

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

George Mifsud-Chircop, *editor*



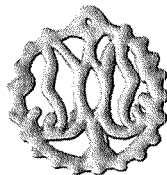
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MALTA
MARCH 20-24, 2005



Publishers Enterprises Group (PEG) Ltd

Published by
Publishers Enterprises Group (PEG) Ltd,
P.E.G. Building, UB7, Industrial Estate,
San Gwann SGN 09, Malta

e-mail: contact@peg.com.mt
<http://www.peg.com.mt>

in association with



<http://www.apsbank.com.mt>

and

The Department of Maltese,
University of Malta Junior College, Msida, Malta

<http://www.malta.info>

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First published 2006

ISBN-13: 978-99909-0-442-0

ISBN-10: 99909-0-442-1

Front cover: "Altar of Apatheosis", Carmel H. Psaila, Malta

Printed by P.E.G. Ltd, San Ġwann, Malta

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Preface

The Proceedings of the First Ritual Year International conference on ethnology and folklore, the first ever to be held in Malta, is the fruit of the joint work by the *SIEF* Working Group on the Ritual Year, a project under the presidency of the inspiring Dr Emily Lyle. Through the efforts of all the members of the group, namely Dr Terry Gunnell, University of Iceland, Dr Aude Le Borgne, University of Edinburgh, Dr Patricia Lysaght, University College Dublin, Dr Irina Sedakova, University of Moscow, and myself, we have put in practice the original proposal presented to the 2004 *SIEF* General Meeting in Marseille, thus '*responding to the challenges and opportunities of the new technology ... and begin to mesh together the approaches and materials from all over Europe ...*' Our group, as recommended, is serving 'as a most valuable forum for discussion.' (*First International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year, Abstracts*, 2005: 8, 9)

The organization of the Malta Conference and this publication and are undoubtedly our greatest achievement and through the support of this group. As Convener of the conference and editor of this publication I've done my best to build the first bridges by discussing our common ritual year cultural heritage. The local organizing committee has worked hard to make the conference a success. Each of us ensured that the participants from the twenty-five different countries in Europe and beyond felt at home in Malta. Their appreciative comments on the conference and Malta show they have returned home culturally enriched.

It is not the task of this preface to sum up the contents of the many papers, which are to be found in the booklet of Abstracts published in 2005. However, a look at the various papers included in these Proceedings of this First International Ritual Year Conference reveals the wide spectrum of multiple dimensions of

the phenomenon of ritual to be discussed. The volume is divided into two: 'Rituals in Malta' and 'Rituals in Europe and Elsewhere'. One finds various issues, styles and degrees of religiosity, genres of ritual practice, as well as fluidity, vitality and rationality. Local perspectives and complexities, reflecting the time and place in which they have come into existence, become inextricably locked within their cultural particularity and immediate world, and/or adapt themselves to the needs, self-expression, ideals, and innovations of the community/ies in question. Let us hope that this volume will stimulate further reflection on the Ritual Year.

I would like to register again the support and help of those who believed in this conference, namely APS Bank and Publishers Enterprises Group (PEG Ltd) who are the main sponsors of this publication, the financial support by the *SIEF* executive board, the current members of the Ritual Year Working Group, the Head of the Department of Maltese and its staff at the Malta University Junior College, the College Administration, my colleagues on the organizing committee, the University of Malta Library and the Malta Photographic Society.

I also wish to thank all the authors for their cooperation, my wife Marlene for assiduously helping me in revising and proof-reading the papers, the publishers and others involved for their support, advice, support and understanding and for ensuring the swift publication of the papers, namely Messrs Emanuel Debattista, Gaetan Cilia, Anthony R. Callus, Pierre Portelli and Kevin Azzopardi of PEG Ltd.

George Mifsud-Chircop, *editor*
University of Malta

EMILY LYLE

President of the SIEF Ritual Year Working Group

Introduction

When we see from this volume how much there is to say about the ritual year, and how many different angles it can be approached from, the wonder is that the topic had ever fallen into comparative neglect. But fallen into neglect it had in many quarters, and this is a pioneering collection that restores it to its rightful place as a central concern of folklore and ethnology and one that impinges fruitfully on many other disciplines. We are indebted for the appearance of this volume so soon after the holding of the conference at which the papers were given to the high energy and the organising capacity of the editor, George Mifsud-Chircop. We have cause to be grateful to him also for agreeing to convene the first conference of the *SIEF* Ritual Year working group in Malta and for drawing in scholars from that island to make the contributions that are to be found here. The field of ritual year studies is obviously going to draw its dynamic from an interplay between the direct experience of specific contexts, like the particularly rich and colourful one of Malta, and broader, more theoretical approaches. The debates are still in the making and we can look forward to the development of specific themes and stances in the future. This book lays an excellent foundation for further exploration and shows what a really remarkable range of materials we have to work with. For some societies, rituals have been lost and are being recovered or created from scratch in a thoroughly modern cultural environment while for other societies archaic practices have continued without interruption below a veneer imposed by religious and political structures at the state level.

Everyone can enter into the feeling of annual ritual events and the often joyful celebrations that they involve, and this book will be a reminder of what experiences like this have meant to the reader as well as offering a chance to reach out to the experiences of others. It is a book to be enjoyed both for the pictures it gives of what takes place today or took place in the past and also for the number of stimulating ideas that it throws out on a variety of different topics.

MANWEL MIFSUD

University of Malta

Welcome Address

Dear Colleagues,

It is my honour and my pleasure this morning, as Head of the Department of Maltese and in the unavoidable absence of our Rector, to welcome you all to our University on the occasion of the First Ritual Year Conference organized under the auspices of the International Society of Ethnology and Folklore.

I must admit that, in welcoming you to this esteemed Conference, I cannot help feeling rather uneasy since I am presumably the only person here who is – so to speak – uninitiated into the ‘rituals’ of your Society, coming as I do from the field of linguistics. In my situation, a modicum of wisdom would suggest prudence, and so I shall not take more than a few minutes of your precious conference time for a couple of lay comments.

The fact that I come from a different field of research does not in any way prevent me from feeling and expressing to you as an academic and a colleague, my deep appreciation of your research of excellence in your chosen field and the high esteem with which this University regards your meeting here. I am confident that, during the few days you will be spending with us, you will find our tiny but vigorous Maltese society a worthy subject for your scrutinising attention and a joy to be with.

As anyone of you who has convened an international conference will know, the work involved in its organisation is, in euphemistic terms, not at all enviable, and the brunt of it, as well as the decisions, the disappointments, the deadlines that go with it, is normally borne by a pair of strong and broad shoulders, those of the ubiquitous convener. I must congratulate Dr George Mifsud-Chircop for taking on himself the task of organising this meeting with his typical unassuming responsibility. As Head of the Department of Maltese, I could not help noticing and admiring the spirit of cooperation with

which he was generously supported and assisted by his and our colleagues at the University Junior College Maltese Department, headed by Mr Saviour Seisun. This is my first opportunity to publicly show my appreciation of the serious academic role they play and to tell them that our University is proud of their work.

The dates of this Conference fall only a few days from the demise of dear Ġużè Cassar-Pullicino (1921-2005), our veteran researcher in the field of Maltese Folklore and a revered master at our University. In probably more difficult situations than our own, he worked with the silent enthusiasm and steadfast faith of a visionary among his often unappreciative fellow Maltese, laying down the foundations of the study of our ethnology. The healthy seeds he sowed then are now bearing their fruit, at a time when Malta more than ever needs to affirm its identity. To his gracious memory I would like to pay a homage of gratitude.

This is the First Conference of the Ritual Year Working Group, and you have honoured us by choosing our country as the first venue for your learned meeting. My hope is that Malta will bring you luck and that this conference will be academically stimulating and rewarding and will set a standard that will be looked up to in future editions.

PAUL CLOUGH

Mediterranean Institute, University of Malta

An Introductory Overview of Papers to the Conference

It is a pleasure to participate in the opening of the First International Conference of the *SIEF* Working Group on the Ritual Year. The organizers – Dr George Mifsud-Chircop, David Calleja, Mario Cutajar, George Farrugia, and Saviour Seisun – and the President of the *SIEF* Working Group, Dr Emily Lyle, are to be congratulated for bringing these deliberations to the University of Malta. As head of the Anthropology Programme at the University of Malta, let me begin by introducing you to the Anthropology Programme. It has two full-time lecturers and four part-time lecturers whose principal duties are in other departments of the University. Every year, the Programme invites three visiting lecturers from other universities, and in 2004, one of our visitors was Dr James Laidlaw, a notable theorist of Jain religious rituals. Anthropologists at the University of Malta also edit the *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, published twice yearly by the Mediterranean Institute – a multi-disciplinary journal of history, culture and society in the Mediterranean world. Anthropology at the University is in the Anglo-American tradition of social anthropological analysis.

In Malta, the analysis of local religious rituals by anthropologists and ethnologists has tended to be contextualized in terms of history, and changing political economy and social identities. Thus, the paper to this conference by Dr George Mifsud-Chircop, on Maltese folk street theatre, shows the extent to which its language expressed and commented on (often symbolically) political and gender distinctions in the community in the eighteenth century – and continues to do so (Mifsud-Chircop 2005). The social analytic approach has been, I think, very much the product of a fertile interaction between Maltese and other European

anthropologists who have done fieldwork in Malta – for example, Prof. Jeremy Boissevain (Boissevain 1969) and Dr Jon Mitchell (Mitchell 2002).

This conference brings together from all over Europe historians, folklorists, ethnologists, musicologists, archaeologists, social anthropologists, and scholars involved in a new area of study – the excavation of Soviet society, now gone, but still one of the bases for the analysis of post-Soviet societies. The participation of so many ritual specialists from Eastern Europe, the Baltic, and Russia is certainly an exciting new intellectual development for Malta.

Surveying the fifty-six papers to this conference, we can, perhaps, compare them in terms of their foci and explanatory frameworks. Very broadly, five explanatory frameworks for Ritual appear to emerge. First, ten papers are descriptive or archival studies, including ethno-medicine and musicology. Secondly, ten focus specifically on the religious significance of Ritual, or on the socially effective power of the ‘sacred’. Thirdly, eight papers analyze particular rituals in terms of the internal logic of their symbols and myths. Fourthly, ten relate Ritual to ‘political economy’, broadly conceived.

Finally, a large category of eighteen papers relate Ritual to social structure and changes in structure. This category includes those which focus on seasonal economical cycles. It also includes a number which analyze Ritual in terms of gender difference. Many of the papers in this group explore what is clearly a key theme of this conference – the conceptualization of the Ritual Year.

Of course, it is difficult to distil explanatory frameworks from complex research agendas. Moreover, the five categories mentioned conceptually overlap. Most importantly, this conference is the opportunity for different frameworks to be aired and compared, not just in the individual thematic sessions, but also in personal discussions. In this connection, the organizers are to be congratulated for establishing two plenary sessions – an excellent opportunity for comparison and cross-fertilisation.

A warm welcome to you all. May your stay together at the University of Malta be the occasion for stimulating discussion.

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EMILY LYLE

President, SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year

Opening Address

The Ritual Year Working Group held an inaugural meeting in Edinburgh last July, but this is our first conference, and everyone here knows very well the importance of openings. They set the tone for what is to come, and it augurs very well for the future of our working group that we are able to enjoy the opportunity of meeting together – in warm spring weather and in Easter week – in this exciting Mediterranean island. Without George Mifsud-Chircop's willingness to take on the organising, this would not have been possible and we are deeply grateful to him. It is a splendid achievement that, less than a year after the working group formally came into existence at the SIEF conference in Marseille in April 2004, such a full and interesting conference programme has been put together and that so many people have arrived to participate in it. A warm welcome to you all.

It is amazing to me to be in Malta. Those who, like myself, grew up in Britain during the Second World War, were constantly aware of the courage under attack of the Maltese people. Many of you at this conference have suffered oppression in more recent times, and Malta can serve as a symbol of the resilience of the human spirit as we hold our first major gathering here in George Cross Island.

**Rituals
in
Malta**

JEREMY BOISSEVAIN

University of Amsterdam

Changing Aspects of Parish Rituals in Malta (1960-2000)¹

When I completed my first period of research in Malta in 1961, I predicted that the celebration of parish rituals in Malta would in future decline. I was wrong. While some have indeed declined, others have expanded in a most extravagant fashion. This discussion sets out what happened and explores why my prediction failed.

In the early 1960s there were good reasons to believe that the competitive celebration of patron saints would decline. During the 1950s heavy emigration had drawn off much of the manpower needed to mount spectacular celebrations. Improving public transport was enabling young men to meet friends in Valletta instead of spending their evenings in the local brass band clubs practicing music, making fireworks or just hanging around. Football was increasingly drawing young men out of the band clubs. But most of all, the growing activity of the political parties was commanding more attention and resources. At the time, it seemed logical that the growing political competition at the national level would continue to command attention when Malta became independent and that would up-stage traditional parochial rivalry over the celebration of saints and Holy Week processions. Finally, I thought that enthusiasm for such religious spectacles would diminish as part of the general wave of secularisation that was emptying churches throughout Europe (Boissevain 1965: 78-79; 1969: 90-93). This seemed to be in line with findings of other social scientists that foretold that industrialization, rationalization of production, mobility, mass media, alternative

¹ This discussion is an updated and abbreviated of Boissevain 1992b.

sources of amusement and the liturgical reforms of Vatican II would take their toll of European public rituals.²

Change

During the late 1960s and early 1970s it seemed as though my predictions were on track. Although the crowds attending the celebrations of parish patron saints appeared to be as numerous as ever, thanks to the influx of tourists, the feasts were muted. Some of the spark had gone out of them. The corrosive rivalry between the governing Nationalist Party and the rival Malta Labour Party (MLP), as predicted, was still running high and creating factional cleavages in band clubs that inhibited the cooperation required to celebrate a rousing *fešta* in honour of parish patron saints. Moreover, many Labour supporters, still angry with the Church for interfering with the elections of 1962 and 1966, boycotted church functions, including *festi*. In Kirkop (Pl. 2), a small village (pop. 1200) that fiercely celebrated two saints, enthusiasm for the feast of St Leonard, the patron of the parish, had so declined that the parish priest had to hire a team of Valletta men to carry the saint's heavy statue in the procession on his annual feast day. Thus it seemed as though national politics had indeed up-staged parochial ceremonial activity, as I had predicted would happen.

By the mid 1970s, however, I became aware that my prophecy had failed. While the celebrations of lesser (non-patronal) saints, and the Eucharist, continued to decline, village *festas* were noisier, more crowded and being contested with greater vigour than I had ever seen. Good Friday processions had also grown substantially. These events, as well as frequent and spectacular political party rallies and heated football encounters, continued to expand during the 1980s and 1990s. Malta was, and is, celebrating as never before (Boissevain 1980: 128-129, 1984, 1992b, 2006).

² A more or less random selection from the many authors: Caro Baroja (1965: 158-159); Christian (1972: 42-43, 181-182); Gluckman (1962: 26-38); Le Bras (1955: 480-481); Silverman (1975: 168-177); Stacey (1960: 72-73); Turner and Turner (1978: 206-207).

Developments in Naxxar, a town of some 10,000 in which I lived in 1961, illustrate the general escalation of community celebrations. When I returned to Naxxar in 87 I found that while the liturgical celebration held inside the church and the religious processions on eve and the day of the *fešta* honouring the parish's patron, the Nativity of Our Lady, had not changed, the popular external celebrations had grown spectacularly. A raucous, colourful demonstrative march (*ta' nofs in-nhar*) now took place after the high mass on the day of the *fešta*. Moreover, the traditional exuberant evening march down St Lucy Street marking the end of the Triduum (the 'Eve-of-the-Eve' march, *Lejlet Lejlitha*) had grown substantially.³ Moreover, four new band marches had been added to the festivities. The Good Friday procession had also grown. There were 130 more participants than in 1961. These included 79 new biblical figures in costume, a new statue of Judas, ten more masked penitents dragging heavy ankle chains, and a second, hired, band. The procession had grown to just over 550 persons and lasted for four-and-a-half hours. The procession accompanying the statue of the Risen Christ on Easter morning had grown from 17 to 130 participants, now also costumed.

Furthermore, during the 1980s the *fešta* of the little neighbourhood chapel of St Lucy had also grown. This, in turn, had led to tension between some of the organizers and the parish priest, who tried to neutralize the growing rivalry between neighbourhoods by limiting celebrations. In 1986 St Lucy Street partisans were so angered by the parish priest's suppression of their wild march on the Eve-of-the-Eve, as well as by the village band's refusal to accompany it because it had become 'too wild', that they set about founding their own band. By 1988 the village had acquired a second band club, located in St Lucy Street, to be sure. Three years previously, a group in the neighbouring town of Mosta, Naxxar's archrival, intent on expanding their *fešta* against the wishes of their parish priest, had also established a second band club. Thus for the first time since the turn of the century *fešta* rivalry had escalated to

³ It is worth noting that these spectacular ludic events that are important for village and band club solidarity and identity are not on the tourist map as framed by the Malta Tourism Authority or the various local tour agencies. They are in effect 'insider only' events. For further discussion on such hidden 'insider only' rituals see Boissevain 2000a.

the point that existing band clubs were again splitting in two, thus reflecting and furthering intra-parish factionalism. By 2004 the rivalry between the two bands had become so fierce that their partisans nearly came to blows during the *fešta*.

The liturgical celebrations honouring patron saints in all parishes have remained practically unchanged except for one aspect. Most of the celebrations have been divorced from their place on the annual liturgical calendar and now take place on summer weekends. This ensures optimal weather conditions to safeguard increasingly elaborate and costly street decorations, firework displays and attendance of local visitors and – since the 1970s – tourists. For example, Kirkop now celebrates the *festas* of its two competing patron saints, St Leonard and St Joseph, respectively in September and July, instead of according to the liturgical calendar in November and March.

The celebratory growth has taken place almost exclusively in the domain of the popular outdoor events, although a number of parishes have recently begun to stage costumed passion plays during Holy Week in the a church (Naxxar in the 1990s) or in some other parish hall (Kirkop 2005). Since 1960, twenty-eight new band clubs have been founded to celebrate patron saints and Holy Week. In the 1960s *fešta* celebrations lasted three days. By 2004 *fešta* celebrations in all of Malta take place for seven days. The quantity and size of the fireworks have kept pace. To take Kirkop again as an example, the largest petards in the 1960s were half a metre in length and weighed twenty kilos (see Boissevain 1980: 115). But by 2004, the village's two band clubs were assembling monster petards, each weighing between fifty and sixty kilos and just under two metres in length (Pl. 1). Moreover, in 2004 each band club produced over two metric tonnes of black gunpowder for their firework displays (Boissevain 2006).

Explaining change

It was thus very clear that my predictions had been wrong. What had happened? Why had the decline of community level celebrations, which had, after all, seemed clear and logical at the time, not continued? Elsewhere I have set out details of some of the factors that have contributed to what is clearly a revitalization of certain

calendrical rituals in Malta (Boissevain 1984, 1988, 1992b, 2006), and elsewhere in Europe (1992a). The background is complex, and the space available is limited. Briefly, this is the argument.

Since independence in 1964 the texture of Maltese village life has changed profoundly. Notwithstanding the growth of some celebrations, others declined. These include Corpus Christi, the Sacred Heart, St Joseph, the first Friday of the month, etc. The Labour Party, in power from 1971 to 1987, 'in the interest of productivity' reduced the number of public religious holidays from eleven to three. It obliged all other religious feasts to be celebrated on weekends. As a result of the rapidly falling birth rate, the number of family celebrations to mark baptisms, confirmations, birthdays and weddings also declined. For various reasons there were thus progressively fewer occasions on which neighbours and kinsmen could come together to celebrate.

A range of developments that are related to Malta's rising prosperity further reduced contact between neighbours. Expanding work opportunities in industry and tourism meant that most men and unmarried women now work outside the villages, which have become dormitory communities. Many have also acquired seaside holiday apartments. Most families own at least one car, enabling members to leave and remain outside the villages long after the bus service stops for the day at 10 pm.

Increased wealth has also brought about a housing boom; people spent more of their free time (re)building and beautifying their houses, which have become the most important status symbols. Television, videos and DVD's and Internet amusements also keep youths and adults alike tied to the interior of their houses. Refrigerators and freezers permit quantity shopping, thus reducing the need for frequent expeditions to neighbourhood shops. Old neighbourhoods have been broken up, as families moved to new houses. Often foreigners and wealthy urban outsiders in search of traditional 'houses of character' reoccupied their old houses, thus gentrifying old neighbourhoods. Finally, most of the wine shops/bars closed and supermarkets put many of the little neighbourhood grocers out of business. This is what happened to Naxxar's St Lucy Street and many other Maltese villages (Boissevain 1986, 2000b).

As a result of these developments, villagers no longer spend as much time in the streets, shops, and clubs and wine shops as they did in the early sixties. Moreover, persistent political factionalism

and rivalry between band clubs further inhibits contact between neighbours who support different political parties.

In short, since the 1960s there has been a serious reduction in the interaction between neighbours. People often remarked to us that Naxxar had changed. It used to be a 'friendlier' place. By that they meant that in the past people used to see more of each other, have more communication with one another. To my mind, the increase in the *festas* of patron saints and Holy Week are manifestations of a desire to celebrate the community. People who have grown up together in poverty and are now separated by prosperity wish to achieve, for a few moments, the feeling of what Turner has called 'communitas': 'the direct, immediate, and total confrontation of human identities which tends to make those experiencing it think of mankind as a homogeneous, unstructured and free community' (1974: 16). They achieve this by doing something together. They take part in costume in the colourful, solemn Holy Week processions, watched by family, neighbours, visitors from other parishes and, increasingly, tourists. They interact while watching fireworks, dancing in the street, drinking, praying, visiting, walking behind the band, and by listening together to the band music in the square. Tourists can also participate, which accounts for the popularity of *festi* among these visitors. Thus, for a few, often fleeting, moments these events, both solemn and ludic, generate a sense of communitas. But just as such occasions reinforce the inward bonds of community, they also establish boundaries and project an image of solidarity to similar outside units. The celebrations thus structure and project group identity. They also mark boundaries and generate rivalry, which, in turn, increase pressure to expand them in order to defend community honour.

Thus, there has been growing interest in revitalizing community relations via celebrations. Tourism, remigration, and the reduction of the power of the Church have facilitated their expansion. Rising prosperity halted emigration, and after the middle of the 1970s there was a net return migration. This meant that more willing hands and money became available to parish *fiesta* organizers. Because many young men were un- or underemployed, they formed a pool of energetic labour that was easily mobilized for projects that celebrated community honour. Such activity gained added spice if it provoked established authority or was directed against a rival parish or saint.

The astounding growth of tourism in Malta – up from 20,000 in

1960 to 1.1 million 2004 – encouraged parish pageantry. Because many tourists began to watch these colourful events, government (and the anglicised elite who had looked down upon such occasions) soon began to realize that parish religious pageants are an important economic resource. They are also an important cultural resource for a new nation state increasingly conscious of and concerned with developing its own cultural heritage. This has given them added status, and so encouraged their organizers. The number of tourist buses parked outside a celebrating village has now become an object of *fešta* rivalry and of village prestige.

There was thus wide popular support for an increase in community celebrations, the manpower able and willing to implement them was at hand and more funds were available for costumes, street decorations, fireworks and musical instruments. But the Bishop and his parish priests generally opposed any increase in such popular celebrations on the grounds that they diverted attention from the liturgical content of the rituals to which they were linked and siphoned off funds from more useful parish activities. Above all, parish priests opposed their expansion because they were seen as fostering competition between associations, neighbourhoods and parishes that could assume extreme, even violent forms (Boissevain 1965). However, by the mid-1970s the power of the Church to prevent the increase in such popular celebrations had been diminished. The Church's earlier opposition to the Labour Party had lost it much respect. Rising educational standards had reduced dependence on priests as literate intermediaries with government. But most of all, the Labour government implemented a number of specific measures to curtail the Church's power. These included instructions, in 1976, to the police to ignore the wishes of parish priests when issuing permits for *fešta* decorations, band marches, and fireworks. Consultation between the Church and police had been customary under the colonial administration and had for decades served to limit some of the excesses of parochial rivalry

To summarize, since the 1970s there had been a growing desire to increase popular communal celebrations in Malta, and elsewhere in Europe (Boissevain 1992). The human and financial resources had become available and the power of the Church to prevent escalation of the celebrations had been curtailed. The result – with the wisdom of hindsight, to be sure – was predictable: a sharp increase in the popular external, costumed, public aspects of

parochial celebrations. Opposition by parish authorities merely fanned community spirit and delighted the organizers, provoking them into more overt, active and innovative rebellion. The new band clubs in Mosta, Naxxar and throughout the country are the result.

If people had suggested to me in 1961 that forty years later there would be an increase in traditional competitive parochial celebrations, including the creation of new band clubs, I would have said that they had no understanding of Maltese society.

Problems of prediction

Why had my prediction been so inaccurate? The easy answer, correct in part, was that I had not foreseen the rate and complexity of the changes that were to sweep over Malta. As noted, these included the tourist influx, the end of emigration, the growth of material wealth, the housing boom, the harsh political repression between 1971 and 1987 and the sense of – dare I say it – alienation that these developments engendered.

I also underestimated the cultural momentum of the attachment of the Maltese to their religion and its pageantry. This lapse is curious, because quite explicitly I had related the prevalence of public religious rituals in the 1960s to something a foreign visitor had observed more than a century before (Boissevain 1965: 56). Namely, the custom '*contractée dès l'enfance de chercher au sein des cérémonies religieuses un délassément, que les autres peuples trouvent dans les spectacles et les réjouissances publiques*' (Miège 1840: 168).

Research has subsequently shown me that the expansion of *festa* and Holy Week celebrations is of long standing and, especially since the beginning of the 19th century, had been growing rapidly (Cassar Pullicino 1956, 1976). The developments since the mid 1970s merely continued this pattern. Seen in historical perspective, the decline I recorded and extrapolated was a momentary hiccup in a long-term trend.

In short, while I had perhaps the legitimate excuse of being unable to foresee the social developments that took place following independence, I had no excuse for failing to place the developments I observed in a more adequate historical framework. My fascination with the emerging present led me to neglect the past (cf. Elias 1978: 160). This neglect was in part a professional bias of my generation

of anthropologists – especially of those trained in Great Britain. We were educated to focus on the present and the immediate past. In part it was also the arrogance of field researchers who believes that the events that occur during the short time that they are there to observe them are of major significance.

I have been fortunate in having had the opportunity, rare for most anthropologists, of being able to return frequently to my field site over a 45-year period. This has enabled me not only to correct myself, but also to become aware of the relativity of trends ‘observed’ during a short period of research. It has also provided me with a concrete lesson in the importance of a long-term perspective grounded in historical time.

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ANNA BORG-CARDONA

Malta

Evidence of Ancient Ritual in Malta's Musical Instruments

This paper will be concentrating on the musical instruments associated with two periods of the calendar year, Carnival and Holy Week, both of which are of great importance in the Maltese culture. The term 'musical instruments' will be referring, in the broadest sense, to any object which is made to produce sound intentionally.

Carnival

Throughout the years, many a traveller arriving in Malta saw Carnival¹ as a disgracefully pagan amusement in a supposedly Christian society. It was classed with 'the *Salzea* of the Babylonians, the *Chronia* of the Athenians and the *Saturnalia* of Rome (Saint Priest 1791: 59-60), and some considered it to display 'extravagances which would have almost scandalised the orgies of ancient Bacchanalians' (Bigelow 1821: 238).

One observer remarked that 'it is not uncommon for the masks to assume the character of a wild bull' (Wilson 1839: 39). He continued by tracing the resemblance he saw between Carnival and the pagan *Dionesia* or *Bacchanalia*. 'Horns were used then and now. Bacchus was styled Tauriformis and Bugenes, of Bull race or form. It is very striking that in Malta, Carnival opens with the blowing of

¹ Carnival is the period of relaxation immediately before the forty days of Lenten fasting. Lent ends with Holy Week and is followed by Easter, the Resurrection of Christ. The date of Carnival depends entirely on the movable date of Easter which is calculated as the first Sunday after the full moon on or after the vernal equinox (21st March).

horns, while men of the baser sort may be seen with horns dangling round their necks' (Wilson 1839: 43).

From these accounts it is clear that Carnival has always had little or nothing to do with the Christian religion. The origin of this amusement must indeed be looked for 'in the annals of pagan rites, which Christianity had not succeeded in abolishing' (Badger 1838: 104-106). There is also no doubt that there is a deep-rooted connection between the blowing of horns and Carnival.

Horns and the evil eye

Horns have long had particular significance on the Islands. Indeed, if we go far back in time, to c. 4,500B.C., we find that a goat skull with horns, 'presumably a votive offering' was found in the Red Scorba Shrine (Trump 2003: 35). During excavations of the megalithic temples of Tarxien (c. 3000B.C.), altar niches were discovered crammed with animal horns, including those of goat, sheep and bull (Zammit 1965: 13).

On the Tarxien temple walls we find carvings of sheep, pigs, rams, and also two massive horned bulls in profile relief. The portrayed animals are mostly horned animals. They were sacrificed during bygone rituals and it is significant that the horns themselves were preserved, suggesting that they were endowed with some sacred, magical significance to prehistoric man in Malta.

Moving closer in time, cow and bull horns were particularly in demand by our forefathers, who considered them to have the magical property of warding off danger and protecting against the 'evil eye' (*l-ghajjn*) (Zammit-Maempel 1968). Pairs of horns were therefore put up on roofs and in entrance halls of most country and village houses as a precautionary measure against any ill wishers arriving at the abode. Farmhouses and old windmills may still be seen with such fixtures. Some fishing boats still are, to this day, similarly fitted with these horns facing all possible angles in order to ward off evil and ensure safety at sea. One old seaman in Marsaxlokk informed me that they were placed there so that the sea 'would not swallow them up or curse them.'² It was also customary to hang small gold

² Personal communication, Marsaxlokk, 1996.

horns around one's neck or attached to a bracelet. Babies were especially adorned with such jewellery, because they were thought to be particularly prone to attracting the eye of jealous people with a negative force (Zammit-Maempel 1968: 3). The protective powers of the horn have therefore long played a very relevant part in Maltese people's lives. Some members of the older generation, to this day, still firmly believe in the evil eye.

In view of all this, I here wish to suggest that even when a horn was used as a sound instrument, or simply as only part of a musical instrument, it still retained this magical, protective element.

Horn as a sound instrument

Sound-producing horns in Malta have been associated particularly with Carnival and Christmas. This type of horn known as *qarn* or *qrajna* (Bezzina 1958: 6) was a cow, bull or ox horn which generally was blown through a little single reed (*bedbut*) cut from the *Arundo donax* plant which is thought to have been growing plentifully around the island as far back as the Neolithic period (c. 5000 BC) (Bonanno 2001: 35).

Horns, however, feature in other more complex instruments. The hornpipe, for example, known also as *qrajna* or *saqqafa b'wahda* consists of a small *Arundo donax* reed attached to a wider and longer reed with fingerholes terminating with a horn bell (Pl. 3).

But, the most important instrument which utilizes the horn, is of course, the Maltese bagpipe, known as *żaqq*, where one large horn bell is affixed to a double piped chanter and bag. The *żaqq* bag is made of the whole skin of a dog, cat, goat or calf, excluding head. When the instrument is played it looks alarmingly like the live animal with all its fur, four legs and tail (Borg-Cardona 1999: 57-63).

These sound-producing horns in Malta were frequently decorated with drawings, fixtures or carvings. The most notable addition, however, is a zig-zag edging on the wider part of the horn. Curiously, similar serrated edges (Baines 1995: 54, 58) are very widespread and may be seen in Greece, Syria, in the Basque region, Switzerland, Sweden, and even in the Welsh hornpipe or 'pibcorn' (Balfour 1890: 142-154). Today one can still see similar designs in the Jewish *shofar*. Some wind instruments, such as ones found in India and Tibet,

actually terminate in a carved serpent's head with the notched edge being the reptile's teeth.³

The serrated edge certainly had some relevance associated with ritual. There may have been a primitive connection between the horns and the snake. It may also be relevant that we find a snake carved onto the side of one of the megaliths at Ġgantija Temples in Gozo. Snakes were often associated with the underworld and also with fertility, wisdom and healing (Trump 2003: 115). Interpretation of prehistory is unfortunately very insecure, but fertility is certainly a recurring theme, both within our Prehistoric temples as well as in the Maltese Carnival.

When I asked one Maltese bagpiper why the bagpipe horn was always decorated with this serrated edging, he stipulated that it was done by bagpipers before him and so he had continued to do so. He then added that older bagpipers used to disconnect the serrated horn from the chanter and use it as a handy weapon when and if the necessity arose.⁴ His reply indicates that in this case the serrated horn was also being considered a form of protection and, though not stated specifically, it is very probable that it originally did carry the exact same magical properties generally given to horns in Malta. This particular old bagpiper firmly believed in the evil eye.⁵ One time he informed me that someone had once cast the evil eye upon one of his bagpipes (*għajjenhieli*), and caused it to burst.⁶

Phrygian hornpipe

The best attested hornpipe of antiquity is the 'Phrygian aulos.' This had a double pipe with the left pipe having a curved horn bell. This instrument was used especially in the rituals of the cult of the Phrygian Goddess, Cybele, who was the Goddess of nature and fertility (her Greek counterpart was Rhea). Phrygia, a kingdom now

³ A few of these may be seen in museums such as Kunsthistorisches in Vienna, and the Horniman Museum in London.

⁴ Personal communication, Toni Cachia, *Il-Hammarun*, 1999.

⁵ Cachia wore a carved horn hung round his waist, and he also fixed several pairs of horns to all sides of his aviary to ensure the safety of his prized birds.

⁶ Personal communication, Cachia, 1999.

part of modern Turkey, was mythologically the homeland of the Great Mother, Cybele, whose annual spring festival celebrated the death and resurrection of her beloved Attis, the vegetation god. She was worshipped in wild, emotional, bloody, orgiastic, cathartic ceremonies. Her cult was introduced into Rome in 204B.C. Malta was then under Roman rule.⁷

Back in 1911, anthropologist Christopher Welch, taking into account the Phrygian aulos, one of the first known hornpipes, and its association with the cult of the Mother Goddess, had already proposed that the horn had a religious rather than an acoustic origin. In his view, the first hornpipers regarded the instrument not as a pipe with a horn added to it, but more as a horn with a pipe added: 'a musical horn capable of melody yet felt to conserve the protective or other religious powers with which the horn appears to have been endowed during the Bronze age.' (Welch 1911: 349).

The Maltese deep-rooted belief in the protective powers of horns, certainly indicates similar attributes in Malta's horn instruments.

Death and birth

In Greco-Roman times the 'flutes of horn,' as they were called, were used by 'tomb pipers' and 'corpse players'. They were of great importance in the chamber of death accompanying the rite of wailing (Welch 1911: 356) and were thus associated mostly with death rituals.

I think it well worth quoting a particularly macabre incident that took place in Malta in 1813, in which the horn had a prominent function of this same type (Bond Head 1834: 184).⁸ A Mohammedan, allegedly got into a brawl and stabbed a Maltese man. He was tried, found guilty, and was being led to his hanging in Floriana. During the procession, or 'death march,' through the streets of Valletta to Floriana, 'the blast of a cow's horn' 'was heard about every ten seconds along the way.' The Muslim, willingly or unwillingly, had professed the Catholic faith before being led away. This, it seems, was cause for great jubilation in the crowds.

⁷ Malta's Roman period was between 218B.C.-535A.D.

⁸ Reference kindly provided by Dr Donald Sultana.

The horn was therefore here being used within the context of death, as well as birth. This was the death of a Muslim and the rejoicing at the birth of a Christian.

We find that this symbolism of death and birth is also a recurring theme within the global context of Carnival, just as it was in the Phrygian celebrations, with the death and resurrection of Attis. Central to the seasonal celebrations is the cycle of life, the idea of death of one agricultural season followed by the birth of another, the inevitable death of winter and the arrival of spring.

Much more on this concept of death and rebirth could also be said with reference to Malta's Carnival dances – the *Kumitiva* and the *Parata*, which are both men's seasonal dances (Borg-Cardona 2002a: 24-28, 81-84).⁹ These dances are full of symbols of the inevitable cycle in human life, the death of the old and the birth of the new, the flow of the seasons, and the final burst of spring. Both dances end with the showering of sweets or kisses to the crowd.

The very similar concept of Christianity celebrating, at the same time of the year, the death of Christ in Holy Week and His Resurrection in Easter, provided an easy transposition of the old musical pagan customs into the new religion.

Rhythm instruments in Carnival

What type of instruments, apart from the horn, are typical of the Carnival period in Malta? In the Carnival of 1831, a group of men in Archbishop Street, Valletta, were seen 'dancing about a fantastic stand to the sound of bass drums and tambourines' (Bigelow 1831: 230-231). This little detail regarding the instrumental accompaniment of Carnival dances reveals the prime importance of rhythm, rather than melody instruments. This preference remains evident today in the predominantly percussive and rhythmic sound to be heard in surviving traditional instrumental groups in Gozo.

Very often they include one melodic instrument accompanied by several friction drums, tambourines, triangle, castanets, bass drum, and frequently also home-made improvised instruments or

⁹ Re *Parata*, see also Alford 1960, Cassar-Pullicino and Camilleri 1998: 51-53, Lanfranco 2001: 205.

work-tools. The melodies used today are recent tunes which are clearly a later addition to the original basic rhythmic sound. Of all the instruments used in Carnival, the Maltese friction drum, requires some focus because of its clearly ritualistic connotations (Pl. 4).

The Maltese friction drum

The friction drum is known in Malta as either *rabbaba* or *zavzava* (Borg-Cardona 1996, 2002b; Lanfranco 1996)¹⁰ and up to some forty years ago, was still largely associated with Carnival and to a lesser extent also with Christmas. In Gozo, the instrument is still very much alive particularly at the Nadur Carnival, characterized by grotesque masks, improvised costumes, inversion of male and female, and silent dramatic enactments or mimes. One cannot help also noticing the blatant themes of fertility, sex, birth and death pervading the whole celebrations taking place.

Musicologist Curt Sachs states that the friction drum is the characteristic instrument at boys' and girls' initiations in Africa, with the to- and- fro movement symbolising 'cohabitation' (Sachs 1942: 40). That which may seem overly crude to us today was in fact typical of the symbolism made use of in a primitive mentality. It should be noted that the instrument's name, *rabbaba*, sometimes also called *zabbaba*, clearly denotes the male sexual organ, leaving no doubt of the instrument's sexual associations (Vassalli 1796: 560 h).¹¹

It is significant that this instrument has always been played by men. Wherever we meet loud harsh sounds like those produced by the friction drum, 'we can be sure that they belong to a form of civilisation where man takes the more active part in magic rite' (Sachs 1942: 42). Early civilisations were not interested in rich attractive tones, however, the 'voice' of the instrument produced a magic power. The friction drum would have been associated with virility, procreation, fertility and initiations, all a vital part of life and very much a part of spring celebrations.

¹⁰ Henry Balfour (1907) was first to discuss the instrument.

¹¹ 'Rabbāba – [1]. Stromento rustico da suonare ... [11]. Penis: *it.* Membro virile.' (Vassalli: 1796)

Mock funeral and death of Carnival

Carnival on the Islands previously always ended with a mock funeral, 'a representation of the death of Carnival. One man personates the dead, and as such, is carried about the streets on a bier, his face besmeared with flour, followed by crowds of dirty attendants who occasionally set up a funeral wail' (Wilson 1839: 40).¹² Occasionally this death representation still occurs. *Papier mâché* death masks were worn in the past and dancers of the *Kumtiva* in Gozo previously wore black on the final night of Carnival as a sign of mourning. At midnight, any respectable musician will, even today, promptly put his instrument down, stop performing, and recite an *Ave Maria*.¹³ This marks the abrupt end of festivities, the end of any temporary liberties, the beginning of Lent and the atonement for all the sins committed. We are now once again entering within the sphere of the Christian religion.

Holy Week – the *Ċuqlajta*

The Church bells in the Christian world have customarily been silent during Passion Week, from Holy Thursday to the *Gloria* on Holy Saturday. During this period, bells have generally been replaced by a wooden clapper, ratchet or scraper. Such instruments were used by early man in ancient ritual and were attributed with magical powers, particularly with that of chasing evil. When these instruments were later adopted in association with Christianity they similarly retained a magico-religious function (Wachsmann 1966: 29).

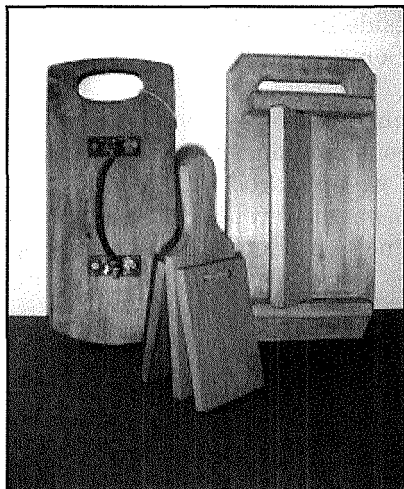
The custom of using wooden instruments continues to this day in many Maltese Churches, whilst in others it went into disuse during the second world war or as a result of Vatican Council II.¹⁴

There are generally, though not invariably, two instruments in each church in Malta; a large one used in lieu of the church bells in

¹² Wilson is also struck by the 'striking resemblance to the obsequies of Adonis.'

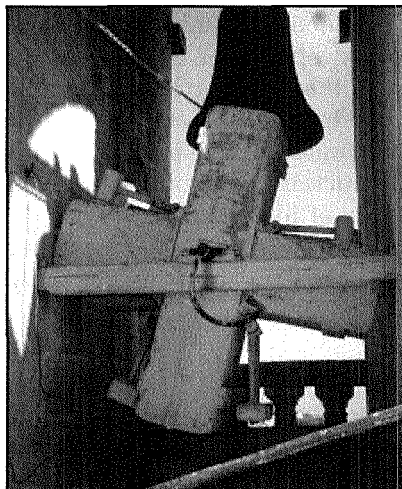
¹³ Personal communication, Frenc Cini, Nadur, 1997.

¹⁴ Vatican Council II was convoked by Pope John XXIII, 1962-1965. Though the Vatican Council gave no specific order to stop using clappers, some parish priests considered the instruments to go against the general spirit of the Council and from then on refrained from using them.



Three different types of clappers used during Holy Week inside churches.

© Anna Borg-Cardona



A large clapper used in the belfry during Holy Week. Mdina Cathedral, 2002.

© Anna Borg-Cardona

the belfry, and a much smaller variety used inside the church. Both these instruments are wooden idiophones, known locally as *čuqlajta* (also *čoklajta*, or *čoqlajqa*) (Borg-Cardona, 2002c, d).¹⁵

Instruments replacing Church belfry bells have to be capable of a loud enough clatter to be heard around the village. For this reason they developed into larger and larger constructions. They were, and some still are, played by a group of young volunteers or very often by the regular bell ringers of the Church. The belfry instrument is also played throughout some of the Good Friday processions on the island (e.g. Żebbuġ).

The instrument inside the church, on the other hand, has much smaller dimensions. It is usually carefully stored away in the sacristy, and only brought out for use once a year. It is normally an altar boy who is given the much-envied duty of playing this instrument, generally during the Elevation and *Sanctus* on Holy Thursday. Wooden idiophones were also given to children who were allowed to

¹⁵ Research carried out between 1996 and 2002, covering over 50 churches in Malta and Gozo.

play them inside the house and outside in the streets during Holy Week, instead of their usual toys. Some also took them to Church with them on particular days.

The Maltese word *čuqlajta* encompasses a vast range of instruments irrespective of size, construction, or mode of sound production. In organological terms, we are faced with a confusing array of idiophones which are in no way differentiated. What they have in common is their very specific noise-producing function during this one particular time of the year.

Noise expels evil

It is worth recalling that the original function of bells was, and still is in some cases, exorcistic. (Sachs 1942: 169-170). One 17th century church bell, up to only a year ago hanging in the Gozo Cathedral belfry, is inscribed with the words '*Daemones Expello Tempestates Que Sereno*' (I expel devils and calm the tempests). This belief was carried on in Malta well into the 20th century. Wooden instruments such as scrapers and clappers were also originally considered to have these same purifying powers.

Up to some forty years ago, during the Easter Triduum, on Wednesday, known as *L-Erbgħa tat-Tniebri* (lit. 'the Wednesday of Darkness'), the Church used to be hermetically sealed from all light. Fifteen candles placed on a special candlestand were lit near the altar. One candle at a time was snuffed out following each psalm reading. When eventually only the last central candle was left, this was lifted for the congregation to see, and was then also snuffed out to symbolise the death of Christ. The clergy promptly began to stamp their feet on the wooden choir. The congregation followed suit by knocking against the confessionals, stamping chairs, and even playing their own *čuqlajta*, thus causing a most frightening cacophony of sound inside the Church (Refalo: 1994). Some said this symbolised the earthquake that took place after Christ's death. However, this noisy, chaotic, and totally irreverent behaviour is surely nothing other than a continuation of the very strong ancient belief in noise having the magical power of chasing away evil (Blades 1992: 195).

In primitive belief, spirits and demons were thought to invade the world of the living in the winter and needed to be chased back to their abode (Simeoni 1991: 19). This was done with the clatter of

noisy instruments made of wood or metal. This same pagan custom simply persisted during the same time of the year, and had been merely given an acceptable meaning within Christianity.

In spite of the long passage of time, musical instruments which originally pertained to primitive ritual functions managed to persist all the way to modern days during the same time of year in connection with a particular function or festivity. Through these instruments, camouflaged ancient superstitions, rituals and obsolete beliefs are in fact being perpetuated today within our modern society.

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The Maltese *Festa*

A Historical and Cultural Perspective

It is a fact that Christianity was well-rooted in Malta by the time the Order of St John arrived in 1530. In earlier centuries there was usually an absentee Bishop, apart from some religious orders and institutions together with a Tribunal of the Inquisition usually presided over by the Vicar-General of the diocese responsible for the island's spiritual needs. The attachment of the Maltese community to the Church was so great that it often enabled the diocese to act as a separate, if not an independent entity in Malta, throughout the rule of the order of St John. Such a situation was attained practically in all pre-industrial societies where religion has always been looked upon as a symbolic code of communication and a focus for social organization. In fact, organized religions have generally always had to come to terms with the existent economic and cultural divisions of society (Smith 1986: 26-29).

Religion and the people

The rural aspects of life conditioned the way people perceived time and space. Every activity, including time, was seemingly saturated with religion. The divisions of night and day remained largely ecclesiastical. It was the church bells that proclaimed a succession of prayers and services from morning to evening at recognized hours. It was customary to refer to the hours of the day in relation to the striking of church bells. Even the calendar spoke the Christian language everybody understood (Cassar 1993a: 444). Religion surrounded food with rules, rituals, and prohibitions and was eaten

partly on the Church's orders. People ate fat or lean according to whether the Church said so or not (Cassar 1993a: 445). Some may have rejected the over-dogmatizing attitude of the clergy, yet – Christianity was the major popular force for the early modern Maltese. Indeed, religion had very little to do with the theorization of norms and the so-called 'guilt culture'. Popular religion had much more to do with semi-magical practices, such as healing, divination, the evil-eye and love charms (Cassar 1993b, 1996, 2000b). Efforts on the part of the Catholic Church to eliminate such practices did not really succeed so that some forms of magical beliefs, like healing and trust in charms against the evil eye persisted into the twentieth century (Cassar-Pullicino 1947b: 35). The hold exerted by religion was perhaps related to the insecurity of life. As a salvation religion dealing with life after death, Christianity offered an escape from damnation in the all too likely event of a sudden or early death. This obsessive anxiety focusing on death reflects how people looked at it. Death was a phenomenon that pervaded early modern society and was a major talking point in both theological and political thinking among all sectors of society. The fragility of human life, widespread malnutrition, economic hardship, frequent famine and epidemic, influenced the religious life of the people in profound ways.

The cult of saints was particularly strong among the masses of the population. The Counter Reformation firmly restated the usefulness of invoking saints (Burke 1987: ch. 5). Devotion to the Virgin Mary increased in intensity, while some new saints emerged as well documented popular hero figures. Vincent de Paul exemplified compassion for the poor, orphans and prisoners; Charles Borromeo stood for personal ascetism and service to the poor, especially during plague epidemics (Mosse 1970: 171, 182). Ignatius Loyola, Francis Xavier, and Philip Neri were also assimilated in Maltese cults.

In the early seventeenth century, the cult of St Paul was further boosted, partly thanks to the presence on the island of the Spaniard Juan Benegas, who revived the veneration for St Paul's Crypt (Azzopardi 1990: 69, 77, 80, 85, 157-158, 160-161, 165, 167-168, 195, 221, 232, 249-250, 356; Freller 1996: ch. 3), and partly to the foundation of the Jesuit College in Valletta in 1592. The Jesuits promoted studies on the Pauline cult where the Apostle's role as protector of the Maltese was particularly stressed (Borg 1978: 237-257; Ciappara 1989: 145-156). Other saints, notably Publius and Agatha, were venerated as co-patrons of the Maltese diocese. By the early eighteenth century,

the patrons of various parish churches were venerated at the parochial level, thus becoming symbols of their respective parishes. Meanwhile, the veneration towards the patron saint of the island, St Paul, grew so strong that by 1700 the Council of the Maltese commune issued edicts with such invocations as 'In the name of God, and the Glorious Apostle St Paul, our Protector' (NLM 23: fol. 13v: 29 Sep. 1701).

No saint was nearer to God, however, than the Virgin Mary, acclaimed by the fifth century Church as 'Mother of God' (*Theotokos*). With this concept the Church developed the Hail Mary (*Ave Maria*) into a prayer to be especially recited during times of great distress. So popular was the *Ave Maria* that its periodical recitation became a recognized way of measuring time (Thompson 1967: 58). Thus the Church involved itself in everything, both in the Middle Ages and even more so after the Council of Trent concluded in 1563 (Febvre 1982: 349; Cassar 2000c: ch. 8). In Malta the Jesuit College ensured the domination of religion over education.

Even the calendar spoke the Christian language everybody understood. Thomaso Xiberras pointed out that he had entered a tavern at the time when the church bells struck the *Pater Noster*, while Rosa Cumbo referred to a particular point in time in this way: 'Yesterday evening, after supper, around the striking of the first *Ave Maria*' (NAM MCC 23: 25, 31 Oct. 1708). Festa days were linked to various collective activities. Andrea Zammit of Żurrieq specified the time he was talking of as Easter time, the time the cotton crop matures (NAM MCC 611 fol. 133: 23 Nov. 1699). Vincenzo Mifsud referred to the olive harvest as the period after the *fešta* of Our Lady of the Rosary (NAM MCC: 1706-1707 fol. 31). In essence the unity of the various strata of the population was possible through the profound ties of all the inhabitants – except the majority of slaves who were mainly Muslim – to the Roman Catholic Church. Malta was close to a theocracy as the three separate jurisdictions on the island – the Grand Master's, the Bishop's, and the Inquisitor's – all considered the Pope as their ultimate earthly head. The net result was that religion seeped deeply into all sectors of society with the clergy serving as the focus of social organization.

The social implications of processions

The Maltese *fešta* is normally associated with Malta's special attachment to the Catholic faith. Much has been said over the years

about the continuity of similar church festivals and one gets the impression that these changed very little over time. Indeed many associate *fešta* celebration with an immemorial past strengthened by the general belief that similar manifestations are many centuries old and provide a link with Malta's past. But snippets of information from earlier periods provide us with a totally different picture. Traditions which appear to be ancient are often found to be quite recent in origin with some of them emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief period of time and established themselves with great rapidity (Hobsbawm 1983: 1).

The celebration of the *fešta* as we know it began to emerge very slowly starting from the late sixteenth century but most of the modern day functions, especially the outdoor activities, with the exception of processions, may at the earliest be dated back to the late eighteenth century. Indeed most are much more recent. Nevertheless, it is the task of the historian to single out false continuities that emerge from the use of specific terminology to designate realities that differ from one epoch to the next. This is normal for all societies but one should perhaps be even more cautious in matters related to Catholic religious practices since the Catholic Church has tended to accentuate the permanence of its fundamental beliefs and its institutional framework over the centuries. Thus some may claim to know how a bishop exercised his role in antiquity, or a priest in the Middle Ages, by referring to those who exercise those functions in the church today (Gurevich 1988: ch. 2). However reasoning by analogy can easily lead to anachronism, particularly when identical words lead us to lose sight of changes that in some cases were considerably, if not outright, drastic. The development of the Maltese *fešta* is possibly a case in point.

During the early years of the Order's stay in Malta the *fešta* was a small affair. The elaborate and colourful manifestation of this Maltese tradition only began to emerge in the eighteenth century and reached its present form by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Sporadic references to the celebration of the *fešta* in the sixteenth century indicate that the activity was often celebrated thanks to the generosity of a local benefactor, and it often consisted mainly of the distribution of food or money among the poor of the village (Cassar-Pullicino 1956: 41). Mgr Pietro Dusina, in his Apostolic Visitation carried out between 1574-1575, reports that at the Church of *Santa Marija tal-Ftajjar* in Luqa the rector

distributed unleavened bread – in Maltese *ftajjar* – to the poor (Micallef 1975: 32, 62). It appears that this kind of activity was customary in other villages. Georgio Tabone of Qormi, who served as sexton of the parish church of St George claimed that Don Vincentio Callus, the vice-rector, had not only introduced the Forty-hours devotion at the turn of the seventeenth century,¹ but he added that Don Vincentio distributed any alms that came his way. When these were in the form of bread – *guastelle di pasta*² – Don Vincentio kept a quarter of one *guastella* for himself and would then send Tabone to distribute it among the poor, blind and maimed of the village (AIM Crim. 23A case 299: fols. 217-18).

A reference to the celebration of the *fešta* of St Agatha, given by the Apostolic Visitor, Mgr Pietro Dusina, gives the impression that some *fešta* celebrations served primarily as merry-making activities. Mgr Dusina had learnt of the riotous merry-making which took place in the precincts of the church of St Agatha in Rabat (Malta) where a wake was kept all night long on the eve of the saint's *fešta* (Pl. 5). The Apostolic Visitor ordered that, from then onwards, the gates of the church had to be kept closed one hour after sunset and thus avoid similar abuses (NLM 643: 56). Dusina's order can be interpreted in essence as an attempt to improve public morality and bring local religion under clerical control. But it was not only the issue of merry-making, which caused concern. There is also very early evidence of parish rivalries based on grounds of precedence between lay confraternities. Perhaps a most notable example is the one given by Alfredo Mifsud (1917-1918: 40 n. 1) which broke out between the parishes of Birkirkara and Naxxar in 1555.

¹ The Forty-hours devotion, known as *Quarant'hore*, was usually staged during the celebration of *festas* like carnival. The Jesuits and the Catholic Reformation Church encouraged such practices during non-Christian festivities. It consisted in the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for forty continuous hours.

² In nineteenth-century Sicily the *guastelle* were a kind of flat bread which used to be filled with fresh cheese and other food items (*Nuovo vocabolario siciliano-italiano* 455). The eighteenth century Maltese erudite Gian Francesco Agius de Soldanis in his 'Damma tal Kliem Kartaginiz,' NLM, vol. 143 (i) fol. 214 refers to the *collura* which was popularly used by our ancestors and were still distributed to the people during the titular *festas* of saints (cf. Caruana 1903: 379). It may probably be assumed that the bread prepared in the villages was in the form of the modern *ftira*.

One interesting feature that emerges from the data discussed above is the fact that the sixteenth and seventeenth century Maltese spent much of their time in the company of others and tended to participate in collective activities at the local level. In the festivity of the Holy Rosary of 1664 the widow Mariuzza Istria of Valletta was watching a procession near the church of Our Lady of Porto Salvo (modern day Merchants' Street) in the company of Gioseppa, a woman with a dark complexion. While waiting for the procession to pass by Gioseppa asked Mariuzza how she was getting on. Mariuzza complained that she was having difficulties to cope with life. Gioseppa realised that Mariuzza was not having much luck with her lovers and suggested she should consult a sorcerer who could help her attract lovers (AIM Crim. 72A case 71, fol. 467: 15 Aug. 1664). The passing procession did not seem to evoke much piety in the two women, who kept talking about their private lives, but they still felt obliged to participate!

One of the oldest devotional festivities held in Malta is that of St Gregory. In 1647 Gian Francesco Abela explained that there were many different opinions about the origin of the feast of St Gregory but everyone agreed that it was established as a public vow by the Maltese. For this reason many believed that it originated after the Moorish siege of Mdina in 1429 when it was believed that St Paul appeared on a horse brandishing his sword against the terrified Moors (Abela 1647: 366). In 1847 Stefano Zerafa came up with a different proposal and suggested that the annual votive procession stemmed from a vow made to St Catherine by the faithful who congregated at the church of Zejtun during a terrible storm that hit Malta in 1343. Zerafa (1847: 10-11) opined that it was only at a later stage that the procession began to be associated with St Gregory. Despite these assumptions, modern research has shown that the procession was not formally organized until 1543 when Bishop Domenico Cubelles (1542-1566) ordered a pilgrimage of penance from the Cathedral at Mdina to the parish church of St Catherine at Zejtun. The pilgrimage was organized in order to seek Divine assistance for Pope Paul III (1534-1549) who was about to summon the Ecumenical Council of Trent to carry out the necessary reforms within the Catholic Church began to meet on 1 November 1542. The Council was also meant to bring harmony and peace among the Christian European powers (Fsadni 1974: 120, 258-259; AAM AO

fols. 62-65: 229-236).³ By 1771 the celebration of the feast of St Gregory had become a Maltese tradition. In a dispute between the Bishop of Malta and the canons of the Collegiate Church of Birkirkara it was claimed that the feast of St Gregory, held each year at the parish of Żejtun on 12 March, formed part of Maltese tradition in which all the regular and secular clergy, as well as the clerics, were duty bound to participate. Bishop Pellerano (1770-1780) complained to Inquisitor and Apostolic Visitor Mgr Mancinforte (1767-1771) that all clergy showed him respect except for the canons of Birkirkara. These never kneeled or bowed their head in front of him and complained that despite his continuous pleas the Holy See never took action against them (AIM Civ. fols. 264-266: 11 Ap. 1771).

By and large processions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries feasts were mostly reserved for strictly devotional services and they often included the exposition of the sacrament. There is no evidence when the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, established at the parish of Porto Salvo in Valletta, started to organise the feast of *Corpus Domini*. However, Michael Fsadni shows that the feast began to be celebrated some years after the publication of a brief issued by Pope Clement VIII on 8 March, 1592. In his brief the Pope gave permission to the Dominicans to hold a procession with the Eucharist on the Sunday following the feast of *Corpus Domini*. Fsadni shows convincingly that by 1598 the procession was already being organised as an annual event (Fsadni 1971: 88-89).⁴

By 1642 the feast of *Corpus Domini* was being celebrated outside Valletta. The criminal records of the Inquisition tribunal contain a document in which we learn that Vincenzo Garin of Vittoriosa accused the 23 year-old Jew Isach Elia of Salonica for refusing to lift his cap, in sign of respect, when a procession with the exposed sacrament passed by him. Three 'Turks' had very recently been whipped for a similar offence. Isach Elia was denounced to the Holy

³ The notarial deed of notary Vincentio Bonaventura de Bonetiis was drawn at the Bishop's curia on 12 March, 1543 in front of a number of witnesses. (R(egister) 206/7 fol.74-v).

⁴ Several documents quoted by Fsadni show that the feast was already being organized in the late 1590s. He refers, amongst other, to a small sum of money left by Agostino Seychell, the Procurator of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, to organize the feast (Fsadni 1971: 88-89).

