren. The godparents themselves would visit small children, while older (especially boys) would visit them (Kudirka 1992: 64). In southern Lithuania, godmothers baked and gave out small rolls on Holy Saturday, which was called “the roll of godchildren” (Marcinkevičienė, Mukaitė, Vakarinienė, 2006: 130). In these areas, it was the custom to give godchildren two eggs also on St. George’s day (during Easter one egg and one roll) (Marcinkevičienė, Mukaitė, Vakarinienė, 2006: 185). Sometimes the Easter visits of godparents would last until the Sunday after Easter (Kudirka 1992: 92). In some places in Lithuania, godparents would also donate eggs on Pentecost Sunday (Marcinkevičienė, Mukaitė, Vakarinienė 2006: 476). Hence the custom of egg-giving could be linked to all the calendar holidays, during which eggs were traditionally decorated. This forms the assumption that a special significance was granted to the gift of an egg. Beliefs also illustrate the importance of the egg. It was thought that a person would be without luck in life if he did not give eggs to children during Easter (Daunoraitė 2011: 29). Or it was said that during this holiday two Easter eggs must be given to godchildren so that there would be harmony in the families of godparents (Marcinkevičienė, Mukaitė, Vakarinienė 2006: 476). Ethnographic material shows that godparents tried to give the most beautiful eggs to their godchildren. Godchildren would especially cherish the carefully embossed eggs given by their godparents (Daunoraitė 2011: 29). They were granted exceptional value and sometimes were not even eaten. According to one woman, in her childhood the Easter egg received from her godfathers was as expensive, as “half of the estate”, and if it was decorated with ornament of flowers, rues and roses, the child receiving such a gift only rejoiced and jumped (Marcinkevičienė, Mukaitė, Vakarinienė 2006: 442).

### **The Ritual Year of Godparents and Godchildren**

One should note that until the 20th century, young children in Lithuanian villages were not spoiled with gifts. With the exception of Easter (sometimes shepherds were paid for work on Pentecost), in the other calendar holidays there was no tradition of giving.

However, from the beginning of the 20th century, the number of annually recurring opportunities appropriate for the mutual interaction of godparents and godchildren increased, forming new rituals. At the end of the 19th – the beginning of the 20th centuries in rural Lithuania the celebrations of name day began to spread, then around the 1920s–1930s, of birthdays. However, this process was slow. According to the data from the investigations of Žilvytis Šaknys, for Aukštaitija in 1920–1940, neither name days nor birthdays were celebrated in many places (Šaknys 2008: 23). Around this time, the custom of Christmas gifts began to spread. In some places the godparents went to greet their godchildren on the second day of Christmas, while older children would come by themselves (Kudirka 1993: 202). In Soviet times, after the beginning of opposition to religious traditions, the custom of New Year gift-giving was generally introduced (Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2013: 319; Senvalytė 2013: 101–121).

According to the data from ethnographic research in 2002–2009 from all the regions of Lithuania, we can say that the occasions when godchildren were visited were similar in all of Lithuania. In addition to the greetings for First Communion, graduation from school, marriage – godchildren are visited every year: on the holidays of birthdays, name days and calendar feasts. At the beginning of the 21st century, the greeting on the occasion of the birthday became most frequent. This tendency has become dominant throughout Lithuania. Meanwhile, the custom of greeting on the occasion of name day is rapidly disappearing (Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2012: 46). However, godchildren are still quite frequently visited on calendar holidays. In south-eastern Lithuania, the custom of giving out decorated Easter eggs to godchildren is still alive now. However, new trends of giving – often in addition to eggs, candy is also given to children, and sometimes the chicken eggs are replaced by chocolate ones. 10 or 20 litai bills are attached to the eggs (MFL 2335; 2365).

According to the affirmation of one woman, it is required to give not only Easter eggs to godchildren, but it is important also to provide a gift (MFL 2335/21). So the Easter egg is now often not perceived as a gift. In the tradition of giving, the influence of other countries is also observed. Following a German custom, sometimes children are invited to look for the gifts brought by the Easter Rabbit (Frank

2004: 121). A woman from West Lithuania related that for some time she has been making an “Easter nest” on Easter morning. In her garden under shrubs, trees, she places a 2-litas coin. Then at one time she summons her children and a godchild and everyone goes to look for gifts (MFL 2338/76). In individual cases, gifts are also handed out on the Sunday after Easter, New Year’s Day and even St. Valentine’s Day. But a much more important holiday when godchildren are visited has become Christmas. This trend can also be seen in the city. Research on the situation in the city of Vilnius at the beginning of the 21st century showed the spread of the tradition of giving godchildren gifts during Christmas. Although godparents still sometimes give an Easter egg or a chocolate bunny during Easter, Christmas and the birthday have become the main celebrations during which godchildren are welcomed. On these occasions, toys, clothes, and most often money are given. However, as Listova noted, candy, toys and money are a significant desacralization of the gift institution in calendar rites (1983: 175).

In the perspective of calendar years, the occasions are revealed ever more often when godchildren welcome their godparents. At the beginning of the 21st century, the number of holidays during which they are welcomed is increasing. Respondents indicated not only Easter, but also Christmas, New Year (during these holidays, gifts are often exchanged), birthdays and name days of godparents. Such opportunities for honouring godparents as Mother’s Day, Father’s Day have been formed (Kudirka 1994). Also, in rare cases, godmothers are also welcomed on International Women’s Day. From the latter holidays, Mother’s Day is most often distinguished. This holiday is becoming a good opportunity to remember godmothers, to bring them flowers or give other gifts. For example, a woman born in 1981 from Nida (Western Lithuania) emphasized that one must welcome the godmother on Mother’s Day, because the godmother is a second mother. Meanwhile, godfathers on the occasion of Father’s Day are welcomed significantly less (MFL 2339/4).

The gifts offered by children to their godparents are quite modest, often made by the children themselves. For example, according to the affirmation of a woman from East Lithuania, she usually received an Easter egg and a card from her godchild at Easter. A female respondent from South Lithuania would receive as gift drawings,

flowers, for her birthday, name day and Mother's day. According to information another woman from this region, during Christmas and Easter, godparents receive paintings and handicrafts as well as gifts. In the recent past, the greetings of godparents or godchildren living further away by mail or phone are already changing with greetings by e-mail and an SMS message (MFL 2235).

So the importance of calendar and family holidays as opportunities for interaction between godparents and godchildren remains relevant in the society of Lithuania today.

### **Conclusions**

The relations of godparents and godchildren are ritualized not only with the godchild going to First Communion, graduating from school or getting married, but also through the annual recurring holidays. During these holidays, the ties of godparents and godchildren are strengthened much more, which creates the opportunity for the concept of "the ritual year of godfathers and godchildren" to function.

### **Archive**

MFL – Manuscript fund of Lithuanian Institute of History. Files 2235, 2338, 2339, 2365. Collected by Rasa Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2006–2009, 2013.

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## **Magic in the Traditional Culture of the Russian Population in the Mari region**

**Abstract.** Magical acts in Russian culture emerged in the ancient times and took the form of numerous rituals accompanying social and family cycles throughout the calendar year. Magical acts were often musical: they had a song accompaniment. This report is based on various sources (including field data of the authors); it presents magical actions, actors and objects such as fortune telling, mummers, spells, charms, amulets against the evil eye and other attributes registered among the Russian population of the Mari region.

**Key words:** Mari region, the Russians, the rites, magic

Republic of Mari El (RME) is a national republic within the Russian Federation. It is located in the middle reaches of the Volga River, on the left bank, nearly 800 km to the east from Moscow. The capital city of the Republic of Mari El is Yoshkar-Ola (from the Mari language ‘the red town/city’). Originally, until 1917, the city was called Tsarevokokshaysk, or ‘Royal city on the river Kokshaga’.

The population consists of two major ethnic groups: the Russians and the Mari – 47.4% and 43.9% respectively, according to the census held in Russian Federation in 2010. The Mari language belongs to the Volga-Finnish branch of the Finno-Ugric languages. The Mari is an indigenous, native population, which can be traced back in this territory by archaeological data to the fourth millennium BC. The Mari people are Orthodox Christians with well-preserved pagan components in their religious practice. They are often referred to as the last pagans of Europe, thanks to the widespread traditional forms of paganism.

According to different sources, the Russians have been present in the territory of the Mari region since the 12th century. However, the massive colonization of this territory began in the middle of the 16th century, after the war between Moscow and Kazan states. As

a result, a vast area of the Middle Volga region was annexed by the Russian state.

The Russian population moved to Volga by force to strengthen the eastern border. There were also massive arbitrary spontaneous migrations. As a result, the Russian population grew quickly in new areas. The scale of this process is reflected in the dynamics of Russian settlements in the Mari region since the middle of the 16th to the early 20th centuries (see Figure 1).

Permanent migrations of the Russian population and their contacts with the peoples of the Middle Volga region (Mari, Tatars, Chuvashs, Udmurts, Bashkirs) led to the formation of a special local group of the Russian ethnic background – the Volga Great Russians (*povolzhskie velikorossy*). Their main difference from other groups of Russians lies in the presence of specific cultural elements as a result of the contact with the local population. These features are reflected in the material and spiritual culture, in family and social relationships, in language and even in mentality. Historical traditions of peaceful coexistence of different peoples as well as the lack of inter-ethnic conflicts are typical for this region and it is an important factor in the creation of favourable conditions for cultural exchange.

The modern Russian population of the RME consists of the descendants of the old residents and migrants of the past 50 years. Most Russians (82.3% in 2010) live in urban areas. By the end of the 1970s there were about 500 ancient Russian settlements, half of which are no longer in existence. In addition, a considerable number of settlements, significant on the map of the modern Republic of Mari El, are chalets or have been abandoned in the last decade. Nevertheless, the Russian urban population of the RME has strong rural roots, which manifest itself in the preservation of many components of ethnic culture. The legitimization of Orthodoxy in Russia in the post-Soviet period is an important factor in the development of popular culture.

At the same time, it is also important to note that the Orthodox Church in Russia was not in sharp conflict with paganism; on the contrary, it included the most persistent pagan ritual components in its calendar. Therefore the elements of the Orthodox and Russian folk culture in the RME are closely intertwined.

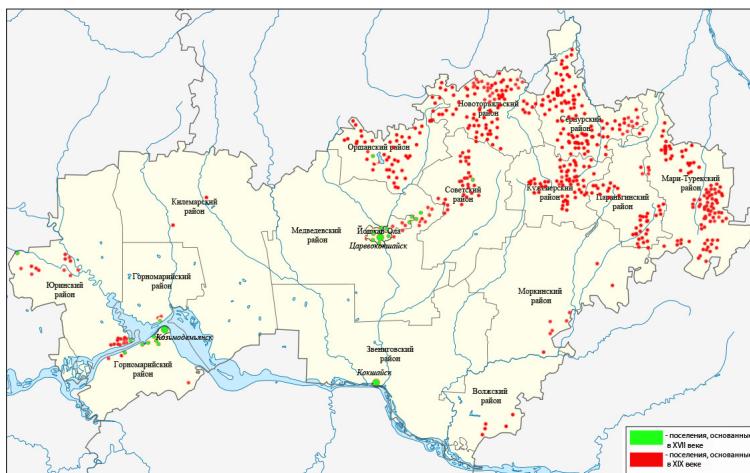


Figure 1. The Russian settlements in Mari region (18th and 19th centuries). In green – the Russian settlements founded by the 17th century, in red – in the 19th century.

The present paper is based on the materials collected by the authors during ethnographic expeditions conducted in the Russian settlements of RME in the years 2010–2014. Expeditions covered 8 of the 20 districts of the RME; the work was carried out in the summer on a broad program of study of the Russian population by ethno-sociological survey and conducting in-depth interviews (620 questionnaires were filled and 45 interviews were conducted). Unfortunately, the Russian population in the RME had not been thoroughly studied. Several topics were touched upon in recent publications (Busygin 1973; Zorin 2001), but these were usually presented merely in the context of broader themes or included in the description of the general features of the Middle Volga population. This material does not allow to draw parallels and to discuss the subject we present here.

Magical acts in Russian culture come from the ancient times. They accompanied numerous rituals of social and family cycles throughout the calendar year. Divinations and witchcraft are the most popular magical acts among the Russians.

Divinations were the most welcomed entertainment during the Christmas period (from December 25 to January 19). Evening (“Holy Supper”) was the best time for divination. Mainly girls participated in these customs, but married women and even old women took part as well. The fortune-telling was performed in the traditional way: the participants collected rings in a dish covered with a handkerchief and sang the so-called “songs under the dish”<sup>1</sup> (Figure 2). One girl took out one of the rings through the handkerchief and the owner of that ring was supposed to sing. In another version of the performance the participants wrapped their rings in the pieces of paper with the song texts written on them. The content of the song predicted the future of the owner of a ring and described the character of her husband-to-be.

The so called “songs under the dish” usually have two parts. In the first part the fortune is told in allegorical form, and in the second part the fortune denoted in the first part is “confirmed”. It has the



*Figure 2. Reconstruction of ritual divination of Russian girls in Republic of Mari El. 2005. Photo by O. Danilova.*

character of a spell and incantation; most often it includes the word “*Eliyah*” or “*Ileyu!*” which is one of the local variants of the refrain-exclamation in the “songs under the dish”.

There are other forms of divinations:

- A bucket was locked up and the key was placed under the pillow. In the dream the groom was supposed to come and ask for water for the horses.
- The pants of brother or father were placed under the pillow. In the dream the groom would come for them.
- One person falls down in fluffy snow, leaving the imprint of the body, and the next day the person should see how does it look. If the snow had been trampled, it meant that something bad might happen to the person, for example, he could get sick.
- Listening under the window until you hear a make name, it would be the name of the groom.
- Going through the village at night, awakening the married women and asking any male name, which will also denote the name of the groom.
- Throwing the boots out of the gate, and asking the person who picks them up to name a male name.
- On Christmas Eve, when Christmas pudding (*kutiya*) was made from wheat, the girls took the first spoonful and ran with it through the village; the appearance of the first man they met supposed to be similar to their bridegroom.
- A hen was taken to the house and some grain, water and a mirror were put in front of it. Then the people watched the hen. If the hen went up to the mirror, the future mother in-law would only love herself; if it had a drink, the mother in-law would be a drunkard.
- A glass of water was installed in front of the mirror and a ring was put into the water. In the mirror an image of the groom was to appear.

In addition to divinations during the winter Yule-tide, other activities took place. For example, in a number of Russian settlements, the custom with a spruce existed, which had the functions of divi-

nation and conjuration. On the New Year's night, the men went to chop the tree. When the tree was cut, it was forbidden to drop it on the ground (otherwise, there would be many deaths in the village). The tree was supposed to be dragged through the village beyond the vertex, if they did not want the girls to get married to another village. Afterwards the guys set the twigs in front of the houses of their girls. If they wanted their girls to be married far away from the village, the tree would be dragged by the barrel. There was a custom that the girls ripped off the green branches and stuck them in front of the houses of the young unmarried girls and the unmarried guys so that they would get married soon.

There was a popular custom called the Yule-tide funeral; a scarecrow was made from straw, i.e. "Yule-tide", and it was placed in the coffin. The coffin was then carried through the village accompanied by the frivolous funeral service; often it had an improper character. In some cases they placed a live male into a coffin instead of the scarecrow, and the same actions were performed with him.

The set of superstitions and beliefs are associated with witchcraft, which is predominantly the occupation of women. It is noteworthy that Russians themselves do not practice magic although there are healers among them. However, Russians believe that the most powerful witches are their neighbours – the Mari people. Perceptions of the Mari as sorcerers were common from the time of Russian colonization of the region and have persisted up to the present. They say that Mari are the second in the world in witchcraft after the voodoo practicing African witches. There is plenty of evidence of Mari divinations in the literature of the pre-Soviet and post-Soviet periods devoted to their religious beliefs and ritual culture (Popov 2003; Ivanova 2005; Kuznecov 1884; Petrov 2003; Toydybekova 1997; Vasilyev 1920). In Soviet times this topic was treated as forbidden and there were no publications on it.

There are many different kinds of witchcraft: allegedly, the witches can conjure water in the well, pour charmed water into the glass, add bewitched salt into the food or throw charmed objects into the house etc. Other descriptions of the Mari magic (according to the Russians) are inexplicable and following such a principle: when one finds an object and thinks that it is associated with witchcraft, that

person gets frightened even if no unpleasant events follow. Often it works like self-hypnosis.

Another common theme among the Russians is the love charms and corresponding magic rituals. In particular, if a Russian man marries a Mari woman, the witchcraft is being suspected to take place. The villagers may say: "If the husband left for another woman – it's a common thing, and if he left for a Mari woman that means that she had poured kind of a potion to him". Even today when people suspect some magic effect on a person, like the evil eye, the actor of the witchcraft would be a Mari woman. Russian women are thought as never being able to magically cause misfortune.

As an explanation of the faith in the power of the Mari magic, the Russian informants often refer to the traditional religion of the Mari. For example, some people do not understand the meaning of pagan prayers and sacrifices and suppose that they have magic power. In the more rational explanations we hear the supposition that the pagan-Mari have not lost their link with nature and that is why their magic is so powerful. The Mari people themselves do not deny such ideas although they consider direct association of pagan prayers with magic unfair and see here a result of misunderstanding and ignorance of the essence of paganism – or fear of it.

Russian informants protect themselves from the harmful influence of magical acts by many means: they stay away from the alleged witches, use prayers and avoid touching things presumably connected with magic. If a foreign object is found in their house, they do not touch it, but they grasp it with a paper or cloth and burn it or put it in the ground. The Russians claim that Mari themselves advise them to do so in order to weaken the effect of the enchanted item.

It is remarkable that the young participants in the survey (born in the 1990s), contrary to the older generations, cannot say anything about the local magical practices and, in general, express disbelief in those practices.

In conclusion, it should be mentioned that the magical ideas of the population of the Mari region undoubtedly were formed under the influence of the folk beliefs and religious views. The upper border of their active dissemination can be arbitrarily designated by the beginning of the 21st century. Presumably, the formation of the

attitude towards magic on behalf of the modern youth evolved in the era of information development, under the influence of the mass media and the internet, rather than under the influence of the traditions, family-household and public, although this hypothesis requires further study.

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### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> *Podblyudnye pesni*, the *podblyudnye* songs are Russian calendar ritual songs; in the Christmas-tide period, participants of divination sung these songs by lot.

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## **Padlock and Key as Attributes of the Wedding Ceremony: Traditional Symbolism and Contemporary Magic (on the Material of the Slavic Tradition)**

**Abstract.** The paper deals with the tradition, which is nowadays widespread throughout the world, for sweethearts to attach a padlock to bridge railings and throw its key into the water to symbolize unbreakable love. This rite treated in the context of wedding ritualism depicts the deep symbolism of padlock and key in traditional Slavic culture. Analyzing the symbolism of key and padlock as wedding attributes in folklore and literary texts, we take into consideration the conceptual capacity of these symbols caused by their wide usage in modern commercial discourse.

**Key words:** padlock, key, wedding ceremony, symbolism, Slavic tradition

The love lock (or love padlock) is a padlock which sweethearts lock to a bridge, fence, gate, or similar public fixture to symbolize their love. My interest in the current topic was caused by a tradition which is nowadays widespread throughout the world. Typically the sweethearts' names or initials are inscribed on the padlock, and its key is thrown away to symbolize unbreakable love. In Europe, love padlocks started appearing in the early 2000s. There are varied explanations of the origin of the tradition, which vary between locations, and in many instances are unsourced.