Office after a discussion that took place in the shop of Mastro Bendo Barbara, owner of one of the punished 'Turks,' in the presence of a group of Jews which included Isach Elia. But the Jew was not disposed to worship something which meant nothing to him. Not only did he object to take off his cap but worse still Elia had the courage to declare that the Eucharist was not God. Elia was obviously denounced for sacrilege to the Holy Office but most probably his gravest mistake was that during the discussion he poked fun and ridiculed his accuser Garsin who took his revenge by reporting the matter to the Inquisition (AIM Crim. 56A case 325, fol. 488: 20 Jun. 1642). The compilation of evidence from several witnesses against him shows that the society of Maltese Christians showed no mercy for Elia. The Jew was found guilty of having shown disdain to the Eucharist and on 11 July he was sentenced to a public lashing in the Vittoriosa square (AIM Crim. 56A case 325, fol. 497: 11 Jul. 1642). Considering the circumstances in which he lived Elia's exuberance was very unwise and speaking his mind had landed him in very grave trouble. The details of similar case-studies depict a society which urged everyone to maintain a united front of behaviour where participation in processions and the observance of special holy days was regulated by specific laws, rules and fines.⁵

Yet despite the harsh punishment of non-believers when it came to the veneration of the Holy Sacrament, Catholics seem to have felt a much stronger attachment to saints and their cults. This was because in essence the cult of the saints was an integral part of religious life and the veneration of a saint often covered a definite area. The saints' role was all the greater in that the notion of a miracle-working patron, to whom one could turn for aid and whose relics were located nearby in a church, found a much easier path to the consciousness of the common people than did the idea of a distant, invisible, and awe-aspiring God. Attitudes towards God the Father lacked that intimacy and sincerity which united the faithful with the local saint. The saint's image was therefore a result of the interaction of different tendencies. In the saint the ideals of Christian humility preached by the Church were embodied.

⁵ See, for example, the collections of *prammatiche* and *bandi* issued in the period of the Order of St John.

Furthermore the saint worked for the good of a whole community rather than on behalf of the individual believer. This occurred primarily because early modern man was not an isolated individual, facing the world on his own. Rather he was a member of a group in which the moods, sentiments and traditions of his consciousness were rooted. It was primarily from collective beliefs and notions that early modern man drew his convictions, including criteria for truth and falsehood. Truth was what the collective believed, and he did not contrast his own personal convictions with the truth of the community. Moreover, belonging to the collective created in the individual the need to affirm those truths that were virtually important for that collective. In short collective values were conditioned by the aims and traditions of the group, and found their basis only in them. Such social psychology offered fertile soil for faith in saints, relics, miracles and of course, saints' images.

The evidence confirms that images of saints played an important role in Catholic societies all over the world. The Church urged the faithful to pray to the saints who would hear their prayers, and possibly intervene by producing miracles and intercede on behalf of the individual devotee. However the detailed descriptions discussed above suggest that miracle cures came at a cost and were by no means free. The dreadful outbreaks of plague which broke out in Malta between 1592 and 1676 may have been part of the pandemic cycle that devastated Europe and the Mediterranean during that period.⁶ It was also a time of great hardship, particularly due to the perpetual warring activities between Christians and Muslims – a state of endemic war; frequent food shortages; inadequate knowledge of medical and health problems; the inability to cope with other incurable diseases; and other hardships. All of these were sources of continual psychological distress on all early modern Mediterranean societies, not least Malta. This sense of helplessness induced the people to seek refuge in religious images which may have served as a means to calm down general popular fears and at the same time instigate popular devotion. But above all religious devotion to holy images seems to have been intentionally boosted by the authorities who used it as a tool to politically control the masses and thus avert

⁶ Cipolla (1973: 15) points out that 'Between 1613 and 1666, Europe was devastated by a dreadful series of plague epidemics'.

outbreaks of disorder at times of particular hardship and social uncertainty.

The constant quest for saint's intervention reveals that their existed strong ties between the devotees and their saints. The saint was thought to have power over certain diseases and was likewise believed to punish those who insulted him by neglecting to fulfil their Christian duties or offended him in any other way. Thus the saint was in essence personalized and domesticated. His ability to mediate between the human and the divine led the faithful to believe that the saint responded to their needs and anxieties both at the level of the individual and at that of the community. His presence drove fear and anxiety from the believers. An example of this approach was manifested on the eve of the plague of 1676 in Malta. On 15 March of that year an old venerated statue of St Roque was seen to change expression and turn pale with fluid oozing out of a wound in the leg. Lorenzo Hasciac (1677: 86, 97), a contemporary Maltese author writing in 1677, remarked that this strange phenomenon was observed by the Maltese and regarded as an omen of the ordeal they had to go through.⁷ The saint was thus identified with his or her image which, similar to relics, guaranteed the reality of sacred power. It was thought that since the image bore the saint's likeness then the image was actually the saint himself and the image took upon itself all the holy powers associated with the saint.

Miracle stories, and other supernatural interventions, established the wonder-working virtues of saints and are direct indications of what Catholics wanted from religion in this period. Religious feelings and excitement apart, the people needed help to cope with the difficulties of life particularly during times of particular distress. The importance attached to the intervention of saints explains the unceasing demand for relics as sources of healing, which the Catholic Church sought to regulate. The cult of relics was born in the East, but it had already acquired enormous popularity in the West by the early middle ages. On its part the church encouraged the practice partly because it did not have the power to oppose its quiet dissemination and partly because the cult was used to further its own ideological and material interests (Hermann-Mascard 1975).

⁷ The event was found to be remarkable enough to be repeated by Mgr Panzavecchia in the early nineteenth century (ACM Panz. 7, fol. 331v.).

The cult of saints was so successful that one modern historian argues that it was imposed on the Church by the faithful and popular influence determined the clergy's attitude towards miracles (Sumption 1976: 43, 53n.).

Interest in relics did not mean that contemporaries were indifferent to the holy lives of saints. Saints relics in particular were often concentrated in important churches in towns all over the Catholic world and were believed to be most valuable. Some relics such as the corpses of local saints were on display in churches where they were available to worshippers. On specific days, the clergy carried smaller relics in procession housed in reliquaries some of which were surrounded by special functions. But most relics were probably too small to be moved around and were kept in off limits areas in special areas within the precincts of churches although they likewise attracted great devotion from the laity.

Petitional and penitential processions, involving both clergy and laity, were often undertaken at the behest of the community as a response to natural disasters like plague, drought, hail storms and so on. They entailed the carrying of sacred images and sometimes relics of saints suggesting that ritual served as a defence against plague (Cipolla 1979). Celebratory processions, such as the ones held after liberation from catastrophic plagues, were also highly in demand. On its part, the Church pushed the belief that just as God could punish and then heal individuals, He could likewise heal an entire society. God's wrath was thus frequently judged as the cause of plague epidemics, as it was of any other natural calamity. In short, devotion to saints and the belief in miracles was a fundamental part of Catholic religiosity, which was shared at all levels of society. The bodily remains of saints, in particular, attracted the devotion of entire communities since early Christianity and entire communities would unite around the protection offered by the venerated saint.

In Malta after a small outbreak of plague in 1655, the Order's government stipulated that a thanksgiving mass and Vespers ought to be held on 26 November 1655, a day dedicated to St Andrew. The ritual was to be solemnly celebrated by the Prior at the Conventual Church of St John, for the liberation from plague. The images of the Saviour and that of Our Lady kept at the church of Our Lady of Victory were to be taken out in procession in which the Grand Master would participate (NLM AOM 259, fol. 138-v n.e.: 26 Nov. 1655).

Evidently the whole ritual was thought to be part and parcel of the salutary effects to be expected from similar devotions. Probably the spirit in which similar religious activities were offered was in themselves the product of the power of Jesus and the Virgin. However it would be incorrect to interpret religious activities simply as offerings to obtain deliverance from plague, or as a token of thanks. Indeed the spirit in which they were offered was itself the product of the power of the saints and the Virgin who, it was acknowledged, intervened through the power of God. But by organising festivities in honour of God and the saints the Order's government was making it clear that the more the community received from the saints, the more they should give. Popular devotion and divine response were thus not only consecutive realities, or rather cause and effect. They were thought above all, to be effects of the power of the image.

Processions were also held with some frequency during the great plague outbreak of 1676. On 14 April processions were organized from every parish of the island. That same day a special procession was organized by the Prior of the Conventual Church of St John in which the Grand Master, accompanied by all the members of the Order present in Malta, took part. The pilgrimage left the Conventual church for the chapel of Sarria in Floriana carrying in procession the venerated image of Our Lady and the relics of St John the Baptist and St Sebastian (NLM AOM 6402, fol. 289).⁸ Another procession, accompanied by several relics, including those of St Rosolea, was organised by the clergy of the parish of St Paul in Valletta to the Capuchin church in Floriana on 17 April (ACM Panz. ms.121, fol. 14). Three more processions were held consecutively on 24, 25 and 26 May (ACM Panz. ms.71, fol. 399v.). The Eucharist was exposed in all churches and the rosary was recited at all hours of the day. Relics were venerated especially the relic of the Holy Cross; in its presence priests recited their prayers daily (NLM AOM 6402, fol. 282).

Processions were likewise held to placate God's wrath and the intercession of the saints at Vittoriosa on the other side of the harbour. On 3 March, the *fešta* of the Holy Cross was concelebrated

⁸ Panzavecchia (ACM Panz. ms.121, fol. 14) writes that the procession was held on 15 April.

by no less than 60 priests – including the Dominican friars of the nearby friary of the Annunciation – at the church of St Lawrence. Solemn mass was followed by a procession with the relics of the Crucifix and St Lawrence and the statue of St Roque. Throughout the celebration the mass of the population let free their pent up feelings and began to cry, shout and lament in grief. Two months later, on 3 May, another special ceremony was organized at the Vittoriosa parish for which once again, all the secular clergy, the Dominican friars, and a large congregation participated. Those present vowed that from then on a procession with the Crucifix, the relic of St Lawrence, and the statue of St Roque would be held annually if God were to free the island from the plague which was raging throughout Malta and especially in Vittoriosa where more than half the population died of plague.⁹ The prayers, vows, and processions did not seem to work well in Vittoriosa because some one thousand inhabitants were decimated by the plague including 46 priests and 30 clerics (NLM Libr. 632, 202-203 n.e.).

But what has been described as the largest pilgrimage after the plague of 1676 was the one organized by Mgr Fra Lorenzo D'Astiria (1668-1678), then Bishop of Malta, and the Cathedral Chapter on 22 April 1677. On this occasion the clergy, the confraternities, and a large congregation, walked in procession from St Paul's Bay to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Mellieħa (Micallef 1984: 125). Religious images attracted popular devotion and form the basis of healing shrines that attracted pilgrims and developed as a direct response to popular demand, as the great devotion to Our Lady of Mellieħa and other shrines suggests. Images of saints played an important role in Catholic societies and could produce miracles when the saint interceded on behalf of a devotee. One may hypothesize that devotion to sacred images coupled with the organisation of pilgrimages, and processions to placate God's wrath in times of hardship and natural calamities, led to the development of the *fešta* as we know it.

⁹ Dal Pozzo (1715: II 4449) reports that the total population of Vittoriosa at the beginning of the plague in 1676 was 3,200. By the end of June when the plague came to an end the total number of dead had risen to 1,800. (See also Micallef 1984: 118.)

Holiness and the value of relics

In Christian antiquity martyrs, through their passion and death, were seen to have a special relationship with Christ, and the celebration of their memory came to involve not simply a remembrance of the dead, but the petitioning of these special dead to continue to intercede before God for their friends in this world. With the toleration, and even active support of Christianity starting during the times of Emperor Constantine in the fourth century, persecution came to an end. From then on the holy men were those who lived a life of prayer and meditation closer to God rather than those who received martyrdom. Thus holiness became associated with goodness rather than martyrdom. Christians from all walks of life came to seek their assistance for all kinds of tribulations: cures; protection from oppression; assistance in settling disputes, and other matters. In return the faithful offered them veneration in the form of pilgrimages, vigils, prayers, and offerings either in a symbolic form like candles, votive offerings, and the like, or material, in the form of property or money (Geary 1986: 175).

The value attached to the special corpses that would be venerated as relics required the communal acceptance of three interrelated beliefs. The first is that the deceased person had led a holy life which had helped him become a special friend of God, in short, a saint; the second, that on his death the remains of such a saint were valued as sacred and treated in a special way; and the third, that the particular corpse, or portion thereof, was indeed the remains of that particular saint. Nonetheless the value of the relics of a saint was determined by the spontaneous popular devotion. This in turn depended upon the efficacy of the saint's miracles and the strength of his cult. Relics of saints were therefore much sought after by communities of Christians particularly since every altar, in every Church, was supposed to contain similar remains. Hence it was believed that if a dead person worked miracles that attracted an enthusiastic following, then that person deserved to be proclaimed saint and receive formal recognition from the Church. Conversely a person who lived a holy life depended on the following of others in order to achieve sainthood. Once relics had gained recognition, and came to be perceived as genuine and efficacious, their significance depended on the continued performance of miracles.

A similar reasoning induced the faithful to circulate relics as

valued commodities. At the same time the transfer of relics from one place to another necessarily breached the cultural context that gave a particular relic its value. Since it was impossible to transfer the meaning and function it had enjoyed in its old location it was believed that the relic had to undergo some sort of cultural transformation that would help it acquire status and meaning within the new environment. Relics were therefore transferred from one community to another with great solemnity. Festivities attached to the translation of reliquaries from one place to another were an essential requisite for which the faithful flocked in large numbers. In the Middle Ages relics circulated like other valuable objects, that is, they were either presented as gifts, sometimes they were stolen, or even bought (Michalowski 1981: 416). Indeed previous to the Lutheran Reformation relics were frequently sold. But this practice was greatly discouraged after the Council of Trent when the papacy began to take stricter control of the movement of relics. Indeed in the XXV Session the Council insisted that

... in the invocation of saints, the veneration of relics, and the sacred use of images, every superstition shall be removed, and all filthy lucre abolished.

The Pope remained the most important donor of relics because he had at his disposal a large quantity of remains of the early Christian martyrs. Rome sought to exploit her inexhaustible supply of relics in order to build closer relationships with the multitude of Catholic states in Europe. In this sense relics turned out to be a useful political tool in the hands of the papacy. Already in the ninth century the papacy had realised that by distributing relics it ensured that the recipient state remained subordinate to it thanks to the ties created in the distribution. The movement of relics often took place through the intervention of a middle man who took it upon himself to mediate on behalf of the ruler (Michaloński 1981: 404). This tendency was more valued in the post-Tridentine period when Catholics distinguished themselves, amongst other, through their devotion to the cult of saints and the importance attached to relics. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the middleman in Malta were often high ranking knights who, thanks to their intervention, stood to gain in prestige both in Rome and Malta. In a way therefore the exchange of gifts led to the establishment of personal bonds between the giver and receiver.

In the seventeenth century the devotion of the faithful addressed itself not only to tombs and reliquaries, where the remains of saints were hidden or enshrined, but also to sculpted images. Saints' relics were either represented in bust form, where the remains were covered in silver and precious stones, or else, they were given a human form and transformed into the shape of a person on his deathbed, the so called *corpo santo* (lit. holy body). The latter method soon became very popular since it reinforced an impression that life had just left the holy body and this presented an illusion of incorruptibility. The churches of Rome were full of these lifelike representations of the dead saint by the early seventeenth century. On their part the knights of Malta were only too keen to emulate the usages of that cultural centre and source of their inspiration.

There is ample evidence which shows the importance attached to relics by the Order's authorities in Malta around the middle of the seventeenth century. In 1644 Grand Master Lascaris supported the Benedictine monastery of Saint Maur in its quest for a relic of Saint Placido – patron of the Benedictine novitiate – from the Order's priorate of Messina in Sicily.¹⁰ The Benedictines were to receive a part of the relic while another part was to be transferred to the Conventual Church of the Order in Valletta.¹¹ The collection of relics at that Church must have been quite impressive by that time and

¹⁰ Despite the official correspondence between the Grand Master and the Benedictines of St Maur, there existed a reliquary, with relics attributed to St Placido at the Carmelite church in Valletta some twenty seven years before. The witnesses that were summoned to comment on the character of the courtesan Sperantia di Lango included her neighbour Jannulla Barbiana. Jannulla described Sperantia as a charitable person who paid for the celebration of three masses per week and in spite of the fact that she led the life of a prostitute had presented donations to several churches. These donations included the payment of a sum of 25 scudi in order to embellish the reliquary of St Placido in silver and gold kept at the Valletta Carmelite Church. Thus anyone who could afford to pay was encouraged to embellish reliquaries even if the donors were notorious prostitutes like Sperantia di Lango (AIM Crim. 38A case 302, fol. 46v: 19 Aug. 1617).

¹¹ The despatch (NLM AOM 1552, n.p.) dated 17 July, 1644 addressed to the Reverend Father Superior General of the Congregation of St Maur refers to the wish of the Congregation to obtain '*...quelque Relicques de St Placide et desirant vous complaire ie priay de magistrates de Mesine de me donner une particule de ce Sainte Corps – ie la separay en deux, en donnay une moitée a mon d. secretaire pour vous l'envoyer, et reservay l'autre pour notre: Eglise...*'

they were so important for the Order of St John that during a meeting of the council in June 1653 it was agreed to fix new walnut cupboards at the sacristy for their safe-keeping (NLM AOM 259, fol. 71 n.e.: 15 Jun. 1653).

The number of relics was bound to increase with time. A mere ten months after the Council decision of 1653, Inquisitor Federico Borromeo presented the Order with relics of his relative St Charles Borromeo, archbishop-cardinal of Milan and a protector of the Order. The relics consisted of a sleeve of red cloth from a habit belonging to the saint; a small part of his heart; and a piece of his intestine. The relics were conserved in an ebony box adorned with crystal glass and silver.¹² On the suggestion of the Italian knight Fra Vincenzo Rospigliosi – a nephew of Pope Clement IX (1667-1669) – in 1669 the Order began to commemorate the date of the consignment of St Charles's relics by celebrating a high mass each year (NLM AOM 1776, fol. 300 a-300 i: 23 Jun. 1669).

In the years preceding the outbreak of the great plague of 1676 several other relics were presented to the Order of St John through the intervention of powerful members of the Order. The influence of the knight Rospigliosi in Rome knew no bounds during his uncle's reign and it was utilised to the full to acquire relics from the centre of world Catholicism. On 1 July 1669, a mere week after his insistence on the solemnity of St Charles Borromeo, Fra Rospigliosi sent to Malta the *corpo santo* of Saint Clement Martyr. The body was at first kept at the chapel of Our Lady of Liesse at the Valetta harbour. But it was soon after taken in solemn procession, with the firing of petards, muskets, and artillery, to its resting place at the conventual Church of St John (NLM AOM 1776, fol. 300 i: 1 Jul. 1669). In the following year the Bailiff of Leon, Fra Giacomo de Cordon Evien, presented the Church of St John with a relic of St Francis de Sales consisting of a *mezzo corpo* (literally half body) in silver of the said saint. The relic had been authenticated by the Bishop of Geneva (NLM AOM 1776, fol. 300 i: 23 Jan. 1670).

¹² According to NLM AOM 1776, fol. 300a: 7 Apr. 1654, '*... una manica di drappo rosso di una veste del Glorioso San Carlo Borromeo, con una particella del cuore, et intestini del medesimo santo che fu gia qui in terra Protettore della Religione, come hora vivamente confida in cielo, poste tutte le dette reliquie in una cassetina d'ebano guarnita di Christalli, et argenti....*'

Relics acquired by the Order of St John in the second half of the seventeenth century were normally carried in a solemn procession. However such *festas* typically involved abundance and excesses that were somewhat profane in nature including the setting off of lavish fireworks and deafening explosions. When in June 1676 the effects of the plague had abated, the chaplains of the Order of St John began to recite the seven penitential psalms in the Conventual Church before the relics of St John the Baptist and St Sebastian. But what is more important is that on 23 June a large part of the bodily remains of St Rosolea, encased in a silver half statue - *mezzo corpo* - arrived in Malta on board the Capitana galley of the Order from Scicli in Sicily. The man behind the acquisition was the Italian knight Prior of Rocella and future Grand Master, Fra Gregorio Carafa (1680-1690) (NLM AOM 262, fol. 57v n.e.: 23 Jun. 1676). Due to strict quarantine regulations, the government of the Order waited until 24 September to organize a public procession of deliverance from the plague. In this procession the relics of the Holy Cross, St John the Baptist, St Anne, St Sebastian and the recently acquired St Rosolea were carried through the main streets of Valletta to the sound of cannons and musket shots. The Grand Master ordered that the festivity of St Rosolea be commemorated every year with the celebration of a high mass (NLM AOM 262, fol. 62v n.e.: 24 Sep. 1676; NLM AOM 1776, fol. 300 ii-iii: 23 Jun. 1676).

Only a few more years were to elapse before another relic – that of St Toscana - arrived from the North Italian city of Padua. The relic of St Toscana was put ashore in July 1685. It was a very richly adorned reliquary and was first taken to the Grand Master's Palace chapel and from there in solemn procession to St John's conventual Church. Once again the procession was accompanied by the firing of muskets and the shooting of canon from the harbour cities' bastions (NLM AOM 1776, fol. 300 iv: 18 Jul. 1685).

But the keen interest in relics and *corpi santi* was not restricted to Valletta and specifically to the Order of St John. In the eighteenth century the Maltese parishes, sometimes represented by local confraternities, *corpi santi* were acquired by the highest authorities of Malta and were then presented as gifts to the various parishes. Thus for example Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena (1722-1736) donated an arm bone said to belong to St Philip of Agira to the Zebbug parish and an ostensory including a splinter from the cradle of Jesus to the parish of Lija.

Several *corpi santi* were brought to Malta thanks to the intervention of particular Inquisitors. One of these was Inquisitor Antonio Felice Zondadari (1777-1785) who managed to transfer the *corpo santo* of San Lucido to Malta which he then presented to the parish of St Lawrence in Vittoriosa in 1779.¹³ The importance attached to the acquisition of *corpi santi* remained high towards the end of the Order's rule in Malta. The last Inquisitor Mgr Giulio Carpegna (1793-1798) managed to acquire a more significant relic of St Lawrence for the same church in 1797.¹⁴

Between the late eighteenth and first part of the nineteenth century devotion towards *corpi santi* seems to have reached its peak. During this period they were dressed up and transformed into 'sleeping' statues. Veneration towards the *corpi santi* during this phase of Malta's history was great so that *festas* were held in their honour

¹³ In 1779 the Confraternity of the Crucifix in Vittoriosa asked Inquisitor Zondadari, as Apostolic Visitor, to intervene on their behalf in the on-going negotiations with Rome to acquire a *corpo santo* from there. Thanks to Zondadari's intervention Vittoriosa received the remains of San Lucido which the confraternity dressed up as a martyred soldier. The parish priest of St Lawrence ensured that the *corpo santo* was translated to the oratory of the parish by procession. A procession was held on 11 April 1779 (Easter Sunday) from the Inquisitor's Palace where it was first kept to the parish of St Lawrence. On the occasion the two religious communities of Vittoriosa – Dominicans and Capuchins participated in the event. Three other parish groups together with the clergy of Vittoriosa, as well as another forty priests from Cospicua, were also present. On the occasion the Inquisitor walked beside the urn containing the remains of the saint accompanied by his retinue (the familiars). The procession passed through the main streets of Vittoriosa to the continuous ringing of bells and the firing of petards from Fort St Angelo (AIM Mem. 21 fols. 29v-32v.).

¹⁴ The clergy of Vittoriosa had a small relic of St Lawrence but they wanted a more significant one. They petitioned to Inquisitor Carpegna to help them in their quest of a new relic. On 3 August 1797, a few days before the celebration of the *fiesta* of St Lawrence, Inquisitor Carpegna wrote to the Cardinal Secretary of the Holy Office in Rome, Cardinal Brusco. In his letter Carpegna asked the cardinal to intervene with the Pope for the clergy and people of Vittoriosa so as to help them obtain a new relic of St Lawrence (AIM Corr. 102, fol.186-v.). Rome had a positive reply to Carpegna's appeal. On 5 October 1797 Carpegna wrote to Cardinal Brusca that the clergy and people of Vittoriosa were overjoyed that a relic of St Lawrence had been shipped to Malta. The Pope had even decided to send a relic from one of the churches dedicated to St Lawrence in Rome. In his letter Carpegna pointed out that in Vittoriosa a festive procession was being organised for the occasion (AIM Corr.102 fol.194v.).

and it became common practice to name children after the saint. Thus, for example, the name of the Capuchin church at Kalkara is officially dedicated to St Barbara. However when the friars managed to obtain the *corpo santo* of Santa Liberata, devotion towards this saint was such that the church was, and still is, popularly known as the church of Santa Liberata. The emergence of similar devotions are clear evidence that the veneration of relics, which had reached Malta of the knights from Rome in the seventeenth century, and immediately taken up by the Mdina Cathedral Chapter,¹⁵ and the Malta harbour cities in the late eighteenth century, was later absorbed and adopted by the outlying villages.

The celebration of the *fešta*

It appears that towards the end of the seventeenth century even the celebration of saints *festas* started to include a procession with a statue. In the words of Joseph Cassar-Pullicino (1947b: 36):

By the 1690s we read of the spreading practice of taking out in procession one and the same statue of Our Lady in all feasts dedicated to the Madonna, such as that of the Annunciation, Our Lady of the Girdle, Our Lady of the Roses, Our Lady of the Rosary, etc.

Joseph Borg (in D'Anastas 1996a: 71) confirms that a statue of Our Lady of the Rosary was commissioned by the Confraternity of the Rosary of Mosta and was taken out in procession for several Marian festivities in that village.

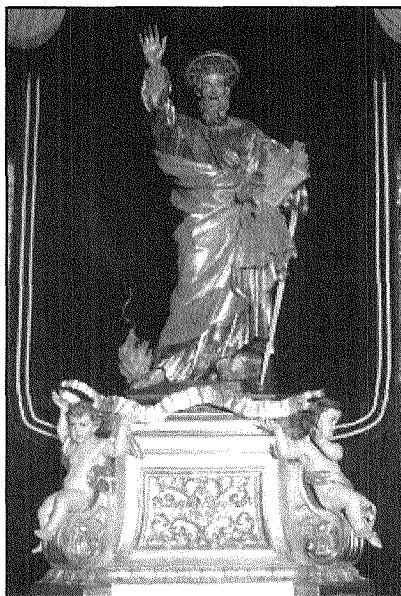
But processions with statues were not restricted to Marian devotion. Canon John Ciarlò has shown that the statue of St Paul, commissioned by the Testaferrata family from the Maltese sculptor Melchior Gafà (1635-1667), was being carried in procession as early

¹⁵ The Cathedral Chapter was presented with the *corpi santi* of the martyred saints Faustina and Acasta (mother and daughter), donated by Mgr Bueno in 1667. A year later the *corpo santo* of St Publius was donated by Canon Montemagni in 1668. The *corpi santi* of St Felice and St Costanza martyrs, donated by Bishop Molina, were deposited in the Cathedral church in 1678. In 1686 the Archdeacon Michele Bonnici presented the *corpo santo* of St Vincenzo martyr. In 1721 Bishop Cannaves donated the *corpo santo* of St Benigno, and finally the *corpo santo* of St Fedele was donated in 1756 (Ferris 1866: 84).

as 1690 (Ciarlò 1995: 42). Documentation for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reveals that the earlier statues used in Maltese processions were figures dressed in clothing like the old titular statue of St Nicholas at Siggiewi (Borg 1983: 108; Catania 1992: 101). We learn that the making of papier-mâché statues was probably introduced by Sicilian craftsmen in seventeenth century Malta but that it was only widely adopted in the second quarter of the eighteenth century.¹⁶

Similarly by the mid-seventeenth century short weekly Friday processions with one statue, were carried through the streets of Valletta in Lent time right up to Good Friday, but these had developed into full-blown processions by 1673 (Aquilina 1986: 26-31). Evidently the cult of saints centred on a statue was well established in Malta by the late seventeenth century. Indeed Ray Debono-Roberts argues that the commissioning of titular statues and other initiatives may indicate that the construction of statues may be regarded as 'one of the social bases of these festivities' (2003: 387).

The earliest reference I have come across to the carrying of a statue of Our Lady in procession is that mentioned by David Davigno, in his deposition in front of the Inquisition tribunal in 1723. On that occasion Davigno – a Sephardic Jew from Spain then living in



Statue of St Paul by the Maltese sculptor Melchiorre Gafà (1635-1667). St Paul's Shipwreck Collegiate, Valletta, Malta.

© Carmel Cassar

¹⁶ George Aquilina asserts that the technique was popularized by the barber-surgeon Saverio Laferla of Valletta who fashioned papier-mâché statues and cribs as a side-line to his medical practice until his demise in 1761. Aquilina shows that Laferla produced a set of Good Friday procession statues for Valletta between 1737 and 1742 (Aquilina 1986: 32-39).

Malta as a pseudo-Christian and serving as a soldier in Malta – declared to the Inquisition that he questioned the carrying of a statue of Our Lady during a procession by the Dominican friars in Valletta as a form of idolatry. That same night, however, he felt he was being strangled in his bed and decided to convert to Christianity and get baptized (AIM Crim. 108A case 7, fols.73-74v: 23 Nov. 1723).¹⁷ The moral in this story seems to imply that the saint, Mary, had chosen Davigno – a Jew – to convert. Her patronage was meant to be. In this case rather than being beseeched for help by someone in need the Virgin was ridiculed by Davigno. The strangling in his bed may be interpreted as a divine imposition on the Jew to convert and a clear indication that the Virgin had come to serve everybody and not just the faithful Catholic members of the community. Similar visions, which led to the eventual conversion of a Jew, strengthened the direct bonds between the saint and each person of the community – whether town or village – beginning with the powerless.

It appears that the inclusion of the titular saint in parish processions on the day of the *fešta* was a development of the eighteenth century. Thus, according to J. Micallef (1975: 125, 126, 129) the statue of St Andrew at Luqa was taken out in procession in 1781. The statue of the Annunciation at Tarxien was taken out in procession from 1829 (Borg 1973: 44, 80). However one cannot exclude that the popularity of *festas* was boosted in the eighteenth century thanks to the celebration of *festas* that were not in any way connected to religious festivals. J. Cassar-Pullicino (1976: 36-37) remarks that

The eighteenth century also saw the Order organizing popular festivities under all sorts of pretexts – the election of a Grand Master, the accession of a new pope, the yearly feast of the Order's Protector, Saint John the Baptist, the occurrence of a centenary such as that of the Great Siege, the birth of a son to some royal household in Europe connected with the Order – and each such occasion gave rise to street decoration, illuminations, fireworks, and other merry-making.

One popular *fešta* in which the Maltese participated fully was that of the *Calendimaggio*. The *fešta* of *Calendimaggio* originated

¹⁷ Davigno, then aged 31 years-old, was baptised at the Inquisitor's Palace in Vittoriosa after receiving instruction and given the name Martino Antonio on 6 January 1724 (AIM Crim. 108A case 7, fol. 75).

in Italy and attained great popularity in Malta by the early eighteenth century. Vincenzo Laurenza (1913: 187-195) suggests that the *fešta* was introduced in Malta by Italian Grand Master Zondadari (1720-1722). Yet, Canon Agius de Soldanis (NLM Libr. Ms.144: 107) recalls how a poem in Maltese written by the Maltese physician Giovan Francesco Bonamico (1639-1680) to honour Grand Master Cottoner (1663-1680) was meant to be recited during the *fešta* of *Calendimaggio*. Such an assertion assumes that the festival was already being celebrated in the third quarter of the seventeenth century. The annual *fešta* was held in the afternoon of 30 April in the Palace square, for which occasion, the Maltese elite organized theatrical representations, serenades and cantatas that were eagerly watched by the Grand Master himself. These performances were also widely popular among the lower classes that, we are told, attended in large numbers (Cassar-Pullicino 1976: 24). It seems that the modern *fešta* as we know it – with its street decorations, illuminations, fireworks and similar merry-making – resulted from an attempt to emulate the spectacular activities held at Malta's cultural centre at a village level.

But there was yet another social occasion where people could meet and enjoy themselves. This was carnival. Carnival enjoyed popularity in Malta ever since it was first known to be officially held in Birgu (later also known by the title of Vittoriosa) in 1535. By the early eighteenth century, carnival balls attracted a large sector of the social elite to the Manoel Theatre (Cassar-Pullicino 1976: 21-25). Carnival merry-making was mostly confined to Valletta, but villagers from all over Malta came to watch, enjoy themselves, and sometimes participate (Cassar 1993a: 457). Carnival continued to play an important function during the British rule, and especially until the Second World War, when although not so spectacular as the village *fešta*, it was a popular occasion which drew enormous crowds to Valletta. However as in the case of the rather solemn celebrations, spontaneous carnival merrymaking was likewise carried out at the village level particularly in some remote areas of the Maltese islands.

The Order of St John, St Paul and the cult of saints

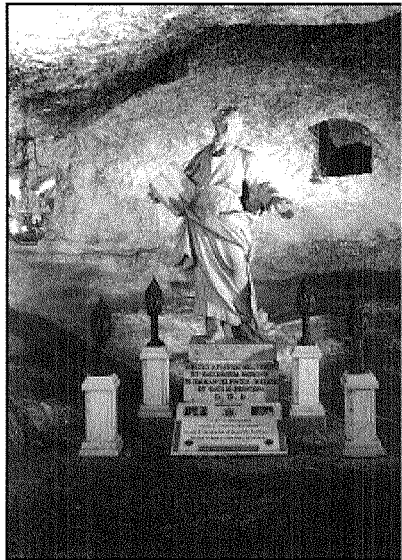
In the early years of the eighteenth century, the Order's government issued edicts and proclamations giving the impression that the

population was expected to participate in official celebrations that were often imposed on the people at large. The word imposed is here being used because on these occasions the urban dwellers were expected to illuminate their window sills with oil lamps and were even expected to adorn their windows and balconies with drapes and carpets especially if a procession was to pass from their street. Failure to comply could induce the payment of a heavy fine. Only the poor and destitute were exempted from adorning the facades of their homes. Proclamations published during the rule of Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena (1722-1736) are eloquent proof of this approach. In June 1722 the Grand Master issued a proclamation in which he gave permission to the general public to celebrate in his honour for two consecutive days (NLM Libr. Ms 429 vol.1, fol. 10). Some years later the same Grand Master issued similar proclamations for the celebration of the accession of Pope Benedict XIII (NLM Libr. Ms 429 vol.1, fol. 58) to the throne of St Peter and again in August 1730 he ordered festivities on the accession of Pope Clement XII (NLM Libr. Ms 429 vol.1, fol. 199). Similar proclamations were issued for the celebration of the *festas* of St John the Baptist – the patron saint of the Order - and that of St Paul – the patron saint of Malta (NLM Libr. Ms 429 vol.1, fols. 52, 158). Under the later Grand Masters, especially during the rule of Grand Master De Rohan (1775-1797), the people were encouraged to indulge more in such festivals.

In seventeenth century Malta, the cult of St Paul developed into a symbol of Maltese identity embodying its hopes of salvation. It came about due to various factors crossbred and enriched with the passing of time. First in importance was the foundation of the Jesuit College, founded in 1592, which went on to promote studies in both local history and traditions, especially the Pauline cult (Borg 1978: 237-258). The Order's perpetual Holy War against the Infidel Muslims made the Knights resemble St Paul for they too had the mission to Christianize and possibly regain lost territory from the Ottoman Turks. Their arrival on Malta was accidental too! St Paul was shipwrecked on Malta, seemingly by an act of providence. The Order accepted Malta only after having lost Rhodes (Cassar-Pullcino 1983: 23-26). Finally the Knights saw in St Paul a counterpart of their patron, St John the Baptist. Both saints had led a highly adventurous life, endured myriad hardships, and both ended up as martyrs (Bugeja 1990: 217). The effect of the popularity of the

Pauline cult is evinced by the introduction of new cults of saints. The cult of St Paul in Malta, together with the ideology of the Marian cult, stretches back to the late Middle Ages rooted in late medieval Christian universalism.¹⁸

During the seventeenth century, the cult was extended to the more general veneration of particular saints, notably saints Publius and Agatha,¹⁹ and those other saints to whom Maltese parishes were dedicated.²⁰ By the eighteenth century, the patron saints of the parishes came to embody the virtues of the village concerned. Thus, the cult and celebration of associated festivities helped define even further the boundaries of local communities within tiny Malta. Such a situation was in response to



St Paul's Grotto, Rabat, Malta.

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¹⁸ The earliest evidence of a Marian cult goes back to 1274 when the church of the *castrum maris* (later Fort St Angelo, Vittoriosa) is known to have been dedicated to Santa Maria (Buhagiar 1983: 1).

¹⁹ The cult of St Publius was propagated in the early seventeenth century (Luttrell 1977: 105-132; Borg 1978: 237-258). The devotion to St Agatha was strong in the mid-sixteenth century particularly after it was thought that the mounting of the statue of St Agatha on the walls of Mdina helped to repel a Turkish attack in 1551. Mastro Blasio Zammit was in fact accused of having doubted the efficacy of this remedy and was reported to the Inquisition Tribunal (AIM Crim. 3 B fols. 626-627: 18 Jun. 1575). Zammit's reputed crime was first mentioned in Cassar 1985: esp. 212).

²⁰ In most Maltese parishes the cult of saints, particularly those of St Nicholas, St Catherine and St George, were already well established by the fifteenth century (Wettinger 1969: 85-86). In 1575, the Apostolic Delegate Mgr Dusina, visited an approximate total of 414 churches in the Maltese islands. A break up of church dedications shows that the Virgin under various attributes and titles had 168 churches dedicated to her followed by St Nicholas, 32; St Catherine of Alexandria, 16; St John the Baptist, 14; St Paul, 14; St George, 13; The Saviour, 10; The Holy Spirit, 1; All Saints, 1; and 145 churches were dedicated to 47 different saints (Buhagiar 1979: 64).

the conception of the Maltese as a distinct people, a motif that gained ground, particularly, as it led others to the acceptance of the notion that Malta never gave up its Christianity since the time of St Paul.

Therefore, the veneration of saints came to stand more than ever for the symbolic expression of an ethnic consciousness, already moulded by the religious concepts of the seventeenth century. It may be argued that the notion of 'Malteseness' assumed a continuity between past and present, firmly binding the Pauline cult with Maltese ethnic consciousness. But political propaganda by the state glorified the exploits of the Knights, and particularly Grand Master La Valette, as the protagonists of the Ottoman Siege of Malta of 1565. The aim clearly was to justify and strengthen the Order's strategic position on the island and to ensure that the loss of their own fellow people was interpreted as a sacrifice to a higher cause. Patriotic resistance became identified with the religious motive and the struggle against the Muslim inevitably assumed the nature of a Holy War (Cassar 1954: 133). This 'ideal' motive was still strong in the eighteenth century, when a protracted crusade against the Moslem 'infidel,' enemy of both the Maltese and the Order, could unite the people and the Order in a common aim (Cutajar and Cassar 1985: 42; see also Cassar 2000c: 228-235, 246-253). Agius De Soldanis gives a valuable insight of this feeling in one of the dialogues he prepared for the revised manuscript version of his *Della lingua punica* (1750), entitled *Nuova scuola della lingua punica*. It records the dialogue held between two ladies of rank, whom he describes as '*puliti*,' and refers to the fear of a Turkish invasion in 1760. One of the ladies is made to say:

I could never believe that they (the Turks) will come. Istanbul is too far away from Malta. The Cross (the Order of St John) frightens them. They never managed to win against us.²¹

The Maltese came to share common assumptions, based on the cult and celebration of associated festivities that helped to define even further the boundaries of local communities within tiny Maltà. Such a situation was created in response to the conception of the

²¹ Original: '*Ma nistax nemmen li jigu. Stambur wisq bghid minn Malta. Is-salib bezziegħi. Qatt ma għamlu l-prova meta hađuha magħna*' (NLM Libr. 144, fol. 195; Cassar-Pullicino 1947a: 122).

Maltese as a distinct people – a motif that gained ground, particularly, as it led others to the acceptance of the notion that Malta never gave up its Christianity since the time of St Paul.

It is thanks to a general belief that the Catholic faith was the one and only ‘true’ religion, that the Maltese developed the ritual cult of saints and the eventual celebration of the *festa*. In this setting the parish clergy were to play a fundamental role in propagating the cult of individual saints and spreading the devotion towards them amongst the faithful.

***Corpi Santi* – St Vittorio and Naxxar in the late 18th century**

Perhaps the most detailed description of a *festa* celebration that has reached us from the eighteenth century recalls the translation of the remains of St Vittorio to the north-eastern village of Naxxar. The advent of the relics to Naxxar and their eventual re-modelling into a *corpo santo* were fortunately recorded in great detail by the parish priest Don Giorgio Fiteni in the back pages of the baptismal register for the years 1627-1745. The text has recently been transcribed and translated into Maltese and published by Paul Catania. We learn that the relics were sent from Rome to that parish through the intervention of Inquisitor Mancinforte in 1770. The remains of the saint were temporarily venerated in relic form at the parish of Naxxar until 1785 when parish priest Fiteni, with the help of another Naxxar priest, Don Gio Battista Grech, took the relics to the house of judge Pasquale Borg in Valletta. At the judge’s house the skeleton was rebuilt by the surgeon and painter Giuseppe Grima aided by Signora Anna, the judge’s wife. The relics were thus transformed and remodelled into a human form. The Bishop of Malta was then asked to put his seal of authenticity on the *corpo santo*. The authentication ceremony, held at the house of the Borg’s in Valletta, was followed by a great reception and many devotees are said to have visited the home of judge Borg. Fiteni remarks in his detailed memoir that several of those present obtained graces through St Vittorio’s intervention.

The newly created *corpo santo* remained exposed in Valletta for several months, where apparently popular devotion towards it continued to increase and the relic continued to be popularly venerated, until 21 September 1786 on which date it was taken to

the parish priest's house at Naxxar. Once again parish priest Fiteni felt obliged to comment on the shower of graces received by the people of that village on the arrival of the *corpo santo*. Those Naxxar villagers who were especially favoured by St Vittorio were expectant mothers; particularly those facing a difficult childbirth. We are told that these women had an easy delivery after drinking water mixed with the dust from the saint's bones. Others suffering from a limp also received special graces. One such man, mentioned by the parish priest was called Battista. Battista had a wooden leg and walked supported by two crutches. After having prayed to St Vittorio, Battista reportedly threw the crutches away and walked without any aid despite his wooden leg! Others are said to have been healed from eye pains and the parish priest declared that even the blind could see after praying to St Vittorio. Several others are said to have been cured from other diseases. Many votive offerings were presented to the saint on that occasion, particularly consisting mainly of candles, gold and silver as well as in the form of sums of money, cotton, wheat and maslin. The offerings of the poor consisted mainly of candles. Indeed so many candles had been lit, that night and day the *corpo santo* was uninterruptedly surrounded by candles and oil lamps. On the occasion parish priest Fiteni thought it was fitting to proclaim St Vittorio as protector of Naxxar.

But it took another year for the *corpo santo* to be translated to the parish church and this served as another spectacular occasion celebrated with great pomp by all the villagers. On 22 September 1787 the *corpo santo* was translated from the house of the parish priest to the chapel of the Immaculate Conception by twelve soldiers – to the firing of petards, squibs and flares – dressed in the livery of the ruling Grand Master De Rohan, where it was kept overnight. The festivities reached their peak on the following morning when a procession, led by the Bishop of Malta Mgr Labini, accompanied the transfer of the *corpo santo* from the chapel to the Naxxar parish church. The offering of a bouquet of flowers to the *corpo santo* by Bishop Labini marked the start of the celebrations for the day. A procession began with the intonation of the antiphony *Iste Sanctus*, accompanied by musicians and fireworks (Catania 1987).

Parish priest Fiteni gave intricate details of the proceedings of the procession which was led by a band consisting of fifes and tambourines. The standard of the confraternity of the Rosary followed by a large number of members of the said confraternity

came next. Then came the standard of the confraternity of the Sacrament accompanied by an even larger number of members from that Confraternity. Next came musicians playing bassoons, flutes, and other musical instruments, who marched in front of the saint's standard. The standard depicting on one side saints Joachim and Anne accompanied by the young Virgin Mary and on the other side St Vittorio was shown receiving his martyrdom. It was executed by the painter (and surgeon) Giuseppe Grima who had originally re-assembled the bones into a *corpo santo*. Then came the Cross of the clergy with an acolyte on each side and the large number of priests that accompanied the cross hailing not only from Naxxar but even from other parts of Malta. Parish priest Fiteni felt the need to point out that both the members of the clergy and the confraternities carried large candles each weighing half a rotolo, and walked in great devotion with their heads bowed down. Six of the clergy were wearing a cope and were continually intoning verses from the hymn *Deus Tuorum Militum*. The *corpo santo* of St Vittorio was carried by four priests under a canopy of red damask. Bishop Labini came next accompanied by four canons of the Cathedral including the archpriest of the Cathedral Church, and Don Giorgio Fiteni, with lit candles in their hands. When the procession arrived under the triumphal arch, the *corpo sacro* was deposited under the arch to the playing of music. The procession then continued to the parish church. The *Te Deum Laudamus* was intoned, one verse being sung by the clergy and another one by the crowd of faithful present. On arrival at the parish church a prayer to the saint was recited together with the *Pro Gratiarum Actione*. The Bishop then gave his blessing to those present and prepared to say mass assisted by the four accompanying canons. Sung mass was then concelebrated by parish priest Fiteni who was assisted by several members of the Naxxar clergy. The Bishop assisted from a throne, purposely prepared for the occasion, and after the reading of the gospel gave a homily in Italian in which he praised the virtues of St Vittorio.

Vespers were sung that evening and were followed by a sermon on the martyred saint in Maltese by the archpriest of the Cathedral, Don Alessandro Tei. On its conclusion the parish church bells rang the first Ave Maria at which the church itself, the arch, and many private houses were lit with oil lamps while petards were shot and church bells rang. The octave continued for a whole week starting that Monday during which a sang mass with sermon was said each

morning. Every afternoon the Vespers were recited followed by another sermon, while every evening the village was lit and petards were fired. Bells rang and petards were fired each time the church bells rang at recognized hours for the daily prayers.

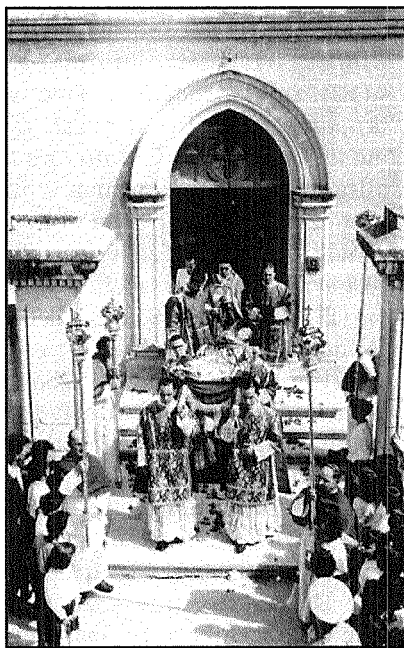
On the last day of the octave Grand Master De Rohan gave permission to hold three races – one for fillies, one for donkeys, and another one for horses, which were held to the playing of fifes and tambourines. A large crowd gathered for these races directed by representatives of the Mdina Town Council who were also responsible for the distribution of the cloth banners (*palji*) to the winners. The popular celebrations for the martyr saint St Vittorio thus came to a close. However the church festivities were only concluded on the following day when the clergy, carrying lit candles, participated in a solemn procession within the parish church during which the *corpo santo* was transferred from the main altar to that of Our Lady of Sorrows. The *corpo santo* was then fumigated with incense to the singing of the antiphony *Iste Sanctus* and the urn containing the *corpo santo* was devotionally put under the altar.

The case-study of St Vittorio suggests that the most attractive thing about the saint was his ability to work miracles. In this he employed his 'magical' capabilities to help his worshippers, easing their lives, healing their illnesses, averting natural calamities, and freeing the unfortunate and the powerless from oppression. In return the saint required veneration; obedience to the church authorities; and gifts in the form of candles, money, and votive offerings. The saint, endowed with human features was active among ordinary human beings and served as a bridge between a distant and incomprehensible God and ordinary mortals. Each locality adopted its own saint, who became an integral part of the community and to whom people would resort to whenever they required help beyond human power. Miracle-working characteristics left the greatest impression on the ordinary folk. Thus a saint would enjoy popularity and veneration if he performed miracles. On its part, the church insisted that the main feature of a saint was his righteousness and privileged position with God. However, the clergy could not oppose the universal need for miracles even because faith in miracles yielded enormous riches to church foundations most of which were used to endow charitable institutions, the embellishment, or the building of new churches. However, since the saints' supernatural actions were not easily distinguishable from popular magic, the two activities

were associated with each other in popular consciousness. The church naturally claimed a monopoly on the performance of miracles, and excluded all other activities as magical. Nonetheless she was induced to elucidate the difference between the genuine miracle and popular magic. But in this she was not very successful.

The use of saints' relics sometimes calls to mind the use of pagan talismans. In reality the majority of the Maltese population did not really distinguish between amulets, which were strictly forbidden by the church, and holy relics. Why did the church forbid the use of magic potions, and punish those that resorted to sorcerers for healing the sick, while at the same time agreed that dust from the saint's relics possessed healing properties? Fine distinctions of this sort were of little consequence to the masses of the faithful. Thus most people did not consider the combination of popular magical beliefs and church practices and rituals as erratic, and still less heretical. The border dividing Christian magic from *maleficium* was unclear to the masses of the faithful.

Another claim for the miracle-working function of relics was the saint's contact with the faithful. By performing his feats in a given locality, in the case of St Vittorio the village of Naxxar, the saint accordingly belonged to its inhabitants. The faithful and the saint thus came to form a single association within the limits of which, blessings, prayers, miracles, and gifts – in the form of candles, gold and silver votive offerings, or otherwise – circulated. This association was thought to be indissoluble, and neither the saint's worshippers nor the saint himself had the right to break off contact. Relics were thus believed to ensure a saint's services for a particular community and it explains why



Procession with a *corpo santo* at Żejtun in the early 1960s. © Sandra Debono

a lively traffic of these popular goods continued to thrive in Catholic communities well into the modern age. This unique situation induced parishioners to consider the saint as their own property and boasted of his miracles. The relations between the saint and the faithful were thought to be of mutual fidelity and aid. In this perpetual activity the clergy played the fundamentally powerful role of go between.

The *festas* under British Rule and at present

But the *festas* were radically transformed in the nineteenth century under British colonial rule when band clubs were formed and fireworks began to play a more dominant role. This does not mean to say that music and fireworks were introduced in the nineteenth century. Actually by the late eighteenth century it had already become customary in the Maltese villages to hire musicians from Valletta and the Harbour enclave to participate in the local processions. These mainly consisted of pipers, tambourine players, trumpets, clarinets, and oboes, and the total number of players usually ranged between five and seven. In 1882 Don Salvatore Ciappara claimed that music playing was introduced for the first time at Żebbuġ in 1777 during the procession held in honour of St Philip. The previous year a triumphal arch, designed by the artist Rocco Buhagiar, had been set up. In 1781 the musicians who participated at the feast of St Philip were five in all – two clarinets, two horns and a bassoon. By 1790 their number had increased to nine (D’Anastas 1999: 163). Żebbuġ was not unique. The feast of the Assumption held in Mosta in 1780 was accompanied by trumpets and a tambourine and in 1785 the number of musicians amounted to four individuals. Similarly the procession of the Holy Sacrament at Rabat was accompanied by trumpeters brought from Valletta during the years 1786-1788 (D’Anastas 1996a: 75).

However the detailed description on the festivities held in honour of St Vittorio at Naxxar in the 1780s suggests that music playing during processions was already relatively widespread at the time. Noel D’Anastas has shown that the feast organised by the archconfraternity of St Joseph in Rabat two decades before, that is in 1763, included music playing and a fireworks display. Nevertheless D’Anastas argues that music playing during processions dates back

to the late seventeenth or at least to the dawn of the eighteenth century. The number of musicians varied from year to year and from one town, or village, and another. In 1763 the musicians consisted of a group of four pipers and a tambourine who accompanied the procession. By 1765 the musical band for the feast of St Joseph at Rabat consisted of two pipers and two tambourines. These musicians passed through the streets of the town, or village, from *where* the procession was meant to pass in order to attract the attention of the faithful. The custom was still kept alive in the early British period when the musicians employed for the activity were recruited from among the rank and file of the British regiments (D'Anastas 1996b: 74-77).

Despite the popular participation in the *fešta* activities one cannot ignore the role played by the parish clergy who continued to control practically all social and religious activities held in the village, or town community. It may be argued that the position of the clergy was rather strengthened under British Rule (1800-1964). The Maltese politician and journalist, Herbert Ganado, relates an anecdote of his life experience as a young man in the 1920s. Ganado explains that when he was invited by a friend to the Siggiewi village *fešta*, his father's friend asked him whether he had first been to see the parish priest. The man insisted with the young Ganado on the assumption that while the village doctor, lawyer, notary, pharmacist, police inspector, and sergeant all enjoyed an important social status, the parish priest was the undisputed head of the local community.

Festivities in the honour of the village saints became more elaborate and complicated throughout the British period. Village *festas* contained a combination of the primitive rituals of the sixteenth century *fešta* and the elaborate celebrations organized by the Order. The changing social and political conditions of the nineteenth century inevitably helped to transform the village *fešta*.

But the role of the village *fešta* gained ground especially after the appearance of the band clubs

... which have proved to be the mainstay of the *fešta* institution ever since. Parallel with the setting up of rival band clubs in most towns and villages... there was the breakaway movement in the villages which resulted in the celebration of secondary *festas* in quite a few parishes, the process being greatly encouraged and facilitated by the creation of new cults inspired by the apparition of Our Lady at Lourdes in 1858 and the

recognition to St Joseph as the Protector of the Church in 1879 (Cassar-Pullicino 1976: 37).²²

Band clubs soon became very popular, and by the end of the century they had become a major social feature in both Maltese towns and villages. Although they were originally non-religious associations, bands soon became identified with parish rivalries and these were best expressed during the village *fešta* (Cassar 1988: 108-109; Frendo 2004: 216-217).

Every Maltese village was, as it still is, placed under the patronage of a particular saint. During the nineteenth century, a *fešta* in honour of the village patron saint began with fireworks on the eve of the *fešta* day (Mac Gill 1839: 33). Horse and donkey races were sometimes held while, on the *fešta* day itself, young and old attended Mass in the morning and abstained from all manual labour. Time was spent in wholesome amusement, singing, and dancing to guitars. Naturally food was of better quality on *fešta* days (Mac Gill 1839: 33).

It seems that very little had changed by 1913. A popular pamphlet, published that year by Giovanni Battista Mamo of Luqa, relates how the Maltese villagers enjoyed themselves on *fešta* days (Mamo 1913).²³ They preferred to pass their time near the sea, especially at Birżebbuġa, Marsaxlokk, Għar Lapsi (off Siggiewi), St Paul's Bay, and Mellieħa, and at other places where, among other enjoyments, they sang popular tunes (*għana*). A most popular form of *għana* consisted of a flyting contest between two men. This usually ended up with a brawl, in which people pelted each other (Mamo 1913: 7-8).

On important festivities, people from various areas would congregate at the village that was celebrating its *fešta*. Mamo cites as an example the *fešta* of Mellieħa, the northernmost village in Malta, yet he mentions how people from Valetta, Qormi, Żejtun, and other places congregate on such occasions. The majority, however, came from the two villages of Qormi and Żejtun which were noted for their love of *għana*, as were those of the Valetta *Manderaggio* and of Cospicua (Mamo 1913: 10). One can best

²² See also Boissevain 1965: 91-92.

²³ This pamphlet was kindly brought to my notice by Mr Nathaniel Cutajar.

appreciate how keen the people were to visit such places if one keeps in mind the rudimentary system of transport. Mamo recalls that, on this occasion, his uncle came with the mule-cart at two in the morning to wake him up. From Luqa to Mellieħa it was a long journey, and they arrived at dawn. He also mentions the food they carried with them: two three-*rotolo* loaves of bread, made of mixed barley and wheat (maslin); a kerchief full of goat cheeses; half a dozen turnips; a jar of home-made wine; dried figs; and other items. Despite the difficulty to reach their destination, people from all areas of Malta flocked to the participate in the *festa* according to Mamo (Mamo 1913: 11).

Since the Second World War the *festa* celebrations have changed drastically. The great event of the *festa* is still the procession with the patron saint's statue through the streets of the town or village. The interior of the church is still decorated with rich swathes of damask, and the silver and gold treasures are polished and put on display. Yet there is much more glare and noise in the modern day *festa*. Feverish preparations for the *festa* are fanned by the rivalry of the band-clubs of which there are at least two in most villages. During the week preceding the *festa* 'friendly' bands are invited to participate in the village celebrations.

There is an unmistakable festive air about the village during this time with bells ringing merrily and continuously. The streets are hung with flags, banners, paper decorations and wooden pillars with life sized *papier mâché* statues. Many houses in the town, or village centre, are neatly white-washed for the occasion. And the balconies, in particular, are decorated with damask drapes and the image of the saint. Improvised food-stalls sell nougat and *imqaret* (deep-fried date filled pastries), or *pastizzi* (ricotta and pea baked pastries). These have recently been over-shadowed by hamburger and chips stalls, hotdog stalls, as well as other modern fast food items. But no self-respecting *festa* would be without fire-works usually costing the village thousands of Maltese liri. The fireworks – which in the eighteenth century were prepared by the artillerymen of the Order's army, or else commissioned from nearby Sicily for the great occasions – had since the last two decades of the nineteenth century been produced by Maltese craftsmen aided by a number of volunteer helpers for the *festa* (Cassar-Pullicino 1976: 37). Months before the *festa*, a dedicated band of men start working on the fire-works in earnest. They mix chemicals, prepare designs and pack

X
the petards. They finally put the prepared petards in brown packages for storage. The results of months of dangerous work and thousands of Maltese Liri (local currency) collected from the villagers on a door-to-door basis are displayed on the eve and on the *fešta* day. Each year a novel combination of colours and shapes is put up as a dazzling aerial display amidst the admiration of the on-lookers. But perhaps the most awaited spectacle are the street fireworks. These are set on poles which are fixed inside holes in the main village square. They are set-up a few hours before they are let off, an hour before midnight on the eve of the *fešta* celebration, each one a tantalizing array of shapes and models.

Modern day *fešta* celebrations have been elaborated further to include a noon-band march and parade on the *fešta* day in which many demonstrate and drink heavily. While on the day after the festival a one day outing, *xalata*, is organized towards one of the beaches. This outing is an elaborate form of picnic, and many participants travel to the chosen beach on decorated cars and buses amid loud singing and music playing. They spend the day swimming and feasting. It is the *xalata* which really terminates the *fešta* activities.

In 1935 the Church authorities took steps to reduce the importance of the secondary *festas* which began to compete with the titular *festas*. The parish priest had to approve the organization of these festivities including the decorations, fireworks, and band marches while the police faithfully followed his instructions. Despite similar restrictions by 1961 the number of band clubs had gone up to 56 shared between thirty odd villages and towns. Nineteen localities had rival band clubs and there emerged rival *fešta* celebrations (Vassallo 1979). This issue has most recently been discussed at some length by Raymond Saliba, an expert of *fešta* celebrations in Malta, who points out that in spite of the growing opposition from the Church Curia over the last few decades, some of these rival parties were originally encouraged by parish priests themselves. Saliba argues that these rivalries are now well-entrenched in some Maltese localities and cannot be changed overnight as some parish priests would probably wish to see. Furthermore one needs to be realistic and appreciate that the modern *festas* are more than just the religious celebrations they were originally intended to be (Saliba 2004: esp. 181-183).

Several prohibitions on *fešta* activities in recent years have shown

that official Church quarters consider the modern *fiesta* activities discussed above with contempt, often subversive, at times immoral, or perhaps simply boorish. But one must not forget that for the clergy, the people are the laity. Indeed since the closing session of the Council of Trent (1564) the people were often seen, explicitly or implicitly, as 'Them' as opposed to 'Us'. In the centuries following the Council, and indeed until quite recently, 'Them' included a large majority of illiterates. However matters have changed drastically over the last half century. In an age when most of the clergy study at a university and gain a degree, those associated with the celebration of 'unacceptable' *fiesta* activities are, in general, those who lack degrees, in short the uneducated. However it is wrong to associate active participation in village *fiesta* activities with the lesser educated because *fiesta*-fans hail from the rank and file of Maltese society and they form a much larger audience which includes even lay graduates.

Conclusion

The intention of this general overview of *fiesta* celebrations in Malta is to show how over time the activity has been transformed from a simple religious activity into an elaborate social performance. One can say that cultural adaptations over time have played an important role in the drastic change of the *fiesta*. Over the years several entities have tried to 'reform' the *fiesta* celebrations and the way the ordinary people perceive popular culture in Malta.

We have seen how during the early phase of the Order's rule the cultural distance between the parish priests and their flocks was not very great. The priests had not yet been trained in the seminary – indeed only from 1593 were priests trained at the Jesuit College and it was only in 1703 that a proper seminary was set up. Yet this traditional culture, however stable it may appear in retrospect, was not static.

With the passing of time one comes across attempts by canon lawyers and theologians, as well as apostolic visitors, or indeed inquisitors, who tried to introduce some form of control in the organization of religious festivals. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the newly trained parish clergy played a fundamental role in teaching the rudiments of the church to the

largely illiterate mass of the faithful. They not only tried to 'purify' popular religion but were even able to regenerate new devotions, particularly towards the sacraments, processions and the veneration of saints. Traditional popular culture eventually succumbed to the changes that were introduced in the later years of the Order of St John in the Harbour towns around Valletta. It resulted from the influence of the Great Tradition (that is the culture of the city as the cultural power-house) on village life. In fact villages went on to absorb and adopt elements of city life in such a forceful way that they made them their own. The architectural boom that spilled from the new city into the surrounding countryside during the rule of the Order of St John had such a great impact on the Maltese countryside that by the eighteenth century most villages could boast of a parish church that was built on a magnificent scale (Mahoney 1988: ch. 8). The resilience of traditional popular values was thus undermined by technological and economic change.

There was also a trend to transform the concept of leisure. We have seen that official festivities were celebrated with great pomp in Valletta and the Harbour towns and how they were often imposed by the publication of edicts and decrees. By the eighteenth century the dominance of the Harbour area over the countryside was so complete that villagers began to celebrate their parochial activities and *festas* on a grander scale. Thus it appears that the *festa* was already becoming influenced by the political and commercial changes of high culture in that century. At the same time we see the elites deliberately distancing themselves from popular culture, withdrawing, for example, from participation in carnival and other festivals.

In the nineteenth century, under British Protestant rule, the Church enjoyed a dominant position in Malta. It was a state of affairs which led to a situation where the Maltese maintained a cool relationship with the British (Protestants), mixing very little until the 1930s. We have seen how the islanders continued to depend directly on the local priests, making the Church the centre of village life, and the parish-priest its first citizen. On their part the British authorities, whose main concern was to keep matters under control in their island-fortress, respected the position of the church hierarchy and they made it a point not to interfere in church matters. Thus under the British Protestant government the Catholic ritual was given predominance in important state functions; religious

instruction, according to the Catholic principles, was imparted in all Maltese schools; and canon law was indiscriminately applied to all Maltese with respect to marriage. Consequently civil marriage and legal divorce did not exist in British Malta. One may say that the local church hierarchy and the British government managed to develop a *modus vivendi* thanks to which the Church enjoyed a privileged position (Cassar 2000a: 40-44). Despite the impact of the new industrial work rhythm introduced by the British to run their Island-Fortress efficiently, Maltese traditional activities were not really affected and instead of reducing the traditional *festa* they kept on adding and elaborating their activities. This tendency applies to all parts of Malta including the countryside where the commercialization of agriculture, and improved communication systems, had helped transform local popular culture. In the villages the *festa* was by then being organised on lines similar to those held in the major towns.

In post Independence Malta, the rapid growth of the tourist industry became the main reason for the popularization of popular culture. In short the *festa* activities became mostly associated with leisure and economic gain. What we can say for sure is that the concept of leisure has changed radically from earlier times. Leisure as we mean it today is a by-product of industrial capitalism. The popularization of the traditional festivities among the locals, and the visiting foreigners, are part and parcel of the social preconditions and consequences of a changing value system that has also helped, directly or indirectly, to transform the way the Maltese celebrate their *festa*.

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JOSEPH F. GRIMA

Malta

**The Development of the Holy Week
Processions at Qormi, Malta**

A Case Study

The Qormi Good Friday procession originated over 250 years ago but, so far anyway, one cannot pin down the exact date when it was first organised. There is no doubt whatsoever that it was certainly well-established by 1764 when there is the first recorded written reference to it in the diary of the scholarly priest Ignazio Saverio Mifsud. This diarist refers, on two occasions actually, in 1764 and 1765, to the existence of large statues and smaller ones and to the great number of people who thronged to watch the procession.¹ This information infers that it was a well-established procession by the 1760s but Mifsud makes no reference to its origins or to how long it had been in existence.

Dating the procession

By the beginning of the 18th century, Good Friday processions already existed at Rabat, Valletta, Vittoriosa, Cospicua and Senglea (Cassar-Pullicino 1992: 54, 56). By the middle of the century they had spread to Naxxar, Żejtun and Żebbuġ (Grima 1988: 10). The fact that Qormi was an equally large, if not larger, parish² suggests the possibility

¹ National Library of Malta Manuscript (NLM) 14, fols. 266 and 428.

² For population figures cf. Fiorini 1983, Table II after p. 343.

that its Good Friday procession was organised at about the same time, if not before. Unfortunately, no written evidence has ever come to light and one has perforce to look elsewhere for indications of its origin.

The Valletta procession dates to the 17th century and it developed from small, weekly processions organised every Friday in Lent (Aquilina 1986: 26-31). It is known that similar processions also existed at Qormi (Grima 2003: 9-10) but there is nothing to suggest that what happened at Valletta was repeated at Qormi. Likewise, at Naxxar a Sodality of Our Lady of Sorrows started to organise the Good Friday procession by 1750 (Catania 1987; Borg 1984: 113) but there is no indication whatsoever that a similar Sodality at Qormi ever followed the Naxxar example. The origins of the Qormi procession have remained shrouded in mystery and one has to analyse one of the few still-existent 18th century statues to try and arrive at some sort of conclusion.

I am referring to the present-day statue of *Our Lady of Sorrows* which is made of papier-mâché but has its face and hands made of stucco. Before the advent of papier-mâché in Malta, statues were figures dressed up in natural clothes.³ Although the art of papier-mâché was probably introduced into Malta by Sicilian craftsmen, it started to come into general use when a Maltese barber-surgeon, Saverio Laferla (who died in 1761), began making statues as a sideline in 1737 (Aquilina 1986: 32-39, *passim*). The Qormi statue's stucco face and hands indicate that it was originally a dressed-up figure and that, at some point in time, the face and hands were incorporated within a new papier-mâché statue (Pl. 6). It is here being suggested that, when Laferla started his labours in 1737, the Qormi manifestation was already in being and that the statue under review was one of the statuary groups carried in procession.⁴

The parish of St George at Qormi also organises a festive procession on Easter Sunday morning with a statuary group of *The Risen Christ*. Again, there are no exact documents to indicate the origins of this procession but, on the other hand, there is tradition.

³ Cf. Aquilina (1986: 31-32) for the Valletta statues. A similar statue of St Nicholas still exists at the Siġġiewi parish church (Borg 1977).

⁴ For an analysis of the development of the iconography of Good Friday processional statues in Malta and Gozo, cf. Grima 1986: 141-148.

One has to tread very carefully when dealing with tradition because it is not history based on verifiable facts. But, at least, it can lend an indication that may, or may not, be exact. In this case, once more we analyse a statue: the figure of *The Risen Christ*. It is moulded in papier-mâché and in the 18th century style so it cannot be earlier than the middle of that century. Oral tradition says that it is over 200 years old and that it was donated by a pious woman named Raffaella.⁵ This is a case where oral tradition and the texture of the statue seem to agree but, it must be stressed, one is still in the realm of educated guessing.

The 18th century procession

Therefore, all this brings us to the point where we try to find out what the 18th century procession was like. The 19th century description of the Valletta procession in 1838 by G.P. Badger depicts a solemn, votive manifestation with a number of statuary groups being followed by flocks of devotees and a large number of members of the clergy carrying lighted tapers together with penitents dragging heavy chains tied to their ankles (Badger 1838: 99-100). The procession could not have been much different in the preceding century and penitence was the order of the day, very unlike the pageant-like and colourful manifestations of nowadays. Together with the already-mentioned two statues of *Our Lady of Sorrows* and *The Risen Christ*, the Qormi parish still cherishes an *Ecce Homo* (The Crowning with Thorns) made of stucco; St John the Evangelist, the Crucified Christ and Mary Magdalene from *The Crucifixion* statuary group; various parts of an urn ordered in 1782 for the statue of *Jesus laid to rest*; and the statue of the dead Christ himself.⁶ Actually, the Crucified Christ and Mary Magdalene are still carried in procession together with the statues of *Our Lady of Sorrows* and *The Risen Christ*.

In the 18th century, five weekly Lenten processions were held on successive Sundays, each one representing one of the five sorrowful

⁵ *Times of Malta*, 1975: 31 Mar.

⁶ They may be viewed in niches or other parts of the parish church, such as the parish museum.

mysteries of the Holy Rosary: *Christ at the Garden of Olives*, *The Scourging*, *The Crowning with Thorns*, *Christ Carrying the Cross*, and *The Crucifixion*. Each procession proceeded to one of the small chapels at Qormi where a homily was delivered on the parvis before returning to the parish church. A general procession was then held on Palm Sunday. It is said that this final manifestation was transferred to Good Friday in 1788 but there is no documented information available to corroborate this belief (Grima 2003: 8-9). At any rate, these processions help us to arrive at the number of statues in the general procession: the five carried in the weekly processions together with the statues of *Jesus Laid to Rest* and *Our Lady of Sorrows*. Very probably, there was another statue, that of the legendary *Veronica*.

Perhaps one may here pause for a brief look at the well-documented Valletta procession which in 1712 had all these statues except *Our Lady of Sorrows* and *The Scourging*. The statue of Our Lady seems to have been introduced in 1742 by Laferla whilst a statuary group then in existence incorporated within it a whipping-post (or column), and seemingly joined together two mysteries of the Rosary: *The Scourging* and *The Crowning with Thorns*. It was only in 1773 that they appear as separate statues (Aquilina 1986: 34-35). To date, the Valletta procession has always had the eight statues just mentioned. But was the position the same at Qormi? The fact is that we do not know, but we also have to point out that the wooden Rabat statue depicting *The Scourging* is reputed to be about 400 years old (Micallef 1980: 12), so this statue could have been present at Rabat but not at Valletta. Other localities could have taken the cue from Rabat and had such a statue before Valletta. As already mentioned above, a diary records the existence of large and small statues at Qormi in 1764-5 but without further comment (NLM 14, fols. 266 and 428).

Nineteenth century developments

The nineteenth century was a time of expansion and consolidation for Holy Week processions in Malta. There was expansion because these manifestations increased in number and spread to other localities in Malta (Grima 1988: 10) and also because the advent of band clubs brought about the full participation of these musical

societies. This does not mean that music was not present in the 18th century because documented evidence points to music being played at the Valletta procession as far back as 1673 (Aquilina 1986: 31), that *tamborlini e fifera* together with a *violincello e violini* had become regular features in the Naxxar manifestation by 1761 (Catania 1987), and that soldiers playing a fife and drum preceded the statue of the dead Christ at Vittoriosa (Zammit-Gabarretta 1973: 11). Nothing is known about music-playing at Qormi during the 18th century. However, in keeping with the times, it is quite possible that a fife and drum were present.

The middle years of the 19th century saw the advent of band clubs⁷ and they started to take part by playing funereal music along the processional route. One of the first clubs to be formed was the Pinto Band club at Qormi in 1862 and it began to take part in the Qormi procession, where it played appropriate funereal marches in front of the statuary group depicting *The Crucifixion*.⁸ However, it seems that the ecclesiastical authorities were not so happy with the band clubs' participation in Good Friday processions because many people were joining the manifestation just to hear the band, they walked in the middle of the processions and smoked cigars without caring that they were actually participating in a religious ceremony and not out on a jaunt to enjoy themselves. As a result, in 1879, bishop Monsignor Carmelo Scicluna (incidentally, he was born at Qormi) prohibited the participation of bands in the Good Friday processions which, henceforth, were bound to be held on Good Friday itself and not on any other date. There was initial opposition to both episcopal orders but common sense prevailed and the bishop was obeyed (*L'Ordine*, 26 Mar. and 2 Ap. 1879). Naturally, the order applied also to Qormi and so the local band club was precluded from participating, just like other localities including Valletta. After the

⁷ For the history of all band clubs, cf. Schiavone 1997-1998, which contains write-ups about each band in the Maltese islands. For comments about their foundation, cf. Grima 1997a.

⁸ For information about this band club, cf. Peresso 1997: 77-89 and Mifsud Bonnici 1962. This band was certainly already taking part in the titular feast of St George by 1868. Moreover, by way of two examples, it has in its possession (and still plays) funereal marches by Emmanuele Bartoli and Orazio Diacono dating back to 1871 and 1875 respectively. Cf. a compact disc of funereal marches issued by this band club in the year 2000.

1879 Good Friday, the local press commented that all parishes had adhered to the orders of the Bishop and that the processions were more serious than had hitherto been the case (*L'Ordine*, 16 Ap. 1879).⁹

However, the prohibition endured for only a rather short time because in 1892 there is a report in the local press that the *La Vincitrice* Band of Senglea was going to make its debut in the Good Friday procession (*Gazzetta di Malta* 1892: 13 Ap.). One here assumes that what was good for the goose was good for the gander and, therefore, all bands which had formerly played in their localities' processions were now re-instated,¹⁰ including the Pinto Band club of Qormi. In the meantime, a new band club was formed at Qormi, St George's M. Band Club, in late 1893 (Grima 1994: 117-126, 1993: 45-80, 1997b: 91-105) and it started taking part almost immediately after its formation because an 1895 newspaper reported that both the Pinto and St George clubs accompanied the Good Friday procession, with the former preceding *The Crucifixion* statuary group (*Il-Habbar* 1895). The new band played in front of *The Agony in the Garden* statuary group.

In contrast with the sombre atmosphere of Good Friday, Easter Sunday is a joyful affair and bands play an important part in instilling a care-free atmosphere. It seems that band-playing in Maltese Easter processions has been present for many years because, in 1770, there is record of the payment of 30 scudi *per la musica di Pascua Grande* of Naxxar, which probably included both Friday and Sunday processions (Catania 1987), whilst in 1804 no less than two bands accompanied the Vittoriosa Easter Procession (Zammit-Gabarretta 1973: 16). The 1879 prohibition had not been extended to Easter (*L'Ordine*, 16 Ap. 1879) but there is no record about band participation in Easter at Qormi before 1895 when a newspaper reported the participation of the newly-formed St George's M. Band Club (*Gazzetta di Malta* 1895: 6 Jun.). The fact that this 'new' club took on this role indicates the probability that band-playing in the Qormi Easter procession had never performed before 1894.

The processional statues initially saw little change in their iconography but their number in Maltese processions seems to have

⁹ Good Friday in 1879 was celebrated on 11th April.

¹⁰ However, it seems that the Valletta procession only re-instated its band in 1897 (Aquilina 1986: 52).

become 'standardised' to the eight already mentioned above, including *Veronica* (Grima 1986: 142). A few innovations only appeared late in the century when, in 1878, the new Cospicua statue of *The Agony in the Garden* included two angels instead of the traditional one (Galea-Scannura 1978: 28, 1998: 18) and the Mosta *Veronica* (in 1895) was accompanied by a young girl (Borg 1992: 161, 162, 163). Both statues were produced by Carlo Darmanin (1825-1909) who, very probably, was also responsible for the Qormi 'copy' of the Cospicua innovation before the turn of the century (Grima 1986: 143). With regard to the Easter statues, all existing effigies portrayed the figure of *The Risen Christ* alone, except the one at Valletta which included two frightened guards. This was also 'copied' by Qormi which, in 1891, added two papier-mâché guards to the Easter statue, the work of Vincenzo Cremona (1851-1912) (*Public Opinion* 1891). By and large, the Qormi processions seem to have experienced no other changes except the replacement of these statues: *The Scourging*, *Jesus Falls under the Cross*, *Veronica*, and part of *The Crucifixion* group, all undated but with the last three by the aforementioned Carlo Darmanin (Grima 2003: 18, 25, 27).¹¹

Developments between 1900 and 1940

The first 40 years of the 20th century witnessed important developments which paved the way for the Good Friday procession becoming what it is today, more pageant-like and less penitential and votive in character. From the iconographical point of view, a new statue was added, in 1908, which represented *The Betrayal by Judas*, fashioned in papier-mâché by Carlo Darmanin. This was a really noteworthy development because it broke new ground and remained unique in Malta till 1961. A contemporary Qormi-born writer, Ġużè Muscat-Azzopardi, thus described the new statue in the press: "On Good Friday we saw at Qormi a new statue with which we were greatly pleased. It represents *The Kiss of Judas* and we can say that it is new in all aspects: it is new because such a statue has never been included with the Passion mysteries, and new

¹¹ In *The Crucifixion* group, the replaced statues were those of Our Lady and St John the Evangelist.



A 1933 studio photograph showing Pontius Pilate, two Roman guards and two servants. These costumes were used for the first time in 1933. © Joseph F. Grima

because Mr Darmanin, one of the best (local) artists, has managed to fashion it so beautifully that we have never seen anything similar in Malta” (*Is-Salib* 1908).¹² The expenses were borne by two brother merchants from Qormi, Giovanni and Giuseppe Coleiro (*Malta Tagħna* 1911). This donation was the prelude, so to say, to similar ones in the second half of the 20th century and also meant that the Qormi procession had an extra statue when compared to other localities.

There were no further developments in iconography before 1961 but changes and additions were directed elsewhere: the introduction of Roman and biblical live groups connected with the passion of Christ. Qormi is rightly regarded as a pioneer in all aspects of innovation and development in the Holy Week manifestations but the real origin of biblical groups is to be found elsewhere: just before

¹² The extract is a free translation from Maltese.

1900, the Rabat (Malta) procession introduced the live group of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. However, that idea was not developed further at Rabat and it was at Qormi that such groups were eventually introduced and have continued to exist uninterrupted until other localities, including Rabat, followed suit during the last thirty-five years or so (Grima 2003: 29).

Before the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the Roman centurion Longinus was introduced and was followed by apostles Peter, James and John before 1930. The year 1933 was a Holy Year and it saw the introduction of Pontius Pilate with two Roman guards and servants, the High Priests Annas and Caiaphas, and King Herod Antipas. The group showing Abraham and Isaac was then introduced in 1934. All the costumes simulated those worn in the Passion play of Oberammergau in German Bavaria (Grima 2003: 30-35).

One other innovation concerned band-playing in the Easter procession: for a number of years, band marches used to be played but, between 1920 and 1924, the Qormi-born musical director of St George's Band Club Nicola Montebello (1872-1930) composed a set of seven Easter waltzes which were immediately introduced in the procession and are still played nowadays (Grima 2003: 76).

One may be inclined to regard these changes and additions, in comparison to further developments after the Second World War, as trivial and perhaps even inconsequential. This would be an incorrect attitude because they heralded the bigger changes to come later and which shall be discussed presently. It is a fact that, even in pre-war years, the Qormi procession was frequented by more onlookers than other manifestations because they could view an extra statue and a few live groups only in this village.

Consolidation and full development after 1950

After the Second World War (1945) no further developments took place for some years except for the introduction of the High Priest's servant, Malchus, c.1945. The only other addition of note, in 1957, was that of the biblical figure of the priest-king Melchisedek (Grima 2003: 35-36). But the real 'explosion,' so to say, occurred in the 1960s with the inclusion of a number of *tableaux vivants* based on the already-mentioned Oberammergau Passion play, the result of a visit there by Canon Joseph Pace and the Archpriest of the parish, Rev

Gerard Frendo (Grima 2003: 35, 38). The inclusion of these groups coincided with changes in the statues which were also increased in number. These developments gave the procession its general present-day composition.

From the 1960s, the iconography of the Good Friday statuary in Malta developed in three ways (Grima 1986: 143-145), viz.:

1. the emulation of the Qormi procession's statue of *The Betrayal* which resulted in the addition of this episode in a large number of localities;
2. the addition of new episodes which had not featured in the original and traditional set of eight (or nine after 1908?) statues. In this instance, Qormi added the following three episodes: *The Last Supper* (1961), *Jesus Meets His Holy Mother* (1961), and *The Pietà* (or *The Deposition*, 1965). This brought up the number of statuary groups to 12, the largest number in any single Maltese procession;
3. the elaboration of certain episodes already represented in the procession. Again, Qormi was in the forefront of this development by replacing the single statues of *The Scourging*, *The Crowning with Thorns*, and *Veronica* with more elaborate statuary groups in 1962, 1962 and 1965 respectively.

Throughout the years some of these statues had to be replaced due to defective workmanship and their place was taken by even more elaborate groupings (Grima 1986: 144-145, 2003: 24-25). All things considered, Qormi was certainly in the front line of all the changes involving iconography.

Concurrently with these changes in iconography, the 1960s saw the inclusion of many biblical figures who were accompanied by scroll-bearers to explain their significance to the onlookers. They included Andrew the Apostle accompanied by two young boys carrying two fishes and five loaves; Prophet Jonah carrying a large fish; Adam and the Cherubim; Cain and Abel; the four prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and Zachary; Levites carrying the Ark of the Covenant; Israelites carrying a huge bunch of grapes; Joseph sold into slavery; King David and his evil counsellor Ahitophel; Prophet Michaias and the king's servant; King Ahab and his counsellors; Naboth and a group of servants, false witnesses and stone-throwers; Barabbas; the two

thieves who were crucified alongside Christ; Simon of Cyrene and his two sons; Moses and Aaron, aged Simeon; Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. The latest biblical figure was introduced in 1995 and represents John the Baptist.

To these one must add a substantial number of 'military personnel' – Roman soldiers and centurions, Romans carrying SPQR placards and other emblems, Jewish temple guards, and Herod's guards. A number of boys and lads carry scrolls, banners or Passion symbols (Grima 2003: 37-39).¹³ Thus, the procession became pageant-like and it is acknowledged that the Qormi manifestation gave the lead to other localities to follow suit on all fronts. However, notwithstanding these changes, additions and elaboration, the Qormi manifestation has retained its processional status and format and still includes a number of men carrying large wooden crosses in fulfilment of vows.

In 1936 Qormi was divided into two parishes and this resulted in the procession changing its route so that it would wend its way through the streets of the old parish and omit those of the new one. The Pinto Band Club found itself in the new parish and therefore did not continue to take part in the processions that emanated from the parish of St George. Consequently, only one band took part, though sometimes another one was hired. However, 1988 saw the official opening of Anici Band Club in Qormi and, being situated in the parish of St George, in 1989 it started to take part in the Good Friday procession and play funereal music along the route. In 1994, this band also started participating, together with the 'resident' St George M. Band club, in the Easter procession which thus became one of the few in Malta to include within it two participating band clubs. Like the other club, Anici Band Club plays a specially-commissioned set of 10 Easter waltzes along the route, all composed by Frank Galea. Another development in Easter has been, since 1979, the blessing of children's *figolli*¹⁴ halfway through the procession and also the continuation of

¹³ For the actual place of each one in the procession, cf. Grima 2003: 54-71, *passim*.

¹⁴ Aquilina (1987: 336) describes the *figolla* as 'the pastry figure (of a doll, lamb, duck, fish, etc.) usually with a chocolate egg struck in the middle, made and sold at Easter time.' The egg simulates pregnancy and therefore symbolises a new life or rebirth. Children are usually exhorted to obtain *figolli* representing white lambs. i.e. the paschal lamb, a symbol of Christ being the sacrificial lamb.

the longish 'hallelujah run' (or sprint) by the bearers of the statue, naturally carrying the statue itself, before entering the church (Grima 2003: 50, 76; Bianchi 1997: 107-114 *passim*).

Organisation

All told, if one counts the bandsmen and statue bearers, no fewer than 600 persons participate in the Good Friday procession. Easter is different though there can easily be as many as 300 participants because of the two bands and the five parish confraternities which take part. These numbers can cause organisational problems especially because each participant may be concerned only with his own personal part and not with the procession as a whole.

Very little is known about who organised the procession in the distant past though it seems that the two senior parish confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament (set up in 1575) and the Holy Rosary (established in 1601) played an as yet undefined part.¹⁵ The reports of pastoral visits by the local bishop have yielded the names of some late 18th and early 19th century procurators who were responsible for the organisational aspect but that is the sum total of what is known. Nearer our times, we have had two procurators, Giovanni Coleiro and Massimo Mangion, in the 20th century who oversaw its organisation for a total of over 70 years between them, a period which also included a Good Friday Junta for five years (1955-60). In 1979, a nominated Committee was set up, made up of priests and laymen, which has continued to organise all the Holy Week processions in the parish of St George till the present day (Grima 2003: 51-53).¹⁶

¹⁵ Two late 18th century notarial contracts defined the place of the members of these confraternities in the procession (cf. Notarial Archives Valletta (ANV): Acts of Not. Ignazio Saverio Bonavita, 22 Feb., 1777; Acts of Not. Vincenzo Castiglion, 9 Mar., 1788).

¹⁶ Other people who were procurators between the 1780s and 1818 included Stanislao Gatt, Angelo Pace, the cleric Paolo Xuereb, Clemente Camenzuli, Giuseppe Barbara, Rev. Giuseppe Borg, Nicola Galdes and Mro. Giuseppe Fenech (cf. NAV, Acts of Not. Giuseppe Bonavita, 18 May, 1782; Archiepiscopal Archives Malta (AAM), *Visitatio Pastoralis* (VP) Labini 1785, fol. 164v; VP Labini 1787, fol. 137r; VP Labini 1789-90, fol. 112r; VP Labini 1793-95, fol. 79v; VP Labini 1801, fol. 49r, 71v and 109v; VP Mattei 1813, fol. 37r).

Conclusion

Throughout the past three centuries or so, the procurators of the Holy Week processions at Qormi seem to have tried, with commensurate success, to organise worthy manifestations which upheld Christian values and, concurrently, evolved with the times. Qormi has always been in the forefront where change and evolution took place and has always been very quick to adapt and adopt new ideas and then lead the way for others to follow. This is quite clear with regards to iconography, live groups, the Easter procession, and music-playing, particularly at the Easter procession. One may argue that the original scope of the Good Friday procession has been left on the wayside but this comment is not precise. What has happened is really a change for the better because, whereas the original procession was penitential and devotional, the present manifestation has retained both aspects, albeit at a lower key, and has added a third which is didactic in character: to present onlookers and spectators with the unfolding story of man's redemption by Jesus Christ. Notwithstanding the human and folkloristic aspects which are certainly present and which may sometimes cloud and blur man's vision, this is the aspect which every onlooker should keep in mind and which is the main, modern scope of the Qormi Holy Week processions.

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Paraliturgical Music in Malta

An Ethnomusicological Perspective

This paper consists of part one where I describe and define the ethnographical context under study: the celebration of *Santa Maria Mater Gratiae's* day in the village of Żabbar in September; part two outlines the music played during this celebration – Who plays? What does this music consist of? Which repertoire is it?; and part three where I will consider the meaning and the relationship between music and ritual.

The material I have used for this communication is the result of two field studies made in Żabbar: the first one, during my discovery of the village and of its titular *fešta* in September, 2003; the second one, on the occasion of the *fešta*, in 2004.

My starting point is the ethno-musicological hypothesis which considers music as a “fait social”, and therefore takes into account its place in society and culture and, more specifically, in this ritual.

In view of the fact that the context is that of a celebration which takes place within a Roman Catholic framework, the term *paraliturgical* music is to be understood in the same manner as that given to it by François Picard (1999: 31), namely

such music which does not constitute the ritual, but which can find a place within it: the singing of hymns, processions, sometimes during ritual time in parallel to the rite itself, often outside the sacred place. Such music is often played by associations which are related to the temples.¹

¹ Original: *‘En attente d’une définition universelle, nous entendons ici par musiques “paraliturgiques” celles qui ne sont pas constitutives du rituel mais peuvent s’y insérer: chants des hymnes, processions, parfois parallèlement dans le temps du rituel, souvent hors de l’espace sacré. Elle sont le plus souvent jouées par des associations liées aux temples’.*

Time and space

The festa and the village

The village of Żabbar is situated in the South-East of the island and is the fifth largest village in Malta. The name of the village Żabbar probably comes from the word /'zabbar/ (*Żabbar*) which means *he pruned*. Żabbar is also called *Città Hompesch*, in honour of Grand Master Ferdinand von Hompesch who gave the village its name.

The *Madonna tal-Grazzja*, Our Lady of Graces, is the patron saint of the village. According to tradition, her celebration day should be 8th September, her birthday. The same day, *l'Otto Settembre*, would also have been chosen by the *Żabbarrin* to thank our Lady for the Maltese victory over the Turks at the end of the Great Siege of Malta in the sixteenth century. However the *festa* of *Maria Mater Gratiae* is celebrated every year on the second Sunday of September. The *Madonna* is also the patron saint of cyclists and motorcyclists.

In Malta each village – and there are more than 70 – generally celebrates the feast of its patron saint in summer (Blondy 1991: 9-10). However, if each village celebrated its patron saint and gave priority to a particular aspect of the celebration (this could be the decoration of the church, or of streets, or fireworks or music), in Żabbar it is certainly the musical aspect that prevails. I choose this particular village because it is well known for the quality of its *baned*, the two band clubs of the village, the quality and 'quantity' of music that is played during the whole period of the celebration and for the involvement of its inhabitants in the celebration of their *festa* and its music. Here, much more than in most Maltese villages, music has a privileged place. As a *bandist* told me during an interview, 'when somebody is asked to compose music for the Żabbar celebration, he already knows that it must be of a certain level and not just any music'. Music in Żabbar is thus an object of great pride as well as great rivalry.

The celebration, the banda and the każin

In general the Maltese *festa* lasts a week. In Żabbar it lasts more. It starts two weeks in advance with religious celebrations (Holy Masses, recitals of the Holy Rosary, prayers), officially, nine days before the proper *festa*, during the period called the *novena* and the *triduum*. It

reaches its zenith during the second week to culminate with the procession on Sunday. On Sunday morning, and this is also another characteristic of Żabbar, a very special pilgrimage takes place: hundreds of bicycles and motorbikes leave from Mosta and Rabat (in the North of the island) to go to Żabbar. On their arrival, a special blessing takes place, and a prize is given to the first cyclist participating (Pl. 7).

In Żabbar, more than in most Maltese villages, the whole village participates in the preparation of the *festa*: villagers decorate the streets, their homes and above all, the main church with all sorts of garlands, banners and damask. We can certainly say that here the celebration is not only in homage to the patron saint: it is also the occasion for the villagers to participate actively in an event which has been anticipated for a whole year and remains central in the *Żabbarin's* life. As a matter of fact, it represents an essential moment in the village's calendar.

The *banda* and its music are essential to the Maltese *festa* celebrations. No *festa* would be a success without music without the *baned* (bands) and the *festa* would not take place. This is all the more true in the village of Żabbar which prides itself on having a feast with the best music and the best bands on the island. I say *bands* because there is something else which is particular to Żabbar:² whereas, in most Maltese villages there are two *każini*, one for each *festa*, here, both band clubs, *Maria Mater Gratiae*, 'the blue', and *San Mikiel*, 'the green', share the village but not the feast at the same time, with the same goal, for the same reason, and indeed for the same patron: the *Madonna tal-Grazzja*. Here rivalry between the *każini* knows no bounds.

The *baned* play daily during the feast for several days and several hours. So when and where do bands and music make their entry into the scene?

Liturgical and paraliturgical spaces

In this respect, I have chosen to make a first distinction between spaces of liturgy / paraliturgy and spaces of the village. Within the former we find two kinds of spaces: space of the church and its surroundings

² There are very few villages where one finds the same situation.

(outside – on the small square), and the streets of the village through which the statue is carried in procession on *fešta* Sunday – in short all the areas used for liturgical and paraliturgical celebrations and marked by the presence of the faithful, clerics and clergy.

In these spaces music does act as a support to and a function of the liturgy from the first day of the celebrations, Thursday, when the statue of the Virgin is taken outside the church onto the front of the square (*iz-zuntier*), and on the last Sunday, nine days later, when the procession winds its way in the streets of the village.

The music played in these spaces consists of hymns to the Virgin, chants, and marches. During the rest of the week there are other occasions, when we find the *baned* and their music. Indeed throughout the celebration period both local *baned* play their music in these spaces which I would call ‘village spaces’.

‘Village spaces’

‘Village spaces’ are the areas used outside the liturgical celebrations but for the same paraliturgical aim, the *fešta*. Only the *baned* and their supporters run around the streets. No priest and no liturgy are present here. As from the first Monday of the novena period both *bands* march down the streets of the village playing their music. The village space is now being shared in a precise and rational manner. One day it is *Banda Mater Gratiae* which plays and marches down the right-hand side of the village main street (*Tal-Biċċieni*). The next day it is the *Banda San Mikiel* which marches down the left-hand side of the village main street (*Il-Misraħ*) and plays. Both *baned* are always followed by their ‘supporters’ and play in the evening, starting from 8 p.m., for three or even four hours. On the Saturday, the eve of the *fešta* (*lejlet il-fešta* or *lejliħa*), the marching and playing goes on all day (Pl. 8).

Sound

The banda, the każin and the repertoire

As already mentioned, the presence of the *banda* is fundamental to the celebration. The *banda* belongs to a *każin*, a sort of music-

social 'club'. In Malta every village has a *każin*, a musical club, sometimes two or three *każini*, each having its own patron saint, its own feast and its supporters. Where two clubs exist they are rivals.³ Thus every village has at least one *banda*, sometimes two, rarely three. Each *banda* is composed of about 50 musicians, men and some women, a bandmaster and his assistant. The *każin* has a solid organisation, a statute with an internal legal structure, a flag, colours, and, of course, a musical anthem. It has above all a fundamental function of musical education in the village. For example, it is in the *każin* that youth and children can, from their early years, learn music with qualified teachers at very low fees. But the *każin* also has a socio-cultural recreational role that no villager can underestimate. It is a strategic place of meeting in the village that anyone can accede to, to spend a moment of relaxation and recreation, have a drink or play cards.

The repertoire executed by the *banda* in the streets during the *fešta* consists of hymns, popular songs, and, above all, marches (*marċi*). This music, and especially the marches, is very popular. Several are composed by Maltese composers, or by former masters of the *banda*.⁴

What we can observe is that all this music is *written* music. The *banda* play music which is executed off the *score*. Indeed the score is a valuable instrument for the celebrations because it allows for this music to be played; it has



The *banda Mater Gratiae*, marching in the street of the village of Żabbar, during the *fešta*.
© Giovanna Iacovazzi

³ An interesting study of division between the supporters of rival band clubs is given Boissevain 1965 (see chapter 'Festa Partiti').

⁴ For example, the *Ave Maria*, is by the Maltese composer Pacifico Scicluna, which is also the anthem (*innu*) of the *Banda Madonna tal-Grazzja*.

also to be known and recognized from one year to another. It also allows *fixing* and transmitting a repertoire that the *Žabbarin* themselves consider as *traditional*. As a matter of fact, it is a repertoire which is transmitted (in writing), and often, replayed by different generations. It is played in a particular context – that of a *paraliturgical* celebration, considered by the same *Žabbarin* as one of the most ‘traditional’ *festi* on the island, a celebration which has existed since the nineteenth century.

Music, ritual and meaning

The music also has a role from an *entertaining* and social point of view not only for the musicians, but also for the villagers who meet during these two weeks to share spaces, follow the bands and spend time together. It is indeed a long time!

On the other hand, if we try to give a perspective to music in its relationship to the paraliturgical celebration, we see that it underlines the different moments of the ritual in its different steps and, thus, gives rhythm to the ritual. Through the *banda* the times and spaces of the ritual are defined and redefined. Music enters the celebration, by supporting the liturgical celebrations, but soon, in the days following, and during the whole celebration period, it moves towards the streets into an environment which we might as well define ‘profane’. Although it is situated outside the ‘sacred’ place, this music is part and parcel of this same celebration. It is ‘not constituting the ritual,’ but it ‘can find a place in it’ (Picard 1999: 31) and support it.

By doing so, it does not simply *support* the celebration, it is not simply a *function* of the celebration. We cannot in this festive musical context speak of ‘accompaniment’. Here music is much more than that: it actually *structures* the ritual. Played for hours and days, it gives a rhythm to the ritual, which ritual will only take place on the Sunday with the final procession. During these two weeks it punctuates the life of the village, it organises the time of the celebrations, it gives a rhythm to the days preceding and preparing the celebrations. It ends up by becoming a real *temporal support* to the village, as a clock would be, since villagers know that they can keep their appointment and meet at a particular time around the *banda*. Thus, the time of music nearly ends up by coinciding with the time of the ritual.

Yet, if the music puts rhythm into the ritual, if it marks the time of the ritual, and consequently, it helps giving an *order* to the celebration, it participates at the same time to its *transgression*. It allows a *break* in the social ordinary life, a rupture in the villagers' socially accepted standards. Thanks to music, conflicts can show up. The time of music becomes the privileged time in the celebration to express rivalries. The two band clubs and their supporters are an example. At the same time, if music allows antagonism to be freely expressed, it also makes it possible for the same conflicts to be *given a direction*, to get organised, within defined standards, highly codified musical practices, stressed by a precise time and in a ritual frame.

On the other hand their music organises the spaces and it defines them. Throughout the two weeks the two *baned*, alternating their marches and going through different parts of the village, define the partition of the villagers' space. Their music establishes limits, right-hand side (*Tal-Bicćieni*), left-hand side (*Il-Misraħ*). It dictates borders not to be crossed. With music the village spaces cross over each other and become interdependent and music is at the centre of these tensions and rivalries.

Thus, we can say that music is, all along the celebrations of *Santa Maria Mater Gratiae*, a powerful *marker* of the space of time and of the local rivalries. It appears to be, in a way, indispensable to the celebrations. The villagers do know it, and they have their own words to express it, as when they say that 'If there is no music, there is no *fešta*!' A good example of this musical 'necessity' was given to me last year when, after the street fights and disputes between the supporters of the two *baned*, the first thing which the police forbade on the next day was precisely the music. In 2005 the celebrations of the *fešta* will not take place.

Thus, through and its symbolic language 'something happens', beyond words, beyond speech, since, as Denis Constant Martin says, music gives access to the musical codes allowing us to understand things on a field which is beyond that of words.⁵

⁵ Personal communication during the '*Journées d'automne de la Société Française d'Ethnomusicologie*' (Paris, 4th December, 2004).

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Ritual and Drama in Malta's Past Carnival*

The aim of this paper is to describe and analyse a seasonal drama practice in Malta and Gozo within certain restrictive parameters. I'm fully aware that the old dramatic text presented is but a small part of the performance. Today it is impossible to decipher the extent of its existence as a provisional text. Or it is possible to speak of the other parts of the dramatic form beyond the text, namely: improvisation and the development of the performance affected by the spontaneous decisions of the actors, movement, music, the simultaneity of production and communication, the ephemeral and unrepeatable nature of the work understood as event and action, and the amount of non-dramatic activity alongside the drama per se.

With reference to carnival celebrations in contemporary Xaghra-Gozo, Vicki Ann Cremona (1995: 76, 78-79) comments: 'Carnival in [Nazarene Church] square revolved around one main event, the [kummit'ti:va] (*kummittiva*), consisting of a highly structured series of folk dances, and a farce.'¹ This last word is qualified in an interesting footnote:

The subject matter of the farce is usually either about marriage or cuckoldry, with mock trials or notarial deeds drawn up to the wife's disadvantage. Another common theme is surgical operations, and animal intestines, liver or heart are 'extracted' from the patient. In Italy, these farces usually mark the death of Carnival... (Cremona 1995: 91 n. 14)

* The author acknowledges the support offered to him by Mr Philip Borg, head of the Malta Public Library, Valletta. He is also indebted to Maltese historian Dr Frans Ciappara who worked for hours with him in an attempt to read through the original mss.

¹ See also, Borg-Cardona 2002: 27-28.

In spite of giant steps in technology as well as development in Maltese modern drama, live farcical folk drama is still popular entertainment in Malta with the lower classes, though not as vastly popular as in past times. Adopting Steve Tillis's definition of folk drama (1999: 195), I would say that the Maltese ritual [il'ar'tfilla] (*Il-Qarçilla*) has 'separate but present performers and audience, enactment over time and space using practices of design, movement, and speech, and, most important of all, a dramatic frame of make-believe action.' Here, make-believe means pretending the performance is real, and not just accepting the reality of the performance. The occasions of their performances are limited to noteworthy events and the impromptu situations and venues are not regulated – venues for *Il-Qarçilla* are outside in the street. The core audiences are found in the villages.

Due to cultural myopia, folk drama in Malta has received sporadic discussion over the years in the scholarship of Maltese folklore and drama.² The only notable exception is veteran Maltese folklorist Joseph Cassar-Pullicino. The same themes are to be found till the late 1960s and thereafter in various areas in Malta, including my native village Qormi and its outlying villages, including Żebbuġ, Siggiewi and Marsa.³

Since mediaeval times Carnival has always been accompanied by parades, masquerades, pageants, and other forms of revelry recalling pre-Christian pagan rites, particularly fertility rites. In Malta Carnival has been celebrated since at least the 15th century, coinciding with Europe's carnivals which reached their peak during

² For this lack of interest in folk drama as a popular research area in folkloristics in general, see, Bendix 1989: 147-149.

³ Lanfranco 2001: 207 confirms the existence of this folk drama, but does not specify locality: '*Kienu jimitaw xi tabib qed idewwi, xi avukat jiddefendi jew jakkuza lil xi hadd, xi mara jew raġel jigġieldu bil-kliem, jimitaw xi karattru magħruf fil-post, jew jilbsu ta' xi haġa li hadd ma jaf x'kienet. Dan kollu minbarra li kienu joqogħdu jissuttaw b'kulma jsibu taht idejhom. Hafna kienu johorġu jdoqqu ż-żaqq u t-tanbur biex ikomplu jallegraw il-festa.*' [Trans. 'They used to play the role of a doctor curing a patient or a lawyer defending a client or accusing an opponent, a man and woman parrying words, imitating some prominent local person, or putting on some unrecognisable garb. Besides, they used to pelt onlookers with whatever came to hand. Many folk musicians would play the [Maltese] bagpipe and drum to further enliven the atmosphere.']

the 14th and 15th centuries (Fiorini, 1987, Cremona 1995: 68-69). Later centuries also evince the popularity of a rustic Carnival folk drama, known as '*Il-Qarçilla*' with the lower classes.

Unfortunately we have no visual or audio documentary of the dramatic ritual grounded in the Maltese reality to define the appropriate context of any performance situation, texts-in-action, the extent the text served as a guide for the performance, practices of design, movement, speech, music, and other practices that take place within a frame of make-believe action shared by the performers and audience in the more general context of Maltese culture. One must not sweep away contextualism and the performer-audience relationship in relation to the concept of framing.⁴

With one fragmentary exception,⁵ no thick, incisive description is made of troupe/s of village amateurs as the primary audience for their performance, parading through village streets with an intentional communicative action, calling attention to the mounting of the impersonation and performance that was soon to take place, and no doubt gathering a substantial audience in its wake, audience participation and its loud repartee to every crude comment. Impersonation,⁶ is common to two folk drama events, *Il-Qarçilla* and [il'a'riŋza] (*il-Qarinza*; Cassar-Pullicino 1945; Vassalli 1796: 406-407). Actors appear before members of their own community, creating a constant juxtaposition of their fictitious and mundane role.

Defining *Il-Qarçilla*

The word [ˈarˈtʃilla] (*qarçilla*) refers to the whole folk drama celebration of a knockabout farce, including the pastry bride within the same ritual during Carnival and the person masked to represent

⁴ In his definition of the concept of framing, Tillis (1999: 85) remarks: '... the dramatic frame itself, in its broadest sense, is predicated simply on the establishment of a sense of otherness for the performance, of an elsewhere and an elsewhen.' Theoretically he also separates 'the framed drama (the action) from the framing of the drama (the communicated and accepted agreement to make-believe)' (1999: 84).

⁵ See, n. 7, below.

⁶ Cf. impersonation in folktales by 'a very small number of active bearers of tradition' (von Sydow 1965: 231).

the bride – consider that female actors participated in Maltese folk drama only since the first half of the 19th century, and in some villages since the beginning of the 1960s. This masking as a representation is the essence of drama once it includes dramatic performance. We do not know, however, if conventional semiotic device or direct imitation of women's overt gender markings such as sexual characteristics, voice patterns, characteristic movement, and gesture, were used.

Action and its interlocking events, mime and mask play their functional part in *Il-Qarcilla*. There is an old description, dating to the second half of the eighteenth century, recorded in an unpublished dictionary *Damma tal Kliem Kartaginis mscerred fel fom tal Maltin u Ghaucin* [A Collection of Punic Words as Spoken by the Maltese and Gozitans, 1750] written by Gozitan Canon Giovanni Francesco Agius de Soldanis (1712-1770). The manuscript is to be found in the Malta Public Library in Valletta.

This game by country people takes place during Carnival, similar to that of the Gentiles A sweet pastry bride doll is made to the height of three or four palms, beautifully adorned with fine clothes. It is placed in a small basket and poised on the head of a masked man carrying a round cake (*M. kollura*) in his hand and accompanied by the rabble. Of these some play rustic instruments, others dance or sing; then, when they have gone round the village, they stop at street corners and it is customary for one of them to mimic the manners of a notary, reading in public burlesque marriage inventory set in Maltese rhyme, in favour of the pastry bride After much wandering, idle talk and nonsense characteristic of Carnival, the pastry bride is eaten and the *Qarcilla* comes to an end with the people getting drunk with wine (287 r-v).⁷

⁷ Original: 'Giuoco di gente contadina che usasi in Carnevale, ed è figura di un altro scenico degli antichi Gentili ... Si forma una sposa di pasta dell'altezza di tre o quattro palmi in circa, ben ornata e vestita. Vi si pone dentro un cestello, il quale vien posto sul capo d'un mascherato con in mano una grande collura o cerchio di pasta pura; costui viene accompagnato da un popolaccio, tra questi chi suona, chi balla, chi canta, quindi dopo un gran giro fatto per le pubbliche vie, si ferma ne' cantoni delle stesse strade e chi la fa da notaio leggendo un giocoso ed inventivo atto matrimoniale a favore della sposa ivi collocata di pasta a vista di tutti formato in rima maltese, burlesco e ridicolo, e chi prende altro giocoso uffizio, dopo vari giri, molte ciarle, più cicalate carnavalesche, si mangia la stessa sposa di pasta, indi ubbriacati col vino, si da fine al giuoco della Karcilla.'

Here the burlesque Carnival play includes the arrangement of overlapping multiple texts over the performance: verbal and/or musical and/or mimic and/or movement texts are invoked simultaneously, taking the mock-wedding plot from everyday life. It is satirical, imitating the peculiarities of individuals or groups, of funny and strange behaviour. It is a mixture of obscenities and satirical dialogues. The foreknown resolution – devouring the sweet pastry bride and general drunkenness – also sets a role for the audience.

According to Cassar Pullicino (1945: 303), ‘by the middle of the 19th century ... [this drama] was probably in disuse and foreign writers on Malta of a century ago make no allusion whatsoever to this Carnival pastime.’ Nine years later the same author remarks that the ritual had reached its apex in Malta by mid-eighteenth century (1954: 100). Yet oral tradition makes various references to this ‘notarial drama,’ as it is sometimes termed. Cassar-Pullicino himself (1945: 303) in the same article concludes:

... [O]f the old rustic ceremonies nothing remains but a few faint survivals ... the burlesque figure of a man dressed up in a notary’s clothes that is still seen about in the streets representing King Carnival.

In the 1976 edition Cassar-Pullicino (1992: 50) recalls the *Qarçilla* folk drama in post-war Malta:

A man dressed up as a Notary Public could be seen every year in Merchants Street, and in Kingsway (now Republic Street), purporting to read a register with which he occasionally shielded his face from all sorts of objects thrown at him by the bystanders or by his retinue of children and adult merrymakers.

From mid-eighteenth century down to 1798 when Malta was under the rule of the Knights of the Order of St John, revelry was part of daily life (Cassar-Pullicino 1975: 138)⁸ much as it was in

⁸ Original: ‘Irrid ngħid għall-festi li kienu jagħmlu l-Kavallieri sa mill-bidu nett li ġew Malta. Il-Kavallieri kienu nies li jistgħu, u kellhom mnejn iħallsu l-ispejjeż. Kienu fuq kollox nies li jħobbu juru ruħhom u jafu jorganizzaw spettakoli sbieħ f’kull okkażjoni li kienet tinqala’ – daqqa għax intgħażel Gran Mastru ġdid, ohra għax is-Sultan tela’ l-Imdina biex jieħu ċ-ċwieviet tal-Belt u hemm jaħlef li jżomm id-drittijiet tal-Maltin, issa għax ir-Re ta’ Franza tweldditlu tarbija, daqqa għax ġiet

other European countries. We can produce excerpts by reliable eighteenth century Maltese writers documenting that feasts were purposely celebrated during the time, on direct orders by the Grand Masters,⁹ lasting throughout the whole night! (Cassar-Pullicino 1975: 138)¹⁰

Parallel to this folk drama and contemporary with it, there was a processional marriage ritual, where another '*qarcilla*' featured. In Count Giovanni Antonio Ciantar's edition of Abela's history which he entitled *Malta Illustrata* (1772), he recalls that

[o]n the wedding day the most respectable relatives or guests of the wedding couple would place a flimsy and transparent veil on the face of a richly dressed and bejeweled bride. It was then the custom to make cuts in the women's dresses, however new and

il-festa ta' San Gwann, patrūn tagħhom, u oħra għax ħabat ċentinarju ta' l-Assedju l-Kbir. U kull darba kienet okkażjoni ta' festa, armar, loġħob tan-nar u mixegħla. [Trans.: 'I'm referring to the feasts the Knights used to celebrate from the very beginning of their arrival in Malta. The knights could afford to pay the expenses incurred by feasts which they celebrated since they first set foot in the Maltese islands. They were ostentatious and able organizers of such celebrations, not missing any opportunity for such feasts – the election of the Grand Master, taking possession of the keys of Mdina, the birth of a child to the French king, the feast of St John, their patron, and the centenary of the Great Siege. Every time it was an occasion for celebrations, decorations, fireworks, and illuminations.']

⁹ See, Pietru Pawl Castagna, *Il-Mużika fil-Knejjes Tagħna* [Music in Our Churches], vol. 3: 238 as quoted in Cassar-Pullicino 1975: 139: '*Il-Banda ... fil-proċessjoni bdiet fis-sena ... 1777, bl-impenn tal-Gran Mastru De Rohan, allurmeta pproġetta u ordna illi l-festi tal-knejjes għandhom isiru bl-akbar pompa tant ġewwa kemm barra, sabiex il-poplu jallegra ruħu u jkollu fiex jedha u hekk ma joqgħodx jippilla u jehodha mal-Gvern u ma' l-impjegati tiegħu.*' [Trans. 'Bands ... during processions began in 1777, Grand Master De Rohan taking it upon himself to order church feasts to be celebrated with great pomp internally and externally, to keep the people happy and alienated from fault picking with the Government and its employees.']

¹⁰ Originali: '*Fl-1752 il-Konti Ciantar isemmi li għall-festa ta' San Lawrenz [il-Birgu] kienu nġabru ħafna nies fejn l-imħażen ta' Pinto, li kienu għadhom kif tlestew, biex jaraw il-mixegħla tal-faċċata tagħhom; u kien hemm daqq helu li baqa' sejjer il-lejl kollu, waqt li l-għonja u nies oħra resqu fuq id-dgħajjes mal-moll biex jaraw u jgawdu dik id-dehra sabiħa.*' [Trans. 'In 1752 Count Ciantar mentions that on the occasion of the feast of St Laurence [in Birgu] crowds of people gathered at Pinto Wharf which had just been completed to watch the illumination on the opposite side and there was sweet music throughout the night while the rich people and others were rowed to the opposite bank to watch and enjoy the beautiful scene.']

costly, to attach in each cut a tiny gold seashell. They also used to wear certain dresses of embroidered velvet in floral designs, arabesque, almost like ecclesiastical cloaks, and we have seen several of them. The most used materials were gold or silver brocade which they called *lamé*. So outfitted, the veiled bride left the house accompanied by her retinue and guests, in Maltese known as *haddara*. Together with the bridegroom they set out to church under a canopy held by four of the closest guests called *Compari del baldacchino*. This was a canopy kept on purpose for use by new couples.... The bridal couple was preceded by violinists and guitarists who stopped regularly to sing a rhymed quatrain in Maltese in praise of the bride or bridegroom. They were also preceded by three other men, one of whom carried a bowl full of well-made sweets, attractively displayed and decorated with ribbons or with a round flat cake called *qarcilla*, with two figures on top representing the bride and bridegroom, which bowl was made of clay with white glaze with yellow arabesques. Another who carried it held a large *ciambella* (here called *collura*, in Sicily *buccalato*), held by a sash slung over his left shoulder down to his right side, which then belonged to him. The other carried a tray with the nuptial handkerchief in the form of a tower or a pyramid or dome with the figure of St Joseph, or Baby Jesus, or Our Lady on top. (1772: 771-773)¹¹

¹¹ Original: *‘Giunto il giorno, e l’ora dello spozalizio, il più rispettabile tra congiunti degli sposi, o tra gl’invitati alle nozze, poneva un velo sottile, e trasparente sul volto della sposa, riccamente vestita, e adorna di gioje, ed ori. Allora usavasi dalle persone di condizione di frappare le vesti donnesche, quantunque nuove, e preziosi, ed ad ogni taglio collocarvi una piccolo conchiglia d’oro. Si usavano pure certe vesti, o sottanini di velluto lavorato a minuti fiori, e rabeschi, simili quasi alle zimarre degli Ecclesiastici; e noi ne abbiamo veduto qualcheduna. Tra i drappi i più usati erano le tele d’oro, o d’argento, da loro chiamate lame. In tal guisa adornata, e vellata la sposa sen [sic] usciva di casa accompagnata da congiunti suoi, e delle persone invitate a quella funzione, dette in lingua Maltese Haddàra, ed insieme collo sposo si conducea alla Chiesa sotto un baldacchino, portato da quattro de’ più ragguardevoli fra gl’invitati, detti Compari del baldacchino. Era questo baldacchino fatto apposta per uso degli sposi novella Avanti a loro giovano [sic] alcuni suonatori di violino, e di chitarra, che ad ogni passo si fermavano, e cantavano una canzoncina in lingua Maltese colle rime in lode or della sposa, ed or dello sposo. Vi precedevano pure tre altri uomini: uno de’ quali portava un bacino pieno di pagnotte delicate, e ben fatte, con buon ordine disposte, e adorne di varie banderuole, o con una focaccia, da loro detta carcilla con due figurine di sopra, rappresentanti lo sposo, e la sposa: il qual bacino era di creta con vernice bianca con arabeschi di color giallo. Colui, che lo portava, teneva appesa con una fascia dalla spalla sinistra*

Would one suggest that through ecclesiastical influence the same term was used to refer to the two small sweet figurines placed on the wedding cake or to the cake itself? Or was it a transference of meaning from the former primitive improvised dramatic ritual to the passive, church dominated ritual procession, known to locals as [‘djilwa] (*‘gilwa’*), which was condemned and stopped by Church orders in mid-19th century?¹²

According to Cassar-Pullicino (1992: 50), the *Qarcilla* folk drama has three elements typical of the genre:

the scenic act represented at each street corner, some rudimentary action – the man carrying the bride, the Notary reading out the contract, etc., and the cutting up, i.e. the sacrifice, of the bride... There was also a ritual element

What is fascinating in the history of the *Qarcilla* folk drama in Malta is that the humorous, burlesque, irreverent lines – Cassar-Pullicino censors substantially long excerpts of the text in his second study (1954: 102)¹³ and later reprints with additions (Cassar-Pullicino 1962: 93; 1988: 3-5, 23) – which were so popular in De Soldanis’ times and the nineteenth century, were written by Felic’ Demarco, surprisingly a priest born in Bormla, around 1713! (Cassar-Pullicino 1954: 101, 1992: 50) We are not informed whether Demarco played some part in the direction of any folk actors performing his script. To date we can only speak of his controlling presence – in the widest of meanings – through the text of a literate outsider amid the performing group. It seems safe to assume that the audience was constantly shifting, according to the place chosen by the wandering troupe. Dramatic action was conveyed by means of a combination of

al fianco destro una gran ciambella, qui detta collora, ed in Sicilia buccalato, che toccava a lui. L’altro portava un canestro col fazzoletto nozziale disposto in forma di torre, o di piramide, o cupola colla figura in cima di S. Giuseppe, o del S. Bambino, o della Vergine Madre.’

¹² According to Cassar-Pullicino 1945: 303, Luigi Bonelli, who took to some fieldwork research in Malta in 1894, remarks in his ‘Il dialetto maltese,’ *Archivio Glottologico Italiano*, Torino, 1897, Dispensa IV, Vi, VII, VIII, ‘... il costume ... è cessato da una cinquantina d’anni, per divieto dell’autorità ecclesiastica.’

¹³ Here Cassar-Pullicino repeatedly and cursorily observes unreservedly: ‘... *il-versi huma mimlija çajt goff, u hafna minnhom m’humix xierqa li jidhru stampati ...*’ [Trans.: ‘... the lines are full of abusive words and most of them are not worthy of publication’].

narrative, indirect and direct dialogue, and descriptions. Textual evidence of the 'notary's inventory of the dowry suggests that the drama has always had significant comic elements, inspiring improvised dramatic action by the performers. But we do not know about any improvisational interaction with the audience, although Green (1978: 846) contends that 'audiences at folk performances are rarely truly inactive.' Many variants were later prepared or improvised by the different 'notaries', to such an extent that a contemporary (RML 143D) remarks:

... the carnivalesque notary reads the matrimonial contract in favour of the bride, there in everybody's presence, in burlesque Maltese rhyme, as it variously makes the round with these Carnival notaries ...¹⁴

Sociological drama

The *Qarçilla* as folk drama aims at more than entertainment. It is a sociological play, presented expressly with instrumental aims: it has effective connection and deals with the daily lives of the actors and audience. It is Carnival and the context accounts for the community's right to eliminate temporarily all differences and hierarchical barriers among individuals, abolishing taboos that prevail in real life and creating a particular type of communication impossible in everyday life being situated at a symbolic level. It expresses its concerns about and attitudes to life in a way that escapes censorship. The repetitive use of symbolic inversion, deviations from and transgression of normal patterns of behaviour, double meaning, crude, blunt vulgarity, overturning of sexual taboos and references to the lower bodily stratum,¹⁵ symbolic equivalence between carnival devices (e.g., cucumber/pig's phallus), and meta-

¹⁴ Original: '[il] notaio carnevalesco legge l'atto matrimoniale a favore della sposa ivi collocata a vista di tutti, formato in rima maltese, burlesco e ridicolo, che in più maniere gira per la mano di questi notai di Carnevale ...' (my emphasis)
For other details on this mss., see, Cassar-Pullicino 1954: 101 n. 3.

¹⁵ According to Tokofsky (1995: 459), 'Bakhtin instructs us that the lower bodily stratum plays a central role in carnivalesque imagery and should thus be subject to manipulation.'

dramatic pointed barbs as direct offence to the audience with various boisterous sexual connotations and rounds of insults – these are all examples of a community observing, chastising, and laughing at itself.

The verse structure is simple, generally in rhyming couplets, allowing for the most straightforward conveyance of meaning for inhabitants of the Maltese rustic context of the eighteenth century. However, this simplicity conceals reality which is simultaneously ignored and destroyed by the usual social norms. The *Qarçilla* bride's shape as the presumed protagonist of the play is torn apart erotically and snatched mercilessly and completely by the actors. Here lies the annihilation of the 'bride'. But in her annihilation, through comic and bawdy manoeuvres, there is the regeneration and life of the actors and the audience. The real protagonist and hero is time. Life and death are integrated with each other. The abuse reflects the destruction of the old world, and in the laughter and farce that take place simultaneously the seed of new life is sown, conceiving the new world. The more the abuse grows and thickens the more grows the 'womb' to give birth to the new.