Due to its pragmatics and performers we can treat the rite in the context of wedding ritualism, at the same time taking into consideration the magnitude of expansion of the contemporary culture in the era of mass consumption.

In traditional Slavic culture the key and padlock are attributed with the symbolism of locking and unlocking, which explains their wide use in love and apotropaic magic. In the wedding ceremony

the functional synonymy of the key and padlock as attributes and tokens is considered both on the level of the ceremonial context and its verbal implementation.

The marital and phallic symbolism of the key and padlock is foregrounded in certain folklore genres (wedding songs, riddles, proverbs, and sayings) and also present in postmodern literary texts (Pavić 1996). At the same time the conceptual capacity of these attribute-symbols cause their wide usage in commercial discourse.

### **Motivation for the Ritual Act**

In traditional as well as in contemporary practice, this ritual is motivated by a desire for a wish to come true. The aim is reinforced by inscriptions and drawings on the lock or nearby.

The actual motivation consists of the code of these objects' symbolic meaning and functionality. A key and a padlock, which are a universal semantic complex, have the maximum mediatory potency and therefore are able to express the most general ideas (destiny, fertility, wealth, etc.) (Baiburin 1989: 85).

This tradition is another proof that the mythological consciousness of the mass-consumption era does not go through degradation or decline, but instead shows an increase of mythological text in everyday life. When in the consumer-culture the archetype is “transformed” through the prism of gender, age, social status, and so forth, we witness the formation of certain constants, or signs, that stimulate a specific target group of consumers.

At the same time, the roots of this tradition are much deeper, which becomes apparent if we turn to the text of traditional culture. We limit the current paper to the study of wedding rituals and love magic, as their context provides explanation for the semantics of the analysed attributes – their procreative and apotropaic function. In Slavs' wedding practice as well as in some other rituals, the locking of a padlock and its further separation from the key was a widespread tradition. The semantics of the separation of the objects was meant to provide particular strength for the ritual action.

### **Locking as a Symbol of the Magical Reaffirmation of the Intended Result: Positive validity**

An unlocked padlock with a key placed inside the keyhole, was put on or under a threshold when either a groom or the newly-weds stepped over it. Later the padlock was locked and the key was thrown away, often into a river or a well (sometimes the key was thrown away while the lock was left in the new couple's house; in other cases, even the key was preserved). The aim was to secure the marriage plans, to strengthen the husband's and wife's bond, and to ensure that the marriage would be long and happy. On the first wedding night would be performed a brief ritual action: the bride would lock a padlock above the groom's head to increase his love and prevent him from cheating. The next morning she would take the padlock to the unknown grave (Tolstoy 1999: 265). Ukrainian brides of the Korosten region on their way to the church put poppy seeds (*shchob ne bulo korosty* “to prevent Scabies”) and an iron key or simply a piece of iron (*shchob nipto ne navrochyu* “against evil eye”) in their bosom. Grooms took an iron object with them (Borysenko 1988: 72). One of the participants of a Bulgarian wedding ritual was a boy holding a key in his hand. Russians locked a door of the newlywed's bedroom so that no one could spoil them (Tolstoy 1999: 512, 264).

### **Usage in Harmful Magic – Manifestation of the Semantics of “Locking”: Negative validity**

On the other hand, the use of the key and padlock in harmful magic is also related to the actualisation of the semantics of “locking” – of life, love, faithfulness, female (or sometimes male) fertility etc. At the same time separation of the key from the lock, which symbolises spatial division, had to ensure particular strength of the invocation. In order to bring infertility, a locked padlock and its key were placed on the opposite sides of a gate, or they were thrown into a well. Understanding female infertility as “a locked womb” explains the interdiction to bring a locked truck with the dowry into the newlyweds' house (in Serbia); otherwise the bride won't be able to conceive.

The pragmatics of ritual objects – in this case the key and the padlock – is caused by their initial, literal function. At the same time, when the key and padlock are understood as a paired or parallel / isofunctional symbol in the context of a ritual, these daily objects change their semiotic status, losing their utilitarian function and acquiring the function of a symbol.

The semiotic status of objects, says A. Baiburin, is based on the unity and principal ambivalence of their symbolic and practical use, and at the same time reflects the correlation between their symbolic and utilitarian functions (1989: 71–72). High semiotic status of an object is caused by its ability to symbolise something more important than itself, which explains its part in the unique general metaphor of traditional culture.

In the context of a ritual, an object becomes a symbol and acquires certain semantics according to a number of characteristics. L. Radenkovich explains that in this process some features are intentionally stressed, such as material (wood, metal etc.); form (round, straight/bent, sharp/blunt); colour; placement (cemetery, river, road crossing, church); age (new/old); function; relation to a specific person or being in someone's possession; way of acquiring of the object, etc. (1996: 106). Obviously, these characteristics are also relevant in attributing symbolic meaning to the key and the padlock.

The motif of locking a padlock, found in charms aimed at the magical reaffirmation of an intended result, is explained by its functionality. Similar semantics can be attributed to conclusive words, such as "A lock and a key to my words"; "A lock in the sky and a key in the sea; locked it and threw the key into the water" (*Slavyanskaya mifologiya* 1995: 188).

### **The Symbolic Meaning of the Key and Padlock in Folklore and Literary Text**

Traditional culture has influenced our understanding of the padlock and key as erotic symbols, or in other words as erotic markers (Aidachich 2010: 115).

Correlation between the female and "closed" is caused physiologically, whereas 'the male' is attributed with the characteristics of

“open,” “external,” “obvious,” etc. (Valodzina 2013: 196). Consider, for example, ‘key’ and ‘lock’ as euphemisms for the phallus and the female principle, respectively. Similarly, the expressions “loose locks” (*Slavyanskaya mifologiya* 1995: 188) and or “the locks have opened” (Dal’ 1995: 123) are used for monthly bleeding. Ukrainian proverbs use the same pattern: “A woman’s lock takes every key”; “Even the wealthiest man carries only one key” (Stavyc’ka 2008: 211).

The separate parts of these objects, such as the keyhole, key-bow, or blade, acquire similar symbolic demarcation. Thus in traditional consciousness, a keyhole, due to its obvious female semantics, was understood as a contact zone between this world and the other, which was the reason for its role in love magic, especially when telling fortunes during the Christmas period. If a key was used on its own, it signified the groom. Performance of magical actions was often reinterpreted in divinations, this was a common process (Sokolova 1978: 395).

Because almost every important episode of social and private life acquired ritualistic (symbolic) transmission in traditional culture, the topic of sexual relationships (or correlation between the universes of male and female in general) could not be ignored or tabooed (Mozheyko 2006: 108). The theme of eroticism is symbolically described in such genres as wedding songs, groomsman’s jokes, riddles, proverbs, sayings, and the Ukrainian *kolomyiky*, — which in the context of a wedding ritual legalised sexual relationships. The variety of symbolic language at traditional weddings (namely metaphors in speech, objects and actions) was intended to ensure a successful *de passage* ritual and guarantee the correct functioning of society.

The concept of **honour** occupies the central part of wedding ritual (Kabakova 2013: 184). The circle of symbolic markers of a girl’s virginity is quite wide, including the motif of **saving or losing keys**. In a Belorussian wedding song, a father asks his daughter if she has lost the keys, and she answers: *Ya u tebe tatk u verno sluzhyla, twoi kliuchykov ne pogubyla...* “I have served you, daddy, faithfully, didn’t lose your keys...” (Krachkovskiy 1874: 78). In a Ukrainian wedding song, a girl refuses to give “golden keys” to a young fellow (Sulyma 2001: 108).

V. Hnatiuk recorded a *kolomyika* in which a dialogue between a girl and a young man reflects the same motif of losing keys (Sulyma 2001: 186). In contrast to wedding songs, the *kolomyika* does not use obscene vocabulary and describes sexual relations only through hints.

Non-symbolic, literal description of sexual relationships is almost entirely exempt from ritual text. However, obscene vocabulary as a procreative component is widely used in wedding songs of the final stage of weddings, which are the most pronounced in this regard. In Ukrainian tradition, there are songs known as *perezvy*, including the so-called *pisni do komory* (songs for the garner or storehouse used as a ritual room for the first wedding night), aimed at ensuring the bond between the newlyweds and the bride's fertility. In Belorussian folklore, the erotic content of 'the *kalinka*' (garner or granary songs) followed the belief in the magic power of the word and accumulated productive energy around the garner (Lobach 2006: 87). Traditionally the multiple repetition of the theme of fertility, including openly erotic description of the groom, is not only allowed but even welcomed, which is related to charms against impotence. A groomsman's *kolomyika* reflects the motif of a key which opens a box containing the bride's shirt, showing signs of her "honour", which could guarantee a "successful" wedding (Sulyma 2001: 33). In the texts that accompany a ritual of presenting gifts for the bride, the union of the male and female is represented by the metaphor of "a golden key from a silver box" (Krasheninnikova 2009: 31).

The metaphor of golden keys is also represented in South Slav's wedding songs, which following the Balkan tradition are filled with a feeling of love-longing and suppressed passion. Connotations of love and eroticism are hidden behind allegorical allusions, whereas the emotional message is provided through vivid metaphorical images and detailed storylines. A Serbian song from Bosnia and Herzegovina, "*Niko ne mogase lastavici otvoriti, već soko*" "No one could open the swallow but the falcon", tells a story of a swallow locked up in a cage, who is waiting for someone to "open" it; she promises expensive gifts and herself as a reward for her saviour. Tailors hearing about the swallow sold out their brocade and forged golden keys which would not, however, open the cage. The furriers sold their sable coats and also made golden keys, but these keys

couldn't open the cage's door either. The jewellery makers similarly tried their luck; they sold pearl *pafte* (a special buckle on women's belts) and forged golden keys, but didn't succeed. Finally a falcon flew to the cage and touched its door with his wing, and the lock opened (Petranović 1867: 189).

In the 1869 handwritten collection of Serbian folk songs from Herzegovina by V. Vrchevich "*Srpske narodne pjesmice i pripjevi (koji nijesu za štampu)*" ("Serbian folk songs and rhymes (that are not for publishing")", there is a text of a wedding song with a motif of opening city gates, in which "a key made of Taxus wood" represents virginity (Ljubinković 1993: 47).

In the same collection we find another example of a metaphoric erotic text, which is also influenced by the Muslim folklore tradition in theme, vocabulary and poetics. In it, a girl addresses her lover, inviting him to bring a "bunch of keys filled with honey" to open the city gates "in the morning, in the evening." The Oriental tradition found its representation in the detailed and intricate metaphorization, in which a man's sexual organ is described as a "bunch of keys filled with honey" or "a precious bag full of sugar" with "two clappers" (Ljubinković 1993: 44).

The motif of the padlock and keys finds its representation in the motif of **guards**. A girl is sitting by a cold-water stream at the foot of Yanina Mountain. The guards are set to watch the cold water, and only a young horse rider can "make the water turbid". Here a female body is described through the metaphor of the landscape (Ljubinković 1993: 48).

In a Ukrainian text, a girl goes out when the guards fall asleep: "I will sow rye – / and you set the guards / To guard me, pretty girl. / The guards fell asleep, / didn't hear a thing. / I, young girl, slipped away to have fun" (Sulyma 2001: 41).

Minor folklore genres belonging to the periphery of the wedding texts provide even more vivid erotic symbolism. Riddles, comic questions, proverbs and sayings use the semantics of a key locking a padlock to describe coitus. The common answer to such riddles is "a key and a lock" (Volodina 2006: 314, 318, 325). This semantic row can be further extended.

Undoubtedly, the representation of erotic texts in ritual folklore (and in culture in general) varies according to the different periods of the society's development. Although once popular magical functions of wedding rituals are seldom represented in contemporary ceremony, the traditional cultural connotations of certain objects continue to be echoed in the actional row of rituals and in the verbal code of accompanying texts (Bricina 2013: 21).

Due to the cultural and temporal connotations, as well as mythological and Biblical allusions, a fictional narrative suggests a much wider understanding of the key/padlock symbolism than folklore texts. In this paper we turn our attention to two examples from contemporary Serbian literature, which were published in Ukraine in our translation.

Milorad Pavić, in his "*Sheshir od ribl'e kozhe*" ("The Fish-Skin Hat. A Love Story"), published in 1996, invites his readers into an intricate symbolic search, in which a 'key' is both a symbol and an attribute of the protagonist. Here the 'key' is a metaphor of mystery and silence and at the same time represents divine knowledge, therefore providing a further allusion to its semantics of mediator.

When Arkadije, the main character of the book, sets out on his journey, he takes along only two objects: a bunch of keys and a fish-skin hat. One day at a market he buys a "strange object" – a wooden figurine of a boy with outstretched arms, a crucifix which turns out to be "a kind of key" (Pavić 1996: 25–26).

Once he has the key, the protagonist comes into the possession of Mikaena, a girl with a bird cage. The wires of the cage ring like a lira, and the girl teaches him to sing a song about fish. The girl leaves Arkadije once he sells the wooden key; many years later, however, the key appears again in his house when the protagonist discovers his daughter.

This postmodern text represents a polyphony of motifs, metaphors and allusions that are related to Biblical text, Byzantine tradition, and to Serbian as well as Slavic and Balkan folklore.

In his fiction, Mihajlo Pantić mostly deals with the life of modern Belgrade, the district known as the New Belgrade. This *topos* allows the author to research the topic of the lack of identity in a megapolis, and the indifference and loneliness of the person. Through his

psychological short stories, Pantić attempts to identify the ultimate meaning to justify human' existence. According to him, only a short story can reflect "the moment of human crystallisation", because "the meaninglessness which fills the world is inversely related to the amount of transmitted information." The text's message is hidden in a symbol, so literature is "a **key**, which can help solve life's misfortunes, even if the solution is not final" (Pantić 2009: 116). In other words, a final solution does not exist and life is unpredictable, only writing can make it more bearable.

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## **Magic as Communication in Family Rituals of Russians in Tatarstan**

**Abstract.** Magic is regarded as the oldest form of communication and organization of collective activity. The magical aspect of communication in traditional family rituals was associated with stabilization of the family as a collective. The research focuses on the ritual elements of prosperity, protection and love magic in traditional and modern family rituals of the life cycle. The trend in the transformation of magical elements in a modern ritual includes the loss of traditional meaning, the inclusion of new items with magical significance and staging of ritual magic action.

**Key words:** magic, wedding, Russians, traditional and modern rituals

Family holidays are one of the forms of satisfaction of many needs: the need for a festive decoration of actual vital events, the need for communication concerning an important event, requirement for collective emotional memory, and others. Magic is an important component of family holidays. Magic is considered the oldest form of communication and the organization of collective activity. As an element of the rite it is directed at achieving its objectives with the use of secret supernatural abilities. The magical aspect of communication in traditional family rituals was associated with stabilization of the family as a collective (Surkhasko 1985: 133). The magical complex consisted of ritual elements of prosperity, preservation and love magic. It was presented most fully in the wedding rites.

In the 20th century Russian wedding rituals experienced major changes (Safonova 2013). They were connected with alternating periods of decline and revival of interest in the traditional elements of this ritual complex. Nowadays we can witness a new stage of evolution of family holidays (Timofeeva 2004). It is associated with a rethinking of traditional festivals and saturation of the holiday

complex by new rites and the professional activities of market agents who offer a wide range of “holiday” services.

This research has been carried out within the framework of the scientific project “Ethno-cultural models of consumer practices: the case of the Republic of Tatarstan”. The purpose of the article is to identify the impact of festive space of the commercial sector on Russian wedding ritual, in particular on its magical component. The information base of the research is scientific discourse and content analysis of marketing narratives.

The wedding ritual is a multidimensional and multi-planned cultural complex. Its evolution throughout the 20th century concerned such elements as reduction or increase in number of participants of the weddings, continuous increase of the role of the groom and the bride, change of the functions of traditional participants of ritual, loss of value of wedding actions and their performance from positions of existing family relations, etc. (Zorin 2001: 175).

Within the frame of the outlined problem we will focus on some of its aspects: the participants of the traditional Russian wedding ritual, their roles and magic acts.

### **The Main Participants of Traditional Wedding Ritual of Russians of the Volga Region and Their Roles**

1. Groom, bride. On the wedding day their ceremonial activity dropped sharply from the time of their courtship and was insignificant. The groom invited his relatives to the wedding feast, took part in equipping the wedding train and paid the ransom for the bride in the bride's house. The bride undertook some measures aimed at protecting her family and relatives from evil and malicious influences and ensuring friendly relations with the husband's family. In most cases she was the object on which the ritual was performed, and not a participant. One of the symbols of the bride was the towel. Ritual actions with towels were “binding the friend with a towel” at his entry to the bride's house, symbolizing her recognition of his powers, using it to cover the table in bride's house, hanging it out in the groom's house and binding the newly-weds with towels on the marriage bed. The functions of the towels are informational,

protective and achieving inclusion and familiarity with the new relatives (Zorin 1981: 143).

2. Groom's parents. They are active participants and initiators of their son's marriage. The father was active at an early stage of the wedding when economic problems were being solved. The groom's mother played the main role when the young people were meeting and she carried out ceremonies and actions symbolizing the welcome of the bride into the family.

3. Bride's parents. The bride's father helped to dress her before the wedding and handed her over to her groom "from hands to hands". The bride's mother quite often acted as the person heading a family staff or the staff of the relatives.

The father's ceremonial role, as a rule, was localized within the limits of Christian ideas, and the mothers' role had a pre-Christian character. Attributes of the father's blessing were icons, and those of the mother's blessing were loaves of bread.

4. *Tysjatsky* is the groom's godfather. At the wedding he was the trustee and the instructor of the groom; he represented his parents at the wedding ceremony (according to the norms of marriage, the groom's parents could not be presented there).

5. The groom's friend is the steward at the wedding. He carried out the entertainment function. He resisted the effects of witchcraft and evil forces. His duty was to protect the groom, the bride and all participants from evil of all kinds. His attributes were a bell, a broom, a whip, an icon (Busygin *et al.* 1973: 141).

6. Wedding food and its symbolism.

There was no special ritual food at the wedding. Particular importance was assigned to a considerable part of the dishes at the wedding, as they performed ceremonial functions. Ritual significance was designated by special signs: colours, figures etc. Wedding food as a symbol of hospitality and friendliness was used in magical rites aimed at protection, unity and prosperity; bread served as a symbol of life and prosperity, a sign of goodwill and trust; the cake with fish and the cake with chicken had special decorations; chicken was a symbol of womanhood; a pig's head, or (later) a roasted or boiled pig was a symbol of a man's force; eggs and bacon served as

ritual food for the newlyweds. The ceremonial role of drinks was insignificant (Zorin 1981: 146).

The elements of prosperity magic were performed in a traditional wedding ritual. They were focused on material well-being, family happiness, a continuation of the family and on strengthening mutual love between the two young people just married. Magic in wedding communication was connected with mutual relations between the bride and groom's parents, the groom and bride's parents and the future spouses and it also dealt with leadership in a family, distribution of functions, a boy and a girl achieving the status of spouses, and the gender category of married women and married men.