Consequently, the marriage is fictitious, but so is there the other symbolic level. According to Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895-1975) in his masterpiece *Rabelais and His World* [1965],

... [A] reference to the bodily lower stratum, the zone of the genital organs ... signifies destruction, a grave for the one who is debased. But such debasing gestures and expressions are ambivalent, since the lower stratum is not only a bodily grave but also the area of the genital organs, the fertilizing and generating stratum. Therefore, in the images of urine and excrement is preserved the essential link with birth, fertility, renewal, welfare. (1984: 148; see also, 435)¹⁶

This makes even more sense when one remembers that these images were a *raison d'être* of the Maltese Carnival during which time the play was performed. The comic play represents the death of the old world and the birth of the new one. Every scene, even in isolation, as in the case of some of Demarco's lines, is still ambivalent, linked closely to life-death-birth. Since that little something else

¹⁶ See also, Tokofsky 1995: 459.

must be said, the references to pregnancy, illness, sexual excesses and so on make much sense. As in the past, in some cases doctors still make diagnosis from samples of urine.

In our text there is laughter, comic and farce which link the ambivalent aspects together. Words which are nowadays considered cheap and vulgar were the cue for the actors and audience to speak unreservedly and openly about their world to call a spade a spade without psychological restrictions, euphemisms, beating about the bush, and not playing hide and seek. During Carnival, people become a big family, share the same world of laughter and disguises, without restrictions and hierarchies, surrounded by the reality of relativity in the presumed truth and the establishment. Thus the mistrust in the official truth and power which is strangling them, as much as hope in their ideals. The *Qarçilla* is the people's celebration for the people. Even the symbolic references to food, such as sausages, pancakes (M. [ka'va:ti], *kavati*),¹⁷ flat bread (M. [f'ti:ra], [f'taiyar], *ftira / ftajjar*),¹⁸ the *Qarçilla* itself in the basket, and public beating emphasize the life-death-birth theme. All the people make fun of the bridegroom and bride though the symbol of uprightness and family unity, everyone ridicules them through physical and moral abuse, with the insistence of the bridal couple itself on unrestrained sexuality; and so ensues the metamorphosis such as disguises behind masks, beating, the body torn apart and later snatched by the actors, and their own total drunkenness. So everyone's socially and sexually unbarred reality appears. The past with all its fears is pushed aside and people celebrate in readiness to challenge their future world. Death is being conquered by means of food, drink and laughter.

Grotesque realism involving the human body dominates the whole play indeed, as happens in the whole comic genre of folklore of other European peoples. Most striking of all is the human body's power of procreation and conception, giving birth and being born, bodily functions and emanating noises, falling ill and dying. In the text, as in colloquial Maltese, expressions involve our sexual organs, belly, buttocks, mouth and nose and all their functions, such as

¹⁷ Pastry sweets covered with honey.

¹⁸ Disc-like flat, round bread.

Jem ukiel għenja f'ha kemmha nra thamel uel jimen
 min iakt minha isrieh in iuen taen
 Jem ukiel edhocar taha midu mienae il thibir
 kalies taetku minha jthayia ma leil iarga jsi.
 Jem ukiel għenja f'ha kemmha tas ta seieh el Caha f'ha
 imen u isrieh
 Jem ukiel mibnija ta dolhietu, ma f'ha la kaxx u
 larey biebta

Explicit sexual references connoted by the word 'dukkar', lit. 'impregnator'.

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man's first sexual step being associated with the 'cupboard,' like the sexual act itself – once associated with figs and with what happens to the man after the act, with food, faeces, the chamber pot, and blowing one's nose. For example,

- 1 *Item ukill taghmillu patt*
 Illi ma ghandux jaghtiha fastidju ghar-ruzarju
 Qabel igibilha xi haga minn gewwa l-armarju.

Lit. Item she would also lay a condition
 he shouldn't taunt her to say the Rosary
 before he gets her something out of the cupboard.

This is what 'the notary' has to say when he talks about the field:

- 2 *Item ukill id-dukkar taghha tridu minn dak il-kbir*
 Ghaliex taqtghu minnha filghaxija mal-lejl jarga' jsir.

Lit. Item she also wants his tool to be of the biggest
 to be able to make love a second time during the night.

For the field worker [duk'ka:r] ('dukkar', lit. 'impregnator') is a fleshy fruit which is inedible but is hung on the branches of the fig tree near its small fruit to capricitate figs, [it'ti:n] ('it-tin'). The sexual

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Jem uehil shamilla par illi ilhanja kien seumien
 u minicwara jira korbja Vidneha nawn. Kja jicith
 l'ol kmar. V halca nija diko u ghdumta phat
 tal kargi. Imnicwara jax l'indina li' jecia kiam
 lila zira. Vuel min jgi izusta tohro: rldu u
 fahlu gema il chicina. V kaineika zina fu il kad:
 den min huada kammia uorra, u mil tohro ma
 tara uien.

Comparison between characteristics of beast (donkey, pig) and man as a means of creating the grotesque. Bride's grotesque nose is also mentioned, thus carrying a phallic symbol.

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connotation is elementary for the Maltese, much more if one remembers the words 'it-tin / it-tina / tintu / tintha / tinti / tintek' (lit. figs/a fig or fig tree/his, her, my, your bottom) as a popular symbol of man's backside as well as animals' in Maltese culture. Suffice it to mention the references to these proverbs collected during my direct research:

- 3 Il-wiċċ u t-tina ma jsirux bl-ilbies u ż-zina.
Lit. Clothes and ornaments do not make the face and the buttocks.
- 4 La kull tina, tina u la kull qargħa qargħa.
Lit. Not every fig is a fig, and not every pumpkin is a pumpkin.
- 5 Ras bla hsieb tina bla garab.
Lit. Carefree head, scabless buttocks.
- 6 Ghonq bla ras, tina bla toqba, u tifla bla misthija la fihom hajr u la hotba.
Lit. A neck without a head, a buttocks without a hole and a girl without shame are not worth admiring or marrying.

- 7 Li kiek u x-xuxa zina ma tinbetx f'xaqqet it-tina.
Lit. If hair were an ornament, it would not grow in the slit of one's buttocks.
- 8 San Martinek tajjeb; aghmel hiltex; (*twegiba*) biex il-lant ikunlek tajjeb.
Lit. A happy St Martin to you; do your best (*reply*) so that your business may prosper.

Two of the proverbs (nn. 6-7) are based on this symbolic meaning and another (n. 8) is enigmatic being loaded with a density of meaning, the latter in particular as a result of the open transition phoneme [sammar'ti: n] (*San Martin*, St Martin) and [‘sammar + ti:nek] for the sexual act with man’s sexual tool associated with the nail.¹⁹ Here is a good example of there being no difference for the folk between the two levels of meaning, the profane and the holy. Thus in the text ‘the notary’ means that the bride wants the man’s sexual tool to be of the biggest so as to have intercourse with him for a second time at night.

The comparison between some of the characteristics of beast and man is of the oldest means of creating the grotesque – here ‘*siequ l-quddemija* / [*li*] *fiha n-nemmilija*’ (*lit.* the front leg tickles him, n. 10) and the bride’s grotesque nose (n. 11) also carries a phallic symbol!

- 9 Inwejza ... habet naturam bhāl tal-baqra...
Lit. Inwejza ... has a physique like a cow’s ...
- 10 ... tagħtih nofs il-ħmar,
 Waqt [?] li kien artab kien il-hajja tad-dar.
 U għandu siequ l-quddemija
 Fiha n-nemmilija, u tan-nofs bewwelija
 U l-għarus Żejpu tibqaghlu l-warranija.
 ... she would give him part use of the ass,
 although [?] he was lazy he was the soul of the household.
 His front leg
 tickles him, and the middle one for pissing
 and what bridegroom Joey has left is his hind limb.

¹⁹ As remarked by Aquilina 1972: 584, ‘[in] the first part ... [there is] the play on the word *San Martinek* which, in quick continuous speech, may be heard as *sammar tinek* ‘nail your buttocks’’

- 11 Widnejha naqra kbar
Jixbhu lil tal-ħmar.
U ħalqha nitfa kbir
U geddumha bħal tal-ħanzir.
Imnehirha daqs l-Imdina
Li f'wicħha jagħmlilha żina.
U kull min jiġi jżurha
Toħroġ tilqgħu u ddaħħlu ġewwa l-kċina.

Lit. Her ears are somewhat large
like a donkey's.

And her mouth is a little large
and her chin is like a pig's.

Her nose as large as Mdina²⁰
and it improves her looks.

And she goes out to welcome whoever visits her
and lets him into the kitchen.

Instead of beasts, plants, fruit or trees may be mentioned or implied (n. 2). And even further when the three are connoted together so that the meaning keeps changing semantic levels throughout.

- 12 U tinkaram wisq għall-ħjar
Għaliex tmut għal nebula tal-majjal.
U fi mnihirkom Sinj[ur]i
Li tisimghuni zobb ta' ħmar.
U insomma ma tbatix mill-aptit
Għaliex il-għarus iġibilha ftit.

Lit. Her wantonness for cucumbers
and a pig's penis is evident.

Ladies and gentlemen who are listening to me
get your nose fucked by an ass.

She does not lack an appetite

As the bridegroom arouses her somewhat.

- 13 *Item* ukill ... mitraħ tas-suf ta' l-għelieqi
Biex fuqu l-għarus jagħmel il-kerciehi.

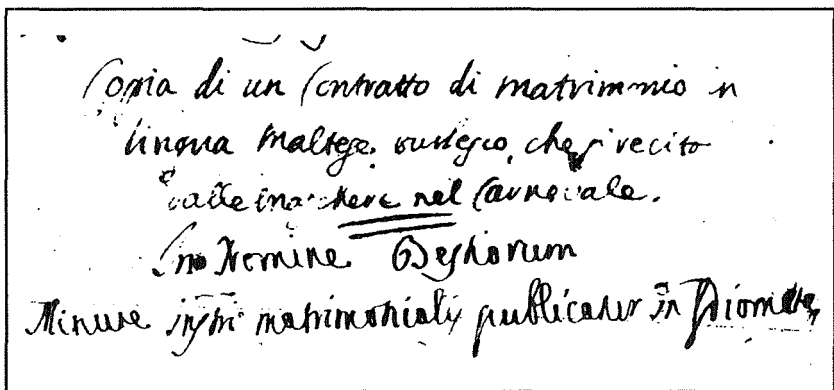
Lit. Item ... also a mattress of wool used in villages
so that on it the bridegroom makes orgasm.

²⁰ The old capital city of Malta.

The core of the meaning in n. 13 lies in the proverbial phrase [ˈya:mɛl ilkerˈtʃi:hi] (*jagħmel il-kerċieħi*). Basically [ˈkɛrtʃaħ] (*kerċaħ*) shows someone walking with effort, bending on one side and then another because he is in pain, or because his legs are weak or his body is a dead weight or shivering with cold. Moreover, there is its literal and metaphorical meaning which is still strong among country folk as explained by Aquilina in his dictionary (1987: 643) according to information given by Ċensu Mifsud-Bonnici, viz. when fruit and tomatoes do not grow because of very cold weather; also according to Mifsud-Bonnici (Aquilina 1987: 643), [kerˈtʃuoh] (*kerċuħ*) is a sickly looking person or a chick which is below average. The meaning in the text is still in use and refers to the shape of man's genitals after the sexual act and ejaculation.

Final Comments

It seems also safe to conclude that the sudden involvement of the audience excited much raucous laughter at the bucolic fantasy of some of the performers' lines written in declamatory style, as well as substantial embarrassment for the upper classes, represented by the 'notary,' at the ludic representation of the community's institutions, including the parody of them aiming at social criticism and transformation. The most hilarious laughter comes closest to the point where the joke is indeed taken too far. It draws upon



The opening frame of the folk play.

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comic, figurative material already in a long-standing tradition in mid-eighteenth century and a good number of examples are still popular in contemporary Malta, including bombastic idioms, butts of humourous expressions, and proverbs. The various legal terms in the text betray Demarco's considerably learned hand, though his text is nothing less than a distillation of the Maltese worldview at the time.

The text's legal terminology and the use of Latin show Demarco's literate mind. The significance of names in the text is that they are functional descriptions. Notary Pierotti Agrighentino '*quello che non beve puoco vino*' [he who drinks no small amount of wine] is the presenter who literally 'presents' annually the performance and occasionally engages in dialogue with his audience. The opening frame is separated from the drama proper by the employment of this meta-theatrical figure, promising '*Copia di un Contratto di matrimonio in lingua maltese, burlesco, che si recita dalle maschere nel Carnevale*' (Mifsud 412) [Copy of a Marriage Contract in burlesque Maltese, which is recited by the masks in Carnival]. The folk play was held outdoors during Carnival in popular locales to work up decent audiences. The performers were all men and understandably so because of the closed society at the time and the instances of obscenity, and off-colour remarks: they laughed at their own world, with all its foolishness and foibles comically exaggerated. Contemporary comments on this folk drama imply the existence of various troupes on the island and they were led by particular individuals as still happens in the Nadur Carnival in contemporary Gozo. Semiosis is at its best, implying a subterranean current of human interaction using the Maltese sign system to accomplish communication. It is the pun which supports the play; everyday terms are made devoid of logic and of their meaning so that the actors and the audience enjoy the play without any inhibitions and for short periods they form new relationships with each other in total anti-structure, to use Turner's perspective (Turner 1995), without interference from powers that be or from language which is another inhibitory social power.

Umberto Eco's remarks (Nelson 1990: 89) are more than appropriate here: the comic effect is realized when a rule is violated by 'an ignoble, inferior, and repulsive ... character ... [We feel] superior to his misbehaviour and to his sorrow for having broken the rule [but we] in some way welcome the violation; we are, so to

speak, revenged by the comic character who has challenged the repressive power of the rule.'

Il-Qarçilla is folk drama because, as Tillis (1999: 140) remarks, 'folk drama is theatrical performance, within a frame of make-believe action shared by performers and audience, that is not fixed by authority but is based in living tradition and displays greater or lesser variation in its repetition of this tradition; its performance, enacted over time and space with practices of design, movement, speech, and/or music, engenders and/or enhances a sense of communal identity among those who participate in its delivery and reception.' (italics suppressed) Ironically it was only in February 2003 that a satirical float participated in the Valletta Carnival after having been dormant for forty years. One must consider that symbolic inversion, deviations from and transgression of normal patterns of behaviour, and double meaning, overturning of sexual taboos in a Carnavalesque celebration are all prohibited by Maltese law and this two hundred and fifty years after Demarco's text.

Appendix 1

The play-text is extremely difficult to decipher, Ignazio Saverio Mifsud, the copier, has a horrible and inconsistent handwriting (Mifsud 412-426). The problem is greater if one remembers that Maltese orthography was only standardized in 1934. In attempting to decipher the text as accurately as possible, Standard Maltese orthography is used in the following examples, words followed by [?] to show doubtful transcription; and parts where the mss is illegible are marked [...]. Punctuation marks in square brackets identify insertions or changes by the author of this paper for editorial reasons.

Here are some relevant examples from the extant text of the original.

SYMBOLIC INVERSION OF TABOO

1 woman's physical description

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1.1 'Inwejza ... habet naturam bħal tal-baqra ...' | 1.1 'Inwejza ... has a physique like a cow's ...' |
| 1.2 '... l-għarusa tixbah/L ommha minn wara,/U minn quddiem fiha x'wiehed jara'. | 1.2 '... the bride takes after her mother in her behind,/and from the front she is worth a second glance'. |

2 heightened phallic references

- | | |
|--|---|
| 2.1 ass's penis: 'zobb ta' hmar' | 2.1 'donkey's penis' |
| 2.2 cucumber: pig's penis: '... U tinkaram wisq għall-hjar/Għaliex tmut għal nebula tal-majjal...' | 2.2 '... And she is very fond of cucumbers/because she would die for a pig's penis ...' |
| 2.3 human penis: needle, vagina: eye: 'għerq illi minnu/Thit bħal ghajn donnha raġel'. | 2.3 'a needle/penis with which/she sews an eye/vagina like a man'. |

3 specific sexual references, including sexual intercourse

- | | |
|--|--|
| 3.1 sexual intercourse: fresh sausages: '... ukill tagħmillu patt/Illi tagħmel trabi bir-riżq/Għaliex thobb tibra' z-zalzett frisk'. | 3.1 '... she promises him also/to give him many children [be a prolific childbearer] because she guzzles on fresh sausages [she enjoys sexual intercourse too much]'. |
| 3.2 penis for sexual intercourse and pissing: 'U għandu siequ l-quddemniya/Fiha n-nemmi-lija, u tan-nofs bewwelija...' | 3.2 'And he has the front leg/penis erect/To reach orgasm, and then to pass water ...' |
| 3.3 sexual act and conception: '... fuqha mitraħ tas-suf ta' l-għelieqi/Biex fuqu l-għarus jagħmel il-kerciehi'; '... id-dukkar tagħha tridu minn dak il-kbir/Għaliex taqtgħu minnha filghaxija mal-lejl jarga' jsir'. | 3.3 '... a mattress of wool used in villages/so that on it the bridegroom helps the bride conceive'; '... she wants his tool to be of the biggest/to be able to make love a second time during the night'. |

4 infertility of animals with transference of meaning to humans

- | | |
|--|--|
| 4.1 ‘...tagħtih żewġ hanżiriet[,]/Il-waħda haħwlija u l-oħra qatt ma għamlet ulied’. | 4.1 ‘... she gives him two sows,/one infertile and the other had never borne young’. |
|--|--|

5 offensive barbs directed to the audience

- | | |
|---|---|
| 5.1 audience described as illegitimate or beasts: ‘Bghulata’ l-ibliet’, ‘intom ilkoll bhejjem’. | 5.1 ‘Bastard townfolk’, ‘You’re all beasts’. |
| 5.2 victims of actor’s vulgar actions (specifically defecating) or illicit sexual relations and solicited to reciprocate: ‘... fuqkom Sinjuri appena nahra’; ‘Stennnewni naqra sa ma mmur/Jiena f’wiċċkom nahra’; ‘U nippromettilkom li narga’ magħkom/Tridu thallu tiegħi f’taġhkom’; ‘... issiġillata bil-hara/Li kellu jiċċappas fuq kull min semaghna’; ‘... kull min semaghni jidhol gewwa sormi’. | 5.2 ‘... I’ll just shit on you, gentlemen’; ‘Wait for me a while till I’ll go/[and] shit in your face’; ‘And I promise you to return/You must leave mine [my shit] in yours’; ‘... sealed with shit/that soiled our audiences’; ‘... may whoever heard me penetrate my arse’. |
| 5.3 capital punishment: ‘Kk Alla jamar narakom imdendlin ‘il barra l-bieb’; ‘... jekk jiena narah imdendel/Ma mmurx inhollu’. | 5.3 ‘May God order that I see you hanged outside the door’; ‘... if I see him hanged/I won’t go and cut him loose’. |

6 breaking wind noisily

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 6.1 ‘Thallux xi waħda tiskappalkom’. | 6.1 ‘Be careful not to fart’. |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|

7 arse wiping

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 7.1 ‘... ma tiswiex għall-imsih ...’ | 7.1 ‘... not worth wiping your arse with ...’ |
|--------------------------------------|---|

8 snot

- | | |
|---|---|
| 8.1 ‘W el-maħta kerha tibqa’ bir-riha’. | 8.1 ‘And the ugly snot leaves a bad smell’. |
|---|---|

9 disease

- 9.1 'Jekk toboghduna taghtikom skaranzija'. 9.1 'If you hate us may you suffer inflammation of the throat'.

10 medicaments

- 10.1 'Il-hwejjeġ tas-servizzjali' 10.1 'suppositories'

ANTI-FEMMINIST COMMENTS

1 physical appearance

One may also identify woman's denigration, ill-treatment by men, in contrast to very few negative comments on latter's behaviour, and an implied pervasive subordination of women:

- 1.1 hunchbacked: '... l-ġharusa hija tewmija/U minn wara ftira hotbija...' 1.1 '... the bride is a twin and has rounded prominent buttocks ...'
- 1.2 squint-eyed: '... Minn waħda għamja werċa/U mill-oħra ma tara xejn...' 1.2 '... She squints in one eye/and is blind in the other ...'
- 1.3 large ears: '... Widnejha naqra kbar/Jixbhu lil tal-ħmar...' 1.3 '... Her ears are somewhat large/like a donkey's ...'
- 1.4 large mouth: '... U haqha nitfa kbir...' 1.4 '... Her mouth is a little large ...'
- 1.5 large chin: '... Geddumha bħal tal-hanzir...' 1.5 '... Her chin is like a pig's ...'
- 1.6 large nose: 'Imnehirha daqs l-Imdina...' (see also, 1 above) 1.6 'A nose as large as Mdina...'

2 sexual avidity

- 2.1 '... thobb ticolhom wisq il-kavati/Għaliex minn tagħha ftira taghti ...' 2.1 '... she likes eating pastry sweets covered with honey [penises]/Because she offers [her] rounded buttocks'..
- 2.2 '...tagħmel it-trabi tagħha bir-riżq/Għaliex thobb tibra' z-zalzett frisk'; '... U tinkaram wisq għall-ħjar/Għaliex tmut għal nebula tal-majjal...' 2.2 '... to give him many children because she guzzles on fresh sausages [enjoys sexual intercourse too much]'; '... And she is very fond of cucumbers/ because she would die for a pig's penis ...'

3 pregnant women pulling at the plough (sexual intercourse implied)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>3.1 ‘... tagħmillu patt/Illi f’dak iż-
zmien illi tkun hebla./Il-għarus
ma jistax jaħrat biha ...’</p> | <p>3.1 ‘... she’ll make him a condition/
that during her pregnancy/he
cannot use her at the plough-
share ...’</p> |
|---|--|

4 disrespect to pregnant women

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>4.1 ‘... f’dak iż-zmien illi tkun
hebla/Ma jistax isuqha biex il-
għarus jista’ jitra’ fuqha.’</p> | <p>4.1 ‘... During pregnancy/He
cannot drive her or ride on her
back ...’</p> |
|---|---|

NEGATIVE COMMENTS ON MEN

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1 debauchery: ‘nebula tal-majjal’</p> | <p>1 ‘a pig’s penis’</p> |
| <p>2 excessive sexual pleasures in
marriage with family running
into dismal poverty: ‘... dana l-
mitraħ tagħtihulu/Biex fuqu
jifraħ u jittieraħ./U biex
iġibilha f’dan il-għera [?] ...’</p> | <p>2 ‘... she gives him this mattress/
for sexual intercourse and to
enjoy sexual orgasm./And bring
her in this utter destitution
[?] ...’</p> |
| <p>3 immature adults: ‘... Għadu ma
nfatamx mill-bizzula’..</p> | <p>3 ‘... He is still given to suckle
...’</p> |
| <p>4 dirty arse: ‘... F’sormu għandu
l-għanqbut ...’</p> | <p>4 ‘... He has cobwebs in his arse
[a venereal disease/haemor-
rhoids] ...’</p> |
| <p>5 swearing habit: ‘Ma jehilx f’xi
ħajt [?] l-iswed/U jidgħi jista’
[?] ...’</p> | <p>5 ‘May he penetrate a black wall
[?]/And he can [?] swear ...’</p> |

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The Emergence of Maltese Ritual Funerary Monuments between 4000 and 2500 B.C.

A tacit belief held by many scholars of Maltese antiquities, is that architecture played more than an ordinary role in shaping the archipelago's prehistoric communities, between 4000 and 2500 B.C. The significant number of megalithic monuments from this period lends weight to this belief. Often referred to as the '*temple period*', Malta's Late Neolithic period is renowned most of all for an extraordinary series of megalithic buildings that have been labelled, by some scholars as the 'oldest free-standing stone monuments in the world' (Renfrew 1973). Labels apart however, this period remains unparalleled for concentration of numerous monuments in such a small and limited territory. With an estimated prehistoric population of about 10,000 people (Renfrew 1973) or even less (Blouet 2004), living on two islands with just 316 km² of surface territory, the Maltese Islands seem an unlikely location that could support such a cultural phenomenon. The social factors behind the intensive use of megalithic architecture as well as its widespread presence throughout the small archipelago are constantly a matter of scholarly speculation and central themes in studies of Maltese prehistory.

Monumentality

The current article focuses on one particular aspect of this phenomenon, the appearance and development of formal ritual funerary monuments that were cut in the live rock. The principal theme is monumentality, rather than the detailed aspects of individual mortuary practices. In this respect, the '*monumentality of death*' is seen as representing a central concern which appears to have been as critical as funerary rituals themselves. Some aspects

of this theme have been explored elsewhere (Pace 1992, 1997). Indeed, it appears from available archaeological data, that rituals, ceremonies and the final disposal of the dead, were not the only components that governed perceptions of death and burial. Such important activities required a special environment which was to be distinct from the known natural and built settings of the time. The formalization of funerary rituals in a subterranean architectural idiom assumed dimensions that, from a comparative point of view, could easily rival the surface architecture of the period. The importance of the burial monument as the final resting place of a community's deceased, is attested to in many archaeological contexts and is also ethnographically well-known from the Merina communities of Madagascar (Bloch 1968, Pader 1982). As in the case of such examples, the functions of Maltese prehistoric burial monuments appear to have been distinctly different to those of domestic and public buildings. The theoretical stand-point of the present article is that the custom of subterranean burial grounds represented a concern that may not have necessarily corresponded directly to economic, political and ideological concerns of the living. While the world of the living may have been characterised by social structures and complex socio-political relationships, the monumentality of death may have served as a mechanism through which the differentiation experienced in life could be transformed into a dimension that may have been extremely different in purpose and meaning. It is not the purpose of this article to explore the rich possibilities of the significance and meaning of the manner in which the dead were disposed of during the Maltese Late Neolithic. A reading of such meanings requires a more extensive theoretical framework that could articulate the diverse possibilities and limitations of the archaeological record (Ucko 1969).

In focusing on monumentality, the present study will explore some of the ways in which design, style, geographic location and function may have been used to define a particular coded environment. Throughout, it will be argued that rather than conforming to an imposed system, Maltese prehistoric burial monuments followed a trajectory that was very much the product of a collective belief system. Over several generations, funerary monumentality came to transcend the differences that surface megalithic architecture and domestic buildings may have exerted on the archipelago's communities. Between them, funerary architecture and surface-built megalithic structures,

framed a large part of the islanders' worldview. In its simplified form, this worldview appears to have comprised, among innumerable aspects, two fundamental opposites of a natural continuum: life and death. The latter, represented not only in the formal disposal of the dead, came to be expressed in aesthetics that were derived primarily from the world of the living. The deceased were laid to rest in a special coded environment that derived much of its signifiers from architectural art forms that had already been tried in the megalithic temples. This coded environment – the subterranean burial space – assumed a number of characteristics. Firstly, these cemeteries evolved over a long period of time as a single phenomenon in which burial facilities appear to have formed part of a broad evolutionary process. This evolutionary process took place over a number of centuries as suggested by a ceramic sequence that can be used to date the different stages of this development (Pace 1992). Secondly, the origins of this evolutionary development appear to have formed part of broader regional customs, which comprised a number of regions in Sicily. Although not clearly in the mainstream of Mediterranean developments, the Maltese Islands maintained broad contacts with the outside world. This factor is more easily understood from archaeological evidence of participation in regional exchange systems involving materials such as Pantelleria and Lipari obsidian, Sicilian flint, and Italian green stone (Trump 2001). In spite of such evidence, and recent deconstructive literature suggesting that Malta's insularity was predominantly a cultural construct, it is difficult to surmise how and to what extent the archipelago's external contacts influenced its internal social and cultural developments. Indeed, there is very little evidence in the archaeological record that can help characterise the frequency, volume or intensity of external contacts. Clearly, the sea channel separating Malta from Sicily acted as a cultural filter as many a physical boundary (land-locked or otherwise) can be. Because of this, the development of Maltese Late Neolithic burial customs and monuments developed along very particular lines which were peculiar to the archipelago. The development of Maltese burial cemeteries may therefore be best understood primarily, although not exclusively, as a distinct phenomenon. Thirdly, the development of Malta's Late Neolithic burial cemeteries took place across the archipelago's landscape, and therefore in relation to other contemporary landmarks that had already occupied strategic locations. This factor is of particular importance for the present study. Regional

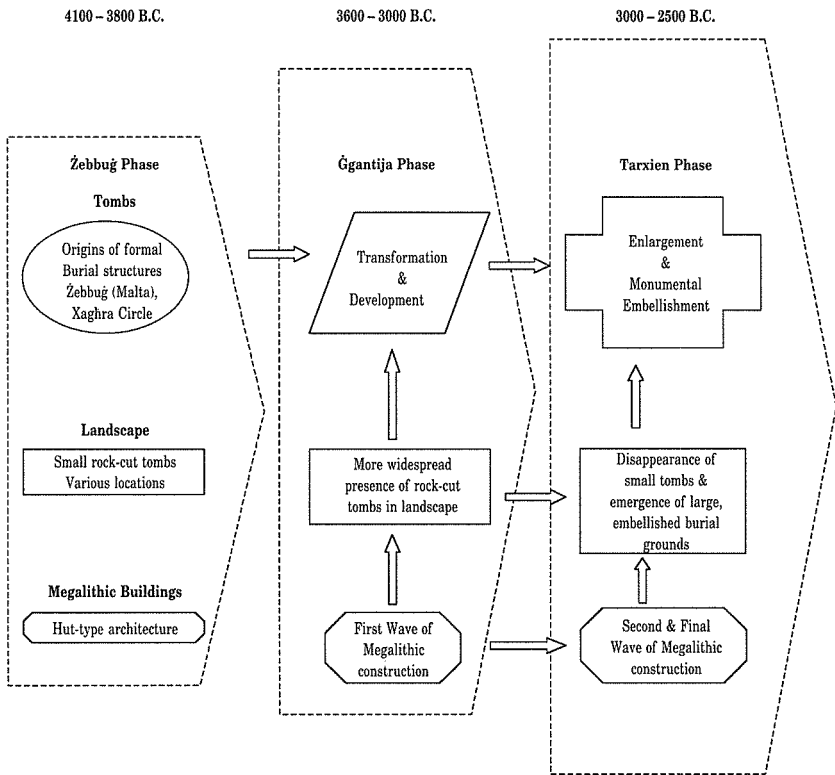
site location patterning shows that the spatial distribution dynamics of burial sites were different from those of the surface megalithic buildings. While the former display a more fluid pattern of site occupation, the latter appear to have been more static in nature. However, it shall be argued that the fluidity in the site patterning of burial sites may have been the result of specific community choices which progressively appear to have favoured 'fixed point' locations rather than diverse cemeteries. Fourthly, the development of burial sites in time and space, embodied specific design elements that were concerned with architectural space and its internal organisation. Monumentality played a significant role. The technique of cutting subterranean cemeteries ensured durability and therefore, a physical solution to instilling a sense of continuity. Monuments served as symbols of association, they required a collective effort during their construction and they were designed to be large enough to accommodate many burials and therefore, to be socially inclusive in their role. Correspondingly, the Maltese Late Neolithic period is also renowned for the lack of small individual burial tombs which appear to have not been favoured. Burial monuments came to embody a belief system that favoured the collective rather than the celebration of the individual. This is not to say that the individual was not accorded significance that may have reflected such aspects as social status or the concerns of those left behind. Indeed, such aspects appear to have marked funerary rituals involving ceremonies and votive offerings. However, the funerary monument itself was designed in such a way as to emphasise collectiveness over individualism. In other words, one function of the funerary monument may have been that of enshrining beliefs in the collective, such as memory, lineage, remembrance of ancestors, shared identities and other such symbolic meanings. The very act of burying the dead in a collective sacred space may itself have been significant of the individual's ultimate contribution to a belief concept or ideology that was greater than the complexities of the living world. This belief came to be expressed and celebrated in the monumental, and it was monumentality that was to provide the symbolic manifestation of collectivity across geographic space and through time over several generations. Finally, the creation of a coded environment dedicated to death required the expenditure of a significant amount of human resources over a very long period of time. The carving and embellishment of underground spaces was in itself a rite of communal endeavour, one which may have brought

together people across social and geographic divides. In a sense, the expenditure of energy over a long period of time, and the preparation of burial monuments was a ritual in itself. To follow Maurice Bloch, the design, cutting, enlargement, embellishment, and maintenance of burial monuments may have come to represent a conceptually fixed point in a society that was diverse and complex (Bloch 1968). This conceptually fixed point of reference may have offered a mechanism of social cohesion in spite of it not being at all a direct reflection of social differentiation, political and economic forces, conflict and 'real time' social complexities. The monumentality of death may have thus provided a sort of a constant factor, but one which may have had no direct relationship to the living. In other words, the monumentality of death may have served as a physical mechanism which, mostly through the passage of time, may have disguised diversity and asserted a form of time honoured identity.

Late Neolithic burial cemeteries

The span of time involved in the development of Maltese Late Neolithic burial cemeteries is a relatively long one. On a radio-carbon dating scale, the period in question spans a number of centuries starting around 4200 B.C. and ending some time around 2500 B.C. (Renfrew 1972). Along with these dates, Malta's Late Neolithic period is also characterised by a number of phases that are defined by a ceramic sequence obtained from stratigraphic studies (Zammit 1930, Evans 1971, Trump 1966). In earlier literature, several scholars have tended to see these phases as indicators of culture change and development. Such an approach may be useful in providing a time perspective to the millennium and a half that make up the whole of the Maltese Late Neolithic. However, an over-reliance on changes in ceramic design and manufacture does have its limitations, especially as ceramic sequences are in themselves only one aspect of culture change and development. Indeed, a number of central themes of culture change in Maltese prehistory are still very much dominated by ceramic design theory rather than a broader understanding of material culture sequences and their possible meaning. The context of Maltese Late Neolithic sequences is indeed a complex one, which will certainly benefit from different approaches as well as future studies and fieldwork. Of particular interest is the

place of monumentality and its development in time. Here three elements come into play. The first, comprises the use of ceramic and stratigraphic sequences as a measure of relative time. The second element of dating is that related to absolute dating, which in the case of the Maltese Late Neolithic is currently dependent on Radio-Carbon dating. The third element is our ability to combine a number of different sources of time sequences in a broad framework. For the purposes of this article, such a framework is critical if one is to understand the stage-by-stage development of funerary monuments. This contextual approach can be enriched by a diverse set of perspectives, all of which have been attested to in the archaeological record. The diagram below provides a relational flow chart of major material culture developments during the Maltese Later Neolithic.



**Sequences and Material Culture Development
during the Maltese Late Neolithic, 4100 – 2500 B.C.**

The diagram highlights the inter-relatedness of various diachronic and synchronic developments that characterised the material culture of the period. In this model, the initial appearance and evolution of subterranean burial monuments broadly follow a three-stage development that coincides with the Żebbuġ, Ġgantija and Tarxien phases. These phases are characterised by a number of important developments. The Żebbuġ phase has often been characterised by scholars as representing the beginning of the temple period, or the Later Neolithic. Among component developments, this period saw a conclusion of the Earlier Neolithic which in general terms comprised the introduction of the first Neolithic farming customs in the archipelago. The Earlier Neolithic, the earlier phases of which were closely associated with the impressed ware movement that characterised South Italy, covered a full millennium according to calibrated Radio-Carbon dating. Our knowledge of the period is characterised most of all by the modest architecture of the Skorba village, which among other aspects, sported a shrine which housed a series of small figurines (Trump 1966). Notably absent from the archaeological record is evidence of any formal burial arrangements. This absence has not been adequately explained and one cannot rule out the possibility that during the Earlier Neolithic, the disposal of the dead may have been undertaken in a manner that was less durable. Nevertheless, the Skorba shrine, as characterised by David Trump, implies that the farming communities of Early Neolithic Malta possessed elaborate rituals. Some elements of these rituals, such as the use of figurines, would in time become more elaborate. The Żebbuġ Phase is equally enigmatic. This period is characterised by the 'sudden' appearance of rock-cut tombs, and ceramic design elements that recall contemporary Sicilian influences (Pace 1992). In all likelihood, the manifestation of this phenomenon in the Maltese Islands may have owed much to broader Central Mediterranean developments and cross-cultural interaction. The Skorba village and the site at Taċ-Ċawla on Gozo, suggest that several locations across the Maltese Islands had been occupied for a long time, in some cases as early as the Ġhar Dalam phase (beginning c. 5200 B.C.). Indeed, ceramic remains found at a number of burial sites and megalithic monuments shows clearly that certain locations continued to be occupied well into the Bronze Age. The chart overleaf shows phase-type ceramic remains found at known burial sites. It indicates the long-term use of some burial sites and the relatively short life-span

Site	General Time Periods & Phases						
	Earlier Neolithic		Later Neolithic			Bronze Age	
	GhD, Skorba	Žb	Mgh	Ġg	Tx	TxC	BN
Buqana		-	-	-			
Busbesija				-			
Bur Mghež				-	-	-	
Hypogeum		-	-	-	-	-	
Nadur Bingemma				-			
Xemxija			-	-	-		
Tarxien		-	-	-	-	-	
Ta' Trapna				-			
San Pawl Milqi		-					
Ġg North Cave				-			
Xaghra Circle		-		-	-	-	
Xaghra		-					

Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age Burial Sites
Ceramic Phase Type dating Ceramic remains

of others. In particular, the chart indicates that it was during the Ġgantija Phase (3600–3000 B.C.) that the Maltese Islands experienced a dispersal of burial tombs. The Ġgantija Phase is characterised mainly by the noticeably ‘sudden’ appearance of the megalithic buildings. Here, as in the case of the appearance of rock-cut tombs during the Żebbuġ Phase, the term ‘sudden’ must be qualified. Many of the so-called temple buildings were first constructed in the megalithic style during the Ġgantija phase. Previous versions of temples have so far remained undetected in the archaeological record, although the Skorba shrine would suggest that the building of ritual monuments may have had a long antecedent. The sharpness of carbon dates, simply serves to amplify circumstances. But in reality, the megalithic structures may have easily been preceded by prototype versions that have now mostly disappeared. A related phenomenon is the extent of construction across the islands. According to excavation work carried out by John Evans and David Trump, many of the more prominent megalithic sites were first built during the Ġgantija Phase. This means that construction was decidedly extensive throughout the landscape. For lack of better evidence, it would appear that the megalithic

construction appeared as an extensive wave which encompassed all the controlled territory of the archipelago. It was during this first documented wave of megalithic construction that burial monuments experienced wide dispersal across the landscape. The third period of development, that of the Tarxien Phase, is marked by the second wave of megalithic construction and the accompanying disappearance of small burials as a few large cemeteries continued to be in use. The Tarxien Phase is characterised by elaborate artwork, the alteration and deliberate expansion of monuments and in particular, the elaborate embellishment of surviving cemeteries. It was during the Tarxien phase that the Maltese Late Neolithic entered its final stages after experiencing a flowering of art and architecture. It was during this period that the burial sites of the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum and the Xagħra Stone Circle entered their most elaborate period of development.

Late Neolithic burials in an island community

Inevitably, a discussion of cultural change in island communities such as those inhabiting the Maltese Islands during antiquity and history cannot be divorced from contemporary Mediterranean developments. For the purposes of this article, the cultural interaction of Maltese prehistoric communities with those of neighbouring regions is of particular interest as the matter at least highlights some of the many unanswerable questions that have come to define island archaeology and anthropology in recent decades. Certainly, our understanding of Maltese prehistoric mortuary architecture and the very particular manner in which it developed over a number of centuries cannot but benefit from the numerous insights that can be gained from the identification of local and external cultural factors. Indeed, it is somewhat always inevitable for a phenomenon as unique and particular as Maltese prehistoric mortuary rituals to be compared to contemporary developments known from surrounding regions, particularly Sicily. These comparisons have followed at least three very broad lines of theoretical enquiry, which, one can even contend, are not mutually exclusive. The first of these, is that which pursued interventionist theories and evidence of extraneous influences as factors of culture change. Such approaches are understandable given the nature of

islands and their susceptibility to geographic factors, isolation and the apparent abruptness of impacts brought about by extra-insular contacts. Such approaches to culture change have coloured many an explanation of Maltese prehistory that has sought to throw light on such changes as for example the replacement of older ceramic designs by the introduction new wares, the introduction of new customs such as the use of rock-cut chamber tombs or the use of megalithic buildings for new purposes, the introduction of cremation rites to replace inhumation and other phenomena (Bonanno 1986, 1993; Evans 1959, 1971; Trump 1966, 2004; Zammit 1916, 1930). A second trend of explanation emerged after the impact of calibrated Carbon 14 dating. Critical factors in such model-building were the questioning of explanations of inter-regional interaction based on traditional dating techniques, regional links based on typological attributes alone and 'diffusionism' as the prime agency for cultural change and development. In this mode of thinking, autonomous cultural developments were given prominence, often at the expense of origins as well as the movement of peoples and materials. In this case, discussions sought to explain culture change in terms of highly localised social factors, such as territoriality, the control and exchange of surplus resources, intra-communal competition, as well as catastrophe theory (Renfrew 1973, Trump 1977, 2004; Bonanno and Stoddart 1990). In the wake of such thinking, theoretical frameworks borrowed from island biogeography (MacArthur and Wilson 1967) were adapted to archaeology by John D. Evans who promoted the important concept that islands could serve as laboratories for the study of culture process (Evans 1973). This influential paper sought to underline the importance of island environments and related geographic factors on the way that culture develops, although since its publication, several scholars have chosen to over-emphasise, and also contest, Evans' use of the term laboratory (see, for example Broodbank 2000). The third theoretical approach to island archaeology in fact borrowed much from the positive thinking of John Evans' paper, in spite of criticism of the laboratory analogy. In this framework, islands are placed firmly in their regional context in which land and seascapes are stressed as important components of island cultural development. Furthermore, island culture requires an understanding on its own merits and may not conform to received wisdom concerning perceived culture change as seen through archaeological remains. The archaeology of cultural

change on islands would therefore benefit from, first and foremost, a broader and more flexible understanding of island life-ways (Broodbank 2000). Some recent theoretical approaches have even gone as far as to present islands as cultural constructs, rather than purely physical geographic expressions. Such thinking emphasises the role of culture above that of geography in shaping isolation (Robb 2001). Elsewhere the present author has already suggested that in the case of the Maltese Islands, isolation may have been but a condition and not a cause of cultural development, in the sense that island cultures and communities were by nature simultaneously inclusive and exclusive, and that notions of pristine environments implied in the term laboratory need not necessarily imply complete isolation (Pace 1996). Nevertheless, as recent studies suggest (Malone and Stoddart 2004), the geographic realities faced by island communities cannot be underestimated or reduced to cultural constructs alone. Indeed, the filtering effect of the sea, distances involved between islands and neighbouring lands, as well as maritime technology are factors that may have played an important part in the development of island culture. And it is this filtering effect, with its diverse attributes and cultural connotations that must be understood as the critical factor that increased or reduced isolation. Here, the term filter is meant to denote a control process which is predominantly cultural in nature rather than an ecologically induced force.

Against this background, one begins to appreciate the specificity of Maltese Late Neolithic mortuary monuments. In the wake of radiocarbon dating, theoretical thinking on the origins of megalithic monuments and funerary structures as products of eastern cultures changed established perspectives on the emergence of rock-cut chamber tombs in the Mediterranean. Revised regional chronologies showed that indeed, this type of monument first emerged in the Mediterranean and was not related to continental megaliths. Furthermore, the Central Mediterranean, specifically South Italy, Sicily and the Maltese Islands, appears to have been the first region in which this type of monument appeared (Whitehouse 1972, Whitehouse and Whitehouse 1975). Diverse communities of the region appear to have been maintained a degree of contact. The circulation of Lipari and Pantelleria obsidian across the region (Renfrew and Cann 1964) as well as the circulation of other materials, such as flint, stone materials and ceramics (Trump 1966), provide

an idea of the geographic extent of contacts. Similarly, it appears that certain ideas also circulated in one form or another, often experiencing the specific mark of local cultural traditions. In broad terms, funerary ritual space appears to have fallen into two classes – the small confined space of the rock-cut tomb that could accommodate one or more bodies, and the large burial spaces, provided in caves or purposefully enlarged hypogea, that could accommodate a larger number of inhumations (Tusa 1983, Cazzella 1994). The idea that the concept of hypogea was an inter-related phenomenon across the Central Mediterranean has been hinted at in recent studies (Robb 1994). However, the available archaeological evidence to verify such links and, more importantly, the extent of regional inter-relatedness of this phenomenon, is seriously limited in scale and extent. The matter will continue to be one of the most interesting areas of debate in studies of Maltese prehistory as new evidence and explanatory perspectives refine our understanding of regional cultural transmission. Indeed, the autonomous development of funerary rituals utilizing large burial spaces may have equally been possible in different locations of the Central Mediterranean (Cazzella 1994), in spite of communication and cultural contact. The attributes of funerary space used across the region suggest that a wide range of structures were in common use. Burials in trenches, caves, rock-cut chamber tombs and extended rock-cut chamber tombs or hypogea are among the more conspicuous forms of burial facilities known from the Late Neolithic (Tusa 1983, Cazzella 1994, Leighton 1999). However, these burial places are distinguishable by their highly specific attributes in terms of design and construction. This specificity owes much to the nature of the individual cultures within which these monuments came to be utilised. The funerary landscape across the Central Mediterranean is indeed uneven and full of interesting variety. The case of the Maltese Islands is somewhat unusual owing to the more coherent picture of the long-term manner in which burial architecture developed in the archipelago. The reasons for this are various. Limited geography of the Maltese Islands facilitates a better understanding of available information. Secondly, the archaeology of prehistoric Malta is fortunate in possessing clear chronological frameworks, even if these are based mainly on good stratigraphic patterns and a limited but well-tested carbon dated chronology.

The foregoing brings us to the question of why the Maltese

Islands developed their particular funerary material culture, which development must be considered against the broader background of Central Mediterranean realities. Certainly the specificity of this material culture can be explained in terms of a particular island lifestyle that could encompass both external influences and internal forces of change. The use of an 'external / internal' line of reasoning for culture change in island communities is arguably one of the most effective. Change is often considered in terms of externally or locally induced factors. In one form or another, this equation has been central to island studies since Darwin's seminal views on evolution. However, the unbalancing of this equation, either through an over-emphasis or exclusion of one of its elements, has often served to divorce theories of island cultural development from the true nature of island life-ways. Indeed, island communities inhabit a world in which land, the sea, sea links, periodical or frequent crossings, migration, exploration, and many other factors are integral elements of every day life. In this, the filtering effect of the sea serves to create a multi-facet view of island life-ways in which the dualistic equation of external and internal worldviews comes to play an important role. As Braudel had pointed out, the sea that surrounds islands is a defining factor of isolation only to the extent that it is allowed to be so. The sea could easily serve as an insulator or a medium through which islanders could maintain, extend, limit or sever links with other lands and islands (Braudel 1972). In the case of studies of Maltese prehistory, traditional approaches to culture change have often stressed external contacts as factors of culture change and development (Evans 1959, 1971; Trump 1966, 2002; Bonanno 1986, 1993). In such models, island communities tend to lose much of their maritime cultural identities. The sea often becomes a symbol of insularity rather than a medium of possible links, however difficult navigation may have been. Underlying such models, the question of imported material has been cited as the main element of culture development and change. The same evidence of obsidian exchange systems and the importation of raw materials from Sicily and beyond, have been used as indicators of change. However, the extent of regional exchange systems across the Mediterranean does not necessarily reflect the extent and character of cultural exchange or development. The assumption that the circulation of materials is an automatic transmission and implanting of cultural elements is not free of difficulties. Such indicators may

no longer be sufficient to explain why seemingly ‘enclosed’ communities develop material culture in the manner that they do. The presence of imported materials, their quantity, geographic concentration and distribution would always be a strong indicator of connectivity, or lack of it. Independently, however, islanders have the propensity to develop their own particular worldviews (Pace 1996), in which culture, religious beliefs, art, language, identity, and internal socio-political structures assume attributes that are visibly distinct and self-contained. This apparent contradiction need not detract us from the understanding island cultures, for islanders often exhibit a great deal of talent in striding the external – internal equation. Trade and exchange need not be understood as the sole forces of change and cultural development. On the contrary, such activity, which in the Mediterranean denotes maritime activity, is but one component of a broader cultural reality. One poignant example of this comes from Maltese prehistoric funerary rituals, the importation of alabaster-like material for the creation of typical Late Neolithic figurines which were deposited as ritual offerings in the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum (Evans 1971). This example shows how foreign materials were imported into the Maltese Islands for the purpose of reproducing a purely local cultural concept which had meaning primarily within the cultural realities of the archipelago. The Hal Saflieni ‘alabaster’ figurines show the complexities and decisiveness of cultural choice that encompasses navigation, trade and exchange and the transformation of imported materials into a local cultural construct.

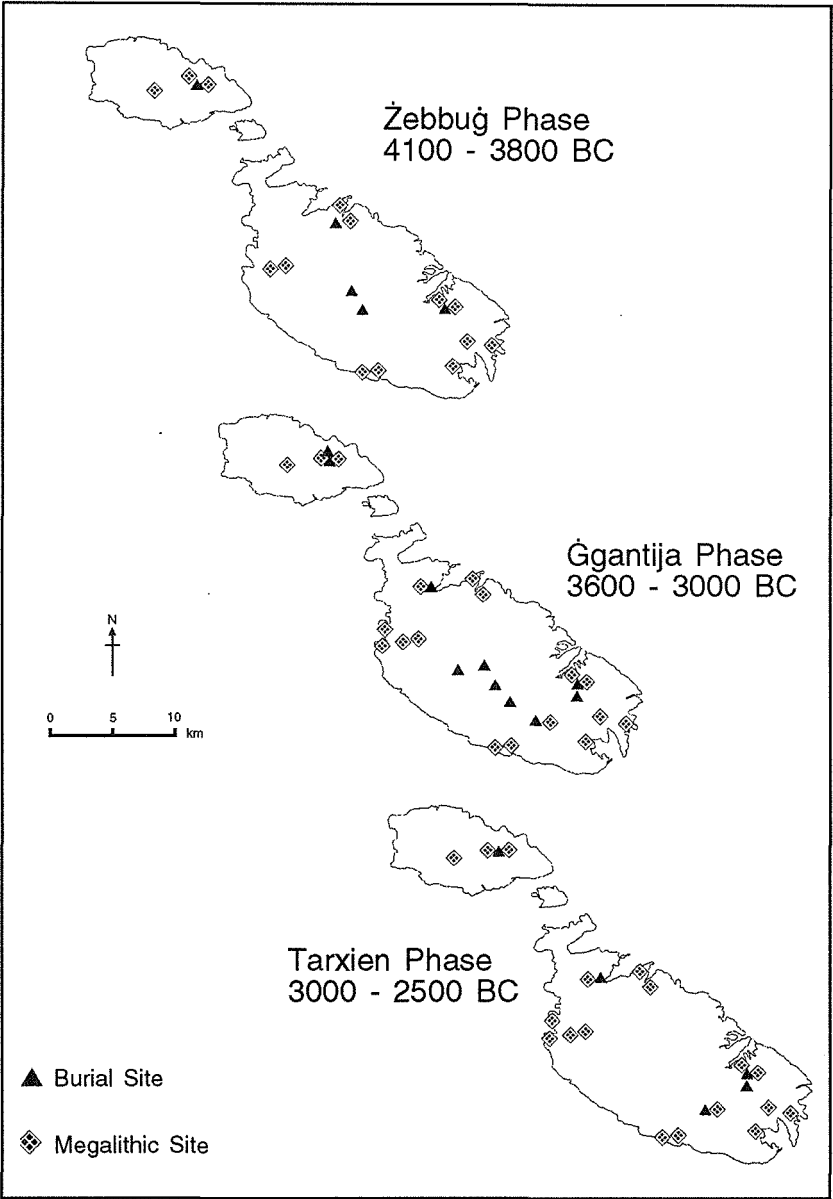
The Maltese experience – an evolutionary sequence

This reading of a particular form of material culture can also be applied to the development of Maltese funerary architecture. The emergence of rock-cut chamber tombs in the Central Mediterranean gives a good indication of the broader geo-cultural context of which the Maltese Islands formed part. Yet having the ability to be self-contained, the archipelago’s communities went their independent ways in transforming a form of ritual structure into a one that was very localized, and which can now, with the benefit of hindsight, be described as unique. This uniqueness, as understood mostly in terms of the physical attributes of underground cemeteries, is a reminder

of the strength of an island culture that managed to retain a high degree of identity over an extremely long period of time. Within this context, time, form and function are three elements that are useful for understanding the development of funerary architecture, and shall be explored here.

The issue of time is critical for the present model of the architectural development of Maltese Late Neolithic funerary monuments. Fortunately, there is enough evidence to support a diachronic interpretation of this development, even though time spans involved are extremely long. The available dating material in fact already allows us to conceptualize at least a three-stage process during which architectural form and function changed through time. Of course, these stages are limited in what they actually represent. For instance there is currently no evidence of pre-Late Neolithic burials, which obviously precede the first stage of development, while the possible stages involved in the Early Bronze Age are not as well documented to provide as clear a picture as possible. In other words, the known stages of development should be augmented by additional ones especially as new evidence might come to light in future research. Nevertheless, the three-stage model of development allows us to depart from a purely synchronic view of what in fact appears to have been a complex and well-defined cultural trajectory. Elsewhere (Pace 1992, 2000), the present author has attempted to contextualise this trajectory by departing from the often-static view of Maltese megaliths as prime locations that had dominated the socio-cultural landscape of prehistoric Malta. Traditionally, surface megalithic architecture had been given primary attention, while the general discussion on funerary monuments was focused almost entirely on the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum and, following more recent fieldwork, on the Xaghra Circle. By introducing a diachronic perspective to funerary architecture, the present model attempts to give temporal depth to a process that in fact remained coherent well defined in spite of the passage of many generations. As stated earlier, one argument in favour of this is that the islanders may have established funerary locations not only as ritual sites but, equally important, as fixed cultural points of reference which, as shall be discussed below, also left a mark on site location patterning in the landscape.

The phase of the three-stage development model (p.151, overleaf) first saw the introduction of the earliest rock-cut chamber tombs



Development of funerary monuments during the Maltese Late Neolithic.

into the Maltese Islands. This cultural innovation occurred during the Żebbuġ Phase (4100-3800 B.C.). It is difficult to try to categorise these structures into several classes. The evidence is limited but interesting nonetheless. Two very broad classes of structures are believed to have been used. The first of these comprised the use of simple subterranean chambers that were accessed through a shaft or an access hole. The documented examples of this type are represented by a small tomb discovered at Buqana (Zammit 1928) and the two tombs that were accessed by a common shaft found at the Xagħra Circle (Stoddart *et al.* 1993). The other tentative category represents what appear to have been burials placed in hollows. This form, first encountered at Ta' Trapna, Żebbuġ (Malta) (Baldacchino and Evans 1954) and later at San Pawl Milqi (Missione Archaeologica a Malta 1969) may have represented an alternative to subterranean chamber tombs. However, this possibility is still open to discussion, especially it has been suggested that the hollows may have actually represented the remains of former chamber tombs that had been truncated during quarrying.

Whatever the case, these burial arrangements followed the same funerary rites, namely those associated with collective inhumation. Collective burial, characterized by the intentional inhumation of several deceased in one tomb, remained the central attribute of the entire development of funerary architecture. It appears that the multiple re-use of the same tomb over several generations was destined to become a widespread custom across the archipelago. Multiple re-use has a number of practical implications. Burial structures were designed to provide space both for primary and secondary burials. Primary burials would have served the primary rites of the first burial of the deceased. Because the structures were also used as ossuaries, primary burials would eventually experience secondary burials or later arrangements. This pattern marks funerary rituals through the entire span of the Maltese Late Neolithic.

It was during the Ġgantija Phase (3600 – 3000 B.C.) that the second stage in the development of funerary monuments occurred. Once again, there are a number of possible ways in which burial structures can be categorised. We have evidence for three classes – the simple rock-cut chamber tomb, the evidently more complex form of subterranean chamber tomb and cave burials. At this stage, what appears to have been important than form was the evident

requirement for extended burial space. The upper level of the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum, the use of the Xaghra Circle, Xemxija I, II, and V, as well as Bur Mgheż cave are some of the larger sites that were in use during this period. As distribution plans will show later, this period also saw the widest geographic distribution of burial sites across the archipelago. Equally significant for this period was the appearance of a number of megalithic structures. Almost all of the major temple sites known in Malta and Gozo, experienced construction work which saw the use of large stones or megaliths. This wave of construction appears to have taken hold of the entire archipelago, although a great deal of research is required to enable us to refine the many possible phases of building. Nevertheless, the period appears to have been dominated by a proliferation of surface and subterranean monuments.

The third and final stage in the development of burial-site typology occurred during the Tarxien Phase (3000 – 2500 B.C.). Like the previous phase, the Tarxien period experienced a substantial amount of construction which culminated in what now appears to have been a second period of megalithic building. Existing structures were altered, expanded, and elaborately embellished. New locations were chosen for new buildings. This phenomenon also left a mark on burial sites. Central cemeteries such as the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum, the Xaghra Circle, and Bur Mgheż cave remained in use. In the case of the Hypogeum and the Xaghra Circle, the cemeteries were deliberately extended spatially and downwards beyond the surface levels where older burials of the Ġgantija generations, remained untouched. It appears that throughout Tarxien Phase, the enlargement of central cemeteries was paralleled by the disappearance of smaller burial places. The demand for such large centralized cemeteries may have in fact been one of the major factors that led to the disappearance of the smaller burial sites.

Throughout these three stages, the form of the funerary architecture experienced a degree of continuity as well as substantial elements of change. The joint use of burial space as both a place for primary burial and an ossuary, or indeed of later re-burials, may have placed new demands on the funerary rituals. The development of form follows distinct patterns which also conform to available chronological data and phases. Once again, the interpretation of form and its development is open to discussion. However certain trends appear to be central to our understanding of how architectural

form came to evolve during different generations. The role of architecture was to play a significant role. But so were the requirements of ritual. We can therefore follow two trends. The first of these reduces form to spatial requirements. Funerary architecture began as small spaces, but gradually became larger in dimension. If one were to follow the three-stage model suggested here, then one can recognise a parallel development from small, through larger to largest spatial forms. This approach is quantitative, and meant to show that burial space in a single monument may have been on the increase as opposed to the cutting of numerous burial sites. Secondly, the development of funerary architecture can be followed through its qualitative attributes. Structures appear to have been simple in form during the Żebbuġ phase, but steadily become more elaborate and monumental through the Ġgantija phase into the Tarxien phase. As elaboration and embellishment became more complex through time, the simple forms that had experienced the greatest dispersion during the Ġgantija phase, had all but gone out of use. Diachronically therefore, the development of funerary architecture followed distinct patterns of change. Throughout, the concept of subterranean ritual spaces was maintained. Indeed, in at least two cases, the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum and the Xagħra Circle, the subterranean dimension of burial was actually increased as space was expanded downwards. This insistence on the enlargement of subterranean burial space was of course a critical factor in the development of the idea of hypogea, and the embodiment of collectivity (Pace 1997). Qualitatively, the development of funerary architecture also incorporated the use of select architectural and engineering idioms used in the surface megalithic structures. During the Ġgantija phase, the expansion of the Xemxija tombs and the creation of the Upper Level of the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum mimicked the use of apsidal spaces and supporting structural elements. This phenomenon had prompted John Evans to suggest that the origins of Malta's Megalithic buildings was to be found in funerary architecture, specifically the tomb types from the Xemxija Cemetery (Evans 1959; Trump 1983). However, this theory is debatable on several grounds. Firstly, it ignores the long tradition of architectural development that had begun during the Earlier Neolithic and continued well into the Skorba Phases and the Later Neolithic as clearly suggested at the village of Skorba. Secondly, the funerary architecture that preceded the megalithic builds may have been too simple to provide

the best inspiration and solutions to the design and engineering problems that were then developed in the building of the megalithic temples. Thirdly, throughout its development funerary architecture remained highly organic in character and never reached the organised and well-structured forms of the megalith temples.