### **Marketing Trends in Wedding Rituals**

At the beginning of the 21st century, agencies which offered their services in organizing and conducting weddings have become more active. A new stage in the evolution of wedding ritual started. It is connected with professional work of market subjects in the commercial sector of a festive landscape.

1. Holiday agencies – the organizers of family holidays.
2. Event-Agencies – organization of marketing actions and events, fests.
3. Catering companies – wedding catering.
4. Travel agencies – the organizers of honeymoons trips.

The website of the wedding catalogue of a celebratory portal of Kazan provides guidance on the wedding infrastructure of the celebratory landscape of a city. It includes: registry offices, marriage agencies; hotels of Kazan as venues of the first marriage night; mosques, churches, temples, cathedrals; travel agencies for organizing a honeymoon; firms specialized in organization of hen and stag parties in nightclubs, cinemas, baths, saunas, swimming pools, bars, billiard rooms, etc.; wedding dresses salons, including Muslim ones; restaurants, banquet halls and cafes. Besides, there are some companies that offer their services on where one can buy dowry items (feather pillows and blankets from the luxurious white goose down, wedding chests, wedding bed linen), wedding

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accessories, such as a chest for a dowry – traditional and obligatory attribute of the bride (Prazdnichny portal).

The city's festive portal contains information about 74 market agents who provide services for organizing and conducting the wedding. Analysis of advertising of these firms showed how they see the fest: it should be bright and exclusive; fests should contain novelty and modernity; each holiday should be unique. Agencies offer two types of wedding scenarios: fest-“turnkey” (wedding as a regulated process) and the festival as a joint work of professionals and clients.

Customers are offered the following ideas of weddings: Russian folk ritual; European wedding; nobility wedding in 18th century style; tropical; in “country” style; in “rock and roll” style; medieval wedding; antique style; traditional style; retro style; gangster's wedding; masquerade wedding; disco style; oriental style; extreme wedding and others.

Content analysis of a wedding magazine on the wedding portal of Kazan shows that of greatest interest to visitors are the speech of the newlyweds and the meeting of a newly-married couple by their parents. The least interest is shown to playacting guests, their location, roles, etc.

### **Modification of Traditional Elements in the Modern Wedding Rite**

The results of the wedding scenario analysis showed that great importance is given to the meeting of a newly-married couple by parents. The meeting of a newly-married couple by parents is a special ritual symbolizing the link between generations and traditions of continuity of family values. Parents meet the bride and the groom at the husband's house or at the doorway of a banquet hall with a round loaf and salt (a wooden or silver opened salt shaker with salt and a *rushnik* – towel with a special ornament on which the loaf is put).

When the parents welcome the newlyweds at home, the mother of a young husband is holding a loaf and his father is holding an icon. It symbolizes that the mother-in-law blesses the newlyweds to live in prosperity and harmony, and the father-in-law reminds them

about spiritual and eternal values of Christian love. The young couple must first make the sign of the cross and bow on the icon, then bite and break off a piece of the loaf, dip it into the salt and then eat it. After that they should thank their parents and kiss everyone three times on both cheeks.

## Conclusion

The modern Russian wedding in Tatarstan includes several traditional elements. Some ritual elements of wedding are reviving. They are associated with prosperity magic, focus on material well-being, family happiness and continuation of the family. Elements of protection magic (prohibitions, amulets) are also present in modern Russian wedding. Love magic is aimed at strengthening the mutual love of the young couple. The magic in wedding communication is mainly connected with mutual relations of the bride and groom's parents, the groom and bride's parents, the future spouses, leadership in the family and distribution of functions. Direction of transformation of magical elements in a modern ritual include: the loss of traditional meaning, the inclusion of new items with magical significance, staging of ritual magic action. This process is the result of the interaction of demand on ethnicity and market offer.

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Beyond the  
Threshold  
and  
Magic Value



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## **The Living and the Dead at the Time of the Winter Solstice in Central Eastern European Beliefs<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract.** The period of the winter solstice was associated in Eastern European popular religion with the visitation of the dead according to widely known 20th century beliefs. The most prominent dates were St Lucy's day (December 13th, which used to be the night of the winter solstice before the Gregorian calendar was introduced), Christmas and Epiphany. Traditions of numerous non-Christian female demonic beings are also associated with these dates, such as the South German/Austrian/Slovenian Perchta/Pehtra, Croatian/Slovenian and Hungarian/Slovakian/Moravian Lucy. What these mythical beings have in common is their connection with the dead, their connection with the fertility of women and domestic animals, the taboos and sanctions related to women's work, particularly to spinning and bread-baking, and sacrifice (hemp, wool, cereals) and divination rites connected with these figures. In my paper I analyse the taboos, magic and sacrifices connected to these female demons particularly from the point of view of their deadly traits, and the communication between the living and the dead which serves as a framework for taboos and sacrificial rites, and can be characterised by a binary principle of world explanation, the opposition of the *raw* and the *cooked, nature* and *culture* as described by Claude Lévi-Strauss.

**Key words:** winter solstice, St Lucy, Perchta/Pehtra, taboo, sacrifice, the raw and the cooked

The subject of this paper is a distinctive set of data regarding communication between the living and the dead, found in the popular beliefs and vernacular religion of several peoples of Central and Eastern Europe (primarily Hungarians, Austrians, Slovenians and Croatians). The rites and beliefs I examine are associated with beliefs about the dead visiting humans at certain dates or periods of the calendar year. These forms of communication between the living and the dead can be characterised by a world view expressed through binary oppositions such as the opposition of the *raw* and the *cooked, nature* and *culture* as described by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1964).

According to archaic beliefs that have survived in certain parts of Central Europe the dead bring fertility to the living. From among the “deadly” periods of the calendar year we are primarily talking about the period of darkness around the winter solstice that was the time for the visitation of the dead according to widely known 20th century beliefs. Its most prominent dates in the countries mentioned were the turning points of the year: Lucy’s day (December 13th, which used to be the night of the winter solstice before the Gregorian calendar was introduced) and the period between Christmas and Twelfth Night. Often even in the modern era these periods of the year/calendar can generally be characterized as a period when the boundary between these two worlds becomes permeable – the dead come to visit this world, and may temporarily transport the living to the other world; they are welcomed and offered food, but earthly people also gain insight into the other world and offering sacrifices can be an important precondition for this<sup>2</sup>.

From among the varied aspects of the communication between the living and the dead I will speak in some detail about certain sacrificial rites that are also accompanied by divination rites and by rites and beliefs concerning acquiring knowledge or “initiation”. I will discuss archaic sacrificial rites that are offered to the dead as well as to certain goddess-like figures with non-Christian attributes of death and fertility who are also associated with these “dark” calendar periods. Besides general regularities a number of local characteristics can also be ascertained regarding local forms of sacrifice and divination and the local variants of the mythical beings in question.

Although the European ethnographic material I use is relatively fragmented and faded, and has been reinterpreted in the context of Christianity, in fact these aspects of communication between the living and the dead were surprisingly lively in traditional village communities at the time of 20th century folklore collections. In this case we are talking not only about a narrative tradition – I actually encountered living beliefs and ritual practices relating to the mythical creatures in question during my field work in Hungary and Romania. In addition to my own research, I also took into consideration the findings of other researchers. Among them I need to mention first Leopold Kretzenbacher, who made some important

points with regard to the sacrificial breads I also examine (1959), and Mirjam Mencej, who drew interesting conclusions – also in connection with the same female figures – about another aspect of communication between the living and the dead namely concerning beliefs and rites connected to circular movements (2007; 2008). The most common form of sacrifice to the dead in the region under examination concerning the fertility of the following year consisted of offering a feast of the dishes of the Christmas dinner at the festive table to the visiting dead forebears or inviting them for a treat of foods made especially for them. This mainly meant bread, kasha and lenten food such as pastries with poppy seed or honey characteristic in the area in question. Putting various types of grain on the table was also common practice at many places. There are prescriptions for Christmas about baking, besides the customary sweetbreads, more common and archaic types of bread – from sweet-corn or rye in areas which otherwise use wheat, or from a mixture of different grain, as well as unleavened flatbreads. Even relatively obsolete data supported by secondary explanations can show quite clearly that flatbreads, different types of kasha and raw seeds of the mid-winter festivals, as offerings to the dead, serve to secure fertility for the coming year. More accurately, the dead who visit their original home at these times secure the well-being of the family in return for the sacrifice.

These were always used for special purposes and were placed on the table and often left there for the visiting dead or the Baby Jesus. They often also became the objects of fertility magic, similarly to the Christmas dinner and other foodstuff and objects from the table. The cult of the dead and fertility are both served by the types of flatbread and kasha made from different types of grain and reminiscent of the ancient sacrificial form of *panspermia*. These are particularly common in the Balkans but also appear in the festive menu of Hungarians at Christmas time or Lucy's Day in the form of flatbreads and different types of kasha.<sup>3</sup>

Another important factor in the “sacrificial” context of Christmas foods is that December 24th was seen in the village communities as a day when baking bread was prohibited, while making lenten foods such as flatbreads and different types of kasha, which also served as sacrificial offerings, was permitted. The previously mentioned

opposition between the raw and the cooked becomes clear here; indeed, it is more clearly visible on occasions when there is an actual ban on baking bread. Baking bread was prohibited, along with other female occupations such as spinning and washing, on days or periods of the dead within the Christian calendar – at Christmas, between Christmas and Twelfth Night, on St. Lucy's day, on the day of the dead (2 November), on days following death in the family, as well as on Good Friday (in relation to the death of Christ) and even ordinary Fridays. For every day when bread-baking was prohibited, there was also a prescription to eat a different type of lenten bread (e.g. in one South-Eastern corner of Hungary Catholics used to bake unleavened savoury flatbreads called *sóspogácsa* or *sósbodag* on Fridays). It was also customary, particularly on Good Friday, to bake bread despite the prohibition, for some special purpose. For instance, the following two statements come from the same village, Dávod in Southern Hungary. “It is prohibited to bake bread on Good Friday.” And, “...lots of people bake bread on Good Friday. They say that ... the smell rises to the heavens and the Lord Jesus can smell it.”<sup>4</sup> At many places they used the bread baked on Good Friday to put on the surface of the water to find people who had drowned; unleavened flatbread baked in lard was given to the poor in order to win salvation for the dead, or to be devoted to the starving dead (Pócs 1982, 1992).

We could go on listing a varied array of data. What emerges from them is that during periods of the dead baking is prohibited but unleavened flatbreads of a more rudimentary technology are frequently produced, often particularly for purposes of sacrificial offering. In the background of the opposition of bread versus flatbread we surmise something like an opposition of the raw and the cooked, which may be interpreted within the frame of a binary principle of worldviews defined by Lévi-Strauss which we referred to above. Traces of this may be captured in Central and Eastern Europe to this day in beliefs which reflect oppositions such as *the living and the dead; this world and the other world, culture and nature*, as well as in rites surrounding communication between the living and the dead. Here we see partly the absence of “the cooked” and partly the role of the “raw” being filled by a food created through a simpler technology (e.g. without making it rise in any way), or a more archaic food; such as substituting kasha for bread. We also see a

type of bread baked in spite of the prohibition, made in “raw time”. The “raw” version is related to communication with the dead and to offerings. We might also say that for periods of the dead, i.e. times when the dead return among the living, a quasi-regressive state sets in when culture is annulled, nature overflows the scene and raw conditions begin to apply: the world of the living temporarily takes on qualities of the dead. (According to a characteristic belief in our area people born during the winter period of the dead will become seers, meaning that their birth traits related to the dead will enable them to communicate with the other world.) At the same time, these conditions are suited to enter communication with the dead, coming in contact with the other world, as we shall see in relation to data connected to divination, or to “insight” and “initiation” into the other world. The raw and the cooked – the asymmetric opposition of these two neighbouring stages of culture – express the mutually presupposing opposition of life and death. Within this system of archaic worldview all major cultural achievements have become symbols of life, from using salt in food and making dough rise all the way to spinning and weaving. Inventing and introducing these achievements and innovation in general, have reduced the previous stage of culture to a symbol of “death”, of the non-human, of the supernatural.

Relations of the raw and the cooked are particularly pronounced in the goddess-like figures I mentioned at the beginning of my talk. In their context we also see weaving as a cultural achievement. They are demonic creatures who penalise breeches of calendar taboos on female work, particularly the prohibition on spinning. These are ambivalent, part-divine, part-dead female figures who also bring fertility to the community. Similar figures have been known to the entire Christian and Orthodox peasantry of Central and Eastern Europe (often tied in with the figure of one or other of the Christian saints, also assuming her name). Here, however, we limit our focus to the taboo figures known in the closer area under examination. These are Croatian/Slovenian/Hungarian/Slovakian/Moravian *Luca* or *St Lucy*, Croatian *St. Barbara*, Bavarian/Austrian *Perchta*, *Berta*, Slovenian *Pehrta Baba*, *Vehtra Baba*, *Zlata Baba*, *Quaternica*, etc.<sup>5</sup>

These mother goddess-like figures retain European pre-Christian traits; their attributes include spinning and the distaff. They tend

to be patrons of spinning and control and sanction adherence to work taboos associated with their days, including the spinning taboos. They also carry certain traits related to agricultural fertility: they may be protectors of hemp, flax or grain fields. Their calendar periods are for Lucy and Barbara their Christian name feast, i.e. December 13th and December 4th, while the Perchta and others figures come to visit humans in groups between Christmas and Twelfth Night. On Lucy's day, figures in white clothes, with their faces covered in flour or wearing a bird's head mask go around the village from house to house, punishing or rewarding children. They quite obviously embody the dead who visit humans. Whenever figures of this kind appear among humans, this means that the deadly or "raw" conditions begin to apply. True to their spindle and distaff attributes, humans are banned from spinning on these days, while as regards other female jobs, baking bread also comes under taboo. However, breads baked in spite of the prohibition also appear, particularly on Lucy's day, or are replaced by kasha or flatbreads. In certain parts of Hungary it was quite common to make wafers on Lucy's day, at other places they make the unleavened, unsalted flatbread called *pászka* or a millet-dish called *lucakása*. Croatians make a kasha called *varica* on Barbara's Day when bread-baking is prohibited, which is made out of all types of grain or "all the grain"<sup>6</sup>.

The opposition of *the raw and the cooked* becomes most plausible through the taboo legends which state the sanctions for those who break these prohibitions. According to one legend, a woman who baked bread on Lucy's day escaped Lucy's punishment, when the latter appeared, by putting a flatbread in her hand. According to a South Hungarian variant, Lucy would have taken away the sanity of the woman who baked bread, had she not hurriedly thrown a flatbread (*lucalepény*) over the rooftop for her. The savory cakes called *luca pogácsa* and *lucalepény* were, according to certain sporadic data, given to the poor "for the sake of the dead". At other times they offered them directly to Lucy. These data indicate that Lucy was given raw offerings. Austrian Perchta and their previously mentioned relations are due an offering of milk – on nights between Christmas and Twelfth Night when their appearance was expected it was common to prepare milk for them, complete with spoons "so they can eat it" (Burgstaller 1957: 74, 78). As regards Slovenian Pehrta Baba and her relations, these figures were offered

a sacrifice of flax (in exchange for rain and the fertility of the herds), this, however, is not directly related to. In the case of the spinning taboo on the day of Lucy and similar creatures, the traits of “raw” conditions appear not so much in the context of sacrificial rituals, rather as the conditions of making contact, acquiring otherworldly knowledge, seeing or becoming seers. There is no room here to dwell on these aspects (Kretzenbacher 1959; Pócs 1982; Mencej 2007). All I note here, based on one of my earlier papers, is that a shirt spun and woven during the time of the spinning taboo, which is made in defence against the demons which launch their assaults at this time (according to South Slavic and Hungarian data) can also be seen as a raw offering for the demons. In this way even a cultural product made in the face of a cultural prohibition can also be a raw offering (which, made during the time of the dead can only be for the dead) (Pócs 2008, 2011).

There is no room here to give a detailed account. During periods of the dead by creating raw conditions it becomes possible to enter into communication with the dead or to gain insight into the other world and the future. Christmas foods made for fasting (pastry with poppy seeds, flatbread or kasha) were used for performing a varied array of divination rites, trying to divine the deaths or the chances of marriage awaiting the family in the coming year (Pócs 1965). There is a connection between the archaic idea of the dead securing fertility for the community and related love and death divination. It is precisely in their role of securing fertility that the dead can give answers to the inquiries of the living regarding matters of death and marriage, and it is in connection with these matters that the living offer their sacrifices to the dead.

Kasha, flatbreads and scones made for Lucy's day and used as means of divining the death or spouse of the family members were quite common in the practice of Hungarians, Slovaks and Croatians. As for the divination practice related to the Perchta, Bavarian and Austrian rituals of *Perchtlmilch*, *Berchtenmilch* (putting milk thickened with kasha or pieces of bread roll out for the Perchta/Berchta for the night of Christmas, the New Year or Twelfth Night) regularly included divination performed the following morning from the spoons that had been left out overnight. People would examine how much milk was left and if the demonic women who had visited

the house at night had drunk a goodly quantity this meant prosperity and good fortune for the inmates for the coming year. On the other hand, the position of the spoons allowed them to divine which family member was to die in the course of the following year (Burgstaller 1957: 74, 78).

Customs for divining future husbands for young women appear in this region, outside of Christmas, on the days of St. Andrew and St. Catherine (November 30th, November 25th), as well as on Lucy's Eve and New Year's Eve.<sup>7</sup> Divining future marriages and deaths can be the subject of one and the same divination procedure. These are usually associated with fasting as a preparatory act, and both symbolic fasting and dreams are included. Fasting may be a strict precondition in these methods of divination, not, however, as a real sacrificial rite but only in symbolic forms. It is an important fact, however, that it is still in every case a means of ritually creating "seeing" and communication with the other world. In other words, even in these "not very serious" forms we are talking about "raw" conditions for supernatural communication.

Fasting plays the most important part of all raw conditions in this respect. Generating visions, recovery in sleep, divination or prophetic dreams through fasting are constant and continuous elements of cultural history in Europe. It must be noted here that one of the roots of Christian fasting is precisely the "offering to the dead" where people forego eating in favour of the dead person; while in the early centuries of Christianity fasting was still within the mourning period.<sup>8</sup>

For all this, innumerable further techniques are also known within these frames for creating connection with the dead and practising divination, the essence of which is to create symbolic other worlds – by walking round, drawing a circle, peeping through a small hole, looking into water or a mirror, etc. Important elements of symbolic divination techniques include operations carried out by virgins, children or widows, with the left hand, naked or in an inverse form, a wide variety of primitive and archaic techniques, in other words "raw" procedures which suspend culture or deny life and culture in various respects.

This is about as much as I have been able to decipher and communicate in rough outline about the traditions of sacrifice and divination which fit into the frames of communication between the living and the dead. As a result of my explorations I can also say that I was surprised during the process how the surviving fragments of these mostly vague, supposedly secondary and half-forgotten beliefs and ritual practices fitted very clearly into a logical order and how many traits of a genuine, autonomous religious practice they showed.