The form of centralised funerary sites also became more complex in terms of arrangements and embellishments. The simple chambers of the Żebbuġ and Ġgantija phases gave way, during the Tarxien Phase, to very elaborate structures with complex and highly designed interiors. The Hal Saflieni Hypogeum and the Xagħra Circle are the two surviving examples of this phenomenon. The Hal Saflieni Hypogeum came to comprise at least three levels which were almost entirely fashioned out of the live rock. The two lower levels, the Middle and the Lower, provide a stark contrast to the Upper level. The latter was cut during the Ġgantija phase, and comprised of a few simple spaces that were arranged around a central lobby area. Although significantly larger than for example the contemporary Xemxija tombs, the Upper Level of the Hypogeum is conspicuous for its lack of embellishments. The complexity of the Middle Level, with its ochre-painted ceilings, carved architectural features and the use of natural light sources, among other elements (Pace 2000), represents the highest achievement in the use of ceremonial architecture in Maltese funerary monuments. The achievements of the Hypogeum were in all likelihood paralleled at the Xagħra Circle on Gozo. Here the geological qualities of the Xagħra promontory may have presented certain disadvantages when it came to rock carving on the scale experienced at the Hypogeum. The excavations of the monument confirmed the fragility of the site's geology. To compensate the monument's designers brought in a number of megaliths that could be shaped, dressed and incorporated in the structural features within the lower spaces of the cemetery. Other megaliths were brought in to enclose the entire cemetery in a large circle, and to define monuments entrances, passage-ways and flooring. Although heavily influenced by megalithic architectural idioms, the form of Maltese prehistoric funerary cemeteries still remained closely tied to the concept of a special ritual subterranean space.

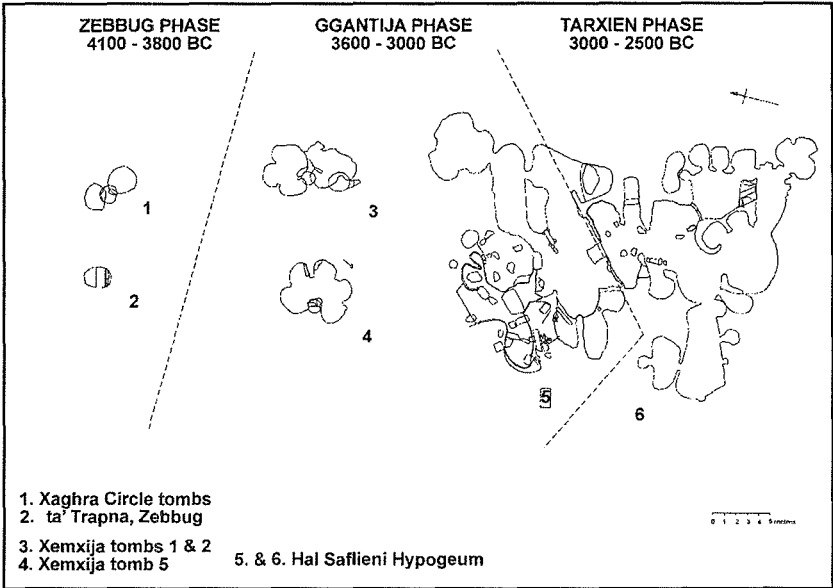
With regards the issue of function, the large cemeteries such as the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum, the Xagħra Circle and Bur Mgheż cave were a logical progression from the simple rock-cut chamber tombs of the Żebbuġ phase. It may now be difficult to read the subtle changes

in funerary beliefs, ritual and related ceremonial aspects that accompanied the whole spectrum of Maltese prehistoric funerary monuments. Once again, as in the case of form, one should expect that a significant element of continuity and change occurred through time. Indeed, one would expect that function and form would have been closely linked as funerary architecture developed to accommodate new religious and social demands. The rite of collective inhumation, introduced during the Żebbuġ phase, remained an essential factor throughout the entire span of the Late Neolithic. In itself, this cultural attribute is extremely revealing. By definition, collective inhumation is characterized by the intentional burial of a number of deceased in one tomb. The fact that this rite was chosen above individual burials, reflects cultural considerations. It is likely that burials would have taken place at different times, although simultaneous inhumations may have sometimes occurred. Here the term collective should be understood in its broadest meaning and that in the Maltese case it may best be described as a multiple re-use of the same burial space or tomb over very long stretches of time. This reading should dispel ideas of mass burial, for which current archaeological information does not provide evidence, whereas evidence of individual treatment at the time of burial is becoming clearer. Nevertheless, the practice of collective burial especially one that had to cater for several generations, had its special requirements. The small tombs that have been noted from the Żebbuġ Phase suggest that as early as 4000 B.C., a funerary monument had to serve multiple purposes. Firstly, tombs provided one of the best ways in which to dispose of the dead in a manner that would greatly improve a time-honoured meaning of this otherwise very functional act. A rock-cut or built funerary structure would greatly increase the monumentality of death, and would serve as a recognised focal point where loss and remembrance could be linked in a more permanent manner. Secondly a monument, whether constructed or a recognised natural feature, would serve as backdrop for ceremonies. Monuments could serve to mediate between social loss and the social and religious requirements that are inherent in special structures. Thirdly, tombs could serve as a place for primary burials and simultaneously as an ossuary where remains of deceased members of the community could be cared for. Finally, the funerary monument would serve as a major element of remembrance which could be simultaneously personal or community wide in nature. The evidence for the intentionally extended burial space at the Hal Saflieni

Hypogeum, the Xaghra Circle and the use of caves such as that of Bur Mgheż, would suggest that these requirements were important religious and cultural factors, and that their importance increased rather than decreased through time. The significance of this is probably appreciated even more when one considers the absence of any large number of small burial tombs or places.

Patterns across the landscape

The possible meaning of collective burial sites across the Maltese landscape raises a number of interesting questions. An emphasis on extended centralized burial structures in a small secluded island community may have encompassed many, if not all of the small communities of the archipelago. Here one might perhaps expect to find some indicators in the archaeological record for such a cultural and religious phenomenon. Once again, the approach adopted here is one based on a limited point location analyses in which known burial sites and compared with known megalithic temple sites through time and geographic space. These factors are combined in a group of maps (p.157, opposite). Even if considered with a sense of caution, the maps suggest that since subterranean burial spaces first appeared in the Maltese Islands, the enlargement of central cemeteries was paralleled by the disappearance of smaller burial places. The demand for such large centralized cemeteries may have led to the disappearance or disuse of the smaller burial sites. The maps also represent the three-stage evolutionary model that has been adopted throughout this paper. Thus, the first map shows the dispersal of tombs during the earlier stage of the development of funerary architecture, that occurring in the Żebbuġ Phase. Together, maps (a) and (b) show that a maximum dispersal factor may have been reached during the Ġgantija Phase. This was the phase in which the first 'wave' megalithic construction had taken place across the archipelago. The most dramatic image of site location patterning comes from the map representing the Tarxien phase. By this phase, arguably the most prolific in terms of cultural expression, many of the known smaller burials sites seem to have gone out of use. In contrast to the dispersal of the Ġgantija phase, that of the Tarxien Phase appears to have been evidently restricted in terms of geographic as well as numeric extent. Indeed, only the large cemeteries such as Hal Saflieni, Bur Mgheż, Xemxija, and the



Point location analysis: distribution pattern changes of funerary monuments during the Maltese Late Neolithic.

Xaghra Circle have provided the strongest evidence of activity. This survival of possibly a select number of sites and the simultaneous disuse of smaller tombs that had been active during the preceding Ggantija phase, is suggestive of the cultural decision in favour of large and well-endowed cemeteries. Unfortunately, the maps can say very little about the social significance of this site location patterning. For instance there might always be the possibility that collective inhumations in rock-cut chamber tombs may have been but one of a number of alternative methods of burial that cannot be retrieved from the current archaeological record. Equally however, the maps may represent all that we can now reconstruct of a once elaborate belief system that cut across the social landscape. The maps provide a strong argument in favour of a possible selective process in which central burial places were marked as fixed cultural points of reference as described earlier. The significance of such cultural reference points could only be enhanced if expressed or manifested geographically. Geo-culturally speaking, the creation of central focal points for funerary rituals across landscape was bound to transcend both cultural

differences and geographical boundaries. In cognitive terms, a belief in collectivity at death may have therefore required the abandonment of smaller tombs as a selected number of cemeteries were simultaneously invested with enough resources for these to be enlarged and embellished. The site location patterning presented here emphasises the significance of cultural constructs and how these can themselves be transformed in spite of perceived differences and geographic realities. In the context of Maltese prehistory, this perspective would enable us to address the apparent variability in the shifting pattern location of funerary monuments in contrast to the seemingly stationary patterns of the Late Neolithic megalithic structures. The location of the latter has traditionally been explained in terms territoriality or social differentiation based on the command of territories. With respect to Maltese prehistory, the social significance of territoriality was first advanced in the pioneering explanations of Colin Renfrew (Renfrew 1973), a theme which was eventually elaborated by ideas of a theocracy (Bonanno 1986) and inter-community rivalry (Bonanno *et al.* 1990). Yet in spite of these important insights, one major problem in the archaeological record remains that of identifying physical or cultural boundaries which often shape so many aspects of society. Such difficulties arise from interpreting boundaries in terms of inflexible insurmountable barriers. Social boundaries and land boundaries often become intertwined in our views of the past because we may fail to detect the cultural forces, such as ideological or religious beliefs, that would by now have been neutralised by archaeology. In the case of Malta's Late Neolithic, it would seem that architectural complexes served a number of purposes and, as has been argued throughout this paper, they would have in all likelihood had a history of their own. Clearly, a strong case can be made against the rather synchronic views that have traditionally been applied to Maltese Late Neolithic site location patterning. Even by limiting ourselves to available published dating information, a reliable set of maps depicting the dynamics of chronological site patterning can be made.

Rethinking boundaries – the role of funerary architecture

Throughout this paper, the emergence of formal burial facilities during the Maltese Neolithic has been approached from a number

of inter-related perspectives. In particular, the paper has presented a three-stage model to explain not only the appearance in Malta of subterranean rock-cut chamber tombs but, in addition, the subsequent local evolutionary process that led to a multiple stage development of funerary architecture. At the heart of this model is a particular focus on architecture, or the monumentality of death. Throughout, it has been suggested that the monumentality of death evolved along a three-stage process for which chronological and spatial data are available. It has been argued that funerary architecture was not only particular in its physical manifestations, but that it followed its particular trajectory of development. The element of time and space in this development, represented by dated ceramic chronologies and site location patterning, reveal a series of dynamics that again emphasize a degree of variability in the overall development of 'Megalithic Malta'. This variability suggests that static views of Malta's Late Neolithic monuments may not always be adequate to explain the development and significance of the megalithic structures. The approach adopted here has been to regard monuments as fulfilling different functions, which functions can also be reconstructed from the available archaeological data. Thus, while surface architecture can be seen to have fulfilled certain functions, cemeteries and domestic buildings would have in turn served their own intended purpose. In terms of funerary architecture, the present paper has emphasized the ritual character of the entire evolutionary process of cemeteries. The role of architecture is essential to ritual, and in some instances it becomes a ritual in its own right. The building of a sacred place requires significant investment of resources, time and energy. The length of time was clearly involved in the creation of such subterranean cemeteries as those of Hal Saflieni and the Xagħra Circle would have been almost ritualistic in character. The social and religious roles of cemeteries are elements that have to be considered on a different level from megalithic architecture, even though the two classes of structures are very much related. But to return to the Merina example as cited by Maurice Bloch (1968), cemeteries embody meanings and symbolism that might not be a direct reflection of other social realities. Thus while the surface megalithic buildings may have been an expression of diversity or intentional differentiation, funerary architecture may have significantly ironed out such differentiation.

Indeed, in trying to characterize Maltese prehistory, several scholars have chosen to emphasize one aspect or the other. For instance the distribution of the major megalithic sites, being now visually attractive because of mapping and aerial photography, has become a central element in studies of Malta's Late Neolithic. Thus the significance of territoriality (Renfrew 1973) and inter-community rivalry (Bonanno *et al.* 1990) has often been emphasized with respect to this distribution patterning. In underlining the difference that exists between social and land boundaries, and the fact that physical barriers and ideological beliefs may not be so easily recognizable in the archaeological record, Fleming (1982) has countered such territorial thinking by emphasizing the critical role of cultural forces in shaping the complex significance of architecture and its diversity. The Merina case study fortifies this view. The special role of funerary monuments may have not been dependent at all on day-to-day social and economic functions. The idea of a conceptually fixed point of reference of religious, cultural, ritual or ceremonial nature (Bloch 1968), provides an interesting insight into why funerary architecture often develops in a manner that seems to contradict or negate everyday realities. The principle applies to Maltese Late Neolithic funerary monuments. Their role as communal burial places, contradicted the differentiation that may have been experienced in the world of the living. Funerary monuments may have provided the right mechanism by which the idea of a continuous past is instilled in society. This factor is present in almost all of the major religious doctrine: religious time is decisively slower and broader than real time. Funerary monuments can serve as symbols of continuity at a number of different cultural levels. In the case of Late Neolithic Malta, the custom of collective inhumation in communal cemeteries may have been one way of creating a bond with the past. Collectively this has geographic as well as temporal implications. The practice of collective inhumation allows individuals from across the landscape to bond in a setting in which the remains of ancestors provide a link with the past. Time and space thus become neutralised or embodied in the funerary monument. Past continuous becomes enshrined in the monumental through the very act of maintaining, altering, embellishing and caring of funerary monuments. Subterranean rock-cut burial structures are almost indestructible, thus idealizing the notion of permanence. Kinship and close family ties might in due course on the conclusion of primary

burial ceremonies become neutralised as higher group identity is emphasized. The Maltese experience also suggests that far more resources were invested in creating, decorating and maintaining funerary monuments as an alternative to creating small and simple tombs. While the latter would have been relatively easier to create, the notion of burying one's dead in a larger than kinship entity may have been too strong a cultural decision to resist.

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Rituals
in
Europe and Elsewhere

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Divining King Arthur

The Calendric Significance of Twelfth Century Cathedral Depictions in Italy

The medieval fascination with calendar systems and seasonal transitions is extant in a number of twelfth-century mosaics and sculptures throughout Italy. In particular, the sacred art and architecture of Otranto and Modena cathedrals position the sixth-century secular Welsh legendary figure of King Arthur in a calendric context, and more specifically, in transitional space.

In this presentation, I shall explore the conflation of two seemingly separate traditions: Arthurian legend and the ritual management of calendric crises. We know that projects assigned to medieval masons and artisans were thoroughly researched and drafted, and especially so when God is your witness and the Roman Catholic Church your patron. Therefore we can deduce that the following representations were deliberate. Furthermore, when expressed in high culture forms, the normally fluid folklore text becomes essentially fixed in the depicted artistic event, and so we can infer that the symbolism was contemporary.

The High Middle Ages

To set the Western European scene simply the High Middle Ages was a time of relative stability and economic, political, social, cultural, and religious progress. This is the era of the Crusades, monastic orders, the construction of cities with their bourgeoisie and town charters, the rise of the German Empire, and it was a high point for that most powerful institution, the Roman Catholic

Church. Italy was a collection of city states, allied but un-unified despite the maneuverings of various Holy Roman Emperors.¹ The doctrine and politics of the Church influenced the medieval mindset, including cosmological perceptions. The Earth was believed to be the centre of the universe and the Julian calendar reigned.

Perched on the southeastern-most tip of Italy, Otranto overlooks the Adriatic and Ionian Seas. A former Byzantine power-base and under Norman control in the Middle Ages, the town was a prime target for pilgrims, invaders, marauders, and traders alike.² The cultural contact of east and west is particularly striking in Otranto's late eleventh-century cathedral.³ A typical exterior conceals an interior display of multi-cultural fusion. The Christian cathedral boasts Arab, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew influences all connected by an elaborate Byzantine mosaic pavement (crafted between 1163 and 1166) that covers the entire floor areas of the nave, apse, and transepts.

The west (main) entrance opens directly into the central nave, and a narrative processes towards the altar, representing the passage of Christian life (Gilchrist 1999: 86). In art form, this manifests in an intricate design that depicts scenes from the Old Testament as well as Greek mythology, historical and legendary characters, the Zodiac, fantastic and hybrid monsters, and the labors of the months, all embedded in a cabalistic tree of life that takes root right at the front door and immediately branches forward and out to the sides. The 'strange conglomerate of beasts and men' as Roger Sherman Loomis put it, is brought to life in 'marble and colored stone' (1938: 36).

At first glance, the busy floor plan appears to be the depository of numerous and randomly scattered images, but on closer inspection, we can discern motifs from Jonah's big fish to the Tower of Babel, and dozens of familiar characters slowly reveal themselves, including Cain and Abel, Noah, Samuel, Samson, Diana, Alexander the Great, King Solomon, and the Queen of Sheba; hero and man, are created, redeemed, and judged in the Tree (Gianfreda 2002: 20).

¹ Life-long adversaries, Frederick I, variously Holy Roman emperor, King of Germany, King of Italy, and Duke of Swabia, opposed Alexander III's election as Pope, instead championing three successive antipopes.

² Apulia became a Norman duchy in the 11th century. 'Along with Brindisi, Otranto was a port from which pilgrims sailed to the Holy Land' (Måle 1978 [1953]: 268).

³ The Basilica Cathedral of Otranto was constructed between 1080 and 1088.

The presbytery is patterned with sixteen cosmological signs set in circles and arranged in a regular four by four quadrangle; each inhabited by creatures such as a siren, a centaur, a bull, a camel, an elephant, and a unicorn, and Old Testament figures including Adam and Eve entwined by a tempting serpent. The flanking transepts are each planted with a single offshoot of tree of life. While the south (right) transept basks in paradise, the north (left) transept is subject to Hell's inferno (Gianfreda: 80-105, 110-143, 201, 195).

The central nave culminates with the months of the year; twelve spheres, laid out in three rows of four, each labeled and encircling both the month's occupation and corresponding zodiac sign. Located above the month of March, we find the conveniently labeled and mounted figure of *Rex Arturus* (King Arthur).⁴ The rendition of King Arthur lies to the right side of the nave so that both he and his mount are facing in a northward direction and heading 'across the Tree of Life' (Gianfreda 125). Arthur's right arm is held up and forward, and his right hand is outstretched. He holds high a scepter in the chest-level hand of a crooked left arm.⁵ The scepter and the crown he wears proclaim a sovereign authority.

Arthur's appearance

When I visited the cathedral in June 2003, I asked a priest and a curator (separately) what each thought of the resident King Arthur. I hadn't asked anything specific about Arthur's attire or mount, but both shook their heads as if deeply scandalized, insisting vehemently that Arthur is riding a horse, but in fact King Arthur rides an animal with ears and horns, cloven [split] hooves, and short tail, which is clearly a goat; the Christian symbol of a sinner (Gianfreda: 127).

While Arthur's appearance in Otranto's mosaic pavement is unprecedented, his title of king in 1160's Italy is not – the transformation from Celtic sovereignty figure to Norman meta-sovereign was by this time assured. Executed in the early days of

⁴ There is no reason to doubt that the annotation located to his right does in fact correspond to this figure's identity, and there has been no scholarly dissent.

⁵ Although Muriel Whitaker describes Arthur carrying 'a club' (1990: 89), all other sources concur that, as a symbol of his authority and office, he is displaying a sceptre.

courtly Arthurian propaganda, the Modena Archivolt inscription is likewise emblematic. So let's pen the goat, so to speak, while we visit Modena and consider how folk representations of King Arthur symbolize the changing of the seasons.

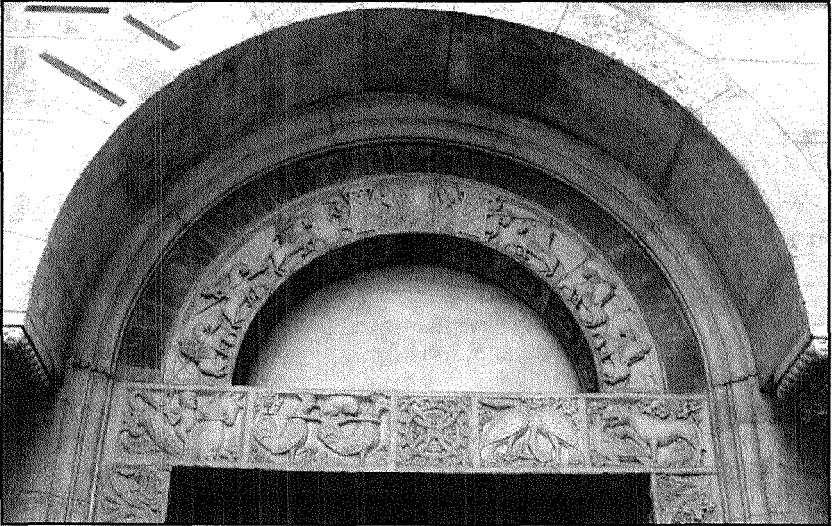
The city of Modena is the capital of Modena Province, in the Emilia-Romagna Region of Northern Italy and home to the Cathedral of San Geminiano, constructed between 1099 and 1184. Located in the heart of the city, in *Piazza Grande*, Modena's Cathedral is considered a fine example of Italian Romanesque, and is often cited in art history and architectural works as both an example and an enigma (Armi 2004: 140; Barral i Altet 1998: 7, 155, 174).

The cathedral layout complies with ecclesiastical directional rules that church foundations should be laid out as a Latin cross and on a precise north/south axis so that the altar would face east toward the Holy Land and the Kingdom of Heaven.⁶ Likewise conventional, the central west door *Il Portale maggiore* (The Principal Doorway) would be considered the main entrance; there are two portals on the south side and one north door, *Porta della Pescheria* (Fishmonger's Door), the latter being of particular interest. Here we can see that the inner planes of the doorjamb are decorated with the months of the year; the labors of January to June on the right and of July to December on the left.

A portal functions as an entrance, and the iconography surrounding the portal would therefore serve as a message, perhaps allegorical or didactic, to those entering the church. At this point, based on the prevailing gendered spatial arrangements, I am confident that I have established elsewhere that the north door is the Women's Door so today shall simply stress the male/female, right/left dichotomy that bears out architecturally, linguistically, socially, and so on. As pointed out by Roberta Gilchrist, there seems to have been an association between north/female/Old Testament/moon and south/male/New Testament/sun (1994: 134-135).

The 'women's' doorway is topped by an unusual archivolt that does not conform to the standard tradition of north doors depicting scenes from the Old Testament. The Modena archivolt (as it has come to be called) is decorated with a bas-relief sculpture. Displaying an

⁶ Considered an organic entity, the structural design was a metaphor for the body of Christ, and the Latin cross facilitated a Medieval invocation of the body of Christ.



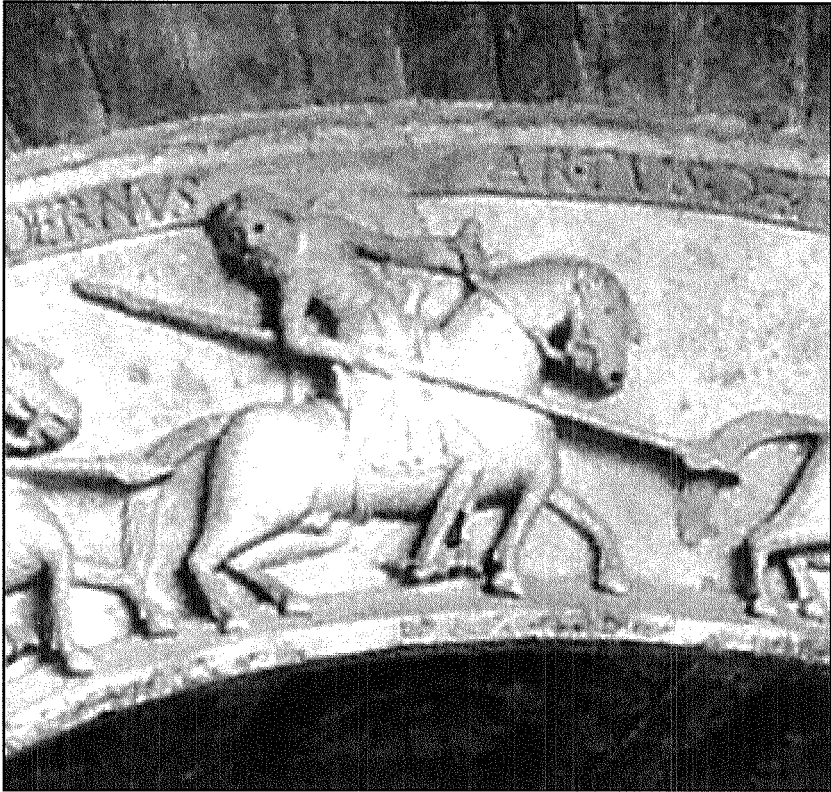
The Modena Archivolt.

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innate symmetry, this earliest surviving Arthurian art form (Whitaker 1990: 86) has ten fairly evenly-spaced sculptured human figures and nine engraved names. Orderly armored mounted knights converge on the tower, three on each side. From the outside in: *Isdernus*, *Artus de Bretania*, and *Burmaltus* meet an unnamed figure brandishing a pick-axe on the left, as *Che*, *Galvariun*, and *Galvagin[us]* face *Carrado* on the right. *Winloge* is cast at the top of the scene, seemingly imprisoned and standing to the left of the central tower. *Mardoc*, the supposed abductor, balances out the right. Detailed analysis of engineering and artistic techniques point to construction between 1120 and 1140 (Stiennon and Lejeune 1963: 288).

The apparently inappropriate representation of Arthur can be reduced to the following interrelated motifs: Arthur is labeled *Artus de Bretania*, is without armor, is clad in a simple belted shift, and is looking backward over his right shoulder.⁷ Let us explore each in

⁷ As ample scholarship attests, there is no doubt that all of the archivolt's named characters belong to the Arthurian cycle. However, scholarly opinion to date has identified the irregularly dressed rider as *Isdernus* and the narrative scene as the abducted *Guinevere's* rescue from the *Dolorous Tower*.



Artus de Bretania.

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turn: Arthur is identified as Artus de Bretania, the only archivist character ascribed an epithet, suggesting that Arthur is a leader or chief and would host a retinue and perhaps own land. Bretania refers to Britons and/or Bretons, as Antone Minard explains, 'It is equally clear that the Bretons and their cousins in Great Britain were considered one people divided over several kingdoms, as indeed they were' (2002: 147).

The Britons were the inhabitants of the British Isles and originally referred to then-resident Brythonic-language speakers. The Bretons, whose language and culture was (is) interrelated with Brythonic-speaking Celtic populations in the British Isles due to

fifth- to seventh-century migrations of Britons from the south and south-west coasts of what is now England to what was then the Gallo-Roman province of Armorica, that is, Brittany, taking their language with them (Powell 1995: 203-204).⁸ That Arthur went to Brittany is mentioned in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, the tenth-century Arthurian native Welsh tale and earliest prose in the vernacular (Ford 1977: 151). The Breton connection also sheds light on the use of the name Winlogee, a Breton form of the English Guinevere.

The legendary Arthur's equally legendary wife is walled up in a castle with Mardoc. Whether she was abducted or went willingly is of no import here for the resultant separation between king and queen has been realized regardless. While his Roundtable knights attempt their chivalrous duty, Arthur meanwhile is preoccupied with mightier metaphors.

That he is portrayed thus is no accident or anomaly, Arthur has lost his honor and is therefore correspondingly shamed. Why? Arthur is a cuckold. Arthur is shamed, not because he has lost his wife to another man and is consequently not having sexual intercourse with her, but rather, because through her, he is having intercourse with another man. In the medieval conception of the human body, essential bodily fluids, such as blood, semen, milk, and bile, could be transmitted from person to person. Thus when a woman is having sexual relations with two men, the two men, in effect, are having intercourse with each other. It is not Winlogee's adultery per se that brings shame on Arthur but the fact that she has aligned him with a male partner.

In the Latin world, a cuckolded man is a marked man and openly taunted. In Italy the terms *becco* (he-goat) and *cornuto* (horned) are hurled at a betrayed husband. In the Spanish-speaking world he is a *cabrón* (he-goat); in France a *cocu* (cuckold; cuckoo is *coucou*) or *cornu* (horny), and to make someone wear the horns is to make someone a cuckold. The horned-goat equivalence is both base and basic; he-goats share female partners (Blok 1981: 428). In sharing a

⁸ The west of the British Isles continued as a Brythonic stronghold until the Welsh of Cornwall were subjugated by the Anglo-Saxon King Egberht in 823, and Howel, the last king of Cornwall, was defeated by Athelstan of Wessex in 936. The south west peninsular was finally taken by Saxons in the eleventh century and her language cut off from Wales and developed its own peculiarities.

female, essentially mimicking he-goats, two men meet in a woman, whom we could say is in the middle, holding the love triangle together.

In a world constructed of binary oppositions, there can only be one male in the relationship, so in effect, to be a cuckold is to be emasculated and correspondingly feminized. To clarify, in a world viewed as having 'limited good,' there simply is not enough honor to go round, and some males are going to have to go without. Therefore rivalry and competition between males becomes the norm (Foster 1979: 122-152). Further, if the amount of honor, that is, virility, is limited, the one sure way to emasculate your rival is to feminize him (Dundes 1997: 27). Arthur has been feminized because his masculinity has been appropriated by Winlogee's abductor. While Arthur is not literally wearing horns in Modena, he is riding a horned goat in Otranto.⁹

The cultural connotations of goat-like behaviour underlie the aversion to any mention of goats and the distress I inadvertently caused the holy men of Otranto cathedral. Folk belief to this day reveals a quasi-homophobic fear of goats and goat-related products. These beliefs are deeply held and considered virtuous, often subconsciously, so that many Sicilian males today refuse to openly eat goat cheese. In a culture largely based on subsistence farming, the strategy to overcome issues of distribution and scarcity is to call all the locally-produced cheese 'sheep' cheese. This socially-sanctioned cover-up is perfectly acceptable as honour is preserved while bellies are filled, and most importantly, rams do not share their partners (Blok 1981: 428).¹⁰

That the multi-layered significance of goat symbolism in twelfth-century Italy had profound implications is corroborated by the

⁹ Note parenthetically that the nineteenth-century British Antiquarian John Brand equated cuckold and cornute (cf. 'Cernunnos,' the Horned One).

¹⁰ I would share two unrelated incidents that occurred during visits to my father's village of Naro in southern Sicily: on her first visit in 1966, my mother, then 24, remarked on a herd of goats trundling down the street – something she had never before witnessed. Family members insisted that the creatures were sheep. I was enjoying a solo visit in 1997, and, knowing my curiosity, my uncle sought permission from his peers to let me observe an exclusively male villagers' predawn sheep-milk ricotta-making ritual. I was granted permission on the grounds that I didn't count as a woman on two counts: I wasn't married and was half foreign.

plenteous secular and sacred overlays. Beneath both the Christian 'sinful' gloss and the peasant 'sheep' substitution, lurks the fundamental fear of relinquishing honor, a catastrophe effected by losing control of one's wife, that is, failing in one's role as a husband. Arthur has personally failed Winlogee. She is figuratively and literally out of his reach, and Arthur has lost the trappings of both kingship and manhood; he is off-guard, out of his role, out of season. And his shame is personified; Arthur alone is without armor and holds a flaccid lance in his right hand.

Looking backward

Having accounted for Arthur's garb and accoutrements, let us now examine why Arthur is looking backward over his right shoulder. While is it customary for cuckolded husbands to be portrayed riding backward, and as a charivariic prank, we cannot ascertain with any certainty that a medieval audience would associate looking backward with riding backward, although it is surely related. In line with the oppositions we have already observed, I would suggest that he is looking backward because it is opposed to forward – if time is not going forward, it must be going backward. We see this played out at Carnival when a person riding backward on an animal indicates that the animal is walking backward, and as a punitive measure to medieval sinners and criminals in an unconscious attempt to undo time and consequently undo the offensive sin or event. Basically time is going backward, rewinding; we have a reversal, an inversion, a transition, a liminal period.

Furthermore, there are numerous new year customs of letting the old year out of the back door and the new year in the front, and if the west door is the main door, the front door, then the back door would be to the east. Thus the physical compass orientation of the cathedral concords with the notion that Arthur is straining his head backward to look east, observing the old year passing. Arthur is looking backward because he has to; he is the scape goat (pun intended) for the outgoing year and is watching it pass.

Likewise, in Otranto, mounting Arthur on a goat figuratively undermines his majesty and makes him an object of ridicule – he is symbolically wearing horns by displacement (Pl. 22). The code is paradoxical, however, for Arthur is holding his scepter erect, a

symbolic equivalence with phallic inferences.¹¹ How can Arthur be both cuckolded and virile at the same time? In order to answer this, one must consider his contextual placement in the mosaic. His scepter is in his left hand and Arthur rides northwards and on the laurels of the month of March.

I suggest that in both cases we are looking at an iconographic representation of a mock battle, a seasonal contest, etched in stone. Mock battles are not literally battles, though a combative encounter may occur. Although no blood is shed, the stakes are high nonetheless, hence the over-determination. A mock battle is staged in response to a calendric crisis; a crisis brought on by the uncertainty of the liminality between seasons, with the seasons personified and the transition represented as a battle waged between victor and vanquished – a metaphor for the annual transition as summer supplants winter and the cosmological balance is restored.¹²

The figurative changing of the seasonal guard, between the outgoing and incoming seasons may manifest as two male rulers or leaders, the metaphorical heads of a social body, engaged in a seasonal contest, a mock battle, fighting at a liminal point in time or place and often fighting over a female sovereignty figure representing the land, which may further manifest as a symbolic rivalry for the 'queen.' Just as Winlogee has no room for the semen of both her husband and her lover, summer and winter can never exist simultaneously.

But why did Arthur warrant such symbolism in the first place? Apart from the fact that traces of Celtic mythology have been found in the region, as discussed by Francesco Benozzo (1998: 329-43), a striking and obvious connection lies in Arthur's very name; *Arth-ur*, which is commonly believed to be derived from *arth*, the Welsh for bear. Although the 'bear' hypothesis may be dismissed as a fiction propagated by the processes of folk etymology, it does not diminish the fact that it is generally accepted, and therefore, in a folk belief sense, is held as true.

¹¹ Any uncertainty surrounding the identity of the sceptre is offset by the certainty of the symbolic representation therein.

¹² This transition complies with the waxing moon, crossing the B axis in Emily Lyle's structural model, Pl. 25.

Carnival, reflexivity and relativity

Let us now turn briefly to Carnival, the celebration of the agricultural change of the year, and the natural start of the new year. The date for Carnival is set at one and a half moon cycles before Easter; that is, the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring equinox, so that the earliest possible date for Carnival is February 2. In short, Carnival always falls on a new moon, or as the French figuratively call it, '*lune cornue*,' a horned moon (Gaignebet and Florentin 1974: 10). Claude Gaignebet and Marie-Claude Florentin suggest that the celebration of Carnival, that is, the changing year coincides '*essentiellement à cette date la déshibernation de l'ours*' [essentially with the date that ends the hibernation of the bear] (Gaignebet and Florentin 15). The transition from winter to summer was considered complete once the bear was free. As Carnival is dependent on the cycle of the moon so the bear comes out of hibernation according to the lunar cycle, coinciding with and heralding the changing season. Furthermore, the bear struggles under the moon's influence and cannot go out in the new 'horny' moon (Ibid: 15). Thus the cuckolded Arthur of Modena and the goatly Arthur of Otranto are aligned in name and in season.

Having considered Arthur's ritual role, in the interest of maintaining some semblance of equilibrium, it is time to revisit Modena's Winlogee and reconsider the female function. The creators of Modena's archivolt ignored the church convention that north doors should exemplify the Old Testament; a popularized secular event takes the place of a prescribed biblical scene. Winlogee is positioned at the center of the archivolt, at the top of a 'love' triangle, playing out the role of the adulterous wife.

According to Natalie Davis, in a world where 'sexual symbolism had a close connection with questions of order and subordination, with the lower female sex conceived as the disorderly lustful one'... and where 'the asymmetry between male and female [played out in roles] in festive life,... the holiday [calendric] role of the woman-on-top ... renewed old systems....' (1975: 150-151). Not only do we have another reversal, in social terms, that is, due to the liminal time, but I would suggest that, like Arthur, Winlogee has no choice and is simply doing what she is required to do, cyclically, seasonally.

The connection between the king and the land is particularly poignant in Celtic folklore and numerous examples exist to suggest

that representations of sovereignty and fecundity culminate in the figure of the queen. Like Rhiannon in Pwyll, Winlogee, whose Welsh name Gwynfwyfar literally means 'white phantom,' represents an intangible sovereign figure and hence is the fulcrum (perhaps literally) in the battle between winter and summer. How apt that the archivolt is over the women's door.

Like all forms of folklore, which are at once culturally reflective and culturally relative, folk belief can codify worldview, and when regionalized, for example, as Arthurian legend is in Italy, the oikotypal expressions therein are a blatant and accessible expression of a specific group's view of the world and how they see their place in it (Dundes 1989: 83). Linda Dégh states that belief is the 'underlying ideological foundation of legends' (2001: 311); and Philippe Walter claims that 'regardless of the genre under consideration, we always find in one form or another that a calendar ritual is at the origins of a medieval literary form' (1988: 66-67), and that Arthur's destiny appeared intimately linked to the movements of the seasons (2002: 213).

Why Arthur? Were Roger Sherman Loomis and John Rhys on the right track? Did the Normans completely misunderstand the mythical Celtic cosmology they encountered, appropriating it literally into their own narrative tradition? And could this illuminate the cryptic entry in the tenth-century *Annales Cambriae* that at the Battle of Camlan in 557, both Arthur and Medraud fell, but no treachery was recorded? Do we have the conflation, the conjoint, of two traditions or reflexes of something more profound?

As the cycle evolved, Arthur's character traits transformed in line with legendary revisions: at once a Welsh warrior-king, a noble Norman king, and a Christian king par excellence. There is no doubt that we have countless versions of Arthurian motifs, so why not many versions of Arthur, sort of symbolic or allomotivic equivalents (Dundes 1963).

The fundamental role of Mardoc disintegrated in the new redactions, reduced to a mortal carnal opponent. In line with Walter Anderson's 'law of self-correction' (1923), did the narrative demand its original metaphor: the essential opposition? Enter Lancelot, and we all know what happens next.

While I am not suggesting that we have uncovered some lost branch of an Arthurian narrative tree, I am suggesting that the Arthurs of Modena and Otranto are symbolic equivalents specific to

their respective sites, and that these particular representations of Arthur capture transitional narratives, effectively separated from the general narrative flow, in an Axel Olrik sort of way (1992 [1921]: 9). Transitional texts expressing transitional time; a secular Arthur transcending sacred space, captured in the liminal space therein ... divining the seasons.

Of one thing at least there is no doubt, Arthur has been publicly and permanently memorialized in both locations. May the symbolism speak for itself, and for Arthur, ... dare I say, by God's truth!

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St Olav's Day in Norway – *Invented Tradition or Old Popular Feast Day?*

Traditions and rituals most often are invented: they do not develop and do not exist by themselves. At the same time, most traditions and rituals are presented and represented as if they have always existed, and as if they represent continuous links between past and present.

The study of rituals, then, may have as one of its most important tasks to analyze varieties, changes, conflicts and discontinuities within the ritual field. The ritual study carried out in that way may be able to show that the ideologies, practises, acting parts and experts behind any specific ritual are historical – which means that they are not self-evident and not general structures beyond time and place. On the contrary, rituals are in the hands of those who invent them, of those who use them and of those who try to understand or analyze them (cf. Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992).

The aim of my article is to present a small case study, namely the different and even differing phases of St Olav's Day in Norway. In my opinion, this case may show how a ritual – or rather a ritual period – has been practised and interpreted in different parts of Norwegian history. The case also shows the importance and to a certain extent also the impotence of those who are in the position to invent and produce rituals.

The first St Olav

Norway became a Christian country during a rather long process of cultural contact with Western and Northern Europe. Around the year 1000 central parts of the country actually were Christian.

However, one specific historical event developed during the next centuries as the most important symbol of Norway becoming a Christian country. That was the death of the King Olav Haraldsson in the battle of Stiklestad north east of Trondheim in the year 1030. Christian soldiers were fighting on both sides in the battle, but shortly after the King's death, his bishop and parts of the clergy in Trondheim promoted his holiness. Their version of the story was that King Olav by his death had won a victory on behalf of Christ himself and of Christianity in Norway.

Soon, miracles were observed at his grave, pilgrims started to arrive in the city, and what was earlier known as the Christ Church in Trondheim became St Olav's church. In 1153 the first archbishop of Norway took Trondheim as his see, and as the keeper of the relics of the holy king, he and his successors became central in both the religious, cultural and political development of the country.

At that time, in the middle of the 12th century, there was no doubt that St Olav was the national saint of Norway, whom all the Norwegian kings were obliged to worship, obey and swear formal oaths to. Trondheim with its cathedral and its Olav relics was for centuries the centre of a series of rituals, hymns, processions, travels – both popular and ecclesiastical ones. The most important period of the St Olav rituals during the liturgical year was the day of his death and martyrdom, 29th July, which was called 'Olsok' (i.e. the *vigilia Sancti Olavi*).

On 29th July the number of pilgrims was at its highest, the holy masses were frequent and quite an amount of miracles also took place according to medieval sources. The body of the holy king was the centre of a solemn procession through the streets of the city, and people crowded around the shrine to have a short glimpse of it or – even better – to touch it. Historical descriptions from the early 16th century indicate that St Olav's Day really was a very important religious feast, a meeting point between the ecclesiastical elite and the popular culture (Bø 1955).

The prohibited Olav

All these ritual traditions were seemingly put to an end. In the years 1536 and 1537 Norway – together with Denmark, as the two countries at that time had the same king – rather suddenly and



There are few contemporary descriptions of the Medieval rituals in the cathedral of Trondheim on St Olav's Day, and no contemporary paintings or illustrations of them. In 1897, however, the Norwegian artist Andreas Bloch tried to imagine how a full procession with the Saint's shrine might have looked like. He based his drawing on the few existing sources and on the interior of the cathedral as it was reconstructed during the 19th century. *(Reproduction by Arthur Sand, Oslo)*

brutally became the object of a Lutheran reformation. After a short period of military confrontations between King Christian III and the last Roman Catholic archbishop, Olav Engelbrektsson, the old church institutions simply were dissolved by the new authorities. Members of the local clergy were, for the most part, allowed to stay in their offices, but the archbishop was forced to leave the country, the bishops were put to prison and new, Lutheran ones were appointed by the King (Amundsen 2005).

These incidents were the real starting point of Norway being a part of the Danish kingdom, mostly looked upon as one of many Danish provinces. This situation lasted until 1814, when – as a part of the negotiations after the first defeat of Napoleon – Norway was transferred to Sweden as a territorial compensation for its loss of Finland five years earlier. This new union lasted until 1905, when Norway proclaimed itself a totally independent state with its own king.

What, then, happened with St Olav during these centuries of politically controlled Lutheranism? After the Lutheran reformation in Norway in 1537, the rituals and traditions relating to his shrine, to St Olav's Day and to the pilgrimages were of course prohibited. However, the popular interest in the king's body obviously must have been so strong, that the new Lutheran authorities actually did not dare just to dispose of it immediately. As a part of the greed common to all those monarchs adopting the new principles of the apostate Martin Luther, King Christian III ordered the most valuable shrine of St Olav to be taken apart, melted down and sent in pieces to Copenhagen.

But the old Saint King himself surprisingly enough stayed in his old cathedral for several decades. Actually, Swedish soldiers were – in the middle of the 1560s – able to steal his body and bring it towards Uppsala. They were stopped at the border, and by military force they were compelled to return his relics to the Norwegians. Not until ten years later – in the 1570s – the Danish commander in Trondheim ordered St Olav's body to be buried in an anonymous grave inside the cathedral. The probable reason for this was that the number of pilgrims and other visitors interested in the relics in the church had decreased – or rather that the Lutheran authorities at this time estimated the risks by such an action to be far less than they had been forty years earlier.

Vernacular traditions

Still, in many parts of Norway there existed popular feast traditions especially at Olsok time. Many of these feast traditions were related to and even marking the high season of pasturing in the mountains of Norway. St Olav's Day made it possible for young people to meet, dance and drink, or it was a day were generations met. But Olsok was far from the most important feast day in the farmers' ritual year. And it is hard to decide if Norwegian farmers say in the 19th century were aware of the historical relationship between Olsok and the old national saint of Norway. However, Saint Olav's name and his reputation as a big magician, a hero and as the keeper of law and order was kept alive by quite a number of legends, fairy tales and verses all until the middle of the 19th century. But at that time these traditions do not seem to have been specifically connected to St Olav's Day (Bing 1919; Bø 1980, 1985).

A national awakening

Although in union with Sweden from 1814, Norway and at least many educated Norwegians became more and more convinced that the country had an identity of its own. It was not Danish, and definitely not Swedish. Since in their opinion Norway had been refused an independent historical development for centuries, the spokesmen for the new, national movement became growingly interested in the medieval history of their country. They were convinced Lutherans, and had problems with facing the Roman Catholic part of this period's history. But all the same – the breakdown of the Roman Catholic Church and the defeat of the last Archbishop in the 16th century was looked upon as a tragic symbol of Norway losing its independence.

For many 19th century activists even the destiny of St Olav was placed within the same historical framework: throughout the Medieval centuries, he was the symbol of a separate and independent Norwegian kingdom, he was a national hero. Even more important, scholars in the discipline of folklore studies were able to show how the peasant culture of Norway had kept the memory of the Saint King all until the present times! The conclusion was that among the independent and self-conscious farmers the true Norwegian culture had been preserved through centuries of Danish suppression.

What, then, was not more natural than that in the last decades of the 19th century, Norwegian nationalists also showed a growing interest in the *Olsok rituals and traditions*, not only in the *St Olav* figure as such? It must be pointed out here that many of the more important nationalists in Norway also were interested in the historical and future importance of the church, and even were clergymen. As an important part of their mythology recalling the heroic past of Norway, they also tried to re-ritualize Olsok as a meeting place between historical traditions and ecclesiastical symbols. Was it not so that the religion – although it was in the Roman Catholic version – had been the most important guarantee for Norwegian independence all until the early 16th century? To create a new tradition combining past and present, church and people, liturgy with summer processions would then be a wise strategy.

Historical revisionism

One of the first – if not *the* first – sign of this development is found in the 1850s. A clergyman in the Western part of Norway, Otto Theodor Krogh, then argued that the Norwegian church should revitalize the memory of St Olav. More precisely he suggested that a new liturgy for St Olav's Day should be written, and used together with an impressive procession of Lutheran clergymen and bishops in the city of Trondheim every 29th July. Krogh's argument was that now, as the Roman Catholics again had established their worship in Norway as a result of a new, very liberal law from 1845, they should not be able to monopolize the Norwegian saint. However, Otto Theodor Krogh was aggressively met in the public debate following his suggestion. Most of all, the fear of and disrespect for Roman Catholicism were the dominant voice in the debate.

For a period, any project considering the reestablishment of St Olav's Day as a national feast day was not considered to be a realistic one. But things were about to change. In the 1890s, Norwegian nationalism among both artists, scholars and politicians became even stronger and more aggressive – a fact that was to be the most important element in the development that lead to the dissolution of the Norwegian-Swedish union in 1905.

Even enemies of the Lutheran church now were more than eager to argue the case of Olsok. In 1893, the radical, nationalist theologian

Christopher Bruun suggested that St Olav's Day should be restored as the most important feast day of the Norwegian church. Only thus the church would be able to remember the deeds of its spiritual and national fathers, of which the Saint King was the most important. The Norwegian bishops rejected Bruun's proposal, but few years later, in 1897, the famous poet and activist, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, supported Bruun.

Even if he publicly had renounced his Christian belief, Bjørnson found Bruun's proposal a very interesting and important one. Bjørnson's motif seems to have been to support any action and any institution that would promote the independence of the Norwegian state. And Bjørnson went even further: 'No other person has – Christ and his disciples not regarded – contributed more to the mildness, richness and high moral standards in the Norwegian church than St Olav,' Bjørnson proclaimed (Østang 1997).

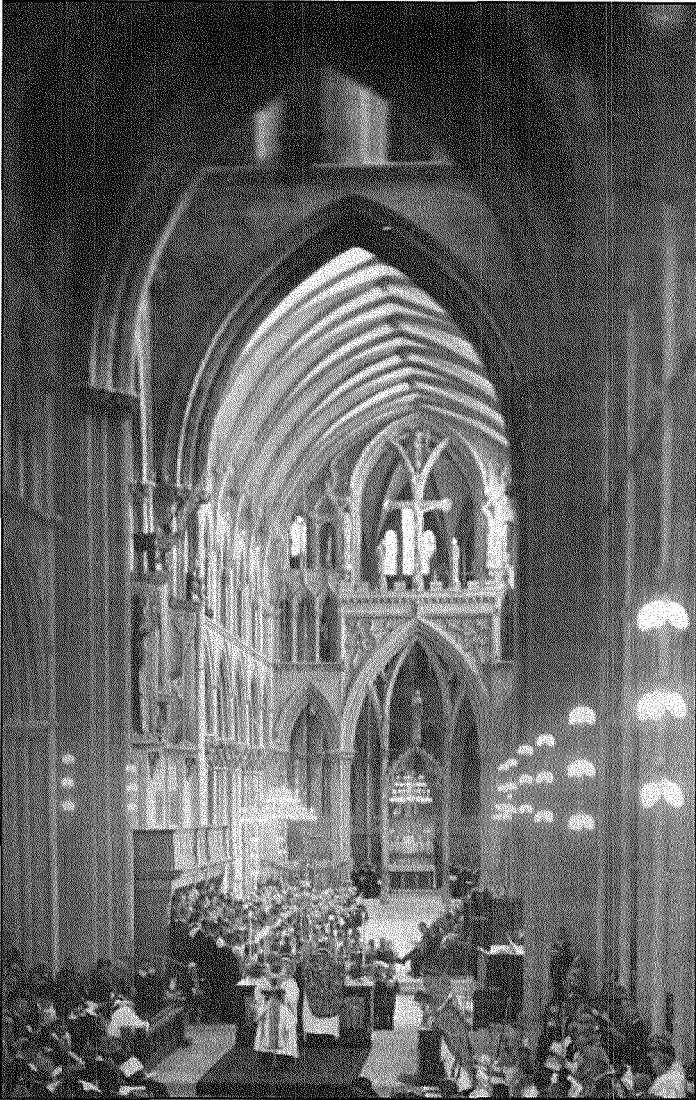
The Trondheim anniversary, 1897

The year 1897 was consciously chosen by the experienced strategist Bjørnson. The city of Trondheim was celebrating its one thousandth anniversary that year, and with help from some of his supporters – among them Christopher Bruun – Bjørnson publicly asked the bishop of Trondheim if it would not be a brilliant idea to arrange a special service in the cathedral on St Olav's Day combining the memory of the Saint King with local and national pride of its past and with the celebration of summer.

As a result of a public debate the bishop refused Bjørnson's proposal. Even if – the bishop publicly declared – the Norwegian government would decide that such a service should take place, he would personally see to it that no clergyman under his supervision took part in it. This shows how the Olav's Day proposal was interpreted as a nationalist and political provocation by the more conservative part of the Norwegian clergy (Østang 1997).

The St Olav Jubilee, 1930

The harshness of the debate in 1897 is even more surprising if one compares the events of that year with what happened some thirty



In 1930 the celebration of the 900th anniversary of St Olav's death in Trondheim impressively demonstrated that the Norwegian Lutheran state church had made the Saint King their hero – four hundred years after a reformation repudiating all memories of the most important saint of the Medieval church. The ceremonies on 29th July 1930 were intended to be national and international demonstrations of the power of Christian tradition in Norway. *(Reproduction by Arthur Sand, Oslo)*

years later. In the years before 1930, the Norwegian Lutheran church in cooperation with both the national government and local political authorities were planning a high scale 900th anniversary of the Stiklestad battle, the death of St Olav and of the establishment of Christianity in Norway. This time, only a few persons publicly opposed the plans of making the year 1930 and 29th July symbolically important by arranging religious services, culture festivals, museum exhibitions and musical concerts. It was not unimportant that this also was turned into a celebration of a milestone in the restoration of the Trondheim cathedral, namely the reshaping of the west wing of the church (Kolsrud 1937).

Instead of raising a new public debate, the Church of Norway in 1930 for the first time made 29th July one of its major feast days, with a special liturgy written for it, revitalization of the medieval symbols of the Norwegian church and renewed interest in for instance Norwegian plainsong traditions, medieval church buildings and religious art. Even if the events in 1930 in fact were extraordinary, they introduced a new trend for instance in many local parishes, where the church and the vicar – eventually in cooperation with local organisations for youth, for farmers or for local history – started to arrange special services on St Olav’s Day, often in combination with a local culture festival, a small exhibition, a lecture on a historical subject. There are also examples of new, nationalistic Olsok rituals focussing on the use of flags, dancing ‘folk dances,’ presenting small historical tableaux, nationalistic public speeches, youth performances and church services (Hodne 1995; Sørbye 2000).

During the 20th century Olsok has become acknowledged as an important feast day and annual ritual in many parts of the country. The most recent element in this process is that Olsok has been made the most central day in creation of the modern or rather post-modern pilgrim traditions in Norway. Since the last part of the 1990s quite a few pilgrims have found their way to St Olav, the Trondheim Cathedral. For many of them, the arrival in the old city which once housed the relics of the Saint King is on 29th July. These more or less organized groups are a very interesting and even surprising element in a country still dominated by a Lutheran state church. There are, however, few or no signs of the Lutheran clergy opposing this new tradition. On the contrary, the pilgrims are welcomed and instructed in ‘correct’ dressing and behaviour by Lutheran ministers (Amundsen 2002).

Continuity or discontinuity?

In some local societies these public events on St Olav's Day in some way or another seem to have developed from older, popular gatherings at this time of the summer – before the harvest, when living was rather easy on the countryside. But it is hard to find a general and direct line of continuity between the ancient, pre-modern traditions on this day and the public traditions that obviously were *created* in the 1920s and 1930s (cf. Bringéus 1999).

I find it more convincing to point out the discontinuity between the modern St Olav's Day rituals and feasts and the old ones. Even if it would be possible to find some sort of a local continuity regarding gatherings and rituals on this specific day, it is rather obvious to me that what happened with the Norwegian St Olav's Day in the period between the world wars, was the creation of new national and religious rituals and feasts. There is – and this is very important, I think – no indications that for instance local feast traditions on Olsok in the 18th or 19th century had any specific religious or 'national' connotations. They were only more or less formal gatherings marking and defining a quiet period during the summer (Solheim 1952).

What is specific about the new Olsok rituals and feasts, on the other hand, is that they were developed as a specific combination of national and religious motifs. What is interesting, though, is that even if the Olsok rituals in the 1920s and 1930s definitely were invented traditions in the Habsbawmian sense, and even if they were developed by an ideological elite among the Norwegian Lutheran clergy at that time, the Olsok rituals spread locally.

What happened then, and what still happens according to my observations during the later years, was that the Olsok celebration turned into local rituals, with local organizers focussing on what they find interesting, relevant or inspiring. Local Olsok rituals often are less national or nationalistic than they are – local, i.e. local manifestations of skills, of vivid organisational activities, of pride over the old parish church – or just a local opportunity of meeting one's neighbours (at least the elderly ones) in a quiet period during the summer. Thus, St Olav's Day might be said somehow to have ended where it started, as a meeting point between elites and common people, and a chance to have a good time.

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A Spring Procession from the Bronze Age depicted on a Rock-Carving in Högsbyn, Western Sweden

Prehistoric rock art constitutes one of the richest resources we have in hand to enable us to begin reading cosmologies and the rituals.

In this paper we want to discuss a procession in Bronze Age rock-carvings from the west of Sweden, concentrating on the carving site of Högsbyn in Dalsland, Sweden, and in particular on the form and character of the depiction of a procession with ships, animals, instruments and human figures.

'Procession-rock'

The rock-carving area of Högsbyn is located in Tisselskog, Dalsland, in western Sweden. It is approximately 90 km from Högsbyn to the county of Bohuslän, where one of the world's largest rock-carving areas is located (Pl. 9, 10).

In Högsbyn there are about 3000 separate rock-carvings scattered on sixty different rock faces. The main area is about 600 x 100 metres wide. The rock-carvings in this area date back to the later Nordic Bronze Age, i. e. 1000 – 500 B C. The rock-carving we are about to discuss is in the centre of this area and can be dated to around 700 B C.

This particular rock was discovered in the beginning of the 1930s and was already from the start called the 'procession-rock.' During fieldwork analyses in the 1990s we were able to complete the story of the rock. As the name suggests, a procession is depicted.

At the head of the procession a ship is pulled on wheels. On the ship is a human figure, probably a woman, who is performing a backward somersault. Alongside the ship, a tall human figure is walking while playing a bronze-horn. Bronze-horns are often found as sacrifices, two by two, lowered in mosses. Most of the finds have been made in Denmark, but parts of a bronze-horn have been found in Värmland, the neighbouring county north of Dalsland. Other rock-carvings from Bohuslän show men playing on similar horns.

Behind the first ship, follows another one pulled by a horse, such being very uncommon in rock-carvings. A very good example comes from Östergötland. Horses pulling ordinary carriages or sun wheels are more common.

As on the first ship there is a voltigeur on the second ship. In Bohuslän there are similar pictures with voltigeurs on ships. Small bronze-figurines have been found in Denmark representing women doing backward somersaults. Probably they had originally been mounted on small wooden miniature-ships.

Behind the ship comes a serpent, and then three human figures, two of whom are armed with spears. All three are wearing animal skins with tails attached. One of the humans also wears a helmet or something similar, with horns, on the head. Finds of bronze-helmets and tiaras with horns have been made in Danish mosses. The procession thus ends by three suncrosses. What you can see on the rock face is thus a procession from the Bronze Age. Many of the individual figures in the procession have their equivalence on the rock face of other sites in Sweden. However, a continuous depiction of such a procession as the one in Högsbyn is unique.

The Bronze Age religion was based on a fertility cult, where the beginning of the New Year and its cyclic motion, fertilization, birth, life and death were the central themes and with the focus on a female goddess of fertility, later called Nerthus.

Carnival processions

An important part of this cult consisted of processions and the use of sacred carriages similar to Tacitus' description of Nerthus. When was Europe eventually christianised, these spring processions and the fertility cult take a Christian form and become Carnival processions instead. The Carnival procession still authorised the

fertility cult and its indecent form survived far into Christian times. The monk Rudolf writes in 1133 that at the Carnival processions ‘shameful songs were sung and men and women went away after the procession and did things better unspoken of ...’

The Carnival procession, in spite of its changed contents, kept its outer form. In a description of a Carnival procession dating back to the middle of the 19th century, we can easily recognise the Bronze Age procession from Högsbyn:

Similar ships on wheels or runners occur during Lent and at the markets in the whole of Flanders and in many parts of France. They carry musicians and masked Carnival figures in procession are pulled by horses, and grotesque figures perform on either side as well as giant human figures, dragons and wheels of fortune.

Just as the ancient serpent has been replaced by a medieval dragon, the wheel of fortune here mentioned refers to the medieval description of ‘Fortunas wheel’ which has replaced the sun wheels.

Ships pulled on runners by horses or on wheels as a part of the rock-carving ships and the ships in the above description should be called ‘ship carriages’. The most common explanation of the word ‘Carnival’ used to be *carne vale* (lit. ‘farewell meat’). Modern philologists have shown that the origin of the word is considerably older than the Catholic Lent festivities, and that the word originates from the words *carrus navalis* (lit. ship carriage).

What was the purpose with the Bronze Age procession depicted on a rock face in Högsbyn? To answer this question, we must first try to gain an insight into the beliefs and cults of ancient times.

The bull cult

The bull cult is a significant part of many agricultural fertility cults. The bull – or more commonly the horns only – represents masculinity and potency. The bull cult occurs as early as the Neolithic cultures of the Anatolian highlands. The powerful bull was interpreted as a symbol of strength, courage and the breeding force of nature, but it also had a connection with love, fertility, death and resurrection. In the fertility cults the bull is often a symbol of spring and summer.

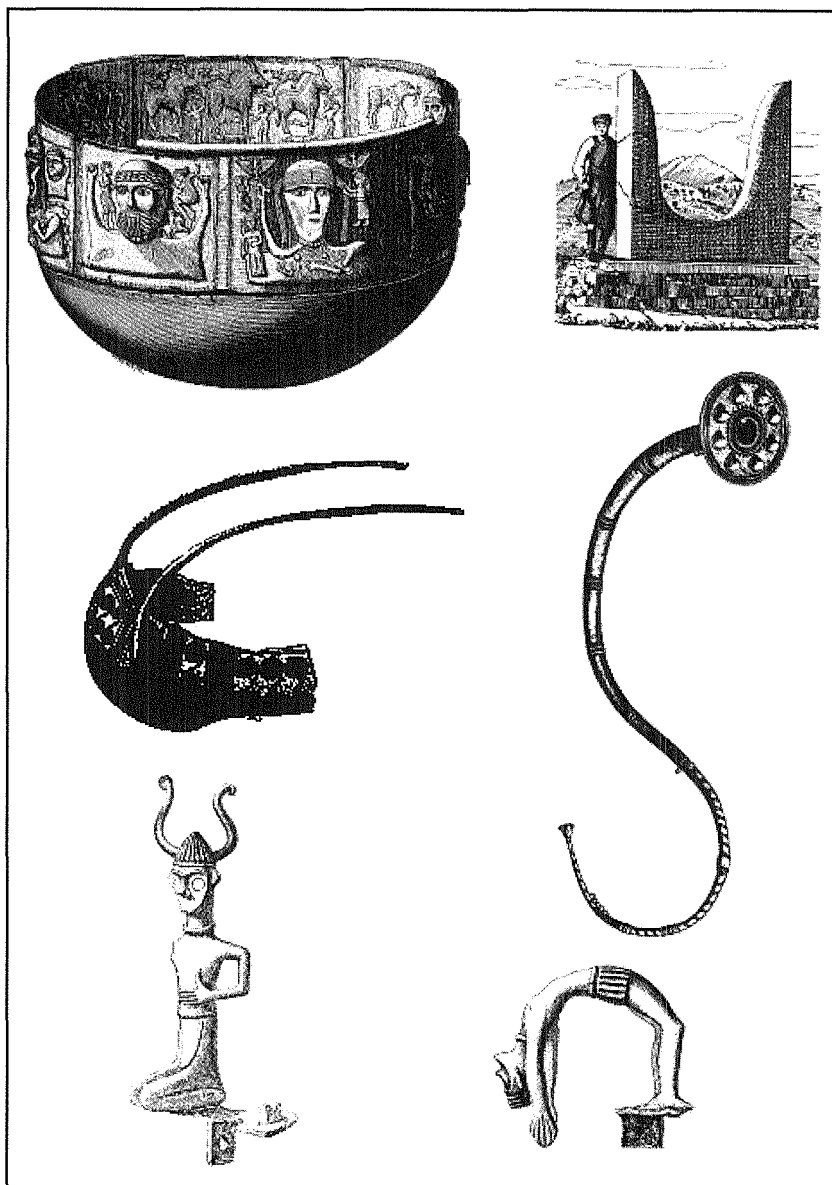
The bull cult appears during the 11th century BC in the Aegean Bronze Age cultures of Greece, Crete and the islands in the Aegean

Sea. In Minoan belief and cult, bulls played a large part. Bulls, stylised bull horns and double axes were all parts of Minoan belief and its symbols and cults. Bull horns were hung in palaces; bulls were caught with nets or snares and were common sacrificial animals. The bull was also a god, the more short-lived husband of the great goddess (the precursor of the Greek fertility goddess Demeter). He lived and died according to the seasons of the year.

An extraordinary phenomenon in this worship of the bull, which was both sacrificial animal and god, is the ceremony of the bull acrobat, bull-jumping. There are several descriptions of this ceremony, but the best known is a fresco from Knossos. The ceremony includes an acrobatic dance, in which young girls and boys stood in front of a raging bull. They jumped up in front of the animal, grabbed the horns, made a somersault over its back and finally landed on their feet behind the bull.

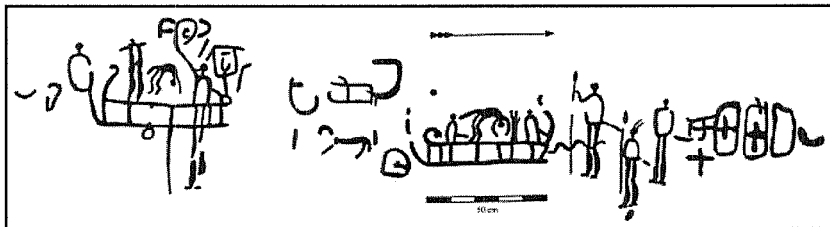
The cult of the bull was also found among the Celts and it was so well established there that it can be traced back to pre-Celtic times when it was used in the worship of the sun. One of the Nordic finds that constitute evidence for the Celtic cult is the large sacrificial cauldron made of silver which was found in a moss in 1891 in Gundestrup, Denmark. The cauldron consists of a circular plate at the bottom and the sides of the cauldron consist of five plates on the inside and seven on the outside, each with religious motifs. The circular plate at the bottom is a technical and artistic masterpiece. The silver has been hammered out into the shape of a bull, whose head rises high above the bottom. The motif shows the sacrifice of a bull as a mythological battle, where a bare-breasted goddess attacks the bull with a sword. It is already down on its knees. The outcome of the battle is already clear: the female goddess defeats and sacrifices the powerful bull. The bull cult had significance in the rituals of pre-Celtic and Celtic times. Iconography, stone inscriptions and sagas show that the bull kept its reputation as a cult animal in Gaul even after the Roman conquest.

In the Celts' bull cult fertility, strength and the will to fight were all qualities of the bull's symbolic cult. In the procession on the rock-carving from Högshbyn a man plays a large bronze-horn as he walks. A couple of different kinds of bronze-horns are among the North European finds. The older kind is slightly twisted and it is development of the natural bull's horn. The bull's horns were, as we mentioned earlier, a symbol of fertility. Eventually they developed



The 'Gundestrupscauldron' of silver. On the front is the fertility goddess together with a man and an animal by her breasts. On the inside there are three bulls about to be sacrificed.

(Picture from Montelius 1895)



A Spring Procession from the Bronze Age depicted on a Rock-Carving in Högsbyn, Western Sweden. © Tommy Andersson

into the large, twisted bronze-horns, of which about fifty have been found in southern Scandinavian mosses. The sound of the horn was dull and monotonous like the sound of a rutting bull.

The spearmen in the procession are probably wearing bull hides and bull horns, either natural or made of bronze. Finds of horned helmets made of bronze as well as several figurines with horned helmets were made in Denmark. Horned human figures often playing horns are also common in rock-carvings.

Female acrobats somersault over ships. They can be associated with the bull cult. Among the young men on the famous fresco from Knossos there are also scantily dressed young women. On the small figurines with acrobats found in Denmark there are also scantily dressed women wearing only a thin skirt. This emphasises the connection between the acrobatic dance, the goddess of fertility and the bull cult. In the Nordic cult the dance is performed only to honour the bull god and the beginning of summer, and not the animals sharp and deadly horns.

Final comments

The unique procession in rock-carvings in Högsbyn dates from the later Nordic Bronze Age (1000 – 500 B C). The rock face shows us a procession in the service of fertility. Such processions still exist in a degenerate form as Carnival defiles.

In the Nordic cult the differences between summer and winter are significant. A late spring or an early winter may cause starvation and death. Shifting of seasons implied critical phases and the purpose of the rock-carvings and the Bronze Age cult might have been

intended to make shifting easier. Through different kinds of rituals people of the Bronze Age assured themselves that spring, summer, autumn and winter would follow each other in a regular manner. This purpose was that winter and death were only a temporary stage and that nature would revive in springtime. Therefore, it may be concluded that these rituals have been performed in connection with vernal and autumnal equinox.

The purpose of the procession has been to help spring and summer to come forth, a *rite de passage*. Spring and summer have been the symbol for the shortlived husband (the bull) of the fertility goddess. The bull with its strength and potency was a strong symbol for spring which gives birth to summer. By imitating the sound of the bull and playing the bronze-horns, dressing up like bulls and making somersaults to honour the bull god, people have tried to help summer to return. It is very likely that this cult took place during the vernal equinox. It is also possible that a similar cult existed during the autumnal equinox but with other features.

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Reclaiming Glastonbury

Processions as Pageantry, Protest and Power

The procession is a powerful, multivalent device. Processions can be used to celebrate, commemorate and intimidate; to protest and contest; to display and convey messages and meanings on a variety of levels.

In this article I demonstrate how different religious groups in Glastonbury draw on and create tradition in order to promote particular versions of the past and visions of the future, and in particular, I highlight the use of procession as a means whereby competing groups and discourses assert their contemporary claims on Glastonbury.

Glastonbury

Glastonbury occupies a unique position in the spiritual and spatial imagination of a variety of religious believers (see Bowman 1993, 2000, 2005; Prince and Riches, 2000; Ivakhiv 2001).¹ While on the

¹ I have been conducting fieldwork in Glastonbury for over a decade, recording developments in contemporary spirituality and changing religious trends. I am grateful to the many people who have given me time, opinions, and information there over the years.

As a result of publishing on Glastonbury over this extended period, there is inevitably some overlap between this article and previous publications, as a certain amount of repetition is necessary in contextualising this extraordinary place and this particular topic.

surface Glastonbury is simply a small town in rural Somerset with a strikingly shaped hill, Glastonbury Tor, it is many things to many people.

Some regard it as a significant prehistoric centre of Goddess worship; for others, Glastonbury's significance lies in the claim that it was the site of a great Druidic university, a centre of learning to which people flocked from all over Europe and beyond. There are those who suggest that in Glastonbury the Druids had anticipated the coming of Christianity, and that here the transition from the old religion to the new was smooth.

Glastonbury's Christian history is contested and has relied heavily on folk religion, defined by folklorist Don Yoder as 'the totality of all those views and practices of religion that exist among the people apart from and alongside the strictly theological and liturgical forms of the official religion' (1974: 14). For many Christians past and present, Glastonbury's status has rested on it being the 'cradle of English Christianity', the point at which Christianity took root in England, allegedly brought there by Joseph of Arimathea (the person who provided a tomb for Christ after the crucifixion) who is said to have established the first Christian church in the British Isles in Glastonbury (Bowman 1999). It is claimed that Joseph arrived in Glastonbury after the crucifixion with a staff which he thrust into the ground on arrival at Wearyall Hill; this staff took root and became the Glastonbury thorn, which flowers twice a year, in spring and around Christmas. (This legend is reinforced each December in a calendar custom, the Holy Thorn Ceremony, in which sprigs of the Christmas flowering thorn are cut and sent to the Queen.) Joseph is also reputed to have brought the chalice used at the Last Supper, the Grail, although in some versions of the legend he brought phials containing the blood and sweat of Christ (Carley 1996: 181-4). Some associate the chalice with the red staining waters of Chalice Well, said by some to run red in memory of Christ's sacrifice on the cross (Pl. 11). Even more significantly, some believe that Jesus himself visited Glastonbury with St Joseph in relation to trade, and that he may even have spent some of the time before he commenced his ministry living there (Bowman 2003-4).

There are those who regard Glastonbury as a bastion of Celtic Christianity, for traditionally saints such as David, Patrick and Bridget were said to have come here. Glastonbury has also been

identified with the Isle of Avalon, the place where King Arthur was taken for healing after his last battle (Ashe 1957). The connection between Joseph and Arimathea and the Grail, and the centrality of the quest for the Holy Grail in Arthurian legend are seen as significant, and the fortuitous ‘discovery’ in 1191 of the body of Arthur in the grounds of Glastonbury Abbey seemed to confirm the association between Arthur, Glastonbury and Avalon. There is also the legend that Arthur lies sleeping in Avalon, waiting to return at some time of great national emergency.

By the Middle Ages Glastonbury Abbey was a major pilgrimage centre, boasting a huge collection of relics and a fine library. The Abbey’s Lady Chapel was allegedly built of the site of Joseph’s original church. The Abbey was brutally suppressed at the time of the Reformation, with the elderly Abbot Richard Whiting and two monks being dragged through the town and hanged on the Tor, and the Abbey was left to fall into ruins. The centre of Glastonbury is dominated by the site of the now ruined Abbey.

In the twentieth century Glastonbury became the focus for religious experimentation of various sorts, with influences from the Celtic revival, Theosophy and esoteric Christianity at the start of the twentieth century (Benham 1993) to its status by the end of the century as the epicentre of New Age in England, Heart Chakra of planet earth, and an important point for alien contact (Bowman 1993, 2000, 2005; Prince and Riches 2000; Ivakhiv 2001).

Pilgrimage and procession in Glastonbury

The most superficially ‘traditional’ or conventional processions in Glastonbury are the annual Anglican and Roman Catholic pilgrimages, both of which centre on the Abbey. (For more details of these pilgrimages see, Bowman 2004.) Although for the sake of clarity I refer to the Anglican Pilgrimage and the Catholic Pilgrimage, both refer to themselves as the Glastonbury Pilgrimage.

Although Glastonbury Abbey fell into private hands and was left to ruin, in 1908 ownership passed to the (Anglican) Bath and Wells Diocesan Trust (Carley 1996: 175); that year, after a procession from the Anglican St John the Baptist Church on the High Street, a service of thanksgiving was held in the Abbey grounds. In June 1924 another service was held in the Abbey grounds, again preceded

by a procession from St John's Church (Hext, 2004) and in 1926 the West of England Pilgrimage Association. was founded; Anglican pilgrimage processions between St John's Church and the Abbey grounds have taken place more or less continuously since the 1930's. In the Anglican Pilgrimage a statue of the Virgin Mary is carried, banners are carried, hymns are sung, and a grand array of male clerical ceremonial garb is on display during the short procession down the High Street and into the Abbey grounds. (As Anglicans involved in the Pilgrimage tend to be Anglo-Catholic or 'High' Church of England, and because there is an Orthodox Christian presence at the Pilgrimage, the Anglican Pilgrimage does not allow female clergy to participate, despite ordination of women priests in the Church of England for over a decade.)

A formal Roman Catholic pilgrimage seems to have been 'revived' in 1950. The Tor is the starting point of the Catholic pilgrimage, in memory of Abbot Whiting and the two other monks who were hanged there at the time of the Dissolution. Thus, while there are visually similar aspects between the Anglican and Catholic pilgrimage processions – the carrying of the statue of Our Lady of Glastonbury, the display of banners, and an obvious hierarchy of male clerics – significantly more of the town is encompassed by the Catholic pilgrimage than the Anglican one; from the ruined chapel of St Michael on the Tor, through town to the Abbey ruins. There was a particular irony when in 2003 the Rev Maxine Marsh (female vicar of St John the Baptist, who cannot take part in the Anglican pilgrimage) was invited to participate in the Catholic Pilgrimage as a symbol of Christian unity. Since the 1980's both pilgrimages have taken place on the same weekend, Anglican on Saturday, Roman Catholic on Sunday. For many years the Anglican Pilgrimage occurred on the last Saturday in June, but as this sometimes clashed with the nearby Glastonbury Festival of Performing Arts, the Christian pilgrimages now usually takes place on the second weekend in July.

It is important to understand that in recent decades, when Christianity has appeared embattled in general society, and specifically in relation to the great variety of 'alternative' spiritual activity that has been taking place in Glastonbury since the 1960's onwards, the Pilgrimages, and in particular the processions, have functioned as an important means of Christianity reasserting its claim on Glastonbury. Together these two pilgrimages in some sense reclaim Glastonbury for Christianity, and many pilgrims find it refreshing

and invigorating to be part of a large, public band of Christians in a place where, some believe, Christianity first took root in England.

However, since 1996, there has been considerable additional processional activity, connected with the annual Glastonbury Goddess Conference. The development of this tradition, its fluid nature and the different agendas that it addresses will be the main focus of the paper.

The Goddess in Glastonbury

Many devotees of the Goddess believe that Glastonbury was significant focus of Goddess spirituality in pre-Christian times, and that the Abbey was deliberately sited on the cultic centre in an attempt to obliterate devotion to her. Some discern huge figures of the Goddess in the contours of the Tor and in other landscape features, and see the red waters of Chalice Well as the menstrual flow of the Goddess in Glastonbury.

The Glastonbury Goddess Conference is always held around the 'Celtic' festival of Lammis / Lughnasa (1 August). Inspired by 'an old Celtic image' of a cart with huge wheels containing an image of the Goddess, the Conference Organiser Kathy Jones had the idea of the 'Goddess in the Cart Procession', in which an image of the Goddess would be pulled through the streets of Glastonbury, (re)establishing Her presence in the town. Over the years this procession has developed in a variety of ways, with changes and expansions in the ground covered – physically and metaphorically – by the Goddess effigies.

It is with the Goddess processions that we can really observe the fluid nature and visual power of pageantry, and the political / politicised power of the procession. Increasingly the Goddess Conference agenda has expanded to reclaim not just the Christian centre of Glastonbury but other parts of town and other aspects of Glastonbury's spiritual past.

The Goddess in the Cart Procession started as a procession through the streets of Glastonbury and up the Tor, originally with a large effigy of the Goddess constructed at the conference pulled in a cart. Each year in rotation a model of the maiden, the mother or the crone goddess, was made for the procession on the last day of the conference, the Sunday, the most public aspect of the event.

However, after the cart was stolen, an image was carried by putting poles through the base, and in 2003 nine smaller wicker goddess figures ('the Nine Morgens'), each light enough for an individual to carry, were made instead. In recent years the procession has also featured large colourful banners depicting a range of female deities, reflecting the tendency within the contemporary Goddess movement to regard as aspects of the universal sacred female all Celtic, Egyptian, Near Eastern, Greek, Roman, Indian, African and other indigenous goddesses, Bodhisattvas in female form and the Virgin Mary.

The co-organiser, Kathy Jones very self-consciously tries to keep the procession fluid and spontaneous, and is always open to new ideas – one year a huge Chinese-style dragon led the procession, in 2003 it was led by the Mendip Morris men! The 2003 Conference publicity captures the interplay of tradition and innovation:

Walk in the ancient, yet ever new, Goddess in the Cart Procession through the streets of Glastonbury to Chalice Well, flying Goddess banners on Glastonbury Tor.

Jones likes the idea of 'beating boundaries', and she sees the procession as 'claiming space', as a way of saying that 'this belongs to Her'. The Goddess Procession used to go anticlockwise, on a less public route, but since 2000 the Goddess Procession has gone 'sunwise', leaving from the Town Hall (beside the entrance to the Abbey), up the High Street 'circumambulating the Abbey', to the Tor. It is now, in effect, a mirror image of the Christian Pilgrimage processions, in particular the Catholic Pilgrimage procession which starts from the Tor and proceeds to the Abbey. Images of female deity are carried and some of the banners depict the Virgin Mary, but the participants are largely female and there are no male authority figures. There are chants and songs familiar in Goddess spirituality, as well as those developed at the conferences.

Reclaiming Bridget

Having created a mirror image of the Christian pilgrimages and, through the banners, incorporated the Christian Virgin Mary into the Goddess in the Cart Procession, the next expansion of Goddess activity came in 2004 with the conference theme 'Celebrating Bridie

and the Maiden Goddess'. I have already mentioned the tradition that St Bridget or Bride,² along with other Celtic saints, reputedly visited Glastonbury. St Bridget's legend is that she was the daughter of a Celtic chieftain (but in some versions daughter of a Druid) with a Christian mother. St Bridget is said to have established her abbey c. 480 on the Hill of Kildare (*Cill Dara* – 'Cell' or 'Church of the Oak') in Ireland. At Kildare, Bridget's Fire (a perpetual flame) was kept alive by Bridget and her nuns, some claim as a continuation of a pre-Christian Druidic tradition on that site, until the time of the reformation. St Bridget allegedly visited Glastonbury 488 and spent time at Beckery or Bride's Mound, an area on the edge of Glastonbury where there was once a community of female religious. An image of St Bridget with a cow appears on the tower of St Michael's chapel on the Tor. However, Kathy Jones and other Goddess devotees see St Bridget as a thinly disguised form of the Goddess Bridie: 'Where we find St Bridget we *know* that the goddess Bridie was once honoured' (Jones 2000: 16).

In 'Celebrating Bridie and the Maiden Goddess', the 2004 Conference events exemplified both the flexibility and the politicised agenda of processional activity in Glastonbury, as well as the increasing confidence and ambition of the Goddess movement there. Since the Conference began in 1996, Goddess spirituality in Glastonbury has become increasingly visible; the Glastonbury Goddess Temple opened in 2002 and became England's first officially registered Goddess Temple in 2003 (Pl. 12). In 2004, for the first time, the procession was staged on Thursday, rather than Sunday, making it considerably more noticeable to a greater number of people than ever. Whereas in previous years the procession had included Chalice Well and the Tor, it took in four sacred sites – Chalice Hill, the Tor, Chalice Well, and Bushey Coombe (a site that Jones feels is strongly connected with the Goddess).

In addition, on Friday, the entire day was devoted to 'Honouring Bridie'. The guests of honour for the day were two Irish Catholic nuns who ceremonially brought the sacred flame of Kildare to Glastonbury, and relit it in a ceremony at the conference venue on Friday morning. They spoke of how it might be futile to try separating

² I am standardising the spelling of Bridget here for the sake of consistency, but she is variously known as 'Bridget,' 'Brigit,' 'Brigid,' or other variations thereon.

the historical Christian Bridget from the goddess since the two are now so interwoven in myth, and concluded

St Bridget stands at the meeting of two worlds. Neither the boundaries of Christianity nor the older beliefs can contain her exclusively.

There then followed a session in which Bridget crosses were made (following the Irish vernacular Catholic tradition) to be carried in yet another procession, for on the Friday afternoon the image of Bridie was carried to Bride's Mound. The route took the procession past the Catholic Church, and past the Holy Thorn, which some stopped to decorate. More ground than ever was covered for the Goddess, and further 'Christian' sites reclaimed. Bride's Mound was beautifully decorated for the occasion, and the Kildare flame was placed at the centre of the ritual circle. It was felt both that Bridget had come home, and that Bridget was reclaiming her territory.

Final comments

There are obviously many facets to the use of processions in Glastonbury, by both Christians and Goddess devotees. Both groups regard Glastonbury as significant and for that reason want to be there in the public, celebratory and assertive manner provided by procession. Both groups creatively utilise the traditional forms of banners, images and song to declare their allegiances. Each summer, however, different claims are being staked, different pasts celebrated, different visions for the future pursued.

This snapshot of the very creative and targeted ways in which processions are regarded and being used in contemporary Glastonbury, as a tool in establishing presence and priority in both overt and subtle ways, reminds us of the power, complexity and flexibility of the procession.

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Who is Jack a Lent?

Personifications of Shrovetide and Lent in 16th and 17th Century England

In 1620 the London satirist and ‘water-poet’ John Taylor published his famous prose work, ‘Jack a Lent: His Beginning and Entertainment: with the mad pranks of his Gentleman-Usher Shroue-Tuesday that goes before him, and his Foot-man Hunger attending. With new additions, dedicated both to the Butchers Farewell and the Fishmongers Entrance: written to choake Melancholy, and to feed Mirth.’ The woodcut from the title page features Shrovetide and Lent as they were commonly depicted in this period, images of feasting and fasting respectively. First in the procession is a well-rounded Shrove-Tuesday, carrying a basting spoon and leading Jack a Lent’s curious mount – a four-legged fish – by the reins. Bringing up the rear is Jack’s ‘Foot-man Hunger,’ a tall, gaunt man carrying a banner draped with fishes, and Jack himself is similarly featured, wearing a wide-brimmed hat through which his hair stands up like straw (Taylor 1620). This is a visual allusion to the proverb, ‘His hair grows through his hood’, or ‘His hair grows through his hat’ (Whiting with Whiting 1968: 258, entry H22,)¹ signifying penury. Jack a Lent, ‘with a tricke that he hath ...

¹ This proverbial image is found also in Bruegel’s 1563 engraving, *The Thin Kitchen* (or *Poor Kitchen*), which predates the Jack a Lent woodcut by fifty-six years. According to Malcolm Jones, the similarity between them indicates familiarity with Bruegel’s work in Jacobean England, and *The Thin Kitchen* can in fact be regarded as the source for Taylor’s artist (forthcoming publication). *The Thin Kitchen*

JACK A LENT

H I S

Beginning and Entertainment: with the ma
pranks of his Gentleman-Usher Shroue-Tuesday that goes before
him, and his Foot-man Hunger attending.

With new additions, dedicated both to the *Butchers* farewell
and the *Fishmongers* Entrance: written to choake Melan-
choly, and to feed Mirth.

By JOHN TAYLOR.

Hunger.

Jack a Lent.

Shroue-Tuesday.



London printed for J. T. and are to be sold at Christ Church Gate. 1620.

Title page woodcut from John Taylor's *Jack a Lent: his Beginning and Entertainment: with the ma[d] pranks of his Gentleman-Usher Shroue-Tuesday that goes before him, and his Foot-man Hunger attending* (1620).

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is in... the most part of the Christian world at once and the self same time' (Taylor 1620: 7) always preceded by 'a fat grosse bursten-gutted groome, called *Shroue-Tuesday*, one whose manners shewes that hee is better fed than taught' (Taylor 1620: 8). Such personifications of Shrovetide and Lent were frequently depicted or alluded to in proverbial speech, literature, visual art, popular plays, pageant-processions and court masques. In this paper I will explore these personifications against the backdrop of Shrovetide and Lent as they were observed in sixteenth and seventeenth century England.

Shrovetide and Lent were, of course, phases of the ecclesiastical year which signalled a return to certain ritual behaviour, including the consumption and avoidance of certain foods; hence the revelry of Carnival or Shrovetide and the sobriety of Lent. The three days of Shrovetide were characterized by a number of violent activities and the frenetic consumption of foods prohibited during the long penitential fast, when pancakes, collops and apple fritters would give way to a meagre diet dominated by fish, mostly herrings. In Ronald Hutton's words, Shrovetide was 'a last opportunity for fun before the dietary, recreational, and sexual restrictions of Lent set in, and indeed imposed a need to consume remaining stocks of meat, eggs, and cheese before they were interdicted' (Hutton 1996: 151). These food-symbols and their associations are present in the anthropomorphized depictions of Lent and Shrovetide/Carnival, who frequently appear in opposition to one another. Thus a lean figure shown with fish (the primary Lenten food) could signify Lent and by extension abstinence, piety, hunger or hypocrisy, while a fat one garlanded with sausages could signify Shrovetide, and thus gluttony, merry-making, brutality or sinfulness.

and its companion, *The Rich Kitchen (or Fat Kitchen)*, also dated 1563, employ images of extreme starving and gluttony to comment on the relationship between rich and poor. For these engravings and commentary, see Klein 1963: 161-165.

Dramatic economic and social shifts during this period resulted in extreme deprivation for many people, which would have further underscored such images of fasting and feasting. Writing about England, David Underdown refers to crises caused by overpopulation, unemployment, land shortage and unmanageably high food prices due to rapid inflation, all leading to further polarization of rich and poor and undermining the stability of the social structure with its network of 'reciprocal obligations'. Together these factors laid the foundation for civil war (Underdown 1984: 22-25).

Different forms of Jack a Lent

As for Lent and Shrovetide personified, there were several types of Jack a Lent alone. The first kind is frequently described as a gaunt effigy or 'puppet' resembling a scarecrow. This figure, which might be stuffed with straw, dressed in rags or old clothes (Simpson and Roud 2000: 198),² and 'decorated with fish-emblems of the penitential season' such as herring skins (Chambers 1933: 157), was set up on Ash Wednesday in a public place, pelted with heavy sticks or 'cudgels' throughout Lent, and finally burnt before Easter (Hutton 1996: 172; Simpson and Roud 2000: 198). In one description we learn that it 'was drawn or carried through the streets amid much noise and merriment; after which it was burnt, shot at, or thrown down a chimney' (Dyer 1966: 281). Simpson and Roud, who locate the custom in Tudor and Jacobean London, say Jack a Lent personified the Lenten fast (Simpson and Roud 2000: 198), but there are indications that he may have in some cases symbolized Judas Iscariot; in early-nineteenth century Cornwall, for example, people 'paraded and burnt' an effigy 'called 'Jack-o-Lent', but popularly supposed to represent Judas,' as was the effigy 'pelted with muck from Ash Wednesday till the end of Lent' in Lincolnshire in the 1920s (Simpson and Roud 2000: 198; (Dyer 1966: 281).

One well-known literary allusion to this type of Jack a Lent occurs in Ben Jonson's 1633 play, *A Tale of a Tub* (Butler 1989: I 480), when Hiltz insults Metaphor by saying,

Thou can'st but half a thing into the world,
And wast made up of patches, parings, shreds:
Thou, that when last thou wert put out of service,
Travell'dst to Hampstead Heath, on an Ash Wednesday,
Where thou didst stand six weeks the Jack of Lent,
For boys to hurl, three throws a penny, at thee

Thus the term 'jack a lent' entered proverbial speech, usually signifying a target for derision and abuse, or 'scapegoat'. In Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor* (1598) Falstaff says, 'See now how wit may be made a Jacke-a-Lent when 'tis upon ill employment!' (Hart 1931: 217) But 'jack a lent' could also indicate a spineless, weak,

² Simpson and Roud add that 'in some country districts, a jackalent is a scarecrow.'

or contemptible person; Thomas Burton's 1654 diary entry refers to making 'the Parliament a mere *Jack-a-Lent*, and as insignificant a nothing as the single person' (Towill Rutt 1828: 1 83).³ In one case, Jack a Lent is debased by his close proximity to crude Shrovetide; as Nicholas Breton writes in *The Honour of Valour* (1605),

The puffing fat that shewes the Pesants feede,
Proues *Jack a Lent* was neuer Gentleman;
The noble Spirit hath no power to reede,
The raking Precepts of the Dripping pan

(Grosart 1966: I: Verse 1-7)

This is an allusion to the proverb, 'Jack will never make a gentleman' and the closely related 'Jack would be a gentleman (if he could speak French)' (Tilley 1950: 344 J2, J4) meaning, 'Jack's base nature will always show through and undermine his pretensions to gentility.'

Shrovetide and Lent were also portrayed by actors in court masques, festive ridings and pageant-processions drawing on allegorical tradition.⁴ The so-called 'Gladman's Insurrection', which took place at Norwich early in 1443, involved a festive riding in which Lent appeared on horseback. The merchant John Gladman, who was accused of 'calling the Citizens to Arms in a riotous Manner', rode through the city at Shrovetide with a large retinue of disguised revellers. He was 'coronned as Kyng of Crestemesse,' and 'in tokyn that seson should end with the twelve Monethes of the yere, afrom hym (went) yche moneth dysguysed after the Seson requiryd, and Lenton clad in whyte & red Heryngs skinns, and his Hors trapped

³ This second proverbial sense of 'jack a lent' is similar to the term 'jack-straw' or 'jackstraw', which means 'A "man of straw"; a man of no substance, worth, or consideration' (Simpson and Weiner 1989: VIII, 172). Indeed, shortly before the 'jack a lent' reference in Burton's *Diary* we find a similar statement: 'to strip the next Protector of the command of the standing forces, were but to make him an insignificant nothing, a mere man of straw' (Towill Rutt 83).

⁴ Allegory seems to have entered medieval and Renaissance dramatic traditions from literature. Morality plays, which featured the opposition of virtues and vices (such as Mercy and Mischief in the late-fifteenth-century *Mankind*), 'aimed at ethical cultivation' (Chambers 1903: II 151). Robert Withington (1920: II 80) credits Lydgate with introducing allegorical elements into the pageant in 1432, and court masques affirmed order and decorum through the use of allegorical characters representing the seasons as well as figures from classical mythology (Lindley 1984).

with Oystyr-shells after him, in token that sadnesse shuld folowe, and an holy Tyme' (Withington 1920: I 8).⁵ *The Diary of Henry Machyn* includes an account of a London pageant he witnessed towards the end of Lent, 1553 in which the sheriff of London and the recent Lord of Misrule were accompanied by many sumptuously dressed men on horseback, musicians, giants, hobby-horses and Morris dancers. Among them came Jack a Lent, his wife, a doctor, and a priest, who provided a short comic performance in which the dying Jack a Lent was shriven by the priest while his wife offered the doctor £1,000 to save his life (Chambers 1933: 155).⁶ Hutton writes of this pageant-farce that 'Secular civic pageantry ... had a comic and satiric theme which ran parallel to the abuse levelled by reformers against the old Church' (Hutton 1994: 89-90).

Jack a Lent as a satirical figure

Literary personifications of Shrovetide and Lent proved to be superbly suited to social commentary on such themes as violence, hypocrisy, and religious extremism. In Taylor's *Jack a Lent*, we are told that Jack 'hath a wife named Fasting, as leane as himselfe, yet sure I thinke shee is as honest, as barren: but it were very dangerous for an Epicure or a Puritan to haue a Bastard by her; for there were no other hope but that the father of the brat ... would tutor it in all disobedience against both Lent and Fasting ...' (Taylor 1620: 7) Elsewhere we learn that Lent enters the kingdom 'entertain'd by a graue, formall, reuerend States-man, call'd Ciuill Policy: But you must understand, that Lent would very faine take up his lodging here with

⁵ From the *Records of Norwich*, cited in Withington: I 8. This account is also found with modernized spelling in C. H. Stephenson 1871: 525; there, however, the date is given as Christmas 1440.

⁶ According to Simpson and Roud (2000: 198), this performance took place just before Easter, and Chambers (1933: 157-158) traces the date to Palm Monday 1553. Charles Read Baskerville (1929: 23), who describes this type of Jack a Lent as a figure from the spring games, speculates that the comic figure in Machyn's account 'was probably executed, like the Fool of the Revesby Play, who makes a burlesque testament.' If so, an examination of Jack a Lent in relation to the mock-trials and executions of continental European Carnival figures (represented either by effigies or human actors) might yield new insights into this tradition.

Religion, but Religion will not bee acquainted with him; and therefore Ciuill Policy hath the managing of the businesse' (Taylor 1620: 11). Here the conflict is not between Shrovetide and Lent, between feasting and fasting or one phase of the year and another (for one season must always give way to the next), but between Lent and its real enemies – and, as Taylor assures us, 'a Dogge, and Butcher, and a Puritan, are the greatest enemies hee hath' (Taylor 1620: 17).

These allusions can be explained by the fact that Lent was currently under attack by the Puritans, who saw it as a symbol of 'popish' corruption. Advocates of the established Anglican church, on the other hand, defended Lenten fasting on both religious and secular grounds. Jack a Lent's importance to satirists is attested to by his presence in a number of ballads, some of which still survive. E. K. Chambers (1933: 158; see also Dyer 1966: 282) cites William Elderton's ballad *Lenton Stuff* (1570) as an example of Jack's role as 'a mouthpiece for the moralizing satire of ballad and pamphlet':

When Jakke a' Lent comes justlynge in,
With the hedpeece of a herynge,
And saythe, repent yowe of yower syn,
For shame, syrs, leve yowre swerynge:
And to Palme Sunday doethe he ryde,
With sprots and herryngs by his syde,
And makes an end of Lenton tyde!⁷

But while Lenten fasting in the form of its various personifications was a symbol of moral qualities, precisely what those qualities were depended on the affiliations of the writer, which meant it could be used to great effect on both sides of the great cultural, religious and political divide.

Jack a Lent's usefulness to the writers of satirical ballads is evident in the letters exchanged between Lord Protector Somerset and Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, in 1547. In one Gardiner deplors 'the rhymes "sette fourth to deprauē Lent" and the money people pay for them.' Lent, he complains, is "buried in rime ... and Steuen Stockfish bequeathed, not to me, though my

⁷ William Elderton, *Lenton Stuff* (1570), Ashmolean Museum MS. Baskervill (1929: 23) associates him not only with ballads but with dance, noting a dance with his name and a reference in to Jack's dancing prowess in Baron's *Pocula Castalia* (1650).

name be noted.” Moreover, “Jack of lentes testament” has been openly sold in Winchester market.’ Somerset seems less troubled by “iack of lents leud balade” and more confident that, unlike its effigy namesake, Lent can withstand the annual attacks against it, remarking that “The people bieth those foolish ballats of Jack a lent, So bought they in times past, pardones, and carroles, and Robbin hoodes tales.... Lent remayneth still... although some light and leud men do bury him in writing.” (Baskervill 1929: 47)⁸

John Taylor, for his part, was a traditionalist, and enjoins the reader to contemplate ‘what good [Lent] doth in this Kingdome ... and how much more good he would doe if he were rightly obserued’ (Taylor 1620: 19). Towards the end of the poem he says, ‘a wise man will make much of Iack for his plaine dealing and true speaking, when a foole will quarrel with him, and falling together by the eares, teare one anothers clothes, and then Iacks paper-ierkin goes to wracke’ (Taylor 1620: 21).⁹ In other works, however, Lenten fasting is mocked and denounced as evidence of lingering Catholicism in England. In Thomas Middleton’s *Inner-Temple masque* of 1619, a ‘Fasting-day’ begs Doctor Almanacke to insert him into the calendar as soon as possible, as he has recently had his head ‘broken’ at court and found a rude reception everywhere he has looked to be put into service. Doctor Almanacke remarks in disgust,

I bade him stay til *Lent*, and now he whimpers;
He would to Rome forsooth, that’s his last refuge ...

(Middleton 1619: reel number: STC / 1320: 02)

The recantacio[n] of Jacke lent late vicare generall to the mooste cruell Antichriste of Rome (1548) is a puritanical tract denouncing Lenten observance as ‘popery.’ Here Jack a Lent appears at turns to be both a personification of the fast and a reformed clergyman renouncing his earlier teachings. ‘I am not unknowen to any one of you But whence I came or whose creature I am I thynke fewe of you do as yet know’ (Anon. 1548), he states, solving the riddle with

⁸ From Foxes’s *Acts & Monuments* (1563 edition), as cited in Baskervill. I am grateful to Malcolm Jones for alerting me to this important reference, in which Somerset conflates Jack a Lent ballads with other frivolous expenditures (including, interestingly, the buying of pardons!)

⁹ Perhaps Jack a Lent’s ‘paper-ierkin’ is an allusion to the flimsy garments worn by the effigies.

the ending, 'By me Jacke lent lately the[?] utter enemy of Christ, but nowe ... conuerted to the Christian fayth' (Anon. 1548: 14)

In such strongly polemical works it is perhaps surprising to find occasional admissions of the morally ambivalent nature of Lenten observation, but where they appear they reveal the complexity of the social and religious issues involved. *The recantacio [n] of Jacke lent* adjures readers to abstain from 'superstitiouse' Lenten observation, 'lest bi your stubburnes you cause me to be utterlye banished thys realme, and you lose all the commodities that you haue by me' (Anon. 1548: 17). An example from the other side of the debate is provided by Taylor (1620: 7-8), who, while defending the traditional observation of Lent on both moral and economic grounds, mocks its intimate relationship with hypocrisy. Neither side had a monopoly on foolishness, as we see in *Jack of Lent's Ballat in Choyce drollery, songs & sonnets* (1656), which commemorates the arrival of Charles I's Catholic bride Henrietta Maria from France. Here the anonymous author poses as Jack a Lent himself, skewering Catholics and Puritans alike in this literary royal welcome (P. 1656: 20-30).

The battle between Shrovetide and Lent

The opposition of Lent and Shrovetide was often imagined in this period in terms of mock-military combat. Bruegel's *Battle of Carnival and Lent* (1559) is probably the most well-known visual depiction of this motif. In this painting, Carnival is a fat man pushed along on a barrel by his followers, threatening the emaciated representative of Lent (here female) with meat on a spit. His retinue of mummers and musicians confront Lent's wagon, which is pulled into the fray by a monk and a nun. Lent appears enervated and unready for battle, but her opponent's attention is distracted (maybe he is worried about the pie about to fall off his head), and she, too carries weapons: a broiling iron for fish and a scourge for self-mortification (Gibson 1977: 79).¹⁰ Frans Hogenberg's engraving (1558) of the same name,

¹⁰ Gibson (1977: 79) adds that it is not known whether such battles were enacted during Carnival, but it certainly seems possible, considering that actors represented Lent and other allegorical figures in pageants (see also notes 5 and 6). It is tempting to see in the simple wagons on which the battling figures are drawn in this painting

which was published a year earlier, presents a similar scene with an inscription which 'invites all men to the carnival feast because "everybody likes to smear himself with fat", but ... also recommends that those who prefer cheap food, like fish, can easily earn a reputation for sobriety during Lent' (Gibson 1977: 79, 85).

In England this motif appeared in art in the form of a pair of prints entitled *Two Pictures [of] Lent and Shrovetide with verses to them by John Taylor* (1660).¹¹ Malcolm Jones notes that these prints (which, when viewed side by side, present a picture of the two figures jousting) provide the earliest evidence that the visual motif of the battle between Carnival and Lent found in continental Europe was known in England during this period (Jones). In the verse-inscriptions, Lent and Shrovetide exchange verbal insults, and their mounts and armour are described. Lent, in a fish kettle helmet and with a lobster slung over his saddle, charges Shrovetide, brandishing an angling-rod for a lance and fishing net for a banner (Jones), but

Fatt Shrovetyde, mounted on a good fatt oxe,
Supposed that Lent was mad, or caught a foxe [was drunk] ...
A spit his long sword, somewhat worse than steale,
(Sheath'd in a fat pigge and a peece of porke) ...
The two plump capons fluttering at his crupper;
And 's shoulders lac'd with sawsages for supper....

(Wright 1875: 374)

We also see this 'seasonal combat' motif in Thomas Nabbes' masque *The Springs Glorie* (1638), in which Christmas addresses Shrovetide ('a fat Cooke with a frying-pan') as a 'rasty [rancid] bacon, tallow-faced scullion', and threatens, 'Though thou be as fat as a Flemming, I'll have *Lent* choke thee with a red-herring.' Shrovetide responds, 'I'll arme my selfe for that. In three days I can victual my

and Hogenberg's engraving (Gibson 1977: 79, 85) a rustic pastiche of the grand pageant-cars on which similar allegorical figures enacted their conflicts, but there is no hard evidence for this. The presence of the wagons may simply reference other visual representations of this motif; as Jones reminds us in his discussion of Taylor's *Jack a Lent* woodcut, assumptions that the scene represents an actual Carnival procession may be misguided, lacking the familiarity with visual analogues necessary to place it in its proper context. (Forthcoming publication)

¹¹ Printed for Thomas Jenner in 1660, and included in his 1662 catalogue of prints under the title *Lent on Horseback & Shrovetide on a Bull*. (Jones, forthcoming publication)

garrison for seven weekes: and it shall goe hard but I will domineere in *Lent* despite of the thin-chapt surgeon that makes men skillitons' (Nabbes 1638).

This battle imagery, however tongue in cheek, was underscored by the religious and political tensions of the day, which erupted in civil war in 1642. In the hands of John Taylor (1620: 11), who was persecuted as a Royalist during the war, the battle over Lent (really a three-way battle between Catholics, Puritans, and traditional Anglicans) becomes a battle between Jack a Lent and those who oppose the fast:

... it is a wonder to see what Muniton and Artillery the Epicures, and Canniball Flesh-eaters do prouide to oppose Lent, and keepe him out at the staffes end, as whole barrels of poudered [salted] beefe to blow him up, tubs of Pork to pistol and shoot him, thorow with his kindred hunger, famine, and desolation, Baricades of Bacon as strong & impregnable Bulwarkes against his inuasiue battery. Which Ciuill Policy perceiuing, causeth Proclamations straight to be published for the establishing of Lents Gouernment

Lent responds with a 'numberlesse Army' of fish-soldiers with such grand titles as Sir Lawrence Ling, 'an ancient Sea-faring Gentleman', and Captaine Stock-fish, 'a well beaten Souldier, and one that is often proued to endure much.' Finest among them is 'The Maiesticall king of Fishes, the heroicall most magnificent Herring arm'd in White and Red,' who inspires a glorious punning allusion to 'the scales of justice': 'if any of his Regiments either doe or take iniury, though hee want the sword of Justice, yet hee hath the scales, which I imagine hee carries not for nought' (Taylor 1620: 13). This pun contains an important insight: Lent has moral weight on his side which will always ultimately overcome the brute force of Shrovetide.

To better understand the context of these depictions, it is helpful to examine them against the backdrop of Shrovetide and Lent as they were popularly observed. In Taylor's *Jack a Lent*, a frenzy of cooking and eating erupts with the ringing of the Pancake Bell, 'the sound whereof makes thousands of people distracted, and forgetfull eyther of manners or humanitie'. Cooks are described as 'Monarchs of the Marrow bones, Marquesses of the Mutton, Lords high Regents, of the Spit and the Kettle, Barrons of the Gridiron, and sole Commanders of the Frying-pan' whose frenetic activity in the kitchen

is all 'for no other purpose, but to stop the mouth of this Land-whale *Shroue-Tuesday*' (Taylor 1620: 9). Such surreal, florid descriptions of Shrovetide feasting and over-indulgence recall the imagery of the legendary land of gluttony and idleness known by the names of Cockaigne, Lubberland, Schlaraffenland, and Balordia, among others. This comic utopia, which had been a popular motif throughout Europe since the Middle Ages, is a place where, in one account, rivers flow with 'oil, milk, honey and wine', and geese fly already roasted towards an abbey peopled with idle gourmands, crying out, 'Hot geese, hot geese!' (Malcolm 1998: 81-82)

Rites of exclusion: Shriving the community

Violent sports were another essential component of Shrovetide festivities. Similar to the custom of pelting the Jack a Lent were a complex of brutal blood sports involving poultry, such as cock-fighting and 'cock-threshing', or 'throwing at cocks'. The latter entailed tethering a rooster to a stake and taking turns pelting it with heavy sticks until it was killed. In 1580 Thomas Tusser described a variant known as 'threshing the fat hen' that involved 'a live hen suspended from a man's back, with straw stuffed into his clothes to protect him, and some horse bells attached. Players were blindfolded, and had to kill the bird by hitting it with sticks' (Simpson and Roud 2000: 74-75; Hutton 1996: 153). Dogs were also victims of Shrovetide violence, tossed up into the air in blankets (Hutton 1996: 156). Shrovetide football, which was also very popular throughout England and had few to no rules, was often barely distinguishable from street fighting, and seems at times to have been used as an opportunity to settle grudges. It was banned in a number of instances, and Sir Thomas Elyot described it in 1531 as "nothing but beastly fury and extreme violence, whereof procedeth hurt" (Hutton 1994: 19). Furthermore, the Jack a Lent was not the only type of effigy to appear during Lent. The Welsh population of London provided another target for scapegoating on 1 March, when they wore leeks in their hats to celebrate St David's Day. According to several seventeenth century accounts, xenophobic Londoners taunted them as 'Taffeys' and hung them in effigy from their houses, leeks and all, which sometimes led to fighting in the streets (Hutton 1996: 173-174).

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were characterized by what David Underdown refers to as ‘drastic shaming rituals’ (Underdown 1987: 39). Those formally accused of crimes could be pilloried, put in the stocks, or whipped through the streets, but people also took it on themselves to exercise a kind of festive mob justice to punish unpopular members of the community – ‘social offenders’ such as cuckolds, scolds, and bawds – driving them, at least theoretically, to reform or exile. These ritualized punishments included ‘carting’ (often used for alleged prostitutes and panderers), being made to ride on horseback facing (and holding) the horse’s tail, and being paraded to the loud ‘beating of the basin’ – a kind of ‘rough music’.¹² Such punishments, while popular year-round, are very much in evidence in accounts of Shrovetide and Lent, when if anything they seem to have intensified. Civil authority enforced royal and religious bans on the buying, selling, and eating of foods prohibited during Lent, and the sixteenth century *Diary of Henry Machyn* contains a number of Lenten examples. In one case the punishment seems to have involved decorating the offender with fishes, making her resemble a kind of human Jack a Lent. On this occasion Machyn saw

... a woman ryd a-bowt Chepesyd and London for bryngyng yonge frye of dyvers kind of fysse unlafull, with a garland a-pone her hed hangyng with strynges of the small fysse, and on the horse a-for and be-hynd here, led by on of the bedylls of Brydwell. (Machyn 1848: 253)

Another Lenten entry describes the carting of a young man, ‘ys fasse toward the hors tayle,’ with large pieces of salted beef, the food-emblem of his undoing (Machyn 1848: 168).

In particular, London apprentices became famous for the sacking of playhouses and brothels on Shrove Tuesday, turning out in the

¹² A literary reference to ‘beating the basin’ and carting can be found in part II of *The Honest Whore* (1604) by Thomas Dekker, V. 2. 434 in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, II, p. 217, where we find the following conversation between the Duke of Milan and a Master of Bridewell:

DUKE	Why before her does the Bason ring?
I. MASTER	It is an emblem of their reuelling, The whips we vse lets forth their wanton blood, Making them calme, and more to calme their pride, In stead of Coaches they in Carts doe ride.

thousands to tear the buildings apart and terrify and humiliate their occupants. 'Their behaviour became proverbial,' as Simpson and Roud (2000: 326) note, citing Dekker's *Seven Deadly Sinnes of London* (1606): 'They presently (like prentices upon Shrove Tuesday) take the lawe into their owne handes and do what they list' (Dekker 1922: 48). In Middleton's *Inner-Temple masque*, Doctor Almanacke cries out,

Stand forth Shrouetuesday, one'a the silenc'st Bricke-Layers,
Tis in your charge to pull downe Bawdyhouses,
To set your Tribe aworke, cause spoyle in *Shorditch*,
And make a Dangerous Leake there, deface Turnbul,
And tickle Codpiece Rowe, ruine the Cockpit, the
Poore Players ne're thriud in't, a my Co-science some
Queane pist vpon the first Bricke

(Middleton 1619)

Taylor relates the attacks in enthusiastic detail, hinting at the possible work prospects for apprentices inherent in the enterprise:

Then these Youths arm'd with cudgels, stones, hammers, rules, trowels, and hand-sawes, put Play-houses to the sack, and Bawdy-houses to the spoile ... terribly untyling houses, ripping up the bowels of feather-beds, to the inriching of Upholsters, the profit of Plaisterers and Dirt-dawbers, the gaine of Glaisiers, Joyners, Carpenters, Tylers and Bricklayers (Taylor 1620: 10-11)

This was hardly a random or occasional phenomenon; Hutton reports that the riots 'occurred on twenty-four out of the twenty-nine Shrove Tuesdays of the early Stuart period, normally ... where traditional areas of recreation were situated' (Hutton 1996: 155) – in other words, the sites of playhouses, brothels, and bear- and bull-baitings which provided entertainment for Londoners. Thus, writes Taylor, 'by the unmannerly manners of *Shroue-Tuesday* Constables are baffled, Bawdes are bangd, Punkes are pillag'd, Panders are plagued' (Taylor 1620: 11)

Although these acts were illegal, London society was not, by and large, opposed to the annual destruction of brothels and playhouses and the subsequent public humiliation of their occupants. The Shrovetide raids were, in Hutton's words, 'directed against targets disliked by the respectable ... and could thus be regarded as a form of community policing' (Hutton 1996: 155). Prostitutes and bawds, the special targets of the apprentices, were not only carted

and whipped through the streets, but, as Brand (1795: I 89) notes in his remarks on *The Honest Whore* by Dekker (1604), 'it was formerly a custom for the peace-officers to make search after women of ill fame on Shrove Tuesday, and to confine them during the season of Lent.' Likewise, Hutton notes that 'individuals considered to be especially sinful by priest and community were excluded from the church during this season' (Hutton 1994: 19).

Looking at these Shrovetide and Lenten customs as a whole, several themes emerge. One is the use of personifications of Shrovetide and Lent as mouthpieces for the religious and political views of writers on both sides of the growing cultural divide. The second is essentially that of scapegoating in the form of ritualized punishment and exclusion. The word 'shrove' is defined as meaning both 'to make merry' (Simpson and Weiner 1989: XV 384) and (from 'shrive') 'to confess and receive absolution for one's sins' (Simpson and Roud 2000: 325; Hutton 1994: 19; Hutton 1996: 151) and it would seem that in this sense the two meanings coexisted in practice. The original scapegoat (in the Mosaic ritual of the Day of Atonement) was 'one of two goats ... chosen by lot to be sent alive into the wilderness, the sins of the people having been symbolically laid upon it, while the other was appointed to be sacrificed' (Simpson and Weiner 1989: XIV 582). Perhaps the community members who were subjected to public punishments such as carting and exclusion from the church were likewise, in a sense, driven into the 'wilderness' beyond the borders of the law-abiding Christian community, having already transgressed its moral boundaries.

In light of this, I would suggest that such acts of punishment and exclusion – be they directed at humans, animals, or effigies – constituted a symbolic moral purge of the community, 'shriving' it of its sins in the person of its sinners. (Clean out your larder, confess your sins, and sanitize the community – these seem to have been the socio-religious imperatives of Shrovetide.) From this perspective the violence and scapegoating of Shrovetide may be seen as not in *opposition* to chaste, controlled Lent, but rather a necessary prelude to it, functioning to set the stage, as it were, rather than simply leaving a mess for Lent to clean up. If this is true, Lent and Shrovetide may be regarded as a two-part seasonal ritual which served to negotiate, define and reinforce the community's moral boundaries. Thus Shrove-Tuesday, rather than merely being his opponent, may truly be Jack a Lent's 'Gentleman-Usher' after all.

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Spring National 'Holidays of the Plough / Holidays of the Sowing Campaign'

Experiences of the Twentieth Century

The spring 'Holiday of the Plough' (Tatar '*Saban tuye*', '*Sabantui*', Chuvach '*Akatui*', Crimean-Tatar '*Khadyrlez*' and other ethnic variants) originates from ancient traditions of agricultural cultures of Turkish peoples of Eurasia.

It was not connected with a definite, binding date for fixing and declaring the Holiday. It was impossible to choose and fix one such day for all Turkish peoples as they lived in different climatic zones of Eurasia where spring and the sowing season come earlier or later and different calendar systems of chronology are used such as the Islamic lunar calendar with its sliding cycle and yearly removal of this cycle for eleven to twelve days and the stable, immutable traditions of system of chronology used by some Turkish peoples of Buddhist area (for example, Tuvinians), after the 'Eastern calendar' with its duodecennial 'animal cycle', where every year has the name of one animal, connected with one of the signs of the zodiac.

The gradual implementation of the Gregorian calendar among christened Turkish peoples of Russia (Chuvashes, Nagaybaks, Tatar-Kriashens, Altaians, and others) was accompanied by the attempts of the Orthodox Church to adopt ancient pagan holidays into the system of the Christian mythology, to link the traditional spring 'holiday of plough' to the Christian Easter.

Choosing a spring holiday

The choosing of a spring day on the eve of sowing activity was only the general rule for fixing holiday. It was advisable to choose a sunny, warm, spring day, because good weather played a definite

role in this holiday that in agricultural magic meant a 'blessing', a magic spell, a supplication for happiness, well-being, sufficiency, fertility, bumper crop, and prosperity.

The elders (*'aksakals'*) of their council of every place, followed tradition and chose a day for the beginning of the holiday. It was believed that their experience helped them in the prognosis of fine weather for the days of holiday and to begin sowing. The elders informed their fellow villagers, countrymen and neighbours considerably in advance about the decision. As a rule news was given in the market-place on market-day.

The organizers of this holiday never tried to establish the same day to celebrate this holiday for all the territory, where their people lived. On the contrary, they deliberately tried to diversify – to come to an agreement about the different days for the beginning of the holiday in different villages and cities to prolong it: the inhabitants of one village or city after having enjoyed their own holiday could later go to visit their neighbors to see how they celebrate their holiday, and even participate in it. However, we must emphasize that neither Tatar Sabantui nor other analogous holidays of Turkish peoples included a special ritual for inviting visitors, guests and relatives, whereas in many other folk celebrations, such as weddings, arrival of guests, reception, entertainment and introductions were the important element throughout the holiday ritual.

Under Soviet Rule

Under Soviet rule Turkish Republics and autonomies had their local authorities, municipal and village administration establishing and organizing spring holidays. In such circumstances folk traditions ran the risk of being broken and deformed. A centralized system of such holidays was established, after the model of sporting knock-out competitions, qualifying rounds and festivals – from the 'lowest' to the 'highest' level, starting with one village, then one region, and finally, the whole Republic closing celebrations in its capital, such as Kazar, in Ufa, or even at Izmaylovski park in Moscow, the capital of Russian Federation.

At the outset such a multi-stage system did not exist here. Every rural community carried out its own Holiday of the Plough as did its neighbours. Cities that became the main arena for such holidays

in the late Soviet times originally were not affected by these rituals which in accordance with their significance of days of the plough, or days of sowing, were linked and celebrated only by rural communities.

These holidays were not adopted wholly by Islam, Christianity, any other religion or preserved elements of olden times' primeval magic. Soviet authorities were tolerant enough of these holidays and their traditional rituals, trying not to notice their pagan essence but to consider them as 'Holidays of Work'. Such holidays were permitted in the Soviet Union as early as the late 1930s. However, Soviet propaganda successfully tried to establish from a traditional rural folk holiday with one ethnic meaning a common holiday for all (Tatar Sabantui, Chuvash Akatui, Yakut Ysyakh, etc.), involving all multi-ethnic urban peoples. People of all nationalities were on the first line, urban youths could participate in sporting competitions and perform in concerts on the holiday. Youths particularly tried not to miss an occasion for merry-making, dancing, drinking, revelling, etc. All this distorted the traditional significance of such a holiday into perversion. The setting up of new business outlets selling alcoholic drinks gave rise to fighting, loud-speakers blaring a variety music that often was very far from folkloric music. All this turned festivities in the urban and sometimes rural regions into something that had nothing or little in common with a traditional folk 'Holiday of the Plough,' besides some its basic ritual features in sporting competitions such as horse-races, wrestling, and sack races. Particularly popular in some ethnic cultures during Yakut Ysyakh were mass round dances, a universally obligatory constituent component, of all spring folk holidays and mass outdoor festive gatherings in the streets and on squares on public holidays in the Turkish regions of the Russian Federation.

In Soviet times fixing of dates for Holidays of the Plough was so arbitrary that a holiday could be removed from the eve of sowing to its end, even from spring to summer. It was partly justifiably motivated by pragmatic reasons: the more folk holidays of Soviet time looked like general mass drinking bouts, the more the authorities tried to remove this problem from the hard work during sowing time. Of course, the essence of the feast which was in anticipation and blessing sowing and the sowing season by magic ritual, lost its sense. However, this does not mean that on the whole twentieth century spring holidays of Turkish peoples, spring feasts

(etymologically, the notion 'feast' – *'bayram'* in Turkic languages is connected with the idea of spring charm, spring fascination and spring triumph) lost their traditional character in the whole.

In the times of Stalin's terror and the later long stagnation of communist regimes these feasts played the role of a peculiar safety-valve, a distraction from the fulcrum, supporting ethnic identity. They were a source of ethnic consolidation and a manifestation of national spirit. They played an important role in the ethnic mobilization of the Turk peoples, becoming the object of idealization in the main motifs of national art and poetry portraying a sound mind and the beautiful and heroic character of people in scenes of athletic competitions, public merry-making, folk round dances and other rituals associated with the 'Holidays of the Plough'. Examples of such paintings of enthusiastic, inspired idealization are 'Akatui' (1935) by Chuvash painter Yuriy Zaicev (Pl. 13), 'Sabantui' (1957) by Tatar artist Lotfulla Fattakhov, 'Wrestling Khuresh' (1968) by Tuvian artist Saryg-ool Saaya, 'Sack' (1974) by Bashkir painter Abrek Abzgildin, ceramic panel in Hotel Tatarstan in the city of Naberejnye Chelny (1977) by Vladimir Nikolaev and Rifkhat Vakhitov, 'Sabantui' (1977) by young Tatar artist Shamil Shaidullin who graduated from the Russian Arts Academy (Leningrad – St. Petersburg), and 'The Round Dance Yssyakh' (1980) by Yakut artist Afanasiy Osipov.