I cannot deal here with the manifold methodological problems that arise in the course of studying such “archaic survivals”. The most important question is whether these scattered data that however point in the same direction can be treated as part of a system. If I treat the data as such I create an etic account of a system. To what degree does such a system correspond to the emic system of any given Central European population – and if there had indeed been such a system what time period was it characteristic of? Am I talking about the vestiges of an unspecifiable archaic past system that cannot be tied to a concrete place or time – or am I talking about the non-Christian components of the Christian system of rites of the present? Setting aside these questions I can only state that the data presented here testify that various, often extremely archaic forms of non-Christian beliefs and rites related to the continuation of life after death, to the dead and to communication between the living and the dead are surviving persistently in contemporary Europe despite and alongside Christian traditions.

## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> See for Central- and Eastern European data: Murko 1910; Nilsson 1916–1919: 122–132; Schneider 1920: 373, 394–395, 408–409; Zelenin 1927: 375–377; Haase 1939: 118; Geiger 1939–1940: 229–230; Ränk 1949: 36–39; Weiser–Aall 1954; Chicherov 1957: 80–82; Megas 1963: 38–44; Pócs 1965: 117–120, 164–177.

<sup>3</sup> See for the summary of the Hungarian data: Pócs 1982, 1992; Central- and Eastern European data: Höfler 1902: 437–440; Schneider 1920: 374; Róheim 1920: 203; Schneeweiss 1925: 4, 6; Zelenin 1927: 375; Eckstein

1927: 1604–1621; Liungmann 1937–1938, II: 649–650; Ränk 1949: 59–75; Burgstaller 1957: 42–43; Chicherov 1957: 80–82; Wolfram 1962; Pócs 1965: 132, 141–142; Ujváry 1969: 220.

<sup>4</sup> Collection of Tamás Grynæus in 1962.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. Zingerle 1857; Lütolf 1865; Mannhardt 1904–1905, I: 99–100, 107; Waschnitius 1913; Róheim 1920: 190–206; Rumpf 1976; Motz 1984; Kretzenbacher 1959; Kuret 1969; Mencej 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Kretzenbacher 1959: 31–47; Pócs 1982, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> On the divination rites see: Höfler 1905: 28; Róheim 1920: 130–132, 137–138; Fehrle 1930: 1239; Haase 1939: 118; Chicherov 1957: 91; Kretzenbacher 1959. The Hungarian data can be found in the Hungarian Folk Belief Archives / Divination (Department of European Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Pécs).

<sup>8</sup> About the connection between fasting and offerings to the dead see e.g. Haberland 1889: 205–206; Höfler 1905: 18; Sartori 1914: 23–24; Fehrle 1929–1930.

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## **The Nine Miraculous Graves: Seeking Help from Beyond**

**Abstract:** Bellu Catholic cemetery in Bucharest is known to host nine miraculous graves. It is believed that praying to people buried in them, burning candles and leaving written petitions nine days in a row leads to the granting of wishes. The local media reports this practice, which combines Christian and magic elements, is one hundred years old. It persisted throughout the communist era despite the efforts of authorities to curtail it. Today people from all over Romania come to pray at these graves throughout the year. In a majority Orthodox country, the fact that Orthodox followers offer prayers in a Catholic cemetery to deceased Catholics they consider might intervene for them next to God is exceptional.

This article examines the phenomenon of the ritual through informal discussions with petitioners, two semi-structured interviews with cemetery employees and periodic field-work observations which began in 2011. The purpose, persistence and origin of the ritual are presented along with a history of the miraculous graves.

**Key words:** miraculous graves, popular saints, lived religion, ritual, Bucharest

### **Introduction**

Romania entered the new millennium as one of the most religious countries in Europe (Voicu 2007). This situation is not merely the consequence of the 1989 political change and reclamation of religious freedom, which was restricted during communism: it resulted from a particular context created by a multitude of factors, including the accelerated social change associated with rising existential insecurity, low human capital and the religious monopoly of the Orthodox Church. While the religious revival continues in Romania, an increasing number of people turn towards the otherworldly, seeking help, guidance and support. This is especially the case within the urban environment where it provides answers or miraculous solutions to daily problems, enabling people “to cope with the stresses and strains of life as they live it” (Stringer 2011) in a rapidly changing society.

The veneration of saints, regarded as close to God, and thus propitious intermediaries, has become an essential component of current folk (Yoder 1974) or lived (Hall 1997) religion in Romania. The devotees develop a special relationship with the saints, whom they relate to as close friends and protectors. But the 'official' saints, the ones acknowledged by the Church, are not the only ones people turn to. The array of popular saints invoked through prayer ranges from canonised saints, to deceased clergy members (charismatic religious leaders, monks, nuns and priests), and further, to deceased lay people, such as children. The transgression from the Orthodox dogma is even more prominent when people venerated as saints are also Catholics, as is the case in the current study.

Bellu Catholic cemetery in Bucharest is known to host nine miraculous graves. It is believed that praying to people buried in them, burning candles and leaving written petitions nine days in a row leads to the granting of wishes. The local media reports this practice, which combines Christian and magic elements, is over one hundred years old. It continued during the communist era despite the efforts of authorities to curtail the practice. Today people from all over Romania come to pray at these graves throughout the year.

Miraculous graves are not exceptional in Europe (see Camus 2011, for France), nor elsewhere in the world. They are encountered in all major religions including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism, as well as in traditional societies. However, what makes the graves in Bellu Catholic cemetery unique is the fact that they are part of a specific ritual which links them together. What is also exceptional is the survival of the ritual despite the means employed by communist authorities to eliminate them. They destroyed graves, kept burials of persecuted religious hierarchs a secret, maintained surveillance of grave sites, interrogated people who visited the graves and forcibly sent them away. Considering these measures, the continuance of the ritual is remarkable. The miraculous graves of Bellu Catholic cemetery give testimony against the communist regime's inference with the lived religion of people. Finally, in a majority Orthodox country, the fact that Orthodox followers offer prayers in a Catholic cemetery is extraordinary.

## **Methodology**

The study of the cemetery and the miraculous graves began in early 2011. The principal methodology involved discussions with cemetery personnel and people attending the graves, direct observation of the ritual, and two formal, semi-structured interviews. These interviews were conducted in 2014 with the cemetery manager, Father Augustin Cadar and with the eldest employee, Marin Creangă, who has been working there since 1947. The content of the questions in the semi-structured interviews originated from observations made through field work and from the nature of the discussions with the grave site petitioners. Field notes from four years of periodic observations, the discussions and the transcripts of the formal interviews provided the basis for this study.

## **History of the Cemetery**

Burial sites in Bucharest were initially located inside the city, in churchyards. Each parish had its own cemetery in which parishioners were interred. Only the poor were buried in common plots outside of the city. This practice continued into the 19th century when authorities became concerned about the increasing population, the overcrowded small churchyard cemeteries and the risk of epidemics. The issue of creating cemeteries outside of the city, for sanitary reasons, was raised at the beginning of the 19th century. Despite sporadic initiatives, the first substantial project of creating new cemeteries outside of the city dates from 1830, during the Russian administration (Bezviconi 1972: 5–9). Tangible actions, however, were not undertaken until 1850, when the designated land was fenced and plans for the cemetery were drawn. The local administration allocated cemeteries to five main religious communities: Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants, Armenians and Jews. Muslims were permitted a new cemetery after the Independence War, 1877–1878. Among the newly created Orthodox cemeteries was also the Bellu Orthodox Cemetery. Initially named after the road passing by it, Șerban Vodă, it soon took the name of the main landowner. The Bellu family was a family of Aromanian origins. Barbu Bellu (1825–1900), future Minister of the Cults and Minister of Justice, donated to the city a parcel previously used as an amusement garden by the local population (Ionnescu-Gion 2003:

695) for a portion of the cemetery. The rest of the land belonged to the Orthodox Metropolitanate. Bellu Orthodox cemetery opened in 1858. The first burials took place the following year. All burials inside the town were prohibited and people were required to move existing tombs outside the city limits by 1860.

The Catholic community had been assigned a cemetery inside the city, at Saint Friday monastery (Bezviconi 1972: 10). However, by 1862 it was full and city authorities demanded that it be relocated outside of the city. The following year, the community was granted land situated next to Bellu Orthodox Cemetery. This was the beginning of the Bellu Catholic Cemetery. The building of the chapel began in 1875. The Orthodox and the Catholic cemeteries were separated by a piece of land which became a cemetery for the poor, and was later incorporated in the military cemetery.

### **The Ritual and the Graves**

The ritual currently performed in Bellu Catholic cemetery, consists in visiting nine graves, nine days in a row. At each grave one should light a candle and leave a written request, a note. On the ninth day, an offering is required. People leave flowers, bagels, cookies, candies or even money. The visitors follow an imaginary, circular path which starts with graves situated on the right side of the cemetery and continues to the left, counter clockwise, following the alleys, but also walking between graves. People who travelled long distances to perform this ritual walk around the path nine times in the same day.

The notes are often well hidden in the holes and cracks of the funerary monuments. Sometimes there are so many that they cover the graves and the ground around them. The content of these notes vary: sometimes it is very short, merely a name, sometimes very long and similar to the *acatist* that Orthodox believers bring to church (see Necula 2014: 109–113). Both men and women pray to the “saints” for help with various problems (healing, harmony inside of the couple/family, getting a spouse or having a child, getting a better paid job, in Romania or abroad, making their partner return, helping them pass an exam), or simply to protect them and their

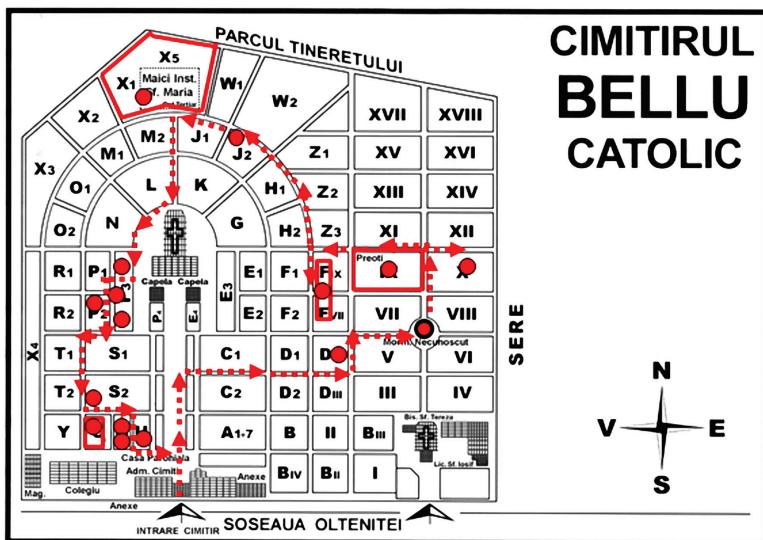


Figure 1. The path of the nine graves' ritual in Bellu Catholic Cemetery, Bucharest. Map provided by Father Augustin Cadar and adapted by Irina Stahl, 2014.

loved ones. Some requests are more unconventional, involving bad thoughts directed towards people who have hurt them.

Requests, written as graffiti, with markers, directly on the stone monuments, are a recent phenomenon. This practice first appeared in 2013 and is a great inconvenience for the cemetery employees, who constantly have to clean them. At first, only names were mentioned, but progressively, the texts have increased in length covering large portions of the monument, in the most unexpected locations (on the hands and the legs of statues, the back of the angel etc.).

People visiting the graves are mostly Orthodox. Discussions with petitioners and the formal interviews, in addition to the content of written requests, attest to this as fact. They come from various areas of the city, but also from elsewhere in the country (Bacău, Horezu, Baia Mare etc.). Petitioners include local and national celebrities,

as well as ordinary people, Roma, as well as Romanians, young, as well as old, and both highly educated and less well educated people.

Although the ritual regarding the miraculous graves supposes visiting nine graves, the actual number of graves exceeds nine. With the aide of cemetery employees, I have identified sixteen graves that have, so far, caught people's attention. Some are more visited than others and have special candle boxes in front, placed there by the cemetery administration.

Among the graves considered to be miraculous, six belong to clergy members (nuns, priests, theology professors, Church hierarchs) and nine to lay people, some of whom are children. One exceptional site is not a grave, but a monument dedicated to victims of the First World War, known as *the Unknown Soldier's grave*. Erected soon after the war, it consists of an impressive cross under which lies a statuary group representing the Virgin Mary holding the dying Jesus. It is believed the monument helps people who had not known or have lost their parents.

Four sites are delimited areas consisting of more than one grave. Two are burial areas for Catholic nuns: one is located in the back of the cemetery, behind the chapel, and another one near the entry. The back cemetery contains 158 graves, among which are some of the oldest graves in Bellu Catholic cemetery, dating to the second half of the 19th century. The second cemetery of the nuns is much smaller (15 graves) and more recent, going back to 1941. There is also an area dedicated to Catholic priests, with 48 graves. Not far from the priests, a different area is reserved for the *Bruder*, the head and teachers from the Catholic theology schools, many of whom had experienced the communist persecutions. Situated in the heart of the cemetery, this last site contains nine graves. All four sites (nuns, priests and professors) are still in use today.

Among the individual graves, two belong to two prominent Greek-Catholic leaders: the Cardinal Iuliu Hossu (1885–1970), first Romanian Cardinal named by the Vatican, and the Bishop Vasile Aftenie (1899–1950). Persecuted and imprisoned by the communists, both are today in the process of beatification. Their burials took place in secret, were anonymous and were performed during night time, by the secret police, to avoid the peoples' attention. Their graves were

identified later with their names. Bishop Aftenie's grave was the first one Marin Creangă dug, as a young man, and he remembers doing it alone. Bishop Aftenie died following the brutal treatment to which he was subjected in prison. According to the legend, before he died, he told the physician who treated him that a joyful event would happen to him, if the physician would bury him in a Christian cemetery. Soon after the Bishop died, the doctor's wife started attending his grave, together with their handicapped daughter, and prayed for the daughter's healing. She continued to do so for years, even after the secret police removed her from the cemetery and tried to dissuade her from returning. She cared for the grave and paid for a stone cross to be raised. Finally, the daughter was cured and escaped the country and its communist authorities. Cardinal Hossu was initially buried in his family crypt. His remains were relocated a few years later, in a more visible spot, next to the chapel, and his name was finally inscribed in stone. Both the family grave and the one in which the Cardinal lies today are currently visited by petitioners.

Three individual graves belong to children. The most popular is the grave of Olguța Gambara (1904–1912), an eight-year-old girl killed in violent circumstances. The grave is one of the most visited, as it is the starting point of the ritual. It also seems to have initiated the ritual sometime between 1965 and 1970. An elderly woman who prayed at the girl's grave was the first one to get her wishes granted. Although she visited it long before 1965, it was only sometime after this date that rumours of accomplished miracles first emerged, according to Marin Creangă (personal communication, 5 July 2014). People began coming to the grave to pray. Many sought help in fleeing the country. The flow of visitors was so great that at one point the secret police started interrogating people to find out what they were praying for. Creangă maintains he knows approximately 300 people who had fled the country this way. In 1981, Olguța's sister, from Belgium, asked for her remains. The communist officials did not grant her request, instead the body was exhumed, the grave destroyed and the remains secretly relocated in the cemetery. This was meant to put an end to the pilgrimage in the cemetery. After 1989, another woman, whose wishes were granted, paid for a new stone cross and a fence which were situated close to the initial location of the grave. Without any remains, the monument is today no



*Figure 2. The unknown child's grave.  
Photo by Irina Stahl, 10 July 2014.*

longer a grave. However, it is still the starting point for the nine graves ritual.

By the time Olguta's grave was removed, another child's grave nearby was destroyed. The remains were left in place, but the monument was levelled to the ground. This is why the name of the child, who appears to have been an orphan, is no longer known. As in the previous case, after 1989, a woman whose wishes were granted took care of the grave and raised a cross on which is written: "Pray with faith and you will be helped" (see Figure 2).

The third young person is Rosina Gelinda Sebatti (1899–1916). Because of a statuary group presenting a mother in a praying posture, accompanied by her child, the grave is also known as *the mother and the child's grave* (see Figure 3). Women wishing for or having problems with their children are meant to pray here.

Not far from Cardinal Hossu's grave is located a simple grave, consisting of a large, stone cross lying on the ground. It belongs to an Italian Count from Perugia, Arturo Montesperelli (1889–1922).

A few meters away is located *the grave with the angel*, which belongs to a Frenchman from Montjoie, Eduard Bühl (1826–1893). The name of the site is inspired by the praying angel guarding the grave



Figure 3. *The mother and the child's grave*.  
Photo by Irina Stahl, 5 September 2011.

and situated at a certain distance above the ground. Recently, the angel and the grave have been restored by a woman whose wishes were granted.

*The holy family grave* is close to the cemetery exit and is the last grave to be visited in the ritual. It belongs to the Petelenz family whose drama took place at the turn of the past century: the three-year-old daughter died, followed by her young mother and much later by the unconsoled father and husband. On the headstone, the medallion representing the couple is shiny because of people touching it while praying. As the name indicates, this grave is meant to help people having family problems or wishing for a family.

In front of the *Holy family grave* there are two other graves. One belongs to the Fabos family (second half of 19th century, first half of the 20th century). It once had an elaborate construction, resembling a monastery, which collapsed during an earthquake. Today, people light candles in a little grotto created by the fallen stones.

The Rogalski family grave, also known as *the grave with chains*, hosts a young woman who apparently died soon after her wedding. The grave is meant to be visited by people who face problems in their marriage, or who want to break a spell. The chains surrounding the grave were used to draw crosses in the stone curb; the groves are still visible today. Not long ago, a family member was buried. With the occasion, the grave was restored and the chains removed.

Before 1965, and the sensation created by Olguța's grave, people offered prayers at the sites of the nuns', the priests' and the Brothers' graves as well as to the Unknown Soldier's monument. Bishop Aftenie's and Cardinal Hossu's graves were later integrated in the ritual. According to the interview with Father Augustin Cadar, the ritual became nationally known in 2010, when a local TV station presented the story of the nine graves<sup>1</sup> (personal communication, 5 July 2014). Following that television story the number of people practicing the ritual has grown enormously. People from Bucharest, but also from all over the country, come to pray at the nine graves seeking fulfilment of their wishes. Father Augustin recommends praying only at the graves of the clergy members and at the war monument, as only people who have had a pure life, a life dedicated to prayer, can intercede with God.

## Questions and Possible Answers

The described ritual raises a number of questions. First, why have people chosen these sites and not others? A second question is why has the ritual persisted and in fact enlarged? And finally, from where did the elements of the ritual come?

According to Marin Creangă the choice of graves was determined by the granting of wishes. However, it is hard to believe that all graves from Bellu Catholic cemetery were “tried out” before the ritual was established. The selection of the clergy graves is easily understood. The dead are closer to God than the living and the nuns, monks and priests, having lived a pure life, a life dedicated to prayer and helping others, are expected to continue doing in the afterlife what they did during their earthly life. Regarding the children’s graves, it is believed children go straight to heaven and therefore, they too, are close to God. The Orthodox Church even has a special funeral service, recommended for children under seven years of age (Molitfelnic 2013: 241–254). The emotions transmitted either by the legends circulating about the dead, or by the appearance of the grave (e.g. the statue of the mother and the child, the praying angel, the grieving Mary holding Jesus, the holy family medallion, the chains etc.) also play an important role in the choice of graves. And last, the fact that most of the people buried in the cemetery have foreign origins might be of importance considering people during communism were praying to flee the country. Even today, many requests concern a better paid job abroad. The persistence of the ritual is supported by the granting of wishes, or at least the hope that the wishes might be granted. This alone is a good reason for maintaining the ritual. Furthermore, cemetery officials endorse the ritual, by encouraging people to pray at graves belonging to the clergy, by installing candle holders in front of the most popular graves and by selling the candles required by the ritual.