Folk arts and sports

Ethnographic field research shows that the traditional spring Holidays of the Plough of Turkish peoples and their traditional ritual and events structures have rich, moral and aesthetic content. We must emphasize that there is great space for the development of amateur and folk arts in various areas: song, dancing, games, literature, arts and crafts. Embroidered towels, kerchiefs, headscarfs, painted eggs, earthenware, wood carving things and other handicrafts are used as prizes for winners in sporting events. Song and dance accompany many rituals, games, and prize-giving ceremonies. Games and sporting competitions allow for people of all ages to show their strength, will-power, adroitness, deftness, knack and grace.

The exclusive variety and diversity of the kinds and forms of sport forming part of the festive ritual are typical of the the majority

of Turkish spring holidays. N. Semionov, the author of the book *Sabantui*, published in Kazan in 1929, lists 55 kinds of sport events included in the programme of Tatar Sabantuis, among them horse-races on saddled and non-saddled horses, Graeco-Roman, free-style, Tatar, Russian, gipsy wrestling, boxing, weight-lifting, rope pulling, tightrope walking, greasy pole, diving, high and long jumps, pole-vaulting, artistic riding, archery, cycle race, and sack race. Of course, not every festivity has such a complex programme, but the trend of including many old and new sports into festive rituals is typical.

The so called merry, gay, cheerful games and sporting competitions dominate these holidays, not only in their results, but also their performance. The execution itself must provoke laughter, brighten and cheer up onlookers. The clownish component of masquerade is especially active in these games and competitions. There were various comic, facetious performances: sack races, spoon races with an unboiled egg on the spoon, greasy pole, a mock battle with bubbles, and blindfolded hunts.

Spring Holidays of the Plough were indeed common to the whole population. Children aged 3-4 years participated also in these rituals. The Tatar Sabantui, for example, began with welcoming children with a sweet *kasha* (collected by all inhabitants of the village). Families in their entirety, with representatives of various generations took part in Sabantuis. The participation of women in these spring holidays was connected with the old tradition that we can consider as a very early form of emancipation of woman in the Turkish-Islamic world. Karl Fuchs, who described the ethnographic peculiarities of Kazan Tatars in the first quarter of 19th century, remarked: 'Tatar women take part in this holiday, though in some distance from the principal spectacle. Everywhere in bushes we can see well-dressed Tatar women with their children, who take tea. Somebody unfamiliar to the family will be invited round for a cup of tea'.

Another important aspect of these holidays is the education in taking care of nature. The venue for carrying out Tatar Sabantuis (and analogous holidays of other Turkish peoples) is the '*maydan*', which means 'square'. It may not always be a city square; more often a green glade behind the village may be convenient for sporting competitions. Trees and bushes grow around such glades and give shade. Such a '*maydan*' becomes an important link in the spiritual rapprochement between urban and rural cultures of Turkish peoples.

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Ash Wednesday Celebrations in Iceland

A Historical and Contemporary Comparison

This report will discuss the customs and traditions associated with Ash Wednesday in Iceland and briefly review a survey conducted by the author and published in 2004. A brief history of Ash Wednesday celebrations will be followed by a more precise account of current practices. Icelanders have celebrated Ash Wednesday since the 18th century if not earlier. Ash Wednesday is associated with many unique customs and celebrations in Iceland, which, traditionally, are not associated with any other day of the calendar year. In this report, these customs and the changes that have occurred over the years will be discussed, as well as the conflicts that have previously surfaced and still arise during the Ash Wednesday celebrations. We will also look at how violence and bullying can find fertile ground in these traditions. Furthermore, we will briefly discuss how this custom, as with many other customs, is characterized by a carnival atmosphere where the 'have-nots' or peasants rise symbolically up against those in power.

Earlier celebrations

Icelandic society has undergone a considerable change over the last century. A hundred years ago, Iceland was an agricultural society where many people lived together on the farms, where you could find both family and non-family relations co-existing on any given farm. In contrast, today's Icelandic society is characterized by urbanization, where you will find stores, high streets, malls and the overall emphasis has become more service oriented. Let us look at

the Ash Wednesday celebrations, as they existed in the earlier agricultural period.

Gender based

At this point in Icelandic cultural history, these celebrations revolved around a simple game of hide-and-seek. The girls snuck around; hanging little bags filled with ash on the boys, while the boys tried to hide a pebble or little stone in the girls' clothes or somehow tries to trick the girls into carrying the stone around without them knowing. Everyone tried to get through the day without having a bag of ash hanging on them or a stone in their possession and a lot of thought and planning went into tricking someone of the opposite sex. Thus, at this point the celebrations are gender based.

Bullying

Most of those who can remember this particular variation of the celebrations, remember it with great fondness and nostalgia. However, there are some accounts of the celebrations being tainted with bullying, especially against those individuals who did not wish to participate. Some people reported feelings of humiliation and embarrassment if a bag of ash was found on their person or a pebble was found in their possession. There are even examples of individuals who refused to get out of bed on Ash Wednesday. Of course, staying in bed was often futile since pranksters found it even more exciting to pin a bag of ash on one of these individuals or hide a pebble for them to find! In one particular instance, there was an elderly woman who had two foster sons. These two boys took it upon themselves to hide a pebble between two cups, which the elderly woman carried down to the kitchen. Later, they found the old woman crying in kitchen because she was so humiliated that they had tricked her into carrying it.

Early to mid-twentieth century celebrations

Later, during the onset of urbanization in Iceland, the celebrations evolved slightly and a new version emerged. This time, the children

walked the city streets and hung bags of ash on unsuspecting adults. In most cases, this was done innocently and without harm. At this junction there were many, albeit respectable, citizens walking around with brightly colored bags pinned to the back of their expensive outerwear. Unfortunately, it was not all innocence and niceness, since some children took the opportunity and speared passer-bys' with the needles they used to hang the bags of ash on. Although it is highly unlikely that anyone was seriously injured it still shows us evidence of some underlying violence in relation to the celebrations. Furthermore, in some instances children hung cards on the back of women with rude remarks written on them. This particular variance was most popular during the period of the Second World War at which time there were more soldiers than Icelanders in Iceland. It is interesting to point out that these cards were hung only on women and only on Ash Wednesday.

In the local morning paper in 1947, the following could be read on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday:

Ash Wednesday's High Jinks! Ash Wednesday is Tomorrow!

Over the last few years, there has been quite a lot of horseplay here in town, somewhat akin to a semi-New Years Eve. Youths run together throughout the streets with lots of commotion and pranks. They no longer stick to the good old-fashioned Icelandic tradition of hanging bags of ash on passers-by, rather are armed with needles ready to spear pedestrians or with cards that have rude sayings written on them. The youths hang these cards on people; fully enjoying their prank. Hopefully this will not be repeated tomorrow here in town. One can have fun without them [these pranks] (*Morgunblaðið* 1947: 17 Feb).

Today, there exists quite a lot of nostalgia for the old traditions of the former agricultural society. This nostalgia in conjunction with many other factors, indicate that Icelanders are or at least were feeling guilty for having left the farm for the concrete jungle. The bag of ash on Ash Wednesday is often considered one of the only unique Icelandic customs and thus even more socially valuable. (However, references to this custom have been found elsewhere, e.g. Sweden, Ireland, etc.).

Contemporary celebrations

Today, the old tradition of pebbles and bags of ash is almost non-existent in Iceland. Every now and again, you might spy a bag of ash on Ash Wednesday, but not to the extent that would allow us to categorize it as a custom. Many reasons exist for the demise of the bags of ash, which will not be discussed at this time.

The celebration of Ash Wednesday is now affiliated with the commerce and service-oriented mores dominant in Icelandic society today. The Ash Wednesday celebrations have once again evolved and children now walk along the streets and town-squares, dressed up in clothes they normally would not be seen in on any other day of the year. They dress as witches, hippies, old people, babies, killers and angels. Moreover, in these costumes they wander from business to business and sing for candy (Pl. 14, 15).

Today it is customary for children to begin preparing for Ash Wednesday days in advance. They choose their costume and decide what role they will play, whom they will spend the day with and what songs they will sing. Actually, 'a few days' is quite a modest estimate because in those regions where this tradition has become well rooted, preparation can begin as soon as the New Year celebrations have ended.

Participants

Four major groups participate in the Ash Wednesday celebrations in Iceland. The main participants are children and teenagers. Secondly, there are the employees in businesses and stores that accommodate the children. Thirdly, there are the parents and other adults that help with the preparation and/or execution. Fourthly, there is the audience, i.e. shoppers, other pedestrians and tourists. Not all of the participants are happy with the way this tradition is practised today. We will now take a brief look at some examples.

First, although employees and shopkeepers make up one group of participants, some owners decide not to participate and place signs in their store windows stating that they will not receive any children in Ash Wednesday costumes. It goes without saying that this tradition can be very disruptive, since one employee is completely reserved for tending only to the children, listening to their songs

and handing out candy. If you consider that practically all children in Iceland participate in Ash Wednesday, then it is not surprising that long lines form in stores and most shopkeepers find it at best bothersome, because they can serve neither their normal duties nor customers. When asked, most shops readily state that they wholeheartedly welcome all children into their stores. These stores care about their outward image since no one wants to be known as the store that is mean to these *poor* little children. In some instances, shopkeepers hire other children or teenagers and in some cases, there are adults outside the store ready with candy. However in this particular situation, the children are not welcomed inside to sing. In the survey conducted by the author (Einarsdóttir 2004), it became quickly apparent that the children were often offended by these antics, i.e. the children wanted to sing and play their role to its fullest and receive a reaction from their audience.

Not all parents are happy with every aspect of the custom either. Many find it difficult to allow youngsters to walk around all day in malls or city high streets without any adult supervision. For instance, the high street in Reykjavik, called *Laugavegur* is a high traffic street that children cross repeatedly in order to visit as many stores as possible. Some parents are able to take their children but as you can imagine not everyone are in the position to take a day off from work.

Furthermore, it is important to mention that most Icelandic parents work outside the home and many parents work long hours. Thus, not only do the celebrations affect the adults work schedule, but possibly the preparation does as well. Ash Wednesday needs a considerate amount of preparation and during the survey (Einarsdóttir 2004); it became evident that most children rely on parents or other adults during that preparation. It is not considered appropriate to go out and buy an expensive costume, rather many parents spend quite a lot of hours helping their children to find old clothes and make the necessary alterations or necessary changes.

As stated earlier, the object of this contemporary tradition is to collect candy. It is common for children to collect a few kilograms of sweets and any notion of health and/or cavity free teeth fly out the window; i.e. not only on Ash Wednesday but also over the subsequent days.

Carnival characteristics

There is somewhat of a carnival feeling to the current Ash Wednesday celebrations in which the peasants take control (or rather in this case... the children). This is primarily evident in the songs sung by the children. A very popular Icelandic scout song traditionally describes the wind in the leaves, and the peace and tranquility of a campfire. However, this beautiful song has been changed by the children and roughly translated they sing the following:

Wind in the leaves
School burns, school burns
The fire department is nowhere near
A pack of teachers inside burn
And outside we sing yippee yea.

(Author unknown)

Here is another example of a song from Akureyri, the second largest city in Iceland and situated on the north side of the island. This song is from the 1920s, and children sang outside stores that closed on Ash Wednesday:

O goodness gracious
Best friend to all kids
You are cunning and sly
Closing on Ash Wednesday.

(Author unknown)

Children's costumes also reflect this carnival atmosphere and yet a variance between genders emerges (Einarsdóttir 2004). You could say that the roles some children play are provocative, but again this varies between genders, i.e. 50% more boys choose this role than girls do. One could also argue that the girls are provocative. They are just provocative in other ways than the boys are. Girls take on the role of hot-chick, prankster, witch, hooligan with a black eye, while the boys are rockers, old men with guns, soldiers, punks, bums, 007 or even Hitler. Thus, one could conclude that the girls are provocative via appearance and the boys through intimidation, i.e. intimidate the audience (Einarsdóttir 2004).

From the diary of a teenager:

I had decided to wear a costume that I bought in the US. It is a long purple robe with a purple hood. A black net is over my face

that I can see through although others cannot see me. Under the robe, I wore a black t-shirt and pants. I also put on black gloves. I started out as a footballer but ended up as an executioner (Diary 2001: 13).

The Social Drama

However, as stated in Turner 1982, the celebrations or theatrics end when everything returns to normality and even the actors have acquired something new. What is it that Icelandic children and other participants have gained from the Ash Wednesday celebrations? Obviously, the children have received an enormous amount of candy – whether their parents like it or not. Many children remember the day with fondness, especially at the end of the day when they meet up with friends to swap goodies.

They have also had the valuable experience of creating something – deciding on what costume they want to dress in and figuring out how they are going to go about creating it.

They have also had the important experience of performing before adults. An experience that is new to many children and might possibly be very precious. Many children say that this is the most fun part of the day, i.e. going out and singing for adults, especially when they are well received with smiles and compliments as their reward.

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Pl. 1 Giant petards (*'murtali tal-loghob'*) for the 2004 festa of St Joseph in Hal Kirkop and the proud pyrotechnician who made them.

© *St Joseph Band Club, Kirkop, Malta*



Pl. 2 A moment of rest for members of the three confraternities carrying the statue of St Leonard during his festa in Hal Kirkop, Malta, 1960.

© *Jeremy Boissevain*

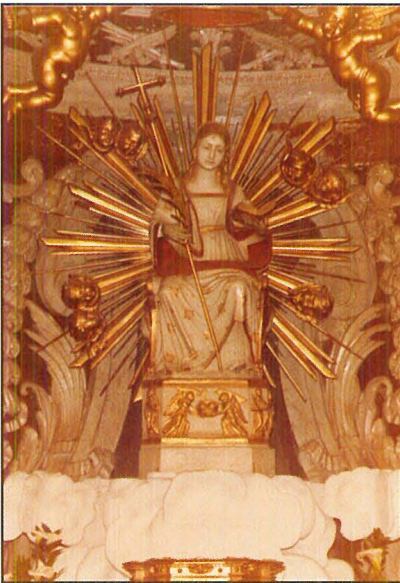


Pl. 3 Horn with single reed, serrated hornpipe, and bagpipe chanter with serrated horn.

© *Anna Borg-Cardona*



Pl. 4 Some members of a musician group in Carnival, Nadur, 2004, showing friction drum, five tambourines and a clapper (*triccaballaca*) © Anna Borg-Cardona



Pl. 5 Early Sixteenth century statue of St Agatha venerated at the church of St Agatha, Rabat, Malta
© Missionary Society of St Paul, Rabat, Malta



Pl. 6 A close-up of the 18th century stucco face of *Our Lady of Sorrows* which indicates the antiquity of the Qormi Good Friday procession. © Joseph F. Grima



Pl. 7 The arrival in Żabbar of the cyclist pilgrims on Saturday morning.

© Giovanna Iacovazzi

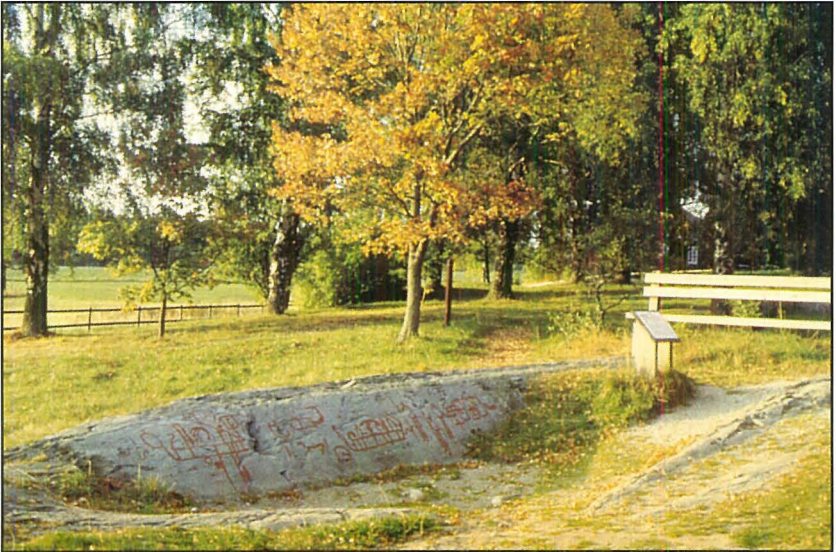


Pl. 8 Supporters of Mater Gratiae bandclub, the 'blue', on Saturday, the eve of the celebration.

© Giovanna Iacovazzi



Pl. 9 and 10 A Spring Procession from the Bronze Age depicted on a Rock-Carving in Högby, Western Sweden. © Tommy Andersson





Pl. 11 Chalice Well decorated for Lammas.

© Marion Bowman



Pl. 12 Goddess banners outside Goddess temple before procession.

© Marion Bowman



Pl. 13 Yuriy Zaicev (Cheboksary, Chuvashia). Akatui. 1935. Oil-painting. The State Arts Gallery of the Republic of Chuvashia, Cheboksary.



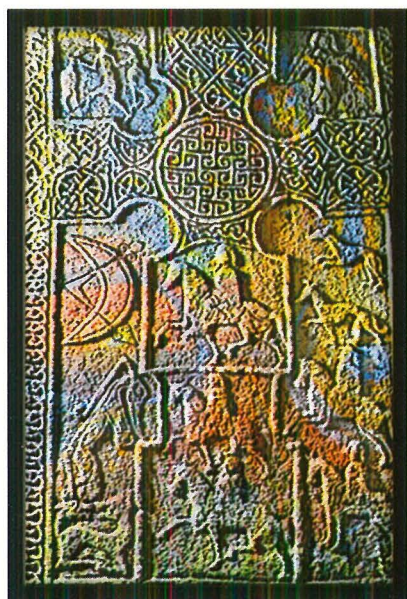
Pl. 14 Ash Wednesday celebrations in Iceland.

© Kristin Einarsdóttir



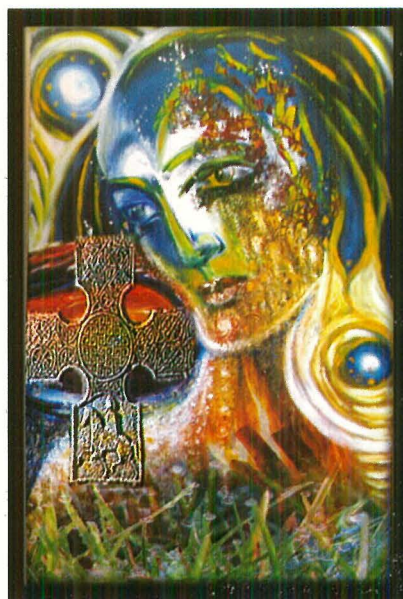
Pl. 15 Ash Wednesday celebrations in Iceland.

© *Kristín Einarsdóttir*



Pl. 16 Natalia Abelian. Ériu.
Conversion.

© *Maxim Fomin*



Pl. 17 Natalia Abelian. The Coming
of St Patrick.

© *Maxim Fomin*



Pl. 18 The Saint Eloi's celebrations in Provence: revitalizing traditional rituals.

© L. S. Fournier, 2004

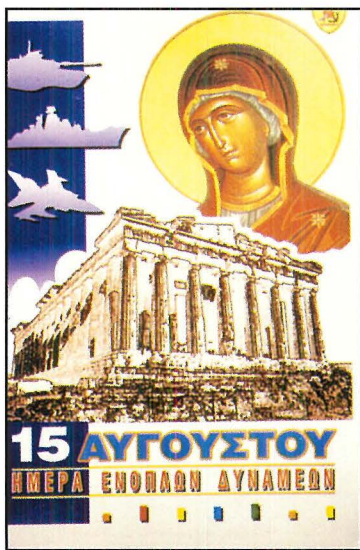


Pl. 19 The World Competition in crushing olives: a new way of building up cultural heritage in Provence.

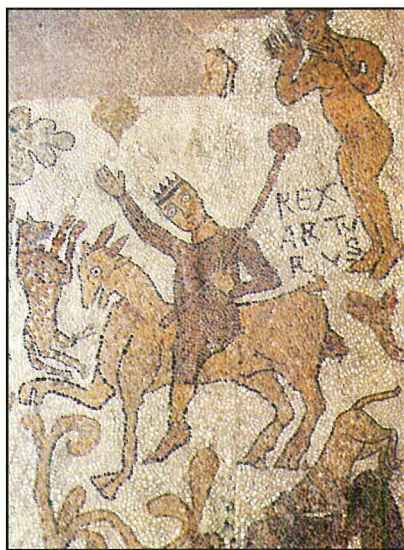
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Pl. 20 During the festival celebrating the Dormition of the Virgin Mary on Tinos, on 15 August, her icon is carried in procession, and also over the sick and women wanting to conceive.
© Hartmut Müller-Stauffenberg



Pl. 21 A poster proclaiming 15 August as the Day of Military Strength.
© E.J. Håland



Pl. 22 Arthur mounting on a goat.
© Maria Teresa Agozzino, 2003



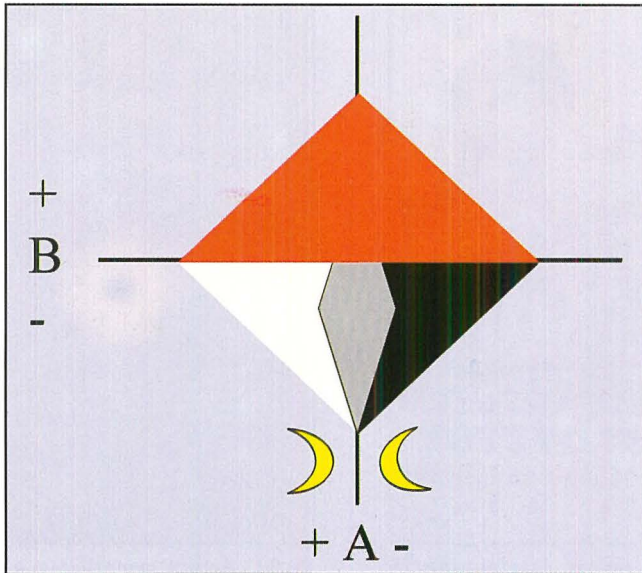
Pl. 23 Young birch tree outside shop in Uppsala, Sweden, 2004.

© Marlene Hugoson



Pl. 24 The Easter Tree in Uppsala, Sweden, 2004. Photo: Marlene Hugoson.

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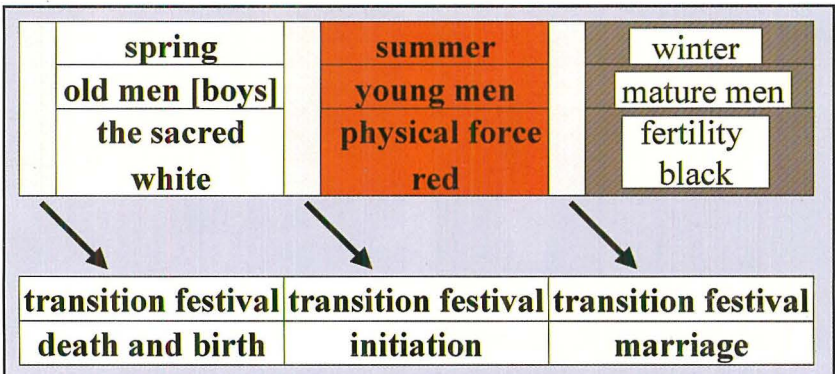
Pl. 25 The divisions of the year showing the suggested correspondence with the lunar cycle.

© Emily Lyle



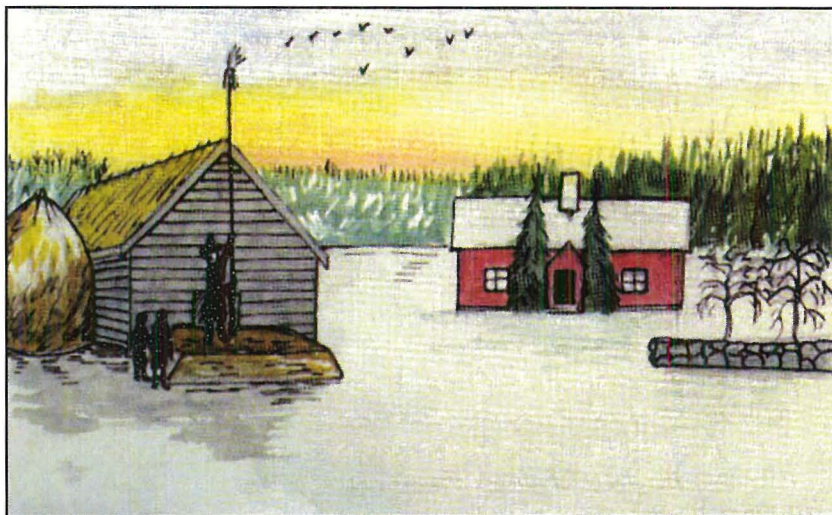
Pl. 26 Christmas mummers in Kuzebayevo village.

© Aado Lintrop, 1991



Pl. 27 The divisions of the year showing the suggested correspondence with the life cycle.

© Emily Lyle

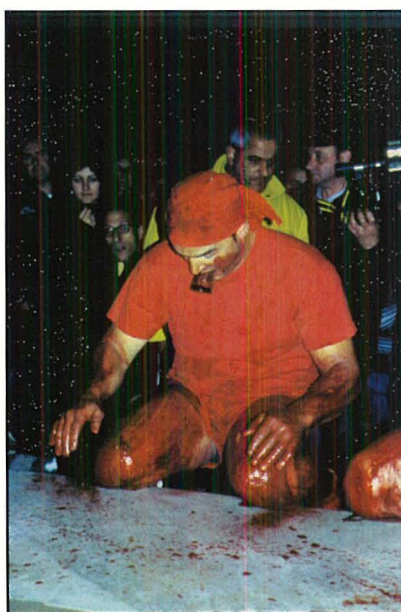


Pl. 28 A master puts up a corn sheaf for the birds at Christmas. (I FGH 6858: 128)



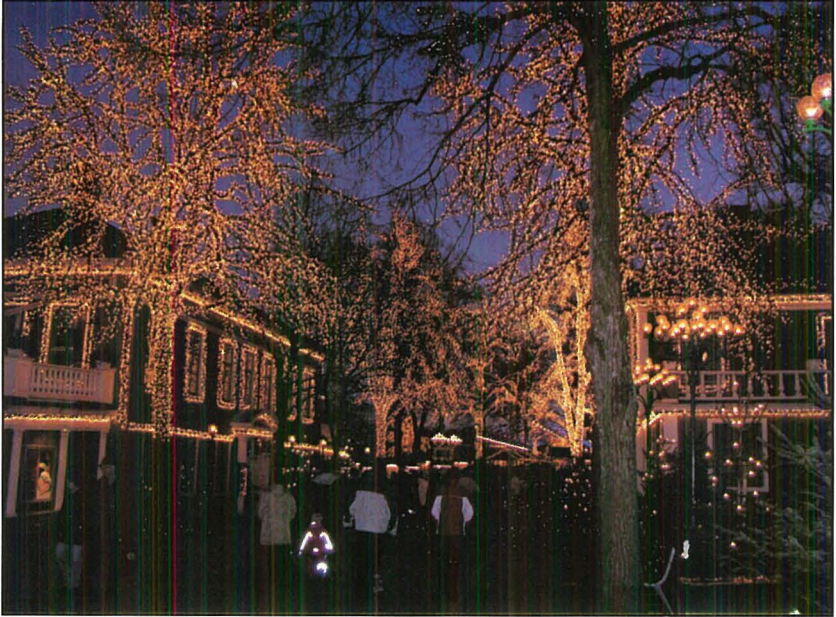
Pl. 29 The meticulous 'preparation of the legs' at Verbicaro.

© Giovanni O. Muraca



Pl. 30 Helping a flagellant ...

© Giovanni O. Muraca



Pl. 31 Christmas Market at Liseberg, Göteborg 2004.

© Carina Ahlqvist



Pl. 32 An old friend – the Christmas goat in a new context.

© Carina Ahlqvist



Pl. 33 The Christmas Eve dinner is an interesting arena for negotiations within many families. It is common that children expect the event to be clean from 'non-Swedish' elements. © Anna Ulfstrand



Pl. 34 A janney holding a 'split' to fend off over-eager guessers. © Jonathan Roper



Pl. 35 An attempt to guess the identity of a janny by their hands.

© Jonathan Roper



Pl. 36 The 'vattiente' at Nocera Terinese is accompanied by a bare-chested child or a boy wearing a red loincloth and holding a red cross (the 'Ecce Homo') and by another friend whose duty it is to pour wine over the wounds.

© Giovanni O. Muraca



Pl. 37 The well-known image of the Motherland from a Second World War poster in a modern remake declares 'Shrove for everyone!' This is one of the Russian illustrations of the huge public interest to the old calendric rites.



Pl. 38 Spring brings melting snows, new leaves, and the beginning of the work year in the cowboy's West. © David Stanley



Pl. 39 Gathering cattle and branding the calves are the first jobs when spring arrives. © Carl Fleischhauer, American Folklife Centre, Library of Congress

MAXIM FOMIN

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Celebrating Easter in Early Ireland

Account of Religious Conversion in Vita Sancti Patricii

Writing about the implications of the Buddhist conversion of Tibet, M. Kapstein (2000: 65) remarked:

When we think of conversion, it is individual conversion that we have in mind. Following James, we sometimes think of this as a sudden and dramatic reorientation of consciousness, marked by profound changes of sentiment and of faith ... When it is conversion of a nation that is at issue, the gradual transformation of cosmological frameworks, of ritual, intellectual, and bureaucratic practices, and of the historical and mythic narratives through which the national identity is constituted are among the key themes to which we must attend.¹

In what follows, we shall seek to explore the story of religious conversion of the early Irish within the framework, indicated by Kapstein, i.e. from the point of view of the cosmological, ritual, historical and mythical perspectives. We shall describe and discuss the implications of the story, contained in the seventh century life of St Patrick about the coming of the saint to Tara, perceived by the compilers of the vernacular Irish sources as the sacred capital of the island. Therefore, we shall be asking (and trying to answer) the following questions. Firstly, on what day Patrick arrived to Tara and what place the date occupied in the outlook of the early Irish? Secondly, what was the central ritual associated with the coming of

¹ Above, Kapstein referred to James 1987.

Patrick? Thirdly, what historical reasons existed at the time to choose this particular date for Patrick's arrival? And, lastly, what metaphorical effect did his mission have on the fate of the kings of Tara?

St Patrick's arrival to Tara according to Muirchú

Let us present the evidence of the story that will be in the focus of our attention. It comes from the composition *Vita Sancti Patricii*, written by the Irish author Muirchú moccu Machtheni.²

I. 10. *In illis autem diebus quibus haec gesta sunt in praedictis regionibus fuit rex quidam magnus ferox gentilisque, imperator barbarorum regnans in Temoria quae erat caput Scotorum Loiguire nomine filius Neill orig<inis> stirpis regiae huius pene insolae. Hic autem sciuos et magos et aurispices et incantatores et omnes malæ artis inuentores habuerat.*

In the days when this took place in those parts there was a king that was great, fierce, and a pagan, an emperor of the barbarians, reigning in Tara, which was then the capital of the Irish, by name Loiguire, son of Níall, by origin of a scion of the regal family of almost entire island. He had sages and magicians and fortune-tellers and sorcerers and inventors of every evil craft around him.

I. 13. *Adpropinquauit autem pasca in diebus illis quod pasca primum Deo in nostra Aegipto huius insolæ uelut quondam in Genesseon celebratum est. Et inuenierunt consilium ubi hoc primum pasca in gentibus... celebrarent... inspirato diuinitus sancto Patricio uissum est hanc magnam Domini sollempnitatem quasi caput omnium sollempnitatum in campo maximo ubi erat regnum maximum nationum harum quod erat omnis gentilitatis et idolatrie.*

² 'Of Muirchú's personal life nothing is known; neither is the date of his death,' says the editor of the text, L. Bieler, 1979: 2, 'Muirchú's *Vita* falls in the beginnings of Irish hagiography. As he himself tells us, his endeavor to write a Life deserving of this name of any Irish saint had been preceded only by that of his 'father' (teacher, *patris mei*) Cogitosus.... Muirchú's effort compares rather favourably with his predecessor's in point of coherence, structure, power of language, and vividness of narrative.' Further on composition of *Vita Sancti Patricii*, see Dumville 1993b: 203-221, 203-206. Few stimulating questions relating to purposes and literary models imitated by Muirchú were raised by Howlett 1995: 250-253.

In those days Easter was approaching, which was the first Easter in our Egypt of this island to be offered to God as it [was] once [offered] in Gessen. And they hold a counsel where they should celebrate first Easter among the pagans... Divinely inspired, Saint Patrick decided that this great feast of the Lord, being principal feast of all, should be celebrated in the greatest plain, where was the greatest kingdom among these tribes that was of all paganism and idolatry.

I. 14. *Donec postremo ad uesperum peruenierunt ad Ferti uirorum Feec... Fixoque ibi tentorio debeta pascae uota sacrificiumque laudis cum omni deuotione sanctus Patricius cum suis Deo altissimo secundum profetae uocem reddidit.*

In the evening they at last arrived at the burial site of the men of Fiacc... There they pitched their tent, and then Patrick with his companions duly offered Easter to God in heaven with great spiritual devotion, a sacrifice of praise, as the prophet says (Pl. 16)

I. 15. *Contigit uero in illo anno idolatriae solempnitatem quam gentiles incantationibus multis et magicis inuentionibus nonnullis aliis idolatriae superstitionibus congregatis etiam regibus satrapis ducibus principibus et optimatibus populi insuper et magis incantatoribus aurispicibus et omnis artis omnisque domi inuentoribus doctoribus uocatis ad Loigaireum uelut quondam ad Nabucodonosor regem in Temoria istorum Babylone exercere consuerant eadem nocte qua sanctus Patricius pascha illi illam adorarent exercerentque festiuitatem gentilem. Erat quoque quidam mos apud illos per edictum omnibus intimatus ut quicumque in cunctis regionibus siue procul siue iuxta in illa nocte incendisset ignem antequam in domu regia id est in palatio Temoriae succenderetur periret anima eius de populo suo. Sanctus ergo Patricius sanctum pascha celebrans incendit diuinum ignem ualde lucidum et benedictum qui in nocte refulgens a cunctis pene per plani campi habitantibus uissus est. Accidit ergo ut a Temoria uideretur uissoque eo conspexerunt omnes et mirati sunt. Conuocatisque senioribus et maioribus natu regi nescisse illum qui hoc fecerit magi responderunt: 'Rex in aeternum uiue. Hic ignis quem uidemus quique in hac nocte accensus est antequam succenderetur in domu tua – id est in palatio Temoriae – nissi extinctus fuerit in nocte hac qua accensus est numquam extinguetur in aeternum ; insuper et omnes ignes nostrae consuetudinis supergradietur, et ille qui incendit et regnum superueniens a quo incensus nocte in hac superabit nos omnes et te et omnes homines regni tui seducet et cadent ei omnia regna et ipsum implebit omnia et regnabit in saecula*

*sæculorum.*³

It so happened in that year that a feast of pagan worship was being held, which the pagans used to celebrate with many incantations and magic rites and several other superstitious acts of idolatry. There assembled kings, satraps, chiefs, princes, and the nobles of the people; furthermore, the magicians, the fortune-tellers, the sorcerers and the inventors and teachers of every craft and every skill were summoned to Loigaire (as they had been made summoned at one time to Nebuchadnezzar) – to the king at Tara, their Babylon, and they were prone to engage, and they engaged in their pagan festivities on the same night on which Saint Patrick celebrated Easter with much reverence. They also had a certain custom, which was announced to everyone by public proclamation, that whosoever, in all the regions, whether far or near, should have lit a fire on that night before it was lit in the king's house, that is, in the palace of Tara, his soul will perish from his own tribe. Saint Patrick, then, celebrating Holy Easter, kindled the divine fire with its bright light and blessed it which was shining brightly in the night, being seen by almost all the inhabitants on the flat plane. Thus it happened that it was seen at Tara, and as they saw it they all gazed and wondered. And being called together by the king [who informed them] that the seniors and the eldest did not know the one who did it, the druids answered: 'King, may you live forever! This fire which we see and which was kindled in this night before it was kindled in your house – that is in the palace of Tara – unless it will be extinguished in the night when it was kindled, by no means will be extinguished forever; and it will even rise above all the fires of our customs, and he who kindled it, overtaking your authority, by whom [the fire was] inflamed on this night will overpower us all and you, and will seduce all the people of your kingdom, and all kingdoms will yield to him, and it will spread over the whole country and will reign in all eternity'.⁴

Symbolism of Patrick's Easter celebration

P. Lysaght (2000: 84-86) writes on the significance of May Day:

³ Latin text is from Dumville 1993: 208-210.

⁴ The translation is mine, partly drawing on Bieler 1979: 74-75, 84-5, 86-87.

May Day inaugurates the summer season, when there is renewed life in the natural world, with trees in leaf, wildflowers in bloom, and a plentiful supply of fresh grass for the milk cows. It has strong agricultural and pastoral connotations, for it marked a new phase in the annual round of farming life...

A lot of attention was given to agricultural semantics of the holiday, especially with an emphasis on 'protection of household luck, especially dairying luck and prosperity' (Lysaght 1995: 97-106; see also Lysaght 2000: 86). Folkloric and mythological data⁵ that had been considered up to a present date never included into the scope of scholarly discussion a probably earliest description of the holiday contained in the *Life of St Patrick* just cited. However, the most of attention has been given to the fact that the account is the 'earliest witness to... the ceremonies of the Easter night' (Bieler 1979: 203), rather than to Beltaine. Indeed, from what we can deduce from the comparison of our source with a vernacular Irish account describing the May Day, there is no evidence whatsoever that one may point to Beltaine as the festival celebrated in the *Vita*, rather, we are dealing with some sort of hagiographical compilation based on the text of the Holy Scripture.

1. An earliest Irish text written in vernacular, *Audacht Moraind*, 'The Testament of Moraind,' gives a lot of attention to a description

⁵ P. Lysaght (2000: 85) probably refers to an account preserved in *Lebor Gabala Eireann* (although it is evident that the date referred to is the first Monday of May calends, which may even occur in the month of April!): *Ocus do dechtar dochum nĒrenn, DĪa Luain hi kalann Māi, hi longaib , barccaib. Ocus ro loiscit a longa ... rogabsad Tūatha Dē Danann ĩar sin rĳhe nĒrenn*. 'And they came to Ireland, on Monday, the calends of May, in ships and vessels. And they burned their ships... Thereafter the Tuatha De Danann took the kingship of Ireland'. Old Irish text and translation is from Macalister 1941: 142-3. It is certainly intriguing to note that St Patrick and his followers, when they arrived near Tara, also arrived on a ship: *relictaque ibi nauī pedestri itinere uenierunt*, 'there they left their boat and went by foot'. Latin text from Dumville 1993a: 210, trans. from Bieler 1979: 85. Andrew Breeze (1996: 59-63, 61) reports: 'It is certain that the Celts considered May Day and May Eve as a significant time. Invaders reached Ireland at *Beltaine*; the Welsh *Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, probably the work of Princess Gwenllian (d. 1136) of Gwynedd and Dyfed, tells of colts mysteriously stolen each May Eve in Gwent; a later, anonymous tale describes how, by a ruse at Oxford, Lludd rid Britain of a devastating May Eve scream. The whole subject has a large bibliography'. See Breeze 1996: 61 n.9 for references to Welsh sources.

of an ideal society. The natural prosperity attained by a righteous ruler in his domains plays an important part of the description; moreover, it would be quite similar in its tone to a description of a May Day just referred to by P. Lysaght:⁶

Is tria fhír flathemon cach soad soinmech, cach tír toirthech, cach lámnad lánchóir. Is tria fhír flathemon cach etha arduasail immed. Is tria fhír flathemon mesrada mórfheda ath- manna millsí - mblaissiter.

It is through the ruler's truth that every well-being is prosperous, every land is fertile, every parturition is wholly proper. It is through the ruler's truth that [there is] an abundance of every high corn. It is through the ruler's truth that tree-fruits of a great forest are tasted [like] a sweet manna.⁷

Within the framework of the early Irish literati the description of natural abundance was connected with a perception of the king as a centre of cosmos, and as the basis of the social unity. Early Irish hagiography employed and re-deployed this paradigm. It has also promulgated the shift from the archaic 'just king' to a new Christian archetype of 'humble king' under the custody of his bishop; we have seen that the great importance was given in the *Vita* to a description of the royal court.⁸ Having used the narrative framework

⁶ *Cp.* a poetical composition, attributed to Finn, 'First of May, fair aspect' (*Cétemain, cain cucht*). This piece is contained in Bodleian Library (Oxford) Laud 610 MS, 120r, and was edited by Murphy 1956: 156-158 and translated by Meyer 1911: 54-5, 55, verses 11, 12:

<i>Melldach rée rann;</i>	'Delightful is the season's splendour,
<i>(ro fáith) gaith garb gam;</i>	Rough winter has gone,
<i>gel ros; toirthech (tonn);</i>	Every fruitful wood shines white,
<i>(oll) síd; subach sam.</i>	A joyous peace is summer.
<i>Suidigthir íall én</i>	A flock of birds settles
<i>(i n-íath) i m-bí ben;</i>	In the midst of meadows
<i>búirithir gort glas</i>	The green field rustles,
<i>i m-bí bras glas gel.</i>	Wherein is a brawling white stream'.

⁷ Old Irish text from Kelly 1976: 60-61. Translation is mine.

⁸ It can also be remarked that St Patrick's behaviour in front of the king's eyes was given a detailed treatment by Muirchú in his *Vita*. St Patrick appears at the royal feast at Tara, puts the charms of the Loégaire's druids to test. He, having sent his follower Benignus into the burning house, demonstrates the power of Christianity by Benignus's withstanding of an ordeal by fire. Following that, St Patrick makes the king tremble and leaves Tara, prophesying that none of his descendants shall

just described, the hagiographer also sought it most appropriate to link the events happening in early medieval Ireland with the ones described in the Old and the New Testaments,⁹ and therefore redeployed the biblical language not only by directly citing from the canonical source, but also by drawing indirect links between the composition and its biblical analogues.

2. Nagy (1997: 84), discussing the ‘feast of pagan worship’ held by Loégaire at Tara, referred to it as ‘the pagan feast of Tara’.¹⁰ Having identified the date on which the feast was held around the 1st of May, it is thus important to explore the evidence of the vernacular Irish sources and to find out whether the feast of Tara, described in them, did fall on the 1st of May.

The opening of *Genemain Gheda Sláne*, ‘Birth of Aed Slane,’ contains an interesting account describing the feast of Tara and few sentiments, containing the glossator’s perception of the congregaton:

Bá coitchenn dano do feraib Herend tíachtain as cech aird co Temraig do chathim fessi Temrach ar cech samain. Ar bá híat da comthinól airegda no bítis oc feraib Herend.i. fes Temra cecha samna. ar bá híside caisc na ngente ,óenach Tailten cech lúgnasaid.

It was common for the men of Ireland to come from every side to Tara to spend feast of Tara on every 1st of November. For there were two principal congregations that the men of Ireland had: the

ever be kings (Bieler 1979: 93-99). A detailed discussion of the episode with regard to a modeling of Patrick’s encounter with Loégaire is contained in Nagy 1997: 90-109 (esp. ‘Patrick’s Proxy and the Ordeal by Fire,’ 96-100), and, with regard to the biblical fire imagery, in McCone 1990: 174-178.

⁹ McCone 1990: 33-34 has devoted a lot of discussion to finding parallels between the events and the lexis of the Old (esp. The Book of Genesis, 15: 6, The Book of Daniel, 2: 46, 3: 3, 3.22-7, 1/3 Kings 18: 17f.) and of the New Testament (The Gospels of Luke, 7: 26-7, and Matthew, 2: 3, 11: 13) with that of Muirchú in the episode cited in section I above. Nagy (1997: 80-84) discussed the episode in the ‘Authority Put to the Test’ section of chapter 2, in his opinion, ‘Patrick’s planned celebration of Easter in sight of his enemies will proclaim his freedom from a constricting ‘gentile’ culture ... It is the saint who blocks the seemingly proper communication of authority by setting his own fire and becoming a distributor of a new light for Ireland’ (81, 84).

¹⁰ He probably followed Binchy 1958: 113-138.

feast of Tara every November (for it used to be the Easter of the pagans) and the Fair of Tailtiu every August.¹¹

As it is obvious from the passage just cited, the congregations that the early Irish used to have did not occur in the spring time, but in the autumn. The Fair of Tailtiu, celebrated on the 1st of August, mentioned above, used to be a harvest festival that marked the beginning of autumn (Mac Neill, 1962). The Feast of Tara, celebrated on the 1st of November, marked the end of the autumn and the beginning of winter. J. Carey devoted a lengthy article dedicated to exploring the temporal and spatial structure lying behind the early Irish concept of the Otherworld. When criticising Binchy's misleading perception of the Feast of Tara as an '*a priori* conception of the details of a 'primitive fertility rite' (Binchy 1958: 134-135), Carey maintains that

- (a) the Otherworld is accessible at sacred spots, most notably ancient burial mounds... the tribal assembly and the Otherworld dwelling are directly juxtaposed. (b) The Otherworld is accessible at sacred times, in particular the festival of Samain. Samain was one of the principal occasions for the holding of an *oenach*, and was the night when the dead were able to return (Carey 1987: 13).

Further remarks regarding Muirchú's presentation of Patrick's celebration of Easter suffice here. Nagy pointed out that Patrick had chosen a burial site for the celebration of the Christian holiday, Holy Easter.¹² Without doubt, Muirchú, placing Patrick at the burial site, employed the rationale of the native Irish perception of the burial mound as a place connected with tribal celebrations and endowed with a special status. Nevertheless, having described

¹¹ Old Irish text from *Lebor na hUidre, Book of the Dun Cow* (Best and Bergin 1929: 133.4208-4212). Translation is mine.

¹² Nagy 1997: 82 says, 'it is a symbolically appropriate place for the celebration of resurrection, and for the assertion of prestige and power, for both pre-Christian and Christian Irish culture, *fert / fertae* was normally the resting place of a person of distinction and occasionally served as a boundary marker or a setting for public meetings'. See *Dictionary of the Irish Language* (hereinafter DIL). Dublin: RIA (1983) s.v. *I fert, fertae*, and also Picard 1992: 355-373. Note also that the author of *Genemain Áeda Sláine* calls the Feast of Tara 'the Easter of pagans'.

Patrick as celebrating Easter on the burial site, Muirchú filled the description with Paschal connotations, thus imposing Christian semantics onto the literary structure of the episode that would be deemed in other circumstances as plainly native Irish.¹³

Etymology of the Early Irish Ritual Year

It is surprising that Nagy (1997: 82) failed to notice that Patrick set the fire inside the tent, describing the saint as ‘lighting a bonfire on the plain of Brega’. The fact that the celebration of the pagan holiday of Beltaine involved kindling of the fire had probably provided a misleading clue for the scholar in this regard. Let us invoke the description of the early Irish calendar, inferred from the saga ‘The Wooing of Emer’ (*Tochmarc Emire*):

Ar is dé roinn no bid for an m-phiadain and.i. in samraid o beltine co samfuin , in gemred o samfuin co beltine. Nó samsun.i. samsvan.i. is ann sin feraid sam svana.i. sam són. Co h-óimolcc.i. taiti and erraig i. imme-folc.i. folc ind erraig , folc in gemrid. Nó aimelc.i. u-melc. Oi issan éxi ainm ina cæirech, iss de isper oi-ba, ut dicitur coinba, echba, duineba, amol iss ainm do bas ba. Oimolc ‘diu is h-i aimser inn sen a ticc as cæiriuch , i m-bleugaur coirich, unde oissc.i. oi-sesc.i. coeru seisc. Co beldine.i. bil-tine.i. tene soinmech.i. da tene do gnidiss la h-æss rechtai no druid co tincetlaib moraib , do lecdis na cethra etarræ ar tedmonnaib cecha bliadna. Nó co beldine ‘diu, ainm de idail. is ann doaselbti dine gacha ceathra for seilb Beil.

¹³ E. Ettlinger (1952: 30) discussed ‘deeply-rooted ancestor worship [that] caused related tribes of ‘warrior-herdsmen’ to congregate periodically at the grave of their eponymous founder, where they held their sports and games in his honour’ with reference to ancient Ireland. The rationale that stood behind Patrick’s behaviour at the site can also be explained by the analogical British evidence. As pointed out to me by Dr. K. Simms, Dept. of Medieval History, Trinity College – University of Dublin, ‘In Britain, Pope Gregory the Great advised the missionary St Augustine of Canterbury to build his Christian churches on top of pagan shrines and temples, so that the pagans would no longer be able to worship there. The fact that the pagan sacred sites or the areas in their vicinity were used as the place for monastic settlements can be called a local element to Irish ecclesiastical establishment as opposed to the imported elements such as Christian missionaries from Britain and the Continent.’

Beldine iarum bel-dine, dine cecha cethrai. Co prón trogein.i. lugnúsad.i. taide fogamuir.i. is and dobroine trogain.i. talom fo toirtip. Trogan didiu ainm do talvm.

For two divisions were formerly on the year, viz., summer from *Beltaine* (the first of May), and winter from *Samuin* to *Beltaine*. Or *sainfuin*, viz., *suain* (sounds), for it is then that gentle voices sound, viz., *sám-son* 'gentle sound'. To *Oimolc*, i.e., the beginning of spring, viz., different (*ime*) is its wet (*folc*), viz. the wet of spring, and the wet of winter. Or, *oi-melc*, viz., *oi*, in the language of poetry, is a name for sheep, whence *oibá* (sheep's death) is named, *ut dicitur coinbá* (dog's death), *echbá* (horse's death), *duineba* (men's death), as *bath* is a name for 'death'. *Oi-melc*, then, is the time in which the sheep come out and are milked, whence *oisc* (a ewe), i.e., *oisc* viz., barren sheep. To *Beldine*, i.e. *Beltine*, viz., a favouring fire. For the druids used to make two fires with great incantations, and to drive the cattle between them against the plagues, every year. Or to *Beldin*, viz., *Bel* the name of an idol. At that time the young of every neat were placed in the possession of *Bel*. *Beldine*, then *Beltine*. To *Brón Trogaill*, i.e. *Lugnúsad*, viz., the beginning of autumn; for it is then the earth is afflicted, viz., the earth under fruit. *Trogam* is a name for 'earth' (Meyer 1901: 245-246).¹⁴

Apart from fanciful etymologies that had a certain impact on the Celtic scholars who tried to decipher the meanings of the Celtic quarter-holidays of *Imbolc* and *Beltaine*,¹⁵ this interesting piece had certain details on how the festival of *Beltaine* meant to be celebrated. It agrees with the celebration of the *Loégaire's* festival described by *Muirchú* in that the fire that was kindled at its celebration had a positive aspect. On the other hand, the fire that was supposed to be kindled by *Loégaire* was meant to be kindled by the king himself, and not by the druids, as it is stated in the *Tochmarc Emire*. Also, the saga (together with *J. Nagy*) speaks of the bonfires being lit, presumably outside, whereas the hagiographic source explicitly states that the *Loégaire's* fire had to be lit inside.¹⁶ Similarly, *St Patrick* who obviously tried to place his fire on the par with that of the

¹⁴ Old Irish text. Trans. is by Meyer 1888: 232.

¹⁵ For *imbolc*, see Ó Catháin 1995: 7. Hamp (1979/80: 111) maintained that the original Indo-European root was **uts-molgo*, 'purification', and that it eventually gave rise to **ommolg*, 'milking'. For *beltaine's* etymology, see Breeze 1996: 61.

¹⁶ See section I above, I.15, *in domu tua – id est in palatio Temoriae*.

king's, lit his fire inside the tent that he and his followers erected on the burial site of the men of Fiacc, and not on the outside!

On the other hand, one may ask – where does the description of the seasons in *Tochmarc Emire* derive from? Some other early records describing *Beltaine* mention the bonfires being lit and the cattle driven through them. For instance, a Y recension of a glossary compiled by the bishop Cormac mac Cuileinan, *circa* 912 AD reports: *Bil. i. dia hidal unde Beltine. i. tene Bil*: ‘B., i.e. the pagan god, that is why B. the fire of B.’ (Stokes 1862: 122). In another version of the glossary (MS H.3.18, fol. 396), we read: *Beltaine. i. bel-dne; bel dano ainm do idhal. Is ann dothaissealbtha dīne cacha cethra for seilbh Bheil*, ‘*Beltaine*, i.e. *bel-dne*; Bel then is the name [given] to the idol. That is the people used to place every cattle-stock in the possession of Bel’.¹⁷ It does not, however, include a reference to a ‘favouring fire’, contained in *Tochmarc Emire*. The latter probably owes it to an entry on Bil from a glossary *Dúil Dromma Cetta*, found in H 3.18 MS, p. 633^a: *Bil.i. soinmech.ut est. biltene.i. tene thshoinmeach*, ‘B., i.e. favouring, that is, B., i.e. a favouring fire’.¹⁸ The latter contained no reference to the idols or pagan rites but established a positive connotation of the holiday, whereas Cormac’s interpretation of the festival obtained ‘negative assessment’: pagan holiday is ‘the work of demons’ (Carey 1997: 50). Trying to uncover the motivations that stood behind Cormac’s composition of his Glossary with regard to some peculiar terms referring to the magical powers of the early Irish poets, J. Carey emphasised the author’s ‘resolutely orthodox condemnation of any pagan or quasi-pagan survivals.’ The celebration of *Beltaine* which was probably practiced in early Ireland might certainly involve condemnation on the part of the Christian priesthood; therefore, it was necessary to charge it with pagan connections, the druids, and with the idols of the pagan past.¹⁹

¹⁷ Old Irish is from DIL, s.v. *Beltaine*, translation is mine. It can also be argued that the descriptions of the other three quarter-festivals, contained in *Tochmarc Emire*, derive from Cormac’s Glossary. See Stokes (1862) on *imbolc* (127) and *lughnasad* (26).

¹⁸ Binchy 1978: 1069.22-3.

¹⁹ It is beyond doubt that the Irish (and Celtic peoples in the British Islands in general) celebrated *Beltaine* by lighting bonfires: this is fully described by J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, chapter 62, entitled ‘The Fire Festivals of Europe’, §4. *The Beltane fires*, and will not be considered here.

Historical reasons for Muirchú's choice of Easter as the principal holiday

The date of the celebration of Easter by the early Irish had been a subject of an ample controversy.²⁰ Not only within Ireland itself there were disputes as to when exactly celebrate Easter as reported by St Adomnan in his *Life of Columba*,²¹ but also in France and in Britain the observance of Easter by the adherents of the Celtic church arose many rumours and accusations. In Gaul, St Columbanus around the year 600 appealed to the Pope Gregory the Great and pointed out the authority of a patristic witness.²² He relied upon the genuine Paschal tract of Anatolius, written in Laodicea in modern Syria in the 'second half of the third century' AD.²³ Later, in the year 664, at the synod of Whitby (Northern Britain, Northumbria) the Irish party headed by the bishop of Lindisfarne, Colmán, invoked the same authority to maintain their argument.²⁴ Synod of Whitby was finished by the dismissal of the arguments of the Irish ecclesiastics by Oswy, the king of Northumbria, who supported the rightness of his argument by the authority of St Peter.²⁵ Yet, the

²⁰ A substantial discussion of an Insular Paschal controversy is provided by an introduction to McCarthy and Breen (2003: 15-24). See also Walsh and Ó Cróinín (1988) reviewed by Herbert (1993: 109-111).

²¹ McCarthy (McCarthy and Ó Cróinín 1987-88: 227-242) reports of the Paschal controversy in the British Isles centered on the use of an 84-year Easter table, which was abandoned by Iona only in AD 716. Such a manuscript was discovered in Padua, Biblioteca Antoniana, MS I. 27 that contained an authentic Irish Easter table for AD 438-521.

²² He wrote: 'For, as I believe, it does not escape your diligence... how scathingly Anatolius reasons about this period of the moon, who recorded a terrible judgment against the Gallican authorities in their error.... I am surprised, I must confess, that this error of Gaul has not long since been scraped away by you', etc. (Walker 1970: 3, 5).

²³ The date is proposed by McCarthy and Breen (2003: 125).

²⁴ Reported by Bede (1969), book 3, chapter 25: 'How the controversy arose about the due time of keeping Easter, with those that came out of Scotland.'

²⁵ See Mc Carthy (1993) on the discussion of the Paschal table or '*latercus*... an example of the Paschal cycle known to have been employed by the British, Scots and Picts between the fifth and eighth centuries and which was at the centre of the Paschal controversy debated in Whitby in AD 664, as Bede relates in length in his *Historia ecclesiastica*' (ib., *Abstract*). The most recent discussion is provided by Blackburn and Holford-Strevens (1999: 794 (*The Insular Easter*)) and Appendix

Nicene Paschal practice was not introduced to Ireland before the end of the seventh century when the Bishop of Iona, Adomnan, paid his second visit to the island in the attempt to accomplish it around A.D. 703.²⁶

Writing in the seventh century, the author of the *Life of St Patrick*, Muirchú moccu Machtheni, was obviously aware of the Easter controversy of the time and, as Charles Doherty argued, chose to portray 'the dramatic confrontation between the power and light of Christianity and the darkness of paganism' by setting the scene at the time of 'the most important feast of the Christian calendar' and at the place of 'no mere local significance [– Tara, the ancient royal capital of Ireland]. The kings, inaugurated at Tara ... were only men who had risen to positions of exceptional power'. Muirchú, the author, was thereby 'flattering the powerful' (Doherty 1991: 53-94, 86).

Conclusions

Now let us come back to the evidence of the *Vita Sacti Patricii*. The custom of kindling of the fire in the royal palace before anywhere else in the country observed by Muirchú in I.15 of the *Vita* and the following prophecy of the druids warning the king of loosing his power in case he would not have Patrick's fire destroyed connects the lightning of the fire in the royal palace with the idea of obtaining kingship by doing this. Therefore, by putting Patrick first to kindle a fire in the plain of Brega, Muirchú puts forward a strong message: the king who has failed to kindle the fire first, can no longer be deemed as obtaining luck and preserving prosperity, and therefore is regarded as an unrighteous one.

The fact that St Patrick had been perceived as a righteous king who was worthy of taking sway of the island is provided in many instances, and, as an illustration, let us refer to the following verse:

J (The Insular Easter of the Latercus), which actually preserved the Insular date of the celebration of Easter in 432 AD as 3rd April – which does not quite agree with the 1st of May proposed by Muirchú.

²⁶ See Bede (1969), book 5, chapter 15, 'Several Churches of the Scots, at the instance of Adamnan, Conformed to the Catholic Easter'.

*Is Patraic fodeis Dūasaig
 leis ar n-ūasal, 's ar n-Īsil,
 hē fongnī cosin lā sin
 is ē ar rī acht in Rīg sin
 Mad airdrig betha brēgaig
 co tadgrīg is co sētaib
 marba ĩar nūair a hōidid
 co nūaill , co n-ēidibh*

Though they be high kings of the false world,
 with poet-power and with treasures,
 they are dead after the time of its youth,
 with pride and with trappings.

It is Patrick at the right hand of the Rewarded
 who has in possession our gentles and our simples:
 it is he who serves us until that day,
 he is the king save that King.²⁷

(Macalister 1941: 280-281)

Thus in the framework of the *Vita*, Loégaire, the king of the Irish, is left with the only solution: to submit to St Patrick and to accept the superiority of Christian faith which he finally executes (Pl. 17).

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²⁷ Old Irish text.

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Agrarian Festivals and the Ritual Year in Mediterranean France – Preserving Traditions or Building Heritage?

Within the limits of this conference about the ritual year I will focus my study on the changes of the festive calendar in Mediterranean Europe. This study is based on fieldwork carried out over some ten years in Provence (South of France) in a very touristic area and an attraction for the press. I will show the ritual calendar in the limelight of the social changes of our modern society of mobility and communication. We will be interested in the revival of festive rituals (as developed in Boissevain 1992) and in the cultural analysis of local popular festivities in the midst of a modern open global world.

I will try to define what is happening to the idea of yearly ritual in our modern society and consider a festivity as a complement of daily life more than its inverted reflection. I will study the changes in the conception of the ritual year and in the agrarian festivals, these changes being due to the fact that rural social groups become more and more open to outsiders and become ‘tourists in their own eyes’, as Boissevain says.

I will concisely give the theory on which my research is based and refer to two case studies to relate (i) the situation of ancient celebrations, and (ii) the situation of newly created festivals. Finally I will examine the present interest and the changes of the idea of ritual year.

A theoretical perspective

I am interested in the ways in which a social group, when facing social changes, tries to preserve and restore what is felt as precious

and traditional, considering the ritual year as being related to both tradition and the pre-industrial agricultural social groups as well as to the idea of cultural heritage which implies a wider opening on the modern world.

The idea of tradition has been widely studied since the works of the French structuralist anthropologists (Pouillon 1975) and the English Constructionist historians (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983). Everybody agrees nowadays that tradition is a product of present times which looks for a guarantee from the past. So you need to be modern to think about tradition. To talk about tradition would mean nothing in a 'traditional' society. Scientists have shown that tradition always comes from 'inverted affiliation' (Lenclud 1987). It refers to 'inventions' and 'revivals' and is first of all the point of view of the present individuals on the past. It is mainly directed by the dimensions of the present and the past.

Cultural heritage, as defined by UNESCO, is a much more ambiguous notion since it tries to relate past, present and future. Heritage is obviously a question of transmitting cultural values. The past is interpreted in the present time in order to foresee the future. That is why heritage is often related to the notions of 'sustainable development' and to the rule of preservation. Whereas tradition used to be built on a retrospective view, turned towards the past, heritage is more proactive, open to the future. Whereas tradition used to insist on the irremediable nature of changes, heritage unfolds cultural possibilities, produces meaning, chooses values. It works as a sign of modernity (Fournier 2004). It is used both to preserve and to create. It is a new stage in the awareness of local identities and it suggests a global evaluation of the different countries.

What happens to the ritual year when society undergoes social changes? Do calendar customs and ritual ceremonies throughout the ritual year help to preserve traditions, or do they help to build a heritage in Mediterranean villages which are becoming more and more open to global values? To answer this question, I will now analyse two very different cases, one related to an ancient festival and a more recent one. After a short description I will focus on the way they are structured and finally on which values they are founded.

First case study – Saint Eloi’s festivals

This group of festivities has been celebrated since the 18th century. They bear the mark of the old rural European civilization and are linked to the ritual cycle of haymaking and today presented in Provence as an authentic evidence of the local traditional culture, emphasised by the blessing and procession of carriage horses, richly harnessed ‘in the Saracen way’.¹ They favour the symbol of the circle and have a deep influence upon the way ritual participants consider time. The main stake of the annual reproduction of the rite is to keep up the ceremonies of popular religious belief and be faithful to the traditional organization of the rural ritual year (Pl. 18).

Description – guild celebrations

These celebrations belong to religious guilds, which question the relationship between official and popular religion in the structure of the ritual year. In Provençal villages the main festivities in honour of the patron saint are traditionally organized by the local youth and the celebration for the second minor saint is organized by a religious brotherhood. During this celebration a procession towards a church is usually held on the day, sometimes far away from the village and at other times in the village church itself. It is more intimate and more religious than the patron saint’s day, even if they are sometimes linked together. Before the 1789 French Revolution these organizing guilds used to be trade corporations.

A guild used to be a social organization in which trade corporations referred to a local identity, to a calendar date and to values embodied by a saint. The idea of ritual year is based on work, environment and religion and thus acquires a real power to structure the social group.

In spite of the secularization process a large number of these guild celebrations has survived in Provence after the French Revolution. They are still celebrated or reinvented today, the most significant group in this particular area is undoubtedly the one dedicated to Saint Eloi, the double of Saint John, who was at first

¹ That is, with a special collar decorated with painted feathers, wool, small bells and mirrors (Gueusquin 2000).

the patron saint of the goldsmiths and blacksmiths, then of muleteers and more widely of country workers.

The main characteristic ritual is called '*Carreto ramado*'. It is a parade-procession of a cart packed with branches and drawn by a large number of richly harnessed horses – from 15 to 60 depending on the possibilities. They are blest as they ride past the church. The success of this rite attracts pedlars and enables the guild to collect the funds for the organization of concerts and dances for the village community. Cocktails and meals are offered by two members of the guild – the priors – who are appointed each year take in charge of the festivities. In some villages these festivities may develop more widely. They last longer and are subsidized by town and district authorities to organize various folkloristic and secular activities like bull fights or parades held in ancient local costumes.

These agrarian festivities led to the foundation of a 'Union of the Guilds of Saint Eloi' in 1970 and since then they have been held throughout summer, though the original feast day was June 24th. The united guilds share their horses and harnesses. They train all year round, publish booklets and fix the calendar for the different festivities.

Structure and function

The elements used (priors, structure of the ritual, articles) give a cultural background to these festivities with a traditional bent. They evince representations linked to the idea of the ritual year in European pre-industrial social groups.

The priors

The cult and the Saint Eloi Guilds influence the festive year in the particular villages tremendously. The private winter Saint Eloi's Day – with a mass and a meal – corresponds to the summer celebration. The fact that the Saint Eloi's celebrations deeply structure the ritual year is expressed in the saying '*Sant Aloi es la festo, que s'en parlo sièi mès après; sièi mès avans, ce que fai tout l'an*' (You speak about Saint Eloi's Day for six months after and six months before, that is the whole year.)

The fixed organization of the festivities relies on priors. During fieldwork sessions one realizes that memory is shaped by the succession of past priors. Informers very rarely remember the dates but their speeches frequently refer to 'the year I was appointed prior' or 'the year when X was prior with Y'. The structure of the celebrations enables the members to set the past according to concrete references.

Moreover, the year of the priors' appointment does not correspond to the civil year. The 'priors of the year' are the '*prèus rintrant*' (the incoming priors). They share their charge with the '*prèus sourtant*' (the outgoing priors) from the previous year. Money is collected by the incoming priors but reinvested only for the next celebrations.² The priors are used as a link, a relay between the past and the coming year: in fact they are incoming priors over two years, from June to the following June and outgoing priors for another year. Thus, through this festive ritual the members are facing a local non-official computation of time which imposes a local ritual year based on Saint Eloi's cult over the ritual Christian year. By building up memory and a new computation of time, Saint Eloi's festivities compel participants to live in a specific world, anchored since old times in local society.

The structure of the rite

Other elements have structured these festivities as a strong mark in the traditional ritual year, drawing the attention of scholars and museum authorities since the 19th century.³ We must remark that the central ritual of the cart is a double circum-ambulation, referring to a symbolical game of wildness versus civilization. Comparing the two rounds of the cart leading the festivities, one can contrast the wild ride of Saturday night and the quiet procession of Sunday morning.

Though wild in the evening the cart is tamed on the next day. Though creating anxiety on Saturday, it goes through a peaceful

² For the organization of the two or three annual celebrations, cf. the Kabyle examples of the *tazz'unt* and *lâamt* system in Lortat-Jacob and Jouad 1978: 50 ff. and 88-89.

³ For an estimate of French Academic Researches related to this type of festivities, cf. Fournier 2002.

liturgical plan on Sunday. It is a typical example of a rite of passage which leads to periodical renewal of a social or symbolical order. Here Van Gennep's theory (1909) of the rites of passage is at play: the Saturday ride separates and scatters in a cloud of dust the frightened participants (stage of separation); then comes a period of waiting characterized by friendly drinking libation and eating (stage of latency); a solemn and ordered parade characterizes the return to normal life (stage of aggregation). In terms of gift and counter-gift, as in Mauss's theory (1923), a cart is entrusted to destiny (a ride with the risk of an accident) to bring back protection and fertility (parade with beneficent plants and whips): in a season of expectation for agricultural activities, a wheel is thrown to bring back fortune. The structure of the festivities is typical of classical anthropological studies about rituals.

Elements of tangible folklore

They symbolize the cycle of renewal common to a large number of folkloristic customs in Europe. The '*tortillades*' (twisted crown-shaped cakes with aniseed) which are fixed on horses' collars, as well as the cross (or crown)⁴ made of corn decorating the cart on Sunday, belong to that type of objects.

Let us examine the crown of corn made by women and hung over the cart driver. Its frame is a 60 cm wide camargue cross on which corn ears, lavender twigs, card thistles and a red and gold ribbon are tied up. The frame is stripped and the cross newly decorated each year for the celebration. All the year round this symbol is kept by the priors. After the celebration one prior is in charge: he will take it to the second prior's home six months later. A private evening will take place to settle the cross in its new home. This 'transmission' of a relic is totally informal, in a secular place: a few

⁴ About the homology cross-crown peculiar to European rites at the end of harvesting, cf. the contributions of the 13th Euroethno workshop 'Festivities and Agrarian Rituals in Europe: Retrospective over a Century,' Keszeg 2004 for Romania, Verebelyi 2004 for Hungary, Spera 2004 for southern Italy, Rivas 2004 for Spain, and Simonsen 2004 for Denmark. Comparisons in these contributions deepen the general interpretation given by Van Gennep 1998: 1879.

verses of Saint Eloi's song are sung, coffee is drunk and chatting takes place as usual in country evenings. Yet this situation about the wheels and crowns of Saint John is well known (Belmont 1973, Varagnac 1948) and it shows that the underlying symbolism of Saint Eloi clearly belongs to European folklore related to Saint John.⁵ Consequently, these festivities display an important symbolic connection which uses elements from a much older agrarian ritual in the present cult of Saint Eloi.⁶

Evaluating festivities

Throughout the yearly festivities of Saint Eloi, the present revival and reorganization of ancient agrarian and trade rituals rely on goodwill and local associations which passionately maintain rural life and local traditions. The Provençal guild festivities mean to be cultural and pro-traditional. Compared to the orgiastic explosion which goes with rejoicing in most of the festivities in Provence, the rituals belonging to the guild festivities are surprisingly quiet, codified, and well balanced. These festivities acknowledge their religious origin even if the official religion sometimes views them as a pagan reappearance. The priors of the year, secular organizers of the celebrations in the name of the guilds, go to church on Sunday and suggest prayers with special intentions. They also sell blessed bread during the procession and ask the priest to bless the horses. They have mass celebrated at home early in the morning for the

⁵ This confirms Van Gennep's remarks (1998) about the symbolic kinship between the two saints and their relation to harvesting. Cf. the relation between Saint Eloi and the myth of the prodigious reaper on one hand, the link between Saint John and harvesting on the other hand. The absence of the custom of the last sheaf and of the harvest cart in Provence leads me to interpret the Saint Eloi's carts as their homologues (cf. Van Gennep 1998: 1835, 1867, and 1851 for a description of the harvest cart). For a comparative perspective, see Belmont 1973: 104 points out the custom for women to make crowns with Saint John's herbs.

⁶ During fieldwork sessions the link Saint Eloi / harvests is testified by the eldest. According to informers, priors had to feed the musicians for Saint Eloi's Day as they had to feed the harvesting groups and that was expensive. These snatches of rural memory must be compared to what Camporesi 1993: 17 ff. and Spera 2004 say about the unwritten obligations of landlords during the agrarian rituals.

benefit of the cart drivers who cannot attend the main service. They also watch over the good order of the programme. They are very religious and devoted to the notion of tradition which they mean to honour by maintaining these yearly festive rites.

Second case study – olives and olive picking cycle

These rituals have been invented in the 70s and are very different from the previous ones. They use a product whose yearly cycle was not adopted in the traditional ritual year. From this product they try to stimulate the local development in the commercial, touristic and ethnic fields. More than maintaining and preserving a traditional ritual, they use agricultural and seasonal resources of the Mediterranean environment to build a cultural heritage for tourists and new residents to evaluate.

Description

These festivities have been completely invented in the second half of the 20th century. They belong neither to religious guilds nor to trade corporations. Whereas ancient celebrations were based on social pretexts which anchored them in a definite community – trade, religion or town –, the new festivities are based on thematic pretexts which enable anyone to participate. This situation is radically changing the classical idea of the ritual year.

Themes linked to land produce, trades, crafts, animal lore or local cultures are the most popular in the area under consideration. In the first place olives, oil, wine, hay and apples are celebrated. These local products have been officially classified these last years. People who produce these products are honoured: olive pressers, vine growers, harvesters, and farmers are selected specifically for these celebrations for their special abilities. Other celebrations honour the abilities themselves, including local costume or basket making. Another recurrent theme deals with domestic animals considered as means of labour and related to a past agricultural civilization. Finally, some festivities focus on local culture, thus celebrating present local personalities or commemorating founding events.

These thematic celebrations have been created recently by local associations or by towns and they all refer to nature and the past as well as to values conveyed by these notions. All these celebrations can be related to the ritual year since they rely on products linked to the agricultural cycle or to activities which transform these products. In fact, though making way for imagination linked to nature and the past, they also ask professionals to cooperate and are open to working with both local identity and economy. Moreover these thematic celebrations change the local festive pattern by superimposing various new elements on ancient festivities, and thus encourage change.

As an example of this type of festivities we will study the 'green olives celebration' in the village of Mouriès. It was first held in 1968 when the town mayor had the idea to organize a bull fight and a dance to celebrate the picking of green olives. The olives were only a pretext since Provençal olive groves were still recovering from frost in 1956. Thirty years later the celebration had become a big fair, with an outstanding folkloristic parade, a famous bull competition and a large number of events. The recent craze for olive oil products, linked to the good will of many local actors, has enabled the celebration to expand and to become one of the most famous in the area.

Yet in the programme, olive production is modest. One can find it of course in a few stands of 'traditional bargains – crafts – local products'. An association offers visits by horse carriage to the surrounding olive groves. A 'world competition in crushing olives' is organized by the producers and the town (Pl. 19). But it is very small compared to the choice of events: exhibition of ancient cars, dog competition, exhibition of paintings by local painters, fun fair, day competition of bowls (*'pétanque'*), folk mass in the Provençal language, bull games, concerts, dances, and so on.

Structure and functioning

How does this type of festivities work? How is it structured? Contrary to Saint Eloi's celebrations in which actors and structure of the ritual are linked to the ritual year, the new thematic festivities are related to the ritual year only by the product they use.

The words used for olive products have a cosmogonic and anthropomorphic meaning which emphasizes the images of

continuity and suggests a parallel between the annual cycle and the human life cycle. To understand this imagery one must keep in mind the slow growth of olive trees which do not produce quicker than men. As it is said: 'The grandfather plants the tree, the father hews it, the son gets the crop' (Bonnadier 1989). One can find the metaphor of milk in the expression '*mouse lis oulivo*' (in which one 'draws' olives instead of 'picking' them, because of the gestures) and in the '*gerlo*' (the big jar used to carry oil as well as milk). The image of death can be found in the expression '*toumba dins la gerlo de l'oli*' (fall into the oil jar – that is 'die'), in the word 'hell' which is given to the drain of a press, or in the use of ashes to preserve olives. There are also images of purity (soap, unction) and fertility (using oil as a sexual lubricant, comparison of olives to testicles in the expression 'change the water of the olives' which means urinate Mistral (1887), and to pick olives women use aprons which swell with the crop of olives as if they were pregnant). All these images strengthen the symbolic value of olive trees. Men and olive trees share a privileged relationship which transforms olive growing into heritage since olive growing must be transmitted to work.

The symbolic value of 'crushed' green olives is strong as well. The technique to 'crush' them is simple – crushing olives with the bottom of a glass. But green olives themselves are very important. They are the first fruits of the crop and as such they have a propitiatory value. Like all first fruits in season one can make a wish. Then they have a predictive value as they are a sample of the next crop and enable one to foresee the quality of the crop. Finally, they have an emblematic value since they are hand-picked one by one in baskets, at a time when olives are often picked with vibrators or rakes, that is with mechanical techniques. The picking is focused on the ancestral gesture: '*mouse lis oulivo*' has a weighty semantic value.⁷ In society the word 'heritage' can be extended endlessly – by preserving all these hidden meanings olives have become a heritage.

⁷ As we have mentioned earlier, this verb usually means 'to draw the milk'. However, Mistral (1887) gives other meanings: 'to pick in one move all the olives of a branch, draw the milk, draw slowly, get money through fondling, and wind a rope around a spinning top.'

Evaluating festivities

Whereas olives have never been valorized in agricultural civilization and had no dedicated cult, today olive growing is becoming cultural heritage. The use of country products as the themes of new festivities revive the notion of the ritual year, which has been forgotten with the disappearance of farming. At the same time the present craze for rural products promotes the idea that olive growing is a heritage. The use of olive products in Mouriès goes with an increase of discourse about heritage.

Originally festivities made use of folklore, bull fights and fun fairs, which are usual festive manifestations. Now local olive growing heritage is being pushed forward: competitions for crushing olives is the main attraction of the festivities; mill presses and groves offer guided tours by members of an association. The town has just bought an old press – closed since the 1956 frost – to transform it into a cultural centre. The tourist office will be transferred there and a thematic museum as well as a conference centre will be opened. The old plant with the triturating machines from 1950 will be part of the museum. So olive is enabling people to ‘reinvent a culture’ (Chevallier 2000). It helps local development.

Towards a revival of the ritual year

These examples show that the notion of ritual year, which can be applied to agricultural societies in pre-industrial Europe, is also a suitable interpretation for modern social phenomena. The view, populations have of the notion of ritual year as well as their conception of time and history, have just changed.

In ancient celebrations, as with the traditional agrarian Saint Eloi’s celebrations, actors, rituals, and articles used are dependent on the ritual year, especially through the theme of cycle (cycle of the priors, circum-ambulation of the carts, cycle of the emblematic objects of the rite) which feeds the festivities and works as an enveloping frame. However, in the recently created celebrations – the modern festivities about rural products, as in Mouriès – the notion ‘ritual year’ is still present since festivities are dedicated to products which depend on the cycle of the seasons, but it is no longer

central. It has become a pretext for the projection of identity, heritage, economy or tourism.

Our study reveals that the meaning of 'ritual year' has changed in modern societies. But to my mind this change does not suppress the importance of the notion nor its capacity to organize social life. Describing seasonal changes among Eskimos hundred years ago, Mauss (1905) compared the phenomenon to the summer travels of city dwellers in western societies. We can reasonably think that were the ritual year no longer resting on agrarian activities, it would have been revived by the leisure society (Dumazedier 1962) and depending on seasons to keep the power to structure social phenomena.

New ways of representing time and history have appeared with globalization and the end of agrarian societies and they have changed the understanding of the notion of ritual year. In ancient societies history was directed either to the past (people behaved like their glorious elders) or to the future (people were waiting for better days). In modern societies history is focused on the present (Hartog 2003) which is now responsible for the past (duty to be faithful to memory) as well as for the future (rule of precaution and responsibility for the future generations). In this situation the ritual year does not belong to an automatic repetitive cycle nor to a fidelity to tradition. It has just become a pretext to understand the notion of cultural heritage that is the active building up of what we are now in relation to what we imagine we were in the past and what we hope to be in the future. The ritual year is remote and is no longer considered as a human necessity, which questions the parallel between individual life, social life, and the life of nature as accepted by ancient rites.

The comparative studies in Europe, led by the members of F.E.R.-Eurethno network for fifteen years, do not oppose this view. Based on the analysis of the conceptions of time, calendar customs, seasonal festivities and rites, they show how the dynamics of contemporary festivities and rites has forced Europeans to renew their traditional representations. Here one can estimate the influence of historical transitions (passage from state economy to a market economy in Eastern parts, passage from an agricultural society to a society of services and communication in Western parts) on the ways festivities and seasons marks are fixed. One realizes that the ritual year, from an unconscious structure helping to think of the passage of time and the seasons, has become a positive resource fit to promote a political or economic speech about local development.

Final comments

Studying the classical notion of ritual year in a contemporary context one can point out what has changed in the conceptions of time and the festive rituals in Europe. The natural cycle of seasons still directs the ritual year but the crops from agricultural products, considered yesterday as the fruit of the common work of man and nature, have been transformed and evaluated in cultural goods. Whereas the ancient ritual year used to link the life of the individuals, the life of social groups and the life of nature, the new ritual year uses nature to build and showcase an identity for outsiders. At the same time the notion of celebration is standardized, inclining to be more profane.

This situation justifies the interest of scholars. They carefully study classical folklorists who have given a sound basis to comparative studies as much as analyse changes brought about by the modern world in the various festivities, ritual and sacred.

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Ethnography in Shangri-La

Tibetan Buddhist Funerals as Folk Religion*

In Tibet, the calendar year is bracketed by two major festivals – the New Year (between late January and early February) and the harvest (first half of September) (Duncan 1998 [1964]: 143, 128). Of these, the New Year is by far the more important and the more imbued with religious significance. At the beginning of this celebration, demons are exorcised at the same time and in much the same way as the accumulated dirt of the past year is cleaned out of the house; and at the end, blessings are sought for health and prosperity in the coming year (Duncan 1998 [1964]: 143-144).

Death rites and the Ritual Year in Tibet

As for 'life-cycle' rites, Tibetan Buddhism plays very little (if any) role in such events as birth, puberty and marriage. The only 'life-cycle' stage that attracts significant religious activity is death (Fürer-Haimendorf 1979 [1964]: 224-225); the funeral rituals¹ involve not

* The following paper is a 'work in progress' report on my doctoral research at the Centre for Buddhist Studies, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Bristol (UK). I gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance of the Graduate Dean Conference Fund of the Faculty of Arts, University of Bristol, which enabled me to attend this conference.

¹ Although I have used the word 'funerals' in the title of this talk, I prefer to speak of 'funeral (or death) rites (or rituals)' to highlight the fact that a usually lengthy sequence of procedures is involved, from those addressed to a person who is either known or believed to be dying, through to the completion of mourning and commemoration, which may occur well after the body has been disposed of.

only the closing of this life but preparation for the next. The consciousness of the deceased person is believed to move on to a new birth, and various activities in the death rites can both help it detach itself from this life and improve its chances of a 'fortunate rebirth' in the next.

The presence of only one major life-cycle rite parallels the presence of one major yearly ritual; both mark a transition from old to new and involve the cleaning away of accumulated 'debris' in preparation for the new situation. In this connection it is interesting to note that during the New Year's celebrations, prayers are frequently offered for the dead; and this is also a particular time for commemorating those who have died in the past year (Asboe 1932: 67).²

It appears to me that interest in the activities of everyday Tibetan life remains largely undeveloped, even within my own field of Buddhist Studies, although there is considerable attention in Western scholarly circles to preserving and disseminating the religious and philosophical knowledge of the monasteries and the religious professionals. I have chosen to focus on one particular set of activities – death rites – as both a paradigmatic ritual sequence for the study of Tibetan Buddhism 'in action', and an example of how, in my opinion, the study of Tibetan Buddhism to date has failed to take into account significant areas of religious activity among the general population.

Descriptions of funeral rituals

When I first set out to design a research project on the death rituals of the *Bar do thos grol* – commonly known in the West as the 'Tibetan Book of the Dead'³ – I was encouraged by comments in the academic

² Memorial rites may also be celebrated regularly at other times of the year: see for example Dargyay 1986: 182.

³ This work – which is intended to guide the deceased's consciousness through the perils and pitfalls of the intermediate state between death and rebirth, in such a way as to help it to a 'fortunate rebirth' – has, from its first appearance in English translation in 1927, been treated as exemplifying a comprehensive 'science of death.' Little attention is paid to the fact that the texts contained in the 'Tibetan Book of the Dead' constitute only a small portion of a larger work ('Liberation upon Hearing

literature to the effect that there are now an appreciable number of specific works on death rites in Tibetan populations, and that the ritual use of the *Bar do thos grol* is well-known.⁴ There are also a number of English translations of the ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’, most of them with extensive commentaries and notes.⁵ It seemed to me that there would be a useful kernel of literature on which to base my project.

I was wrong. The ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’ itself contains no information on such practical elements of a funeral as, for example, how to dispose of the body, mourning and commemoration. Western attention has focused largely on the ‘psychological’ or ‘philosophical’ aspects of the Tibetan Buddhist approach to death, and the commentaries and notes on the various ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’ translations are singularly bare of any reference to what is actually done with a dead body.⁶

It was therefore necessary to turn my attention to written accounts of funerals, seen as descriptions of activities rather than evaluations of an underlying religious philosophy. In addition to detailed studies of historical documents,⁷ I reviewed popular literature dating back to the 18th century for accounts by traders, soldiers, diplomats, missionaries and travellers of funerals or related rites that they witnessed.⁸ I was able to locate a number of useful analyses of Tibetan death rites in the anthropological and

in the Intermediate State’), which in turn is part of a larger cycle of texts (‘Self-Liberation through Contemplation of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities’), which in turn is only one among many such cycles. Throughout this paper I use the term ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’ to refer to the various Western-language translations of the Tibetan text, not the Tibetan text itself.

⁴ See for example Blondeau 1997: 193.

⁵ In addition to the original 1927 translation, which has remained continuously in print (Evans-Wentz 2000 [1927]), see also Fremantle and Chögyam Trungpa 2000 [1975], Thurman 1994.

⁶ Evans-Wentz’s edition contains a section on ‘Death Ceremonies’ (2000 [1927]: 18-28), but there is no indication that Evans-Wentz himself ever saw a Tibetan Buddhist funeral; his report appears to be drawn mostly from accounts previously published elsewhere.

⁷ See in particular Lalou 1952, Haahr 1969, Stein 1970.

⁸ For example, see respectively Bogle 1971 [1879], Waddell 1999 [1899], Bell 1998 [1928], Duncan 1998 [1964] and David-Neel 1978 [1929].

ethnographical literature.⁹ From a preliminary analysis of my data, I developed a broad five-stage structure for studying death rites which includes:

1. Immediately before death
2. Between death and the disposal of the corpse
3. Disposal
4. Immediately after disposal
5. Some time after disposal (commemoration)

Even this doesn't completely cover the available data, so I have had to add a further category:

6. Related beliefs and practices,

as a sort of catch-all for elements which are closely related to funerary rituals and often come into play in the context of death rites, but which do not form part of the sequence of events that deal directly with the disposal of the deceased.

Each of my headings had to be further broken down into a series of activities. This allowed me to prepare a spreadsheet from which I could get a 'bird's-eye view' of which account covers what rites, what elements are mentioned frequently, what are not, and also where my categories were inadequate and needed further refinement.

Preliminary results

I have not yet completed the analysis of my findings. At this point, however, I am able to point out a few of the aspects I find interesting, and which will form subjects of further study.

Clerical religion versus lay ('folk') religion

Firstly, although Tibetan Buddhist funeral rituals require the presence of one or more lamas or monks to perform various religious functions with respect to the deceased and her future rebirth, a

⁹ Of particular note, see Brauen 1982, Mumford 1989, Ramble 1982, Steinmann 1987, Vinding 1982.

great deal of activity takes place among the laity, frequently in providing support and assistance to the lamas but also in an extended series of activities which range from ensuring that the dying person has made final disposition of her property, to preparing the corpse for disposal, to making merit for the deceased after disposal, to periodic commemoration of the deceased for some years after death.

In terms of my five-stage structure, the breakdown is as follows:

1. Immediately before death:

laity – friends and/or relatives of the dying person assist her in making disposition of her property and provide relics or blessed substances for ‘last food’

religious professional(s) (one or more lamas and/or monks) – may be involved in giving religious instruction to the dying person, but the material is not clear as to whether this happens in all or even most cases.

2. Between death and the disposal of the corpse:

laity – prepare the corpse, ‘feed’ the spirit of the deceased, assist religious professionals.

religious professional(s) – perform ‘*pho-ba* (pronounced ‘po-wa’) to liberate deceased’s consciousness; say prayers, read texts, and begin the guidance of deceased’s consciousness through the *bar-do* (the intermediate state between death and rebirth).

3. Disposal:

primarily the responsibility of the *laity*, although *religious professional(s)* may participate in the procedure, mostly by offering prayers.

4. Immediately after disposal:

laity – activities to ‘make merit’ for the deceased (see below); assist religious professionals

religious professional(s) – continuing to guide deceased’s consciousness through the *bar-do*.

5. Some time after disposal (commemoration):

primarily the responsibility of the *laity*; again, *religious professional(s)* participate mainly by being present and offering auspicious prayers.

In addition, (6) related beliefs and practices primarily involve the *laity*.

Examinations of the Tibetan Buddhist approach to death and dying in the religious studies literature appear to focus almost entirely on mortuary texts, particularly the so-called 'Tibetan Book of the Dead'. The tendency to focus on this one work as either the only mortuary text (which it is not) or even a typical mortuary text (which it also is not) may have had the effect of suppressing investigation of different texts and procedures.¹⁰

Furthermore, by focusing almost exclusively on the reading of the *bar-do* text to the deceased – an activity performed by a religious professional without lay participation (although the laity may and indeed should listen passively to the reading) – Western scholars have failed to take into account the many parts of the funeral rituals which are in the domain of the laity, and also how much of the religious content of the rites does not relate at all (or perhaps only tangentially) to the doctrine of death, *bar-do* and rebirth.

Sukhāvati

For example, little attention is paid to the prevalence of practices aimed at bypassing the *bar-do* stage completely and ensuring the deceased's rebirth in Sukhāvati, the Western Paradise of the Buddha Amitābha. One who is reborn in Sukhāvati will attain enlightenment without needing any further rebirths in *samsāra*, the round of existence in which we dwell.¹¹ Thus, *'pho-ba* (which is done by a religious professional as soon as possible after death) is intended to eject the deceased's consciousness from her body and send it directly to Sukhāvati. In addition, a text may be read giving the deceased's consciousness instructions for reaching the Western Paradise. This reading may be performed at the same time as the reading of a *bar-*

¹⁰ A notable exception dealing with a quite different mortuary text is Lati Rinbochay and Hopkins 1979.

¹¹ Rebirth in Sukhāvati is often associated with a particular school of Buddhism known as 'Pure Land' which focuses on devotion to Buddha Amitābha. However, as Geoffrey Schopen has shown (1977), a desire for rebirth in Sukhāvati does not necessarily imply a specific devotion to Amitābha.

do text, in spite of the incompatibility of their aims.¹² The amount of emphasis throughout the funeral rites on obtaining rebirth in Sukhāvātī for the deceased appears to be underrepresented in the literature and there is a lack of analysis of the role played by this form of belief and practice in death rituals.

Merit-making

Although the activities of the lamas during the death rites are seen as critically important for the guiding of the soul of the deceased, or obtaining her rebirth in Sukhāvātī, considerable emphasis is placed on making merit for the deceased, to release her from the negative karmic effects of her bad actions in this and previous lives. Accumulated negative karma would cause the deceased to have a ‘bad rebirth’ – perhaps as an animal or a hungry ghost, or in a time or place where the Buddha-dharma (the teachings of the Buddha) is not taught and so progress towards enlightenment is not possible. Positive karma can increase the likelihood of a ‘fortunate rebirth’ as a human being with the opportunity to study the dharma.

By performing acts of religious and/or moral value, such as reciting a set number of prayers or giving food and clothing to the poor, a person generates good karma for herself. This is ‘making merit’. The merit thus accumulated can be dedicated to the benefit of another person, alive or dead. In Tibetan Buddhism, ‘making merit’ is often considered to be the most important form of religious activity in which a lay person can engage (Dargyay 1986: 180), and the deceased’s *post-mortem* welfare is believed to be heavily dependent on the merit-making activities of the living (Füerer-Haimendorf 1979 [1964]: 245).

The many activities undertaken in the context of funeral rites to generate merit for the benefit of the deceased are primarily the responsibility of the laity. The procedures are usually both extensive and expensive, and form a major portion of many of the ritual sequences described.¹³ They also extend to individual and group

¹² Waddell (1999 [1899]) describes the performance of ‘*pho-ba*, which he refers to as ‘extracting the soul,’ at 488-489. On reading the text, see Waddell at 491-492.

¹³ See for example Füerer-Haimendorf 1979 [1964]: 241-245, and in particular the excellent and detailed study by Brigitte Steinmann (1987).

commemorative events well after the actual death.¹⁴ Although the importance of merit-making is recognised in a general way in much of the literature, and specifically in some accounts, the significance of particular merit-making activities, especially in the context of death, remains to be studied in depth.

Ghosts and ghouls

Of course one of the most important reasons – possibly *the* most important reason – for making merit to ensure the fortunate rebirth of the deceased is simply to ensure that she is reborn at all, and somewhere else – that she finally and completely severs all connection with the family, friends and belongings of the life she has just left, and does not return in the form of a ghost or, worse, a *ro langs* (walking corpse). There appear to be numerous beliefs relating to how a person may become a ghost or a *ro langs*, and what must be done to prevent this happening, or to protect the living against the depredations of such a supernatural entity (which is inevitably assumed to be malignant).¹⁵

Although comment has been made in more than one work on Tibetan belief in a superabundance of spirits,¹⁶ the issue of fear of ghosts seems to have been neglected. The amount of energy that is expended by the participants in the funeral rites to ensure that the deceased is well and truly out of the way, merits more attention than it has so far received.

Questions raised

The above are just a few of the elements which I have identified as present in funeral rites but underrepresented in the academic literature. I have no doubt that I will find more as I continue the analysis of my data. However, at this stage, they have given rise to several considerations which interrogate the entire enterprise.

¹⁴ E.g., Asboe 1932: 67; Fürer-Haimendorf 1979 [1964]: 248-249; Ramble 1982: 342.

¹⁵ See generally Wylie (1964).

The study of ritual in Tibetan Buddhism

Within the overall context of Tibetan Buddhist studies, I have been particularly struck by how little academic literature there is on the subject of Tibetan Buddhist ritual in general, not just funeral rituals. The acknowledged starting point is Stephan Beyer's 1973 book, *The Cult of Tārā: magic and ritual in Tibet*. This is an in-depth study of a particular set of rites based on Beyer's doctoral research at a Tibetan Buddhist refugee community. It also attempts to tease out the underlying 'processes and presuppositions' of the Tibetan Buddhist ritual structure as a whole. Two remarks Beyer makes in his *Preface* struck me as particularly interesting. 'A scholar from our secular society', he commented, 'may too easily forget the fact that Buddhism is basically a performing art.' He also noted that 'a Buddhologist does not deal with Buddhism so much as he deals with Buddhists' (Beyer 2001 [1973]: xii and xvi; emphasis in original).

More than thirty years after its first publication, Beyer's book is still acknowledged to be the leading study of Tibetan Buddhist ritual.¹⁷ There have been additional valuable studies (e.g. Kohn 2001), but no other work has appeared which seeks to understand the overall syntax of the ritual processes of Tibetan Buddhism. Nor has Beyer's implied challenge to the Western scholarly community to consider the performance aspects of the subject been taken up. Yet at the same time it is widely acknowledged that two of the principal functions of monastics in Tibet have always been to perform rituals within the monasteries, and to provide 'ritual experts' to perform rites requested by the laity (including death rites) (Bentor 1996: 290; Beyer 2001 [1973]: 22-23).

My research into Tibetan Buddhist funeral rituals suggests that in most cases the primary academic emphasis is on texts, with correspondingly less attention being paid to evidence that actual practices may not be as described in the written material, or may include elements not found in the religious script. There often appears to be an ingrained, automatic assumption that what is done

¹⁶ The *locus classicus* is Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1998 [1956].

¹⁷ 'To date, the most extensive study on ritual is still Beyer': Cuevas 2003: 243, n. 9.

is what is written – no more, no less.¹⁸ In addition, the role of the laity in the rituals and the presence of elements which do not correspond to a Western notion of ‘real’ or ‘pure’ Buddhism tend to be ignored as if they do not occur at all.

I do not in the least mean to suggest that we should abandon the study of texts, only that we should realize that the text is not the sole element to be considered, and that the interpretation of any text must always be undertaken in conjunction with an examination of how that text is *used*. Examination of a text apart from its location within the framework of practice can be as misleading as examination of practice without reference to the text which forms an integral part of it.

I believe it is fundamental to our understanding of Tibetan Buddhism that we investigate what Tibetan Buddhists *do*, how they live out their religious beliefs both in major celebrations and in everyday life. As Beyer has noted, ‘We must first ask, simply, what the Tibetans are doing before we can go on to decide the ‘real’ reason they do it’ (Beyer: 2001 [1973]: 3). In asking this question, we must pay close attention to what the *laity* are doing, in addition to the activities of the ‘religious professionals’.

Funerals as folk religion

One of the most vital aspects of funeral rites, in my opinion, is the extent to which the laity are involved, and to which the ‘folk’ beliefs of the laity influence the course of the rituals. This can be seen clearly with reference to activities involving ghosts – both feeding the spirit of the deceased and simultaneously trying to ensure that the said spirit doesn’t become a permanent resident. Lay Tibetans do not involve themselves in matters of religious philosophy; this is the domain of the religious professionals. Although it is vitally important that the proper texts be read by the professional to ensure the well-being of the deceased, *which* are the proper texts is a matter

¹⁸ For example, an introductory edited text contains a section on ‘Rites and Techniques’; but in fact all the ‘descriptions’ of rituals contained therein are simply translations of ritual *texts*, including the instructions, not eye-witness accounts of what happens when such a ritual is actually performed (Lopez 1997: 225-292).

left to the lama (or monk, or astrologer) to determine. Ordinary Tibetans participating in funeral rites do not appear to worry about grasping the meaning of the texts; they might not even understand the language in which they are read. It is enough for them to know that they have been read.¹⁹

There are grounds for suggesting that many of the activities which take place in the context of death rituals are 'magical' in nature.²⁰ It could be argued that ordinary Tibetans regard the reading of the text more as a magical act which will benefit the deceased than as a teaching of a philosophy of death and rebirth. It is not helpful to short-circuit this area of study by insisting that 'real' Buddhism cannot possibly involve 'magic'; in fact a number of studies in South Asian Buddhist communities suggests that 'magic' plays an important role in their overall belief system.²¹

More than one Western writer has in the past judged certain elements of Tibetan Buddhism to be 'not Buddhist'.²² In fact, some early writers claimed that *all* of Tibetan Buddhism – which they called 'Lamaism' – was 'not Buddhist', but a degraded hodgepodge of superstitious mumbo-jumbo almost unrecognisable as having once derived from the pure, philosophical, atheistic Buddhism brought to the West in the 19th century.²³ Other writers have remarked to the contrary that if people think they are practising Buddhism, then

¹⁹ This issue is discussed at length in Draper 1994; see especially 90-92.

²⁰ The debate about the relationship between religion, ritual and magic has been ongoing for over a hundred years and is far too complex to enter into here. The association of magic with Tibetan Buddhism had been made by the late nineteenth century and continued at least until the 1970s, when Beyer titled his book *Magic and Ritual in Tibet*, and throughout it referred to the 'magic' performed by lamas. Recently, however, the word seems to have fallen out of favour. See for example Snellgrove's comments on Western reaction to the early use of the word 'spell' to translate the word *mantra* (Snellgrove 2002 [1987]: 143).

²¹ For example, Aung 1959, Kapferer 1997, Obeyesekere 1963.

²² For example Snellgrove and Richardson maintained that the whole idea of guiding the consciousness through the *bardo* is 'manifestly of non-Buddhist origin' (Snellgrove and Richardson 1980 [1968]: 110). Waddell considered the entire notion of a 'Western Paradise' to be 'a non-Buddhist invention' (492). It could be argued that both these statements are incorrect, but such an argument lies outside the scope of this paper.

²³ The phenomenon of 'Lamaism' has been examined in depth in Lopez 1998: 15-45.

they are, whether we in the West condescend to allow it or not.²⁴ The task then becomes to study different forms of Buddhism comparatively, rather than trying to decide arbitrarily what we will allow to be Buddhist and what we will not. I prefer this second approach.

Conclusion

By studying the actual performance of Tibetan Buddhist rituals – in this case, what is done in a specific situation embedded in everyday reality, namely death – we will be able to develop a more accurate comprehension of Tibetan Buddhism as practised in the Tibetan culture than is available merely by studying textual material. Such a study must involve careful attention to the beliefs and practices of the laity – ‘ordinary’ Tibetans – as well as to the teachings of the religious professionals.

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²⁴ See Dargyay 1988: 133, for example.

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Ritual Space. Ritual Year. Ritual Gender

A View of the Old Norse and New Icelandic Ritual Year

The roots of this paper go back in part to a short chapter I was recently asked to write for a book about Iceland in the present day. In the chapter in question, which dealt with modern day Icelandic festivals, I underlined the importance of the sense of family for Icelandic society, and not least the indirect sense that Icelanders have of the entire nation being one large family.¹ Indeed, this last feature has recently been given firm, formal support by the appearance on the web of a geneological database called *Íslendingabók* (The Book of Icelanders),² where Icelanders can see exactly how closely related they are to their friends and colleagues, and even the original settlers and saga heroes of the country (see www.islendingabok.is). The database in question underlines that there are very few cases where an Icelander will have to go back more than eight generations to find a family link between him/ her and their friends. My conclusion at the end of the chapter in question was that when it comes down to it, all Icelandic festivals are essentially a celebration of different degrees of 'family' relationship.³

¹ This idea is underlined whenever Icelanders return home to Iceland by air with one of the Icelandic air companies, when an air stewardess announces 'velkomin heim' ('welcome home') in Icelandic over the loudspeakers just after the plane touches down. No similar statement is made in English.

² The name is based on that of one of the earliest histories of Iceland written by Ari Þorgilsson in the early twelfth century.

³ This certainly applies also to most small communities, past and present, in one way or another. As other scholars have noted in the past, one common function of festivals is the degree to which they underline identity in one form or another. See

The Ritual Year

These ideas can be easily seen from a quick review of the modern Icelandic ritual year, starting with the high point of the Icelandic National Day (*Þjóðhátíðardagur/ Lýðveldisdagurinn*⁴) which takes place on June 17.⁵ Every few decades this festival is celebrated in the countryside by the nation as a whole at the site of the first Icelandic parliament (established in the early tenth century) at Þingvellir, but otherwise it takes place in town and city centres. Here, quite naturally, it is the national family that is celebrated, and not least by means of references to national history, national culture, national customs and national figures, as national hymns by national poets are sung, national costumes worn, and speeches made by the relatively recently constructed national image of the *Fjallkona* (Mountain Woman), the Prime Minister and the President (see Árni Björnsson 1993: 148-156, 1995: 34-38, and especially Guðmundur Hálfðánarson 2000).

Following this, at the end of August, comes *Verslunarmannahelgi* (Bank Holiday weekend), when young people in particular head out into the countryside in packed cars, buses, planes and ferries, equipped with tents, alcohol, guitars and condoms, to celebrate a weekend of music and drink away from their parents and school teachers, to the accompaniment of Icelandic rock groups.⁶ This festival, which also has particular marked off settings in 'the wild'

for example Bringéus 1976: 242, 250-251, Bregenhøj 1974: 76-78, 130, Gunnell 2003 (on the Vietnamese in Iceland); and forthcoming (a); and especially Guðmundur Hálfðánarson 2000 (concerning Icelandic national festivals).

⁴ The letter 'Þ' is pronounced like the 'th' in the word 'thank'; while the 'ð' is pronounced like the softer 'th' in a word like 'rather'.

⁵ It is no coincidence that this is close to midsummer: over and above the obvious weather factors, the original Icelandic *Alþingi* (parliament), which had close connections with pre-Christian ritual, used to take place annually at midsummer. The fact that June 17 is the birthday of Iceland's 'hero of national independence', Jón Sigurðsson, was a useful means of combining past and present heritage. See further Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1998: 41-42, 1999: 79-80, and Árni Björnsson 1993: 148-156, 1995: 34-38.

⁶ Einar Örn Benediktsson, a member of the Icelandic rock band *Sykurmólarnir* (the Sugar Cubes, to which Björk also belonged at one point) gave these festivals a certain international notoriety in the nineties by referring to these gatherings in the world press as 'The Icelandic Mating Festival'.

(see Hastrup 1985: 136-154), is essentially a celebration of a different kind of wide Icelandic family, now based on generation.

Passing over the late summer festival of Gay Pride (held on the main streets of downtown Reykjavík), which is a borrowing from abroad but naturally serves to underline another type of 'family' belonging related to sexual identity, we come to a local early autumn festival, Reykjavík's *Meningarnótt* (Cultural Night), which shows an interesting move from light to darkness, and simultaneously underlines both 'city family' identity (now that the time of summer movement is over), and also the ever-increasing multicultural identity of the Reykjavík family.⁷

Halloween can also be skipped over, not least because at this present point in time it is only gradually beginning to put new roots down in Iceland. While the period of Hallowe'en⁸ was once the general time setting of a very ancient Scandinavian festival which went by the name of the *vetrnætur*, or 'Winter Nights' (see Gunnell 2005), public festivities at this time seem to have dropped out of the general run of events for several centuries (see Árni Björnsson 1993: 261-269; and 1995: 59-62).

The next real festival in Iceland is that of *jól* (the Christmas period), a period of several days of close family gatherings, at which the participants range from the immediate family of parents, grandparents and children who meet to eat and distribute presents on Christmas Eve (*aðfangadagur*: usually held at a family 'heart' such as the grandmother's home), to aunts, great aunts, uncles, great-uncles, cousins, nephews and nieces who might meet up at the other gatherings that take place in other family homes over the next few days. This is the period at which 'outsiders' staying in Iceland generally feel most like outsiders. They are not really welcome at such gatherings which serve to underline the intimate 'core' family (see Árni Björnsson 1993: 314-392, 1995: 71-82, Lacy 1998: 199-203).

⁷ In interviews that I and Svava Óðinsdóttir have recently taken with immigrants to Iceland, it is interesting to note some of these new citizens stating how they see this festival as 'their' festival, a day on which they can publically announce their ethnic backgrounds on the streets. Nonetheless, it might be considered that the liminal 'night time' context of this 'announcement' possibly serves to underline the continuing liminal status of these people in Reykjavík society. See further Gunnell 2003 (on the Vietnamese in Iceland).

⁸ The spelling is deliberate here as a means of delineating between the old Hallowe'en / *Samhain* and the new American Halloween.

New Year's Eve in Iceland marks a move back outwards, as the 'family' participating in the festival extends its walls to include close friends: in Iceland, people begin the evening⁹ with intimate family gatherings eating at home, many then going on to parties with friends at other sites (see further Árni Björnsson 1993: 393-404; and 1995: 83-84; and Lacy 1998: 250-252).¹⁰

As the hours of daylight gradually increase again, spring festivals in Iceland show the 'family' borders gradually extending back from the intimate family back towards the 'national': at some point between mid January and mid February (the old Nordic month of *Þorri*), many 'workplace families' will gather at rented halls or restaurants to celebrate a festival called *Þórrablót* where they will tuck into a range of cold, 'traditional' Icelandic foods ranging from smoked lamb to pickled sheeps' testicles, sheep heads, seared seal flippers, whale blubber (if they can get it), and pickled herring (see further Árni Björnsson 1993: 433-484, 1995: 87-92, Lacy 1998: 59-62). Sometimes these gatherings blend with other work place banquets known as *árshátíð* (or 'year festivals', which take place at similar venues at some time in the spring, and serve to underline workplace identity (speeches and games involving in-jokes being one of the centre pieces of these gatherings).

Soon after this (or around the same time depending on the year), comes *Öskudagur* (Ash Wednesday: see further the paper by Kristín Einarisdóttir in this volume), where disguised children venture forth briefly onto the main streets of towns, visiting shops and work places in daytime to sing and gather sweets (see also Árni Björnsson 1993: 565-586, 1995: 102-104).

The first real outdoor public festival of the year in Iceland is *Sumardagurinn fyrsti* (the First Day of Summer, in late April), which again centres on young children, but now involves festivities and processions which nowadays take place in parks and social centres outside the centre of town, and involve most of the family in one

⁹ It is noteworthy how many of these winter festivals take place in the evening or night rather than during the daytime.

¹⁰ Officially organised public gatherings in Reykjavík were largely dropped last year (2004/ 2005); a relatively new phenomenon, these attempts to copy Times Square or Edinburgh simply have not caught on: the Icelanders clearly feel the festival belongs essentially to the inner 'family' circle, rather than the wider 'official' sphere.

way or another (see Árne Björnsson 1993: 31-47, 1995: 14-17, Lacy 1998: 115-121).¹¹ This is then followed by the First of May workers' marches (a wider workplace family identity, relating to the working nation as a whole), involving marches and speeches in a similar central public area (see Árne Björnsson 1993: 48-42; and 1995: 17-18). And then June 17 comes again, involving not just national workers but the national family as a whole.

The aforementioned review underlines one of the key functions of festivals in Iceland today. Nonetheless, looked at from another angle, it also underlines certain other structural characteristics that, to my mind, reflect a much older concept not only of the old Icelandic ritual year, but also that of the other Nordic countries in the distant past.

Narrowing

My background is in drama, and thus when I look at festivals I tend to see them as semi-dramatic performances in space and time, involving movement, costume, and various kinds of text (spoken and visual). I am especially interested in their intrinsic nature as 'games' that we play (in the sense of *play* used by Huizinga: see further Huizinga 1950). One key feature that becomes clear from a quick overview of the kind noted above is the way that the celebrations move into the evening, and also that the space occupied by Icelandic festivals narrows as the year grows darker. The same narrowing applies to the concept of 'family' involved. Set around midsummer, the National Day celebrations cover a period of around twenty-four hours of daylight,¹² and are usually centred around national monuments in the most public outdoor areas of each town and city. In Reykjavík, the area in question centres around the

¹¹ Up until about fifteen years ago, the festivities on this day took place in the centre of all towns (including Reykjavík). However, as noted above, in Reykjavík, they have gradually moved out from the centre to become a local community festival centering still on children (who still often get special 'summer presents' on this day).

¹² This is very much a daylight festival; it starts in the morning of June 17, and ends with young people staggering home at around the same time on the following day (if they can make it that far).

parliament building and town hall, *away* from the main shopping area. Whatever the weather, very little takes place inside on this day. As such, the National Day celebrations form a total opposition to the focused *indoor* festival of Christmas, which starts at around six in the evening, and will not go on much longer than midnight (all in total darkness). In between the two, come the Cultural Evening taking place in the city, both inside (in a variety of venues) and outside on the main shopping streets (not around national monuments); and Ash Wednesday, which is largely confined to the shopping area (very rarely involving family homes, unlike the custom of Halloween Trick or Treating in America, for example) (see further Kristín Einarisdóttir's article in this volume).¹³

In short, as the Icelandic year moves from daylight to darkness, so too do festivals focus on the home environment, and the immediate family ('outsiders' being barred in an ever increasing degree: it might be noted that even good friends are not really welcome visitors to Icelandic family homes during the family Christmas festivities unless there is a very good reason.) Interestingly enough, this 'retreat' inwards is reflected by a parallel 'advance' on humankind that is/ was supposedly being carried out by the supernatural beings of the Nordic countries (in Iceland, the *jólasveinar* or Yule Lads), which, as Christmas approaches, are/ were¹⁴ believed to move down from their mountain homes,¹⁵ eventually reaching the homesteads in the days before Christmas. After that, they would start moving back home again, the last leaving the settlement area by Twelfth Night. It might be noted that in many areas of Norway in the past, nobody was supposed to leave their farm on Christmas Night or Christmas Day, in part because of the supposed danger of being abducted by various marauding spirits (see for example Bø 1974: 90-96, 119, 1980: 44-47,

¹³ Interestingly enough, when house visiting in disguise does involve the visiting of homes in Iceland, it tends to be around the 'home' festivals of Christmas and New Year: see further Vilborg Davíðsdóttir, forthcoming and Terry Gunnell, forthcoming (b).

¹⁴ While the belief in these Christmas spirits is of course nowadays confined to children, it is nonetheless a belief game cheerfully carried out by the entire nation as it takes part in the pretence.

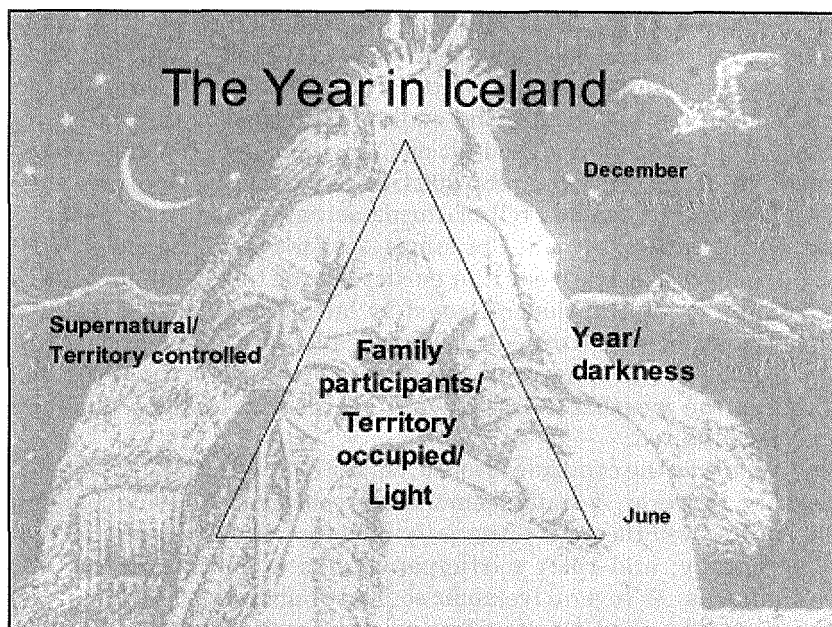
¹⁵ In Norway, a midway point was the 'taking over' the mountain dairies by nature spirits. They were believed by many to move in to the dairies in the early autumn. By that time, humans should have moved out.

57, Celander 1943, 1928: 205-216, 228-234, Eike 1980). The same idea is reflected in Icelandic folk legends, which regularly talk of priests being kidnapped during the Yuletide period by large hungry trolls that can not endure the endless tolling of church bells, and have nothing against a good bit of Christian *suchi* for their festive meal (see for example Simpson 2004: 80-81). Other Icelandic, Swedish and Norwegian legends tell of farms actually being taken over by advancing trolls or elves at Christmas (see for example Gunnell 2004).

In short, it seems clear that earlier Nordic folk belief underlines a similar concept to that reflected by later Icelandic folk festivals and folk legends. And of course clear parallels are seen in the natural environment, travel naturally becoming increasingly limited at this time as the weather worsens, and the degree of light available becomes limited.

Such was the context of Nordic winter festivals in the nineteenth century. However, it would seem that the concept of festivals changing in nature over the year (especially in terms of the space and time they occupy, and their participants) has much earlier roots in Scandinavia: As several Icelandic sources from the early Middle Ages point out, the pre-Christian festivals in the Nordic countries, like those in many other countries (see for example Hutton 1996), were closely associated with the natural year: they are listed variously as taking place at the start of winter, in the middle of winter, the start of summer and in the middle of the summer (see Snorri Sturluson 1941-1951: I, 20-21, 166, 171-172, II, 109, 180, 194, trans. in Snorri Sturluson 1932: 6, 86, 89, 280-281, 326, 336). As one saga states directly, all of these festivals were comfortably and peacefully taken over by the Christian festivals of All Hallows, Christmas, Easter and St John's Mass at a very stage (*Ágrip* 1984: 22 [ch.XIX]). As the names and dating of the early festivals also makes clear, the old Nordic year was also seen as being divided into two halves rather than four seasonal quarters. Furthermore, just as people in Scandinavia saw night as preceding the day, talking of 'nine nights' rather than 'nine days', so too did they see winter as preceding summer: people's ages were counted in terms of 'winters' rather than years.¹⁶ Seen in this

¹⁶ For anyone who knows the Nordic countries, this was quite natural. If you could make it through the winter, you could probably make it through the summer. In many ways, however, this concept of the world echoes at least one of



sense, we might regard the old Nordic year as expanding *out* from the personal, intimate ‘interior’ sphere to that of the national, public outside, rather than heading from light into darkness.

It is possible to add yet another layer of understanding to this concept, a layer more closely connected with gender and festival organisation: in the earlier Nordic mind, the house and farm workers were seen as being run by women (who kept the keys), while the public sphere was run by men, who were the only ones permitted to make decisions at the key area parliament meetings which took place in the late spring, summer, and early autumn (see further Foote and Wilson 1970: 108-111, Jesch 1991: 186-187). Women, of course, were also seen as being responsible for the family itself, while men were more involved with trade, politics and warfare, the

the early Nordic creation myths given in the Eddic poems, *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Völuspá* (see *Edda* 1962: 1-2, 46-49, *The Poetic Edda* 1996: 4, 41-44) and in Snorri Sturluson’s *Prose Edda* (*Gylfaginning*) where daylight follows darkness and nothingness (see Snorri Sturluson 2003: 13-20, 1987: 8-13). Indeed the same concept is clear in *Genesis*.

national (also in a local sense of ‘nation’) and international. All of this is well reflected in the Icelandic family sagas like *Njáls saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Laxdæla saga* (see, for example, the translations in the *Complete Sagas of Icelanders* 1997). This relationship of gender and sphere of influence raises the question of whether the Nordic ritual year, moving as it did from the dark internal to the light exterior was also seen as being a move from the feminine to the masculine spheres (and back again)?

Such speculations are of course highly generalised, and a number of obvious exceptions to the ‘rule’ might be voiced here (not least the facts that Óðinn and Freyr have sometimes been connected with the Yuletide festival [see further below]; and that men seem to officiate at most of the festivals described in the sagas¹⁷). Nonetheless, I might also stress that I am highly uncomfortable about the idea that the Nordic countries ever had one established religion and mythology before the arrival of Christianity (something suggested by a number of earlier works on Old Norse religion, and also Snorri Sturluson’s *Prose Edda*, where the role of women is very limited.) I am very much in support of religious historians and archaeologists like Neil Price and Thomas DuBois who in recent years have talked of ‘Old Norse religion’ in terms of religious systems that varied by period, cultural influence and cultural and physical environment rather than any set body of rituals and myths known by all over a period of centuries (see further Price 2002: 26, DuBois 1999: 11, 205-206, Gunnell 2005: 119-121).

External Male Sphere

Nonetheless, it is worth looking at the earlier source material to see whether how much support it might offer for the idea that for some, the Old Nordic ritual year and its rituals was seen by some as reflecting the move postulated above from an internal feminine sphere to that of the external male sphere. Here I would like to

¹⁷ On accounts of Old Nordic sacrifice, see for example Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1997 and 1998. At the same time, it might also be borne in mind that *most* things in the sagas seem to be dominated by men: see further Helga Kress 1993, 2003, Jesch 1991: 176-202.

return to an idea earlier voiced in an article that appeared in *Cosmos* last year (see Gunnell 2005). In this article, a close examination was made of a pre-Christian Nordic festival known as the *Dísablót* (or *Dísarblót*: the Sacrifice of the *Dís* or *Dísir*) which seems to have been associated, at least for western Scandinavians, with the aforementioned *Vetrnætur* or Winter Nights which took place around the time of *Samhain* or *Hallowe'en* at the start of the winter half of the year (in late October). In some ways, the *dísir* seem to have been similar to the *valkyrjur* or *fylgjur* (fetches), both of which were seen in the Eddic poems, *fornaldarsögur* and Icelandic family sagas as being (for the main part) individual personal guardian spirits (see further Simek 1993: 204-208, 2002, Ström 1954). The *dísir*, on the other hand, seem to have been groups of female spirits that protected the family as a whole, and the expression *dísablót* suggests that they were given sacrifices at this turning point in time, almost certainly for their protection over the winter. At least three Old Norse accounts, *Víga-Glúms saga*, *Egils saga* and *Þiðrandu þáttur og Þórhalls* talk of the sacrifice to the *dísir* as taking place at this particular time (*Íslendinga sögur* 1987: 419, 1913, 2254-2255, trans. in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders* 1997: I, 81-83, II, 274-275, 460-461). All of these accounts underline that unlike the national and local gatherings of the summer, this was also a *private* festival to which outsiders had to be personally invited (similar to other private Nordic festivals here and there described in the sagas, such as that associated with a preserved horse's phallus and another associated