The origins of the ritual are difficult to ascertain but aspects are found in folk customs whose ancestries are long forgotten. The counter clockwise movement involved in the ritual is encountered in folk as well as canonical traditions, such as: healing rituals (Candrea 1999: 419–422), folk dances (e.g. *hora*), and processions (e.g. surrounding the church during the Great Friday, at Easter – Tipic 1976: 172). While in folk medicine the movement is meant to

persuade the evil to retreat, allowing the body to regain its initial state of health (Candrea 1999: 419), in Orthodox doctrine, the movement symbolises the resurrection and the movement towards light. The number nine is also attributed with a particular significance. Frequently encountered in Romanian folklore, nine is a powerful number. Three times three, it is three times as powerful as the number three, symbol of the Trinity and thus of divine perfection. In medical folklore, nine is frequently used in healing rituals (Candrea 1999: 431–433). However, given the fact that the ritual is performed in a Catholic cemetery, the specific Catholic prayer called novena, which is repeated nine days in a row, might also have influenced the number of repetitions, as well as the nine graves of the Bruders.

The nine graves ritual presents many interesting aspects which deserve to be further developed. In addition to those already mentioned, the continuous development of the ritual is fascinating, illustrating the logic inherent in lived religion, religion as people experience it.

### Acknowledgements

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Prayer in time of crisis: The nine holy graves from Bellu Catholic cemetery.* <http://www.antena3.ro/romania/ruga-pe-timp-de-criză-cele-nouă-morminte-sfinte-din-cimitirul-bellu-catolic-99231.html> (Date of access: 18 May 2010).

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## ***The Year of Magical Thinking – Rituals and Magical Thinking in Autobiographical Literature of Mourning***

**Abstract.** Inspired by Joan Didion's touching self-reflexive book of mourning "The Year of Magical Thinking" (2005), written after the death of her husband, this paper investigates literary descriptions of personal mourning rites also in other works. It analyses not only autobiographical processes of grieving as *rites de passage*, combining traditional mourning customs and individual rituals of commemoration, but also the process of writing itself as a form of magic, inspired by linguistic formulae such as binding spells and incantations. Beyond religious conventions and psychological explications we find archaic rituals and symbols of liminality at work in many literary works of mourning. The moments of magic in such a year of mourning are scenes of remembrance and recollection, re-calling the past and calling up the beloved deceased.

**Key words:** autobiography, grieving, commemoration, *rites de passage*

*True stories can't be told forward, only backward. We invent them from the vantage point of an ever-changing present and tell ourselves how they unfolded.* (Hustvedt 2010)

The feeling of bereavement following the death of a loved one is an experience which everyone of us either has already experienced or is going to experience in the future – which also provokes our engagement with our own demise.

In this essay I want to look at literary products resulting from such an experience, four autobiographical 'books of grief' which will demonstrate the characteristics of this literary form in which rituals and magical thinking play as great a role as questions of aesthetics of form and of lived experience. This literary form thus takes on functions analogous to real-life situations.

I shall not deal here with the ceremonies of burial, the social rituals of commiseration and condolence or the cultures of consolation,

much less with traditional modes of mourning or guide books offering advice for the newly-bereaved of how to get through the first weeks after the death of kith or kin.

“Michael Rosen’s Sad Book”, published in 2004 with illustrations by Quentin Blake, describes in only 30 pages how the author of this children’s book is trying to deal with the sudden death of his 18-year-old son from meningitis. The very book cover, showing a side view of the haggard-looking author Rosen with a skinny dog and turned-over dustbins in the middle ground, alerts us to the fact that it is a heavy load which the protagonist has to shoulder. The first-person-narrator of this picture book describes his feelings and thoughts in short and pointed sentences, all revolving around the memories of that happy child and his terrible loss: the general mood is corroborated by Quentin Blake’s coloured illustrations, the first of which, a smiling Michael Rosen seen against a sunny background, is quite misleading: “This is me being sad. Maybe you think I’m happy in this picture. Really I’m sad but pretending I’m happy. I’m doing that because I think people won’t like me if I look sad.”

The following pictures turn out to be greyer and become darker, the face reverting into a shadow of itself; the text accompanying this loss of features and colours describes in simple words what Sigmund Freud had analysed as “loss of the beloved object” in his essay from 1917 on “*Trauer und Melancholie*” (“Mourning and Melancholia”), as a “loss of interest in the world outside, [...] the same turning away from any activity that is not connected with thoughts of him [the deceased i.e. the object of love]” (Freud 1999: 244) – a state in which all personal energy is completely dissolved: Freud also alludes to the overcoming of such a phase after some time – unless a steady decline into melancholy has begun, something called depression in today’s language. The personal sorrow thus isolates the persona from his or her environment, and at the same time renders this environment unattractive and colourless. In our book, Quentin Blake’s pictures are only colourful and vivid when representing the memories of the protagonist’s happy life with his son, culminating in the last illustration full of emptiness and agony, “because he’s not there any more”. This final drawing shows the narrator between light and darkness, illuminated by a candle as tall as himself, with



Figure 1. "Michael Rosen's Sad Book" (2004).

his eyes glued to his son's photograph – but at the same time turned towards the reader and brightened by the candlelight.

### Autobiography as Genre

Autobiographical literature as such implies a so-called implicit biographical pact (cf. Lejeune 1975), based on the identity of author and narrator and supported by corresponding images and paratextual insinuations. The self-reflexive stance of the first-person-narrators of these essayist texts demonstrates their knowledge of the linguistic matrix of history, identity and memory (Holdenried 2000, 52–60). All forms of autobiographical writing have to reflect their fundamentals as products of narration, bringing about autobiographical truth through its narrative process and the progress of narrating. In our context, intertextual references to more or less well-known works of literary mourning become quite relevant, as they form the nucleus of a genre as well as serve as a basis for analysis; thus Connie Palmen (2013) lists more than three pages of works quoted and referred

to – from Roland Barthes’ *“Journal de deuil”* (“Mourning Diary”) (2009) to Anny Enquist’s novels, especially “Counterpoint” (2008), from Susan Sontag’s essay titled “Regarding the Pain of Others” (2004) to P. F. Thomése’s *“Schattenkind”* (2004). Joan Didion (2005) repeatedly refers to Sigmund Freud’s essay mentioned above, to anthropological studies such as Philippe Aries’ *“L’Homme devant la mort”* (“History of Death”, 1977) and Geoffrey Gorer’s *“Death, Grief and Mourning”* (1965); she quotes a poem by Gerald Manley Hopkins and the first stanza of W. H. Auden’s, “Funeral Blues”, which shows in the first lines the personal and public reactions during a funeral, the most visual ceremony of mourning and memorial: “Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone, / Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone, / Silence the pianos and with muffled drum / Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come” (Didion 2005: 45).

This referencing of pre-texts, both well-known and almost unknown, dealing with similar experiences of loss and grief, takes up quite some space in the works of Joan Didion and Connie Palmen. And it leads through the reflection of this reading experience, the intra- and extra-textual dialogue with others in and on these literary works, to the comfort of experiences shared, but more important to the mirroring of one’s situation and role, of one’s dealings with autobiographical writing, to links, connectors and actualisations. In this way individual experiences gain importance and status in the supra-individual context of human history, thus inverting the archaic mode of mythologizing, which did not focus on the individual at all, into a modern literarisation of the individual *per se* in a context of myth and magic in order to establish a maze of meaning centred on the individual and opposed to the anonymity and liminality of a science-based world of abstraction (cf. Gottwald 2004, 330).

The texts themselves focus on the distance between the narrating I and the experiencing I, between the subject and the object of narration, on the contrast between the persona who relives the life of the past, thus resurrecting the dead, and the persona narrating this past, who at present is left alone in his/her bereavement. This writing oneself by writing about another who is no longer present, but whose lack of presence determines the present situation of the writer, who at the same time is his/her own first reader, – this writing oscillates between the poles of narrating and reflecting, between

fictional telling in the manner of the novel and critical analysis of codes and conventions, e.g. that of the novel itself. This arena of narrative modes and modalities engages the current loss of a lover or a loved one, the powerlessness when facing death, the impossibility to revert, stop or only slow down the dying process on the one hand. And on the other it offers the look back, the telling and re-telling of the past, of moments, words, scenes and stories of togetherness from this past, now lost forever except in memory – often right up to the moment of death and contaminated with prefigurations of that fatality imagined or remembered only after the fact – this whole area which is overwritten with writing trying to rewrite what is lost – and it is showing signs of magical thinking at every twist and turn, which now will be illustrated with some textual evidences.

Our narratives begin with the current situation of the narrator/author who is suffering and unconsoled; almost our first information is the news of the death of a loved one, often with the exact dates, the time elapsed, and the centrality of the event, the consequences for the narrator. On the first page of “*Logbuch eines unbarmherzigen Jahres*” (2013: 9) Connie Palmen confronts her reader with some graphic details: “39 kilograms, lockjaw, mouth ruptured, throat inflamed, stomach in turmoil, intestines in pain for lack of food, heart pounding, speeding, pumping like mad. On the inside cold through and through, on the outside drops of sweat.”<sup>1</sup>

Every entry in Connie Palmen’s “Log of a Merciless Year” features its date, beginning with “28th of April, 2010 48 days after his death: First notes” (9) and ending with “11th of September, 2011 One and a half Years after his death: Final notes” (257), creating the impression of an authentic diary. The log of the book’s title evokes the picture of life as a road (as seen in Michael Rosen’s cover picture), here as an existential metaphor for life as a journey at sea, a voyage.

At the same time, Palmen reverts to the traditional and well-ritualised year of mourning. This year of mourning implied historically the period (usually 10 months) which the widow had to wait before marrying again, then the time frame for wearing black after the passing of a close relation. Beyond simple tradition, this year of mourning does have fundamental psychological implications (cf. Kübler-Ross 2005).

Psychologists break up the process of mourning into different stages, which can differ considerably from person to person, but often last at least one year. These different stages, though I do not want to focus on them, are reflected in our literature of mourning – at least to a certain degree:

Stage 1 is often called “Denial”; the loss is felt as a shock and cannot be accepted; stage 2 combines frustration and anger; mixed emotions range from self-reproach to hatred, and from aggression to anxiety; stage 3 and 4 can be seen as “Parting”, called “Bargaining” and “Depression”: the dead are revisited in real as well as in imagined/remembered locations and situations, the past is re-enacted, which leads to a great ambivalence of emotions; and stage 4 implies the final “Acceptance”: the loss is acknowledged, and the dead are separated from the life which continues (even though they remain part and parcel of the survivor). Our literature of mourning reflects mostly stages 3 and 4 and only reverts to stage 1 and 2 in short scenes of complete speechlessness, utter helplessness and abandonment. These first two stages do not allow much reflective or even creative engagement – and are simply too intimate to be verbalized.

By and large this scheme corresponds to the *rites de passage* described by Arnold van Genepp (1909) and Victor Turner (1969): Phase I: Separation and self-distancing; Phase II: Liminality and lack of orientation. This corresponds roughly to the mourning stages 1 to 3 and is usually accompanied by corresponding rites and rituals, such as the *rites de séparation* (‘rites of separation’) and the *rites de marges* (‘rites of liminality’) such as the funeral service and the meal which follows it, the obituaries, dress codes and memorials: in the end, we have a phase of integration in which a new identity is being accepted; as a rule our western cultures do not accompany this last phase, which corresponds to phase four above, with *rites d'aggrégation*. These stages corresponding with individual and collective rituals provide a social framework for mourning which can be experienced at the same time as an exceptional situation of crisis.

Our bereavement literature employs rather individualized rituals of distancing and changing; the authors/narrators experience the phases of mourning generally as metamorphosis and utilize a variety of strategies for preserving the past into a literary afterlife

of the deceased even while they themselves realized that they are changing/have already changed.

A similar time frame is evoked in Joan Didion's "The Year of Magical Thinking" (2005), a book which also starts with a first notation on May 20th, 2004, five months after her husband's death on the 30th of December, 2003; Didion concludes her work with sentences full of poetic melancholy: "I do not want to finish the year because I know that the days pass, as January becomes February and February becomes summer, certain things will happen. My image of John at the instant of his death will become less immediate, less raw. It will become something that happened in another year" (225).

This return of anniversaries of death will make apparent her remembrance as such and underline both the ritual of representation and the unmitigated loss – and through both: the passage of time. Another echo chamber is sounded with Didion's title "Blue Nights" (2011), in which she tries to come to terms with the death of her daughter Quintana, who had passed on in 2009 at the age of 39 after a long illness; here she employs a more radical style of language, full of lyrical associations to the phases of transition between day and night, "a span of time approaching and following the summer solstice, [...] when the twilights turn long and blue. [...] During the blue nights you think the end will never come" (Didion 2011: 3f.), implying the transition from life to death in ritualized images referring to the end: "During the blue nights you think the end will never come. [...] the end of promise, the dwindling of the days, the inevitability of the fading, the dying of the brightness." (4).

She begins the book with memories from Quintana's day of marriage, another paradigmatic turning point of life filled with rituals and remembered as a moment of magic. And she concludes as follows: "Pass into nothingness [...] Fade as the blue nights fade, go as the brightness goes. / Go back into the blue. [...] Yet there is no day in her life on which I do not see her" (188).

### **Functions of This Literature of Mourning**

On the one hand the authors use this literature of mourning as autobiographical reflection in analogy to their professional work and their creative calling, a well-established mode of creative control

which leads them back into everyday routines of writing, helps to overcome the passivity of grieving through actively engaging in creative as well as critical text production. Connie Palmen (2013) declares during a radio interview on the 7th of April 2013 in this context: "Well, I cannot say that this has saved me, although I felt a lot stronger when it was finished. That is when I thought: I don't know, how I did it – but I have written a book. In this way, I am: *cogito, ergo sum*. I have done something, it's not that something has just been taken away from me, I have done something myself. That is what writing also implies, making a book, making something for others. Grief is something very egotistical, you concentrate so much on your own sorrow, therefore it was wonderful to be able to make something out of it."<sup>22</sup>

For the reader, on the other hand, this can become a kind of model, a "pre-figuration"; it can comfort the mourning by reflecting their own moments of existential crisis and pre-figure a way of coming to terms with them. Autobiographical writing thus helps to construct a new identity by offering concepts of individuality through life stories which keep a special interest for the reader – either because of the author's public standing, or because of the importance of the experience itself. This particular case of autobiographical literature of mourning does not start with the childhood of the first-person-narrator, but with the first encounter with the deceased, the development of their relationship, which becomes more and more personal and intimate, and culminates in a representative scene of togetherness, for example the celebration of marriage.

Literature turns here into a memorial space, a locus of remembrances, in which the imaginative properties of the form admit the presence of the person remembered, thus allowing the person remembering to assure herself/himself of their existence as part of a partnership, as parent to a child, as wife to a husband, as son to a mother, and so on. These critical experiences and these liminal situations also lend special importance to rites and rituals.

### **Magical Thinking in (Mourning) Literature**

Mythical and magical thinking still accompany our contemporary life which is based on logic and rationality, natural sciences and

a materialist image of the world – a basis which is nonetheless regarded as deficient. The magico-mythical thinking, the magical view of the world, is determined by the tenet of ‘universal sympathy’, i.e. the idea that everything is connected to everything (Petzoldt 2011). This fundamental analogy, these mutual references and sympathetic correlations, render understandable both macrocosmos and microcosmos and the acts of humans and gods – or, in more secular terms, of “fate” – in them. The magic principles present a multi-faceted system which is based on similarity as well as on opposition, on contiguity, in which a part represents the whole (such as relics), and on imitation, promising to assure a certain outcome through corresponding rituals. Certain leitmotifs, the construction of protagonist and antagonist, of antinomies and opposition, the ordering of the work itself, all this can be found in the composition of a literature of mourning; especially the repeated interpretation of signs, and in particular those which can be regarded as omens of death – after death; thus Joan Didion reconstructs an “apprehension of death” (Didion 2005: 76) which the persons concerned did not recognize as warning, but which the survivor may now read as such an announcement, and as signs of a presence of the deceased after his death.

The ritual can be seen as the transposition of magical thinking into acting, a special performance with symbolic function, which carries a timeless meaning despite its concrete association with a given situation at a given time. It can be re-enacted whenever necessary. The necessary liminality of the ritual corresponds to the liminality of all forms of self-discovery which autobiographical literature outlines, reflects or stipulates: The experience of a threshold, the liminal experience, refers to a mode of experiencing which leads to the transformation of the person experiencing it (cf. Fischer-Lichte 2003).

The connection between the ritual and its literary representation becomes particularly apparent in the moments of repetition, allowing recognition and orientation through its aesthetic form and its poetic effect: the invocation, the magical conjuration, the evocation with the right word.

This fundamental principle of repetition and repeatability is the basis for recognition, for knowledge, for communication: every form

of speaking, all forms of literature are repetition. Genre conventions as well as all other conventions are built on this principle, all variations need the underlying model in order to repeat and extend it. Repetition is the central element of poetic language and of poetry in particular; rhyme and rhythm, consonance and alliteration, cadence and melody, all follow the principle of the recurrence of the same within its variations (cf. Neubauer-Petzoldt 2008/09; Schlaffer 2012). The affinity of magical and poetic language have been manifest from the very beginning of literature – the earliest documents of German literature are incantations, the so-called Merseburg Charms. This property of poetic structure, ritualized repetition, becomes obvious in the literature of bereavement: thus Didion is filling whole pages with identical sentence structures, others with sentences all starting the same, a whole litany opening with “I remember” (2005: 92) which lines up the traumatic phases of confronting death, but also provokes the renewed remembering, the reconstruction of past episodes and images, and finally the unfulfillable wish of her “I wanted” (2005: 75).

Since religions and traditional myths have lost much of their impact and importance today in our western world, literature and autobiographies can offer some orientation for our own course of life, confront us readers with borderline experiences and different ‘realities’, allowing us to find ‘magical’ analogies and correspondences, and above all give ritual orientation in critical situations of our own lives.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> “Neununddreißig Kilo, Kiefersperre, Mund in Fetzen, Rachen in Brand, Magen greint, Darm jammert laut vor Leere, Herz rast, klopft, pumpt wie verrückt. Innen durch und durch kalt, außen perlt der Schweiß.” I refer to the German translation of Connie Palmen’s book “*Logboek van een onbarmhartig jaar*” originally written in Dutch, translated into German by Hanni Ehlers. This and other translations into English of Palmen’s book are mine and I am very grateful to Paul Neubauer, who helped me with the translation and was the first critical reader of this essay.

<sup>2</sup> Interview “Über die Trauer hinaus”, Deutschlandfunk: “Ja, ich kann natürlich nicht sagen, das Buch hat mich gerettet, obwohl ich mich stärker fühlte, als es fertig war. Da hab ich gedacht: Ich weiß nicht, wie ich es getan habe, aber ich habe ein Buch geschrieben. Also, ich bin; cogito, ergo sum.

*Und ich hab wieder etwas gemacht, es ist mir nicht nur etwas entnommen, ich hab wieder etwas gemacht. Das ist, was Schreiben auch ist, man macht ein Buch, etwas für andere. Und Trauer ist schon so egoistisch, man ist so konzentriert auf den eigenen Schmerz, dass es auch schön war, dass da etwas daraus gemacht werden konnte.“*

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Analysing Magic  
in  
Rituals  
and  
New  
Field Researches



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**Magic Beliefs and Practices of Holy Thursday  
in the Modern Tradition of the Peasant  
Population of the Russian North  
(based on materials of the XXI century)**

**Abstract.** In the imagination of the inhabitants of the Russian North Holy Thursday is saturated with magic practices directed at achieving the well-being, prosperity and health of the people for the whole of the coming year, at increasing the fertility of soil and animals and the production of crops. It is connected with many charms, interdictions and signs and is accompanied by prevention, protection and cleansing magic acts. The materials collected at the beginning of the 21st century among the peasant population of the Russian North show that many traditional practices known to be efficient, functional and stable in the past, are still applied by the inhabitants up to the present day.

**Key words:** Holy Week, Holy Thursday, Russian tradition in the Komi Republic, magic ritual practice, charm, incantation, well-wishing, ritual dialogue

In the imagination of the inhabitants of the Russian North Holy Thursday is saturated with magic practices directed at achieving the well-being, prosperity and health of the people for the whole coming year, at increasing the fertility of soil and animals and the production of crops. It is connected with many charms, interdictions and signs and is accompanied by prevention, protection and cleansing magic acts. The materials collected at the beginning of the 21st century among the peasant population of the Russian North show that many traditional practices known to be efficient, functional and stable in the past, are still applied by the inhabitants up to the present day.

We are concentrating on one local, compact area of Russian tradition in the Komi Republic – the village of Loima and other settlements belonging to the Loima rural administration. The village

of Loima was first mentioned in 1620 in the Census Book of the Sol'vychegodsk 'district' *uezd*. It belonged at different times to the Sol'vychegodsk, Lal'sk and Ust'-Sysol'sk districts of Vologda 'province' *guberniya* and it was attached to the Komi Republic in 1921 (Zhrebtssov 1994: 139).

When evaluating their ethnic, territorial and linguistic affiliation the inhabitants of this area align themselves with the Vologda-Vyatka territories of the Russian North and may refer to the "falsity" of attaching themselves to the Komi republic:

*The Komi [people] were there, then [the Russian people] came over here from the Kirov and Vologda regions. Loima became Russian. It belonged to the Vologda province earlier [...] then when the revolution happened, it was attached to the Komi Republic.* (2004, ILLH: AF 1541-1)<sup>1</sup>

*Vyatka [province] was closer than the Komi [Republic]. In fact, we were only recently attached to Komi. We were in Archangelsk or Vologda [...]. We are Russian, we do not know anything about Komi. Because we are Russian.* (2004, ILLH: AF 1547-5)

*All our customs are from Luza [region], our vocabulary comes from the Kirov region, we were concerned with Kirov more, than with Komi...* (2004, ILLH: AF 1550-21)

The folk tradition of Loima was formed by Russian migrants moving from northern and north-eastern Russian provinces into an alien ethnic environment, in close contact with the Komi population. This factor promoted the maintenance of "traditional forms of folk culture as a means of reinforcing 'otherness' amidst the indigenous [Komi] population" (Vlasov and Kaneva 2006: 24–25) and this phenomenon occurred within the historical memory of the Loima Russians. Living in close proximity to the Komi population promoted the conservation of many elements of folk culture and the mythological picture of the world from the historical motherland of the immigrants. These elements are manifest in ritual folklore, in tales, in mythological personages as well as in other folklore forms (Ibid: 25).

Our expeditionary records from Loima concerning the present situation support and supplement known data collected earlier in the Russian North. All our materials were gathered in the years 2004,

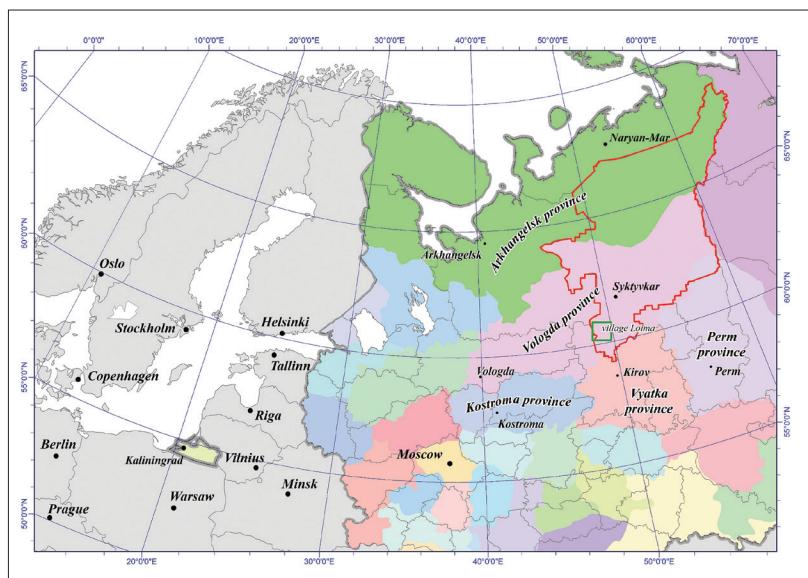


Figure 1. The administrative division of 1914 is given in colour. The black line shows the modern borders of administrative units. The territory of the present-day Komi Republic is marked by a red line. The Loima territory is shown in the green square.

2006, 2009 and 2010 from the native Russian population born between 1909–1940 who were at that time living in Loima.

In the popular terminology of Loima Holy Week is called *Velikoden-naya* (2004, ILLH: AF 1539-29). Holy Thursday is referred to variously as *Great*, *Big*, *Clean*, *Terrible*, each of which titles contains an aspect of the whole complex of notions concerning this day of the national calendar.

Magic actions performed on Holy Thursday are referred to as *koldovat'* (*koldovat'sya*) (2004, ILLH: AF 1539-29) *dekovatsya* [all the terms being pronounced with the stress on the first syllable] (2004, ILLH: AF 1549-13), meaning 'to perform some magical actions in order to harm a human or animal', 'to perform some magical actions to ensure well-being, prosperity and marriage'.

The noted magical practices are divided into preventive, precautionary, cleansing, protective and others. Some general rules must

be followed: All magic actions must be carried out before sunrise; magic actions must not be talked about, otherwise they will not work (AA, 2009).

Magical practices aimed at prosperity and prevention form the largest group. Thus, in order to promote their own marriage, girls would “sweep” the road with a broom for their prospective bridegrooms (2004, ILLH: AF 1538-9). They would take a wooden harrow, chop it up and scatter the pieces at the crossroads (2004, ILLH: AF 1539-29). Girls would also sweep out the rubbish and watch to see which way the wind would blow it. From this direction their bridegroom would come (2004, SA KomiSC: F.5. Op.2. D.742. L.94). They would walk around the house with a broom and invite the bridegrooms, saying: *Suzhenyy, ryazhenyy, naydis', privedis', prikhodi svatat'sya* “Chosen one, promised one, show yourself, come to me, ask my hand in marriage” (2004, SA KomiSC: F.5. Op.2. D.742. L.138).

The girls practiced witchcraft on this day; e.g. fortune-telling similar to the Christmas divinations. For example, the girls would try to find out about their future bridegroom in the bath-house (*banya*) at night: if a girl found something smooth on the stove, even a stone, her bridegroom would be handsome, good-looking (2004, ILLH: AF 1548-5).

The mistress of a house in whose family there were girls of marriageable age would stand on the porch and “invite” bridegrooms, as in the following example: “My mother-in-law [taught me]: you must go out on the porch, open the doors and say: “I am opening my house, my porch, for the young and daring people. You are welcome”” (AA, 2006).

This “invitation” could be constructed as a ritual dialogue between the mistress of the house and an imaginary groom:

“[The girl's mother] opens the door on the porch and converses with herself:  
– Who's there?  
– I am, open the door.  
– Who are you?  
– I'm the groom. I have come for the bride, for your girl Anna.  
I have come to woo her.

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*She married all her daughters. On Holy Thursday ... On Holy Thursday we must accomplish all these actions in order for the young men to cherish and woo the girls". (AA, 2009)*

Before sunrise the mistress of the house performed several magical rituals whose purpose was to ensure the prosperity and well-being of the family, its continuing good health and strength, its standing in the wider community. Some rituals were accompanied by short incantatory texts (*zagovory*, *prigovory* 'charms', *zaklinaniya* 'incantations', *blagopozhelaniya* 'well-wishing formulae'). The main motives behind these wishes are the creation of a plurality and a multiplicity of "good things" (products, objects and so on; "so that there would be a large amount of something") and their continuity ("so that it would continue throughout the whole year, all the time"). A typical example of this would be when women counted their money with the hope "that money would be there throughout the whole year". As they counted they would say "these are not roubles, these are thousands [of roubles]" (AA, 2009).

When the mistress of the house stirred the sour cream she would say "these are not pots, they are pails" in order to have an abundance of sour cream in the next year; when she churned butter (2004, ILLH: AF 1541-19) or sifted flour she would use incantations aimed at increasing the amount of butter and ensuring a rich corn harvest in the following year (AA, 2006). Women prepared bread and large amounts of tasty baked goods/pastries ("everything tasty") so that "all these products will be there for the whole year" (2004, ILLH: AF 1544-28). This rule also applied in certain portents. For example, if you had bread on Holy Thursday, there would be bread for the whole of the coming year (2004, ILLH: AF 1545-13). Women would also steal soil from other people's gardens to ensure a good crop in their own (2004, ILLH: VF 1518-29).

Women put bread and salt on the icon shelf (*bozhnitsa*) before the icons so that it would "spend the night" near the icons on Holy Thursday (2004, ILLH: AF 1549-12). When the cattle were first sent out to pasture, a piece of salted bread and some salt were given to each animal on the farm (2004, ILLH: AF 1543-1). Salt was used in a variety of different situations (see below).

On Holy Thursday men simulated fishing: they climbed onto the roof or into the attic (*povit'*, *podvoloka*) and placed logs in their

fishing nets, so that “much fish would be caught” (variant: “large pikes would be caught”) (2004, ILLH: AF 1545-12). Imitation of fishing was sometimes accompanied by the exhortation *Lovis*, *rybka, bol'shaya i malen'kaya* “Be caught, fish, big and small” (AA, 2010). To ensure a successful hunt hunters repeated the spell: *Volki, medvedi – vdal', vdal', zdal', zaytsy, lisitsy – k nam, k nam, k nam* “Wolves, bears, go away, away, away, hares, foxes [go] come to us, to us, to us” (AA, 2010).

Some actions were aimed at acquiring beauty, health, “general love, honour and respect”. In the early morning of Holy Thursday villagers climbed onto the roof and watched the sun rise (AA, 2009). In the morning, too, girls washed the windows with the words *Kak na okoshko glyadyat, tak by i na devushku glyadeli* “Just as people look at the window, so should they look at me, the girl” (AA, 2009). They would try to dress beautifully on this day of Holy Week (2004, ILLH: AF 1541-19). Girls also climbed onto the roof where they would push the eaves an upper log on the roof (*ohlupen'*) in order to gain for themselves “the respect of all” (AA, 2009).

Early in the morning kids turned somersaults on the thin crust of ice over snow to make sure they would always be lively and active (AA, 2009). Villagers washed themselves in fresh river water so that their “eyes would see well” (2004, ILLH: AF 1544-11) or used water with a silver or gold coin in it (2004, ILLH: VF 1524-26).

A number of magic practices were oriented towards boosting the fertility and health of domestic animals. Stones were placed on the fence so that the hawks would not carry off hens and chickens from the yard in summer (2010, SA KomiSC: F.5. Op.2. D.789. L.26). Fence stakes were bound up in pairs and then the villagers would perform a ritual dialogue: *Odin sprashivaet: “Chto delaesh?” Yemu otvechali: “Ne kol'ya svyazyvayu, a u korshuna nogi”* “One [man] asks: “What are you doing?” The second [man] answers: “I am not binding the stakes; I am binding the hawk's feet”” (2010, SA KomiSC: F.5. Op.2. D.789. L.65).

Women cut off animals' tails and placed the wool in the cattle-shed under the *matitsa* ‘upper beam’ (2004, ILLH: AF 1541-19), to ensure the animals would return home. Also at the time when cattle were sent out to pasture for the first time on the 6th of May (Yegoryev

day) wool was put into the ear of the leading cow to ensure it would come home (AA, 2009).

Ritual dialogues spoken by the master and mistress of the house on Holy Thursday have been recorded. The purpose of these dialogues was to encourage cattle to come home from pasture and to recognize their own cattle-shed. The mistress of the house stood in the street before an open window and asked: "Is the cow at home?" The master stood near the window and answered, "At home". This dialogue was repeated until all the animals of the farmstead were counted. In one such dialogue all the members of the family were mentioned, followed by all the animals (for more about this type of ritual dialogue see Tolstoy 1984: 26–30).

Some magic practices were aimed at cleansing, at the creation of "borders" between one's own space and "other" spaces for the protection of the house, farm and members of the household. On Holy Thursday the villagers washed and cleaned their own houses (2004, ILLH: VF 1518-15). Early in the morning women would take water from three streams and spray the house and other buildings (2004, ILLH: AF 1554-16). Before sunrise they would walk around their own house with a prayer, having closed all doors and windows (2004, ILLH: AF 1550-31). With the aim of protecting themselves from harm and the evil eye, people drew crosses on the doors of cattle-sheds and houses (AA, 2006). The mistress of the house would seat herself on a broomstick and run round the outside of her house, chanting *Krug domu, krug domu, krug nashego dvora bud' kamenna stena, zheleznyy tyn* "Around my house, around my house let there be a stone wall and an iron fence" (AA, 2009). This was done to protect the house from burglary.

People would toss a log, wood chip or small stone up onto the roof, crying *Kladu gnet na tselyy god* "I'm laying a weight on you for the whole year" (2004, ILLH: AF 1545-12) in the belief that the wind would not blow the roof off after that.

It is necessary to mention the belief in the active power of salt placed near the icons on Holy Thursday (*velikodennaya, chetverizhnaya*). Salt was kept there until the following Holy Thursday. It was accepted that salt had therapeutic, protective functions. People treated tonsillitis and gingivitis (*zhaba*) (2004, ILLH: AF 1545-14a) with

this salt and they also used it to wash dishes that had been tainted by mice, cockroaches, etc (2004, ILLH: VF 1544-28). Salt that had been kept for three years was thrown into the footprints of any person thought capable of causing harm (2004, ILLH: AF 1550-31).

In cattle-breeding rites the salt which had “stayed overnight” near the icons was kept for the entire year. It was given to ailing cattle and used at calving-time as a protection against the evil eye or harm. The salt was sprinkled around the cattle-shed to keep the animals safe from the evil eye (2004, ILLH: AF 1544-12).

An important characteristic of salt, the fact that it does not spoil, is emphasized in numerous short incantatory texts (charms and incantations) suggesting that “just as salt does not spoil, so no person/ no object will be spoiled”<sup>2</sup>. For example, to prevent “spoiling” an animal was salted from head to tail with the words ***Kak eta sol' domu derzhala's'a, ne portilas'a, tak chtoby u menia skotinushka ne portilas'***, *derzhala's' by domu. Budte moi slova krepki, lepki naveki. Amin* “As this salt was kept in the house and did not spoil, so the cattle will not be spoiled, and will keep to their house. Let my words be strong and binding for ever. Amen” (AA, 2006). On Holy Thursday morning a small piece of salted bread was eaten with the words ***Kak eta sol' stoyala, ne urochilas', khlebok ne urochilsya, tak chtoby raba Bozhiya ya, NN, ne urochilas'***. *Budte moi slova krepki, lepki* “As this salt stayed the same and did not spoil and this piece of bread did not spoil so shall I, servant of God N. N. not be spoiled. May my words be strong and binding” (AA, 2010)). And a circle of salt was made around the cattle-shed and house with the words ***Kak sol' ne portitsya, tak zhe moy dom ne portis'*** “As salt does not spoil, so my house will not be spoiled” (2004, ILLH: AF 1550-32).

Holy Thursday moreover is called Terrible. In the popular imagination it became linked with the activity of sorcerers and with the special vulnerability of cattle and people at this time. A great deal of material collected during field-work presents examples of “harming” or “spoiling” as the special province of wizards (damage to people or animals, to make the girl to remain an old maid through the whole life, etc), which are connected with this particular day of Holy Week (for example, the ability to turn into a werewolf, the transmission of

magic knowledge, etc). Some texts provide examples of regulations, prohibitions and rules relating to these activities.

It was accepted that nothing should be borrowed or lent on this day (2004, ILLH: AF 1548-28). Informants explain the existing interdiction against giving anything away as mitigating the danger of losing one's property, suffering damage or losing happiness. For example, in one oral narrative the informant stated that his giving away a small amount of hay was the reason for the subsequent loss of all the hay and cattle in the household (2004, ILLH: VF 1521-55). An unknown object found in one's own household on this day must be consumed or burnt with the words *Kak ogon' gorit, tak chtob u nego [u togo, kto podbrosil – Yu.K.] use gorelo vezde* “As fire burns, so shall everything everywhere belonging to that man [the one who left the object there – Yu.K.] be consumed by fire” (2010, SA KomiSC: F.5. Op.2. D.789. L.46).

Talking or yawning on the street was forbidden, otherwise the harm created through witchcraft would enter the body (AA, 2009). Animals could be spoiled by a sorcerer if hair or wool was cut from an animal's coat or if its excrement was collected on this day (AA, 2006). Similarly, spouses could be separated if they drank something containing dog faeces collected on Holy Thursday (2004, ILLH: AF 1545-80).

Thus, the magic practices of Holy Thursday are diverse, but they are concentrated on achieving the well-being, prosperity and health of the people for the whole of the coming year, to encouraging fertility both in the land and in animals, a more abundant crop and protection from sorcerers. Comparative analysis of calendar ritual and folklore texts reveals specific and typical features deriving from the local tradition with its own individual profile but at the same time organically “embedded” in the culture of the Russian North. Analysis of the rituals and poetry of Holy Thursday in Loima reveals many “references” to the parent folk traditions of the Russian North, particularly the northern areas of the Kirov region (Luzsky, Oparinsky, Juryansky, Murashinsky districts) and the Vilegodsky district of Arkhangelsk region.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> All translations of texts from Russian into English are the work of the author. All local terms, folklore texts and quotations from interviews are in italics. Our explanations are given in the square brackets. The archive number and year of the folklore record are given in the round brackets.

<sup>2</sup> In this case the term *portit'sa* means ‘to get spoilt’, ‘to spoil’ or ‘go bad’; it differs from the *portit* ‘to spoil or harm by witchcraft’.

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## Abbreviations

AA – Author's personal archive, records of 2006, 2009, 2010 years.

ILLH – Folklore collection of the Institute of Language, Literature, and History of the Komi Research Centre, Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Syktyvkar), AF – audio collection, VF – video collection.

SA KomiSC – Scientific Archive of Komi Scientific Centre, Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Syktyvkar). F – *fond* (collection), op. – *opis'* (list), d. – *deleniye* (file), l. – *stranica* (page).

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## **Traditional Festive Rituals in Modern Chuvash Culture**

**Abstract.** The paper describes traditional elements of the ritual, represented in the current calendar holidays and customs of the two ethno-religious groups of the Chuvash – adherents of traditional beliefs (“pagans”) and the Orthodox Chuvash. In the modern ritual practice of both groups there still exist a number of traditional elements. The rituals described here represent the actual practice of modern festive and ceremonial life of both pagan and Orthodox Chuvash. They contribute to developing and strengthening of ethnic identity and to the consolidation of the community on various levels of social interaction (family and family-related groups, rural community, regional community).

**Key words:** ritual, festive ceremonial culture, the Chuvash, pagans, Orthodox, traditional elements, syncretism

Ritual practice in the culture of any people is determined by their way of life, economic and cultural activities and at the same time reflects historical milestones. The formation of the festive ritual of Chuvash farmers was influenced by the seasonality of agricultural cycles. The majority of these ceremonies were held in the spring, summer and autumn months, as periods of the most intensive agricultural work (Salmin 2004: 162–174). Rituals preceded farming activities, sanctioned them and were believed to ensure the welfare and material prosperity of the people who participated in the rites.

By “traditional rituals” we mean items of cult practice dating back to the religious beliefs and practices within the so-called Chuvash “folk religion” – Chuvash faith (*chāvash tēnē*); the latter is often referred to as “paganism” in scientific literature.

Contrary to the opinion of Chuvash ethnographer Anton K. Salmin, who believes there is some “terminological awkwardness” in the concept of “traditional rituals” (Salmin 2007: 57), the authors of the paper think it is possible to use it in the meaning of well-established

(and in this sense “traditional”) forms of religious behaviour of the members of ethno-cultural communities that have symbolic nature and are part of the tradition. At the same time, we cannot but agree with the above mentioned author that terminology in the field of religious and ritual culture should reflect the ethnic aspect (hence the proposed terms “folk ritual” and “folk rite”) and that the terms should be used in the native language. In the Chuvash language the complicated term *yāla-yērke* (literally “custom-order”) semantically corresponds to not only the concept of *ritual* and *rite*, traditionally differentiated in the Russian literature on the subject (Bayburin 1991, 1993; Toporov 1988), but to the concept of *custom* as well (Salmin 2007: 55–58). These arguments were taken into account in this study, the aim of which was to identify features of the functioning of “traditional rituals” in the modern festive ritual Chuvash culture.

The system of religious beliefs and practices of the Chuvash is fairly well described in the publications of Gyula Mészáros (2000), Petr V. Denisov (1959), Anton K. Salmin (1990, 1993, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2007), Georgy E. Kudryashov (1974) and Ekaterina A. Yagafova (2007a, b), but the problem of its transformation in the process of modernization of the Chuvash society in the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century has been understudied. Focused study of the problem of religious syncretism with elements of traditional beliefs and rituals, the so-called “Chuvash paganism”, in modern Chuvash culture affected only ethnic and religious Chuvash-Muslim community (Yagafova 2011). The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to rectify this omission.

The article describes the traditional ritual elements that persist in modern calendar celebrations and ceremonies of two ethno-confessional Chuvash groups – adherents of traditional *chān chāvash* (literally “true Chuvash”) faith and Orthodox Chuvashes. The modern festive ceremonial culture of both groups is a syncretic form of “paganism” and Orthodox traditions. This article was prepared using field data collected in the Chuvash villages of the Ural-Volga region in 2001–2010 (E. Iagafova’s field materials).

The Chuvash “paganism” area historically covered all zones of the Ural-Volga region, but had significantly narrowed by the beginning of the 21st century and the number of unbaptized Chuvashes

decreased from 17.8 thousand (at the beginning of the 20th century) to about 5 thousand. One thousand of these live in Samara Zavolzhie and more than 3.4 thousand – in the Zakamskiy districts of Tatarstan. The remaining local groups of unbaptized Chuvashes are settled in the Republic of Bashkortostan (more than 500 people), Ulyanovsk region and Chuvashia. The latter group is currently distributed among more than 40 villages (Yagafova 2007 a: 100).

Sacrifice rituals in honour of Tura the great god (*uchuk, sumār chūk*) and of domestic spirits (*húkleme, kilēsh pātti*, etc), rituals of purification (*sēren, munkun*) and propitiation of the spirits of ancestors (*simēk, kalām kun / munkun, kēr sāri*) still figure in the ritual calendar of unbaptized Chuvashes.

*Munkun* is a significant, well-preserved ritual that starts on the Wednesday of Holy Week. On its eve a swing is erected and in some villages (New Aksubaev) people fire guns and draw a borderline round the house with an iron object (*timēr karta*) on the night of *munkun*. In the morning, the first guest to arrive at the house is seated on a pillow in order to ensure the safe arrival of the next brood of chicks (Chuvashkoe Shaymurzino). Also starting from the morning children collect coloured eggs while during the day people pay visits to male relatives – *ret / kalām pātti* (literally “a row / *kalām* porridge”), beginning in the house of ancestors called *tēp kil*. In each house the *chúkleme* prayer is held, during which everyone faces the east and the senior man in the family says a prayer, thanking the god *Tura* for preserving the cattle during the winter and for the family’s wealth in the past year and asking the same for the next year. In the past, in every house people used to open a barrel of beer (*pichke puslani*) and nowadays there is the ritual of beer treat when personalized ladles of beer are served: *savāsh kurki, súre kurki*. While walking from house to house people sing “guest” songs. In recent years the visit-paying tradition has been in decline. Instead, all the relatives get together to pray in the *tēp kil*.

On the next day, Thursday, a ceremony for the commemoration of ancestors (*vattisen kunē / vattisene hyvni*) is held. This also includes paying visits to relatives and elements of *hyvni* (‘sacrifice’), as well as the *sāra kurki* ‘beer treat’. The commemoration day ends with *sēren* – the repeated collection of eggs and other treats by adolescents and unmarried young men. After splitting into groups they

visit all the houses of the village shouting “Sēren!” and making a noise with rattles. As the participants in the ceremony come up to a gate, they knock on it with sticks; the ritual is called *sēren shakkani*. They gather all the collected treats on the outskirts of the village, where they eat them and have fun around the bonfire until midnight. At the end they burn the sticks and rattles, which are believed to have accumulated “evil” as the young men went through the village, so the third name of the ritual is *shujtansene hāvalani* (‘expulsion of the evil spirits’) (Staroye Afonkino). On Friday the *saltak kēreki* ritual is held only in families in which sons are in the army.

One of the most striking elements of the ritual calendar of the unbaptized Chuvash is ‘summer prayer’ (*uchuk*), in which all the inhabitants of the village participate. Traditionally, five species of animal (duck, goose, lamb, ram and bull) are brought during prayers in honour of *Tura* the Supreme God, his assistants and the spirits of water, light, and land. Nowadays, this sacrifice procedure does not exist in all villages. In Staroye Afonkino it is observed only during the so-called ‘grand prayer’ (*pysāk uchuk*), which is held every three years and in Staroye Surkino only one kind of animal, usually a bull, is sacrificed today. In Yultimirovka village it is necessary first of all to slaughter three sheep on behalf of all the villagers, after which people make individual sacrifices. Those who wish to do this get in a queue and the head of the ritual distributes the names of spirits or deities, to which their sheep will be sacrificed. The list of spirits and deities consists of eight names and goes as follows: *Turā amāshne*, *Pūlehse*, *Kepene*, *Valle*, *Arhana*, *Hērlē şyra*, *Kashi chūka*. Other sacrifices are made with the saying: *Aslinchen kēsēnnine, kēsēnninchen asline* (“From old to young, from young to old”) which symbolizes kinship unity.

Before its throat is cut water is poured over the sacrificial victim and people wait until it begins to shake, a sign that it is a godly beast. Near the victim they put a bowl with salt, in which the dough for a round cake (*yusman*) is later kneaded. The cake has three big tucks on its periphery (*sāmsa* – “nose”) and a hole in the middle (*kāvapa* – “umbilical cord”). During prayers they put the *yusman* next to the sacrificed meat together with millet or wheat porridge. People from Yultimirovka bring from home three little *pashalu* cakes (about 10 cm. in diameter) made of pastry and five



Figure 1. Uchuk Prayer in Staroe Afonkino, Shentalinskiy region, Samara Oblast, 1997. Photo by E. Iagafova.

large *yusmans* (about 20 cm. in diameter). Tucks are made only on one cake which is brought by the man who makes the sacrifices for the “sheep” prayer. Porridge is prepared in six cauldrons: five of them with meat broth, in another one they add eggs; and there is one more cauldron in which they cook broth or soup.

People have their meal only after the prayers, during which pieces of meat, pots of porridge, and the cake are presented one by one and the skins of the slaughtered animals are spread in front of worshippers facing the east. The leading worshipper cuts pieces of meat, the “nose” and “umbilical cord” of the cake, eats it and treats his closest assistants as well. The text of the prayer and of the whole procedure is described in detail in the ethnographic literature; there is also an archive description of the ritual as it took place in Staroye Afonkino village. The crucial point is that the prayer texts and the rite sequence are preserved as close to the original ones as possible.

In Zakamie *uchuk* is included in the Semik-Troitsa cycle of ritual activity and is held on the Thursday after Orthodox Pentecost and

one week after *simēk* – the day of annual commemoration, on which Chuvashes visit the graves of their ancestors and “feed” them with home-made pancakes, eggs, scallions, candies, cookies, fruit, and drinks. People crumble treats, put them on the ground, pour *yupa* on graves or special grave poles *yupa*, eat, and drink the remaining food before leaving the cemetery.

On Sunday there is another rite after *uchuk* – *sumār chūk* ‘the prayer for rain’. Chuvashes cook porridge of milk, butter, cereal, green onion, and eggs collected by people from the same street. Traditionally, children intentionally destroyed a nest of a sparrows, bathed the parent bird in the river, put its chicks into eggshells on the water, and let them float away saying: “*Chir-chēr kaytār*” (“Let diseases go away!”). Nowadays this ritual is no longer held or else imitation birds are fashioned from clay. Eggshells are strung on a stick struck into the ground by the river near the prayer place. The rite finishes with the pouring of water. In some villages both prayers merged into one or are held at different times in one day: *uchuk* – during the day, and *sumār chūk* – in the evening (New Aksubaev, Klementeykino, Erepkino).

During the *semik* ritual cycle in Staroye Afonkino the *sabantuy* / *akatuy* is also held. It is devoted to the completion of spring work and unites people not only of one village, but of the entire agricultural enterprise. For example, until recently Staroye Afonkino inhabitants have celebrated it together with Orthodox Chuvashes from Saleykino and Mordvinians from Podlesnaya Andreevka. Thus, *sabantuy* is not only an inter-confessional, but also an inter-ethnic holiday, which demonstrates rapid changes in the socio-economic situation of the village. The festival to celebrate the holiday includes a competition in strength and agility combined with a discotheque, an amateur artist concert and a fair.

Games and *uyav* / *vāyā* round dances beginning on the day known as “Summer Nikola” and ending on Petrov day (dates observed by both groups) serve as a similar platform for inter-confessional dialogue. The activities are held jointly in mixed villages. Local “pagans” living in the same village with local baptized people have adapted well to their customs: they celebrated Easter together with the end of the *munkun* cycle (*kēsēn munkun*), *chūkleme* (Yul-timirovka) and village holidays, combined with one of the largest

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Orthodox holidays such as Shrovetide (Novoye Ilmovo) or “Winter Nikola” (Novoye Aksubaev), etc.

The autumn sacrifice called *kērhi sāra* is made on Thursday at the end of the lunar month, usually in late October. It is held at the same time as the commemoration of ancestors. Prayers to house spirits (*kil-yish pātti*) and cattle spirits (*karta pātti*) are still offered by unbaptized Chuvashes. They are held in certain locations; offerings of porridge and cakes *pashalu* and *yusman* are made during the prayers.

In modern ritual practice there are still a number of traditional elements common for both religious groups. During the New Year cycle *surhuri* / *sēnē sul* / *svetke* the traditions of offering treats with dough balls, *riazhenije* (mumming or guising with masks and special costumes) and various types of fortunetelling (using rings, etc.) are upheld. During *sāvarni* Shrovetide sledging, pancake baking, a ritual meal, and paying visits with singing of special songs are widespread.

Some of the rituals described above (for example, *simēk*, *kēr sari*) may be found in the culture of Orthodox Chuvashes. The *kēr sari* is carried out in both religions at the same time, while the *simēk* is celebrated on different days: unbaptized people hold it on Thursday, the Orthodox – on Saturday (Staroye Afonkino, Saleykino). Traditions which involve visit-paying and offering of treats are also to be found among Orthodox Chuvashes during *munkun* (Easter), but they name it in different ways: *sāra pichki usni* (‘opening the barrel of beer’), *kalām pātti sini* (‘treating with porridge of the *kalām* festival’), *munkun ertel* (‘artel of *munkun*’), *kalām kun* (‘the day of *kalām*’), *kalām yērki* (‘group of *kalām*’). In Sukkulovo, for instance, there are several stages of paying visits on the first day. In the morning *irhi ēskē* is held, involving the closest relatives (parents and children, brothers and sisters); during the meal the head of a sheep, specially slaughtered for the holiday, is served, (hence the name of the holiday – *surāh pus sini*). Participants in this rite are called *pus ertelē* (literally “the team of the head”). By lunchtime other relatives visit the house of the oldest member of the family. The main dish of the meal is porridge, so participants in this stage are called *pātā ertelē* (literally “the porridge team”). People visit each other’s houses for one or even two days.



Figure 2. Uyav Farewell in Devlezerkino, Chelno-Vershinskiy region, Samara Oblast, 2008. Photo by E. Iagafova.

The most stable rituals in the Orthodox Chuvash villages of Zakamie are greeting and bidding farewell to summer with round dances and games called *uyav*. During the rites people perform a special type of song (*uyav yurrisem*), singing of which is forbidden at other times. The ceremonies of meeting or greeting and of bidding farewell *ujav*, using these songs, must take place in certain areas of the village (places set aside for games, on the outskirts of the settlement, on the borders between households, etc).

A “pagan” – Orthodox syncretism appeared as Christianity spread in some Chuvash villages of Bashkiria where “paganism” had been traditionally strong. Local baptized Chuvashes understand that certain customs’ do not conform to Christian standards, but consider these customs as their own and do not intend to abandon them. They say: “*Yälana tumasan pitē yāvār pulat, tessē. Savānpa epēr tāvatpär. Vylākh, sem'eshēn – pārakhmappār!*” (“If you do not follow your customs, they say, life will be hard. That is why we follow and follow them. Whether it is for the sake of cattle or family – we will not forget them!”).

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The ritual known as *Chúkleme* was adapted to the Orthodox tradition better than any other one. It fit well into the cult of Saints and nowadays some autumn-winter Christian holidays (Epiphany / Christmas / Winter Nikola) are celebrated as civic festivals by all the villagers. In most areas it kept its autonomy or merged with *kēr sāri* / *avtan sāri* (funeral rites), significantly changing the original principal division between the days of sacrifice in honour of the spirits of ancestors and of oblation.

The rainmaking rite called *sumār chūk* has turned out to be relatively stable. The reasons for this are: high demand for the ritual among farmers interested in encouraging optimal weather conditions for the ripening of crops, organizational convenience such as availability of products and few participants, and the dominance of the entertainment component: a common meal followed by splashing water on each other ensures that everybody has fun and that young people are kept entertained for the whole day. The *sumār chūk* rite became a syncretic “pagan”-Christian ceremony among baptized Chuvashes. Worshippers turn to *Tura*, at the same time mentioning Jesus Christ and crossing themselves (Uezybashevo). In Tyaterbashevo people think this custom is blessed by the Orthodox Church.

Thus, traditional rituals form the basis of religious life for unbaptized Chuvash and are included in the actual practice of the modern festive ritual culture of Orthodox people.

In both ethnic and confessional groups, they are the basic element of syncretized forms of religious practices. For the unbaptized, the Chuvash religion exists in the form of pagan-Orthodox syncretism with the dominance of traditional rituals, while for the baptized Chuvash it exists in the form of Orthodox-pagan syncretism, where the elements of the Chuvash folk religion in general complement the orthodox religious practices of the community. Traditional rituals are an important factor in the formation and strengthening of both ethnic identity and community consolidation among the Chuvash at various levels of social interaction: in families, family-related groups, rural communities, the regional community, and as the basis for inter-religious dialogue in both groups.

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**Field materials by E. Iagafova:** 2001–2010: 2001, Samara region, Shentalinsky area (Staroye Afonkino, Saleykino), Pohvistnevsky area (Staroye Gankino); 2002, Republic of Tatarstan, Aksubayevsky district (Novoye Aksubaev, Staroe Timoshkino), Drozhzhazhansky district (Chuvashskoe Shaymurzino), Buinsky district (Runga, Starye Burunduki); 2003 Almetyevsky district (Staroye Surokino, Klementeykino); 2005, Nurlatsky area (Yakushkino, Erepkino) Cheremshansky district (Novoye Ilmovo); Republic of Bashkortostan, 2002, Ermekeevski area (Sukkulovo); 2003, Bakalinski area (Yultimirovka), 2004, Miyakinski district (Uyesybashevo), Sterlibashevski district (Tyaterbashevo).

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## **Ukrainian Calendar Cry: the Magical Value and Functional Features of the Tradition**

**Abstract.** The article describes calendar laments in the villages of the Dubrovitsky district in the Rivne region. At Pentecost following the liturgy, almost all of the villagers (except for pregnant women and engaged girls) go to the cemetery to visit the graves of their relatives; bringing tree branches with them. Here the women decorate all of their relatives' graves with herbs and tie kerchiefs on the cross; afterwards they cry for recently deceased relatives. The main function of this ritual is to wake up the dead. This feature is expressed by the popular use of the term *vozbuzhdati X* (to wake up the dead).

**Key words:** calendar laments, graves, decoration with herbs

Traditional calendar laments (laments performed at a certain time during the ritual year) were quite common in Ukraine in the early twentieth century. Records of calendar mortuary laments are kept from Poliss'a, Slobozhanshchyna, Holmshchyna and Pidlyassya, Bukovyna. However, this custom is not observed in Central Ukraine, where it is believed that the commemoration of the dead is a "light holiday", during which one should not cry and be sad.

Today, calendar laments are preserved just in only in several villages in Dubrovitsky district in Rivne region. At Pentecost following the liturgy, almost all of the villagers (except for pregnant women and engaged girls) go to the cemetery to visit the graves of their relatives; bringing tree branches with them. Here the women decorate all of their relatives' graves with herbs and tie kerchiefs on the cross; afterwards they cry for recently deceased relatives. The main function of this ritual is to wake up the dead. This feature is expressed by the common use of the term *vozbuzhdati X* ('to wake up the dead').

This article proposes to examine these calendar funeral laments, using the material of an actual lamentation ceremony held in the

village of Svarytsevychi; the field research was conducted by the author in 2011, as well as by her colleagues in 1985–1987 and 2010.

For a researcher of ritual culture it is very important to document in real situations. This is especially true as regards folklore in a ritual context; in my case, the funeral laments. There is special moral and ethical difficulty in the process of recording, since it is inconvenient to record during funerals. Hence, in this situation I decided to use the opportunity to make notes on calendar funeral laments, which are very close to the funeral laments. The full scope afforded by firsthand documentation of performance makes it possible to observe some details which would never be mentioned in interviews by respondents in other situations, because they are unable to notice them. In my experience, a very important component in mourning is a special pose held by the lament-performer during the lamentation and ritual calming by the relatives.

Calendar mourning is a genre in the Ukrainian lament tradition which also includes funeral, metaphorical, mock, and obscene texts as well as those lamenting soldiers going off to war and texts written for special occasions. (Koval-Fuchylo 2014: 61–95). The calendar mourning is performed for the deceased in the cemetery on a special commemoration day; mostly it falls on Pentecost (Green Monday) or Khoma's Sunday, which follows Easter Sunday. It is evident that in the past, the calendar mourning custom was rather common in Ukraine (Sventsitsky 1912: 29, 32), but it is much less so today.

Today, in the Dubrovitsky district of the Rivne region, the day of calendar mourning falls on the feast of the Trinity Sunday. This custom is quite active in the village of Svarytsevychi. In the past, this village was of great interest to the scholars who had searched and studied the folk calendar rites. First of all, the main point of interest is the rite called *vodyty kusta* ('to drive *kust*', i.e. a bush) (Kitova 1972; Davydyuk 2010). The ritual is performed by girls in groups. One of those girls is decorated with a thick wreath of green leaves and flowers; she represents the *kust*. With maple branches in their hands, the girls visit homes singing ritual songs. For their visit, the hosts reward them with money and treats. The rite of *vodyty kusta* and calendar mourning are an integrated set of rites honouring the dead.



*Figure 1. The roadside cross in Svaryczevychi. Photo by author.  
12. 06. 2011. Svarytsevychi.*

Our interest is in the custom of mourning on the graves of the dead on Pentecost (Trinity) morning, which had been recorded before by folklorists in this village. Recordings of the (actual) performance had been made by Stephan Sheychuk in 1987, by Sergiy Leychuk in 1987, by Anderij Voychak and Yurij Rybak in 2010, among others. On the 11th and the 12th of June, 2011, on Pentecost, we made eleven recordings of the funeral laments at the time of the

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ceremony. During this exploration, we were guided by the method of participant observation. Those recorded materials provide the main sources for this article.

On Pentecost morning, after the liturgy in the church, all residents (except for the pregnant women and engaged girls (Shevchuk 1987: 1)) go to the cemetery with branches of maple, basswood, and ash to awaken (*vozbiditi*, *vozbuzhdat'*) their dead relatives, accompanied by many recorders (folklorists and musicologists). They bring candy with them as well. In the past, they also brought buns and wine, which were left on the graves: "It is the law that we should come here" (Yefemets M.A.); "We have to cry to wake up our relatives, they should hear us"; "We must wake up and tell the dead relatives everything that had happened this year." Previously one should walk three times around the grave moving clockwise (Shevchuk 1987: 87), but in our case, we did not succeed in recording such a sacred action because it was forbidden.

In Svarytsevychi, they usually lament for the deceased who had died not long before; first of all, they lament for those who died during the previous year; however, feel the need, feel sorry for the family, they cry for those who had died long before. There is a rule that the cry should not be long-drawn; otherwise it will harm the deceased and the unborn children. A woman told me a dream; she heard it from another woman who dreamed of her dead daughter. The woman said:

- To cry for a long time – that is forbidden!*
- Do they say the deceased will lie in the tears?*
- In tears. So ... I don't know ... One woman told me a dream about her daughter. The daughter said, "Mom! I am wet to the waist! I can't dry out in any way" ... The first children of my father's mother were dying and dying and dying. Well, my aunt had already been born. She went to the graveyard, to her son; he had studied to be a teacher and died when he was 22 years old. She went there and began to cry. She was crying for a long time, and she fell asleep on the grave. And she saw (in her dream) an old man. This old, old man came and said, "Why are you weeping? Why are you crying? God gave you (a child), and God took (it) away. But if you want, take away the sand from the grave as you need it".<sup>1</sup> She was*

frightened, and said: “I will get married my daughter<sup>2</sup>, I will sing the first,<sup>3</sup> and will no longer cry<sup>4</sup>.” And she did not cry anymore and gave birth to her children. She bore still more children: Genia and Olga, and my father, and Natasha. Four children were born. And there were nine children, and five of them died. It is forbidden to cry for a long time.

– And do they say that for the first child its mother could not cry?

– It was forbidden for her to go on the graves. To cry – she did, but she did not go to the graves.

– Does she not go at all, or on this funeral day?

– On the funeral day. On the second day she goes.

– Why?

– I do not know.

– And maybe they say because every child will be lost with this visit?

– I do not know, I do not know. (Yefemets, M. A.)

The calendar mourning texts reflected syncretic mythological views about the world of the dead, which arose under the influence of pagan and Christian beliefs. For example, people believe that they should visit the grave, bring eggs on Easter and goodies on Pentecost, decorate the cross with an apron or a scarf (on the woman’s grave) and with towels (on the male grave). They do it this way because they believe that they will thus prevent the anger of the deceased; otherwise, the deceased will take the living. These kinds of beliefs were verbalized in the texts of the funeral laments. The things the villagers brought (towels and handkerchiefs) were referred to as gifts.

*Oh and my Marusiochka<sup>5</sup>,  
 My good,  
 For 20 years, I never said any wrong words about you,  
 Always I bring gifts to you,  
 And all the time I cleaned thy grave,  
 I have brought gifts for you for 20 years.  
 Why did I not please you?  
 You took your husband away,  
 Oh why did you come get him?  
 Let him he would stay with me,*

*Let him he would still preparing himself to go away,<sup>6</sup>  
Oh my good home hosts,  
Oh I don't know you,  
And I have never said anything against thee,  
I have never offended you,  
I always cleaned you,  
I ... always ... for you...<sup>7</sup>  
You came to get your husband,  
And also my host (Author is unknown).  
At the same time, they believe that the best help for the dead  
is to order a liturgy in the Church:  
– ... let's pay for the liturgy – it's a grace to them, and so we  
go and cry – they do not hear.  
– Maybe (they) hear.  
– Aw, I do not know. If they had heard, they would stand up  
and talk to us. (Shvayko, A. H.)*



Figure 2. The woman mourning her husband. Photo by author.  
12. 06. 2011. Svarytsevychi.

When they leave the cemetery they are saying: "Let them rest! Let them rest with the saints, and let them wish good for us. Eternal rest, the heavenly kingdom for them" (Yefemets M. A.). This demonstrates the syncretism of archaic folk beliefs and Christianity.

In Svarytsevychi, almost every woman can perform the lamentation, and if the researchers ask them to perform the act, the local women do not refuse to mourn their loved ones. When a woman begins to wail, she always her body at the waist and/or leans the cross. More often she stands near the cross or moves around the grave. During the mourning, the woman can lean on the cross, kissing the photograph on the monument, and sometimes she rearranges a wreath or flowers on the grave. The mourning performs the appropriate melody like a recitative.

The typical motifs of the calendar laments are the stories addressed to the dead, which are about the daily work of their living relatives, asking the dead why he/she left his/her family, describing the pain of losing the relative, listing all the kind deeds of the deceased, appeals for them to stand up, begging tell them about meetings with deceased relatives, asking them to come in a dream. In the village of Svarytsevychi, the special motif of the *kust* driving celebration is mentioned. The daughter mourning her mother asked her why she does not celebrate the *kust* driving anymore, as the mother had loved to sing with the *kust* group during her lifetime:

*Oh and where are you, my mom?  
Oh and where are you, my dear?  
Oh why didn't you visit us?  
Oh why didn't you celebrate the kust?  
Oh my dearest,  
Oh my darling, answer me.* (Shevchuk 1987: 7)

In the lament for her father, the daughter tells him that the village is celebrating, people are gathering in groups, and he is not among them:

*Oh my darling,  
Daddy, our dearest,  
In the village all are celebrating,  
All are gathering in the group, in the family,  
And you do not, daddy.* (Shevchuk 1987: 7)

The motifs of mourning tradition may be various. For example, in the mourning for a brother this motif takes the form of antithesis, at the positive pole of which is the past, when the celebration of the Holy Trinity was joyful and merry, and accompanied by songs, while the negative pole describes the modern time which is sad. In the lamentations for children the future is mentioned, when the singer says that she cannot sing anymore and also notes that she will never sing the *kust* songs.

Another original motif in the Svarytsevychi calendar laments is a call for the dead to come and visit a family at Pentecost. On the eve of this feast, the villagers prepare a funeral dinner named “old men (grandfathers)” and addressed to those “old men”, which call the dead to the commemorative dinner and invite the ancestors to join them. However, contrary to these beliefs, the bitter lamentations uttered awareness of the impossibility of return:

*Oh Vovchyk, Vovchyk<sup>8</sup>!  
Oh (you) lie and rest.  
Visit us as a guest at Pentecost.  
Take Vovchyk,  
Take Shajka<sup>9</sup>,  
Your baptized mother,  
And come to us.  
Say “Mommy!  
We will not come to you,  
But you will come to us.  
If we could,  
We would fly with wings,  
But we have no wings (but we do not have any wings).  
How can we step out of the field,  
When we lie there?...<sup>10</sup> (Holod'ko, T. I.)*

An integral part of the mourning text is an appeal to the dead, and it is often repeated. The frequency of repetition depends on the pain of loss: if the woman experiences more pain, then she repeats the appeal again and again, changing the text of the repetition, reaching out with new epithets:

*Oh my dear child...  
Oh my dear dove, oh and my flower,*

*And my doll, and my daughter so good,  
And my young, who died so early,  
And my so young, and my darling.  
Why do you not live, my child, why do you not live?  
Arise, daughter, rise, daughter,  
Two weeks have been calling, two weeks crying,  
But I don't hear your voice, neither see your footstep.  
And my dear child, and my dear,  
And my dear bird, and my daughter. (Shevchuk 1987: 7)*

The visit to the cemetery lasts about two hours, and then people go home to have lunch. After lunch, the groups go with the *kust* through the village, and later organize a festival in the main square of the village. Afterwards the participants of the ceremony construct the stage, upon which amateur bands from different villages in the Dubrovitsky area perform authentic folk music, lyric and calendar songs.



*Figure 3. The woman mourning her daughter. Photo by author.  
12. 06. 2011. Svarytsevychi.*

The main purpose of visiting the graves was magical: to awaken the dead to talk. Remarkably, in some lamentations the replicas from the deceased are represented, i.e. the lament-performer acts as the dead person. Today people come to the cemetery on that day mainly because (they feel) it is a tradition, or “the law”, as people call it. Furthermore, people believe that the dead will hear them, and these beliefs continue to the present day. Thus the magical ritual mourning possesses two main characteristics: firstly, crying is a tool to communicate with the dead (Tolstaya 1999: 135–148), and secondly, the mourning is an offering, like the Easter eggs, towels, and kerchief, which are aimed at protecting the living from the harmful effects of the dead.

It is important to note that a big role in preserving the tradition is played by the interest of researchers, folklorists, anthropologists, and musicologists in this custom. We even heard remarks that the performers had expected the researchers. The women realize that the researches are coming from far away; therefore they gladly go to perform the laments and this way deliberately help the scientists to gather material. This is our real contribution to the preservation of tradition.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> This is a metaphor for the uselessness of crying. It means that crying cannot help; it is not possible to bring back the dead this way.

<sup>2</sup> It means that she will be an active member in a wedding, and she will not cry anymore.

<sup>3</sup> In Ukrainian tradition, “I will sing the first” is a phraseological unit; here, it means that she will be the best singing on the wedding.

<sup>4</sup> It means that she cannot raise the dead child.

<sup>5</sup> The woman’s name is Maria; here it is a familiar nickname.

<sup>6</sup> The second wife had wept for the first dead wife of her husband for 20 years. Now the husband has died; the second wife is weeping, asking why the first wife took her husband away, for after all, she took care of her grave, wept, and made offerings. This is a verbalization of the widespread belief among the Slavs that the dead entice the living to come join them.

<sup>7</sup> The informant did not finish the lamentation, she had interrupted it.

<sup>8</sup> The boy’s name is Volodymyr; here it is a familiar nickname.

<sup>9</sup> Shajka is the boy's nickname.

<sup>10</sup> This is an example of an archaic dialogue between the dead and the living. The dialogue represents the voice of the dead person.

## Informants

Shvayko, Anna Hryhorivna, born in 1929, recordings by Iryna Koval-Fuchylo, 12.06.2011.

Yefemets, Maria Andrijivna, born in 1941, recordings by Iryna Koval-Fuchylo, 12.06.2011.

Holod'ko, Tetana Ivanivna, born in 1958, recordings by Andrij Vovchak, Jurij Rubak, 23.05.2010.

Unknown woman, born in 1931, in the village Dubrivsk in the Zarichnyanskyj district of the Rivne region, recording by Iryna Koval-Fuchylo, 12.06.2011.

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## **Archaic Magic as Background to Artistic Inspiration and Interpretation**

**Abstract.** There is good reason to believe that the popularity of ancient sacred and magical sites offer reassurance of another reality. Many of these sacred places are associated with a fundamental knowledge of wisdom, divine and mystical, which people of today would like to recapture.

Today's religions often do not fulfil the needs of the soul, and these remote places hold spiritual powers that are reaching out to help. The rock art, petroglyphs and pictographs that were incised and painted on canyon walls and rock boulders were often the art of vision quests, the shaman emerging from within the stone, carving and painting his sacred visions on the wall. These carvings still emanate energy for those who visit these sites with open hearts.

My art is inspired by prehistoric rock sites. All that I feel and experience at these sites are within every piece of my art. My vision is to introduce the magic and mystery of ancient art images to people of today through my art.

The images I create on paper represent various kinds of ritual magic – vegetation and animal magic, shamanic rituals, ceremonial war rituals and more.

**Key words:** archaic magic, rock art, petroglyphs, sacred visions

There is good reason to believe that the popularity of ancient sacred and magical sites offers reassurance of another reality. Many of these sacred places are associated with a fundamental wisdom, divine and mystical, which people of today would like to recapture.

Today's religions often do not fulfill the needs of the soul. I believe, after 28 years of experience searching for and discovering rock art sites, these remote places hold spiritual powers that are reaching out to help. The rock art, petroglyphs and pictographs that were incised, pecked and painted on canyon walls and rock boulders were often the art of vision quests. The shaman or young man finds a remote site and moves himself into an altered state of consciousness by fasting, often smoking hallucinogenic plants, sitting without sleep,



sometimes for days. His spirit enters the stone or rock wall. When he emerges, he carves or paints his sacred visions, often leaving the site with new power and wisdom.

Other sites indicate hunting magic, births, Mother of Game, maps, clan history, celestial events, agricultural information, mythological stories, animal spirits and more.

Today, these carvings still emanate an energy for those who visit the sites with open hearts. Through this symbolism we humans enter consciously into contact with the Higher Self, the Community and with Spirit. This art opens doors to the future at the same time that it takes its place harmoniously in that long sequence that began one day in prehistory with the magical engraving of a spirit guide on the canyon wall.

All that I feel and experience at these sites inspires my personal art. These ancient drawings represent thousands of years of the evolution of human consciousness and communication. My vision is to introduce the magic and mystery of ancient art images to people of today through my art, offering a bridge between the past and

the present; a new access to the cultural and spiritual wisdom of prehistoric people who knew the land intimately and respectfully. Through my art, people of today can gain appreciation and, at best, find a personal connection with the source that brings all humankind – all life, together – a timeless space where all experience a depth of understanding of existence.

I have hiked to, viewed and photographed all of the sites you will see on the slide presentation.

These sites are scattered from the Rio Grande, the river that divides the United States from Mexico, up to Central Montana. Most of the areas are arid regions that have interesting geological features – mountains, canyons, large boulders, dry river beds, volcanic remnants, buttes, and glacial lakes. The rock art dates from 12,000 BCE to 1800 CE.

In some of the slides you will notice a close resemblance between the original rock art image and my art piece. In others, there is a similarity in style. The style of the rock art was dependent on the time it was created and the geographical and cultural circumstan-



es. Were the people hunter-gatherers? Were they an agricultural society? Warriors? All of these sites have stories and it is believed that all the rock art had significance. Archeologists, anthropologists, linguists, geologists, and ethnologists continue to discover, study, record and protect these ancient and important sites.

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## **SIEF working group on the Ritual Year**

### **Inaugural Meeting**

The working group on The Ritual Year was established at the conference in Marseille on April 29, 2004. Initiated by Dr Emily Lyle the inaugural meeting was held on 11 July 2004, in the department of Celtic and Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

### **The Conferences**

1. First International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year in Association with the Department of Maltese University of Malta, Junior College Msida, Malta. March 20–24, 2005.
2. Second Conference of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year “The Ritual Year and Ritual Diversity”. Institute for Dialectology, Onomastics and Folklore Research. Gothenburg, Sweden. June 7–11, 2006.
3. Third International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year “Ritual Year and History”. Národní ústav lidové kultury. Strážnice, Czech Republic. 25–29 May 2007.
4. Fourth International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year “Ritual Year and Gender”. Folklore and Ethnology Department, University College Cork. Cork, Ireland. 22–26 June 2008.
5. Fifth International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year “The Power of the Mask”. Vytautas Magnus University. Kaunas, Lithuania. 2–6 July 2009.
6. Sixth International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year “The Inner and the Outer”. Estonian Literary Museum, Department of Folkloristics. Tallinn, Estonia, 4–7 June, 2010.

7. Seventh International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year “Researchers, Performance, Researcher. Co-Designing Heritage, Co-Designing Performance”. Institute of Slovenian Ethnology SRC SASA. Ljubljana, Slovenia. 10–13 November, 2011.
8. Eighth International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year “Migrations”. The Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) & Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. Plovdiv, Bulgaria. 26–29 June, 2012
9. Ninth International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year “Politics, Feasts, Festivals”. Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Szeged, the Bálint Sándor Institute for the Study of Religion. Szeged, Hungary. 14–16 March, 2013.
10. Tenth Annual Conference of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year “Magic in Rituals and Rituals in Magic”. Institute for History and European Ethnology of the University of Innsbruck. Innsbruck, Austria. 25–28 September, 2014.

### **The Publications**

George Mifsud-Chircop (ed.). *The Ritual Year 1. First International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year in association with the Department of Maltese University of Malta, Junior College Msida, Malta. Proceedings. Malta, March 20–24, 2005.* Malta: Publishing Enterprises Group 2006. 568 p.

Lina Midholm and Annika Nordström (eds.) *The Ritual Year 2: The Ritual Year and Ritual Diversity. Proceedings of the Second International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year. Gothenburg, Sweden, June 7–11, 2006.* Gothenburg: Institutet för spark och folkminnen, 2007. 377 p.

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Jenny Butler (ed.). *The Ritual Year 4: The Ritual Year and Gender*. [Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference of The SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year. Cork, Ireland, June 22–26, 2008]. Edinburgh: Traditional Cosmology Society (a joint publication with Cosmos 25), 2011. 251 p.

Arūnas Vaičekauskas (ed.). *The Ritual Year 5: The Power of the Mask*. [Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference of The SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year. Kaunas, Lithuania, July, 2–6, 2007]. Kaunas: Vitautas Magnus University, 2013. 150 p.

Mare Kõiva (ed.). *The Ritual Year 6: The Inner and the Outer. The Yearbook of the SIEF Working Group of the Ritual Year* [Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of The SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year. Tallinn, Estonia, June 4–7, 2010]. Tartu: ELM Scholarly Press, 2011. 400 p.

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### Conference Memories

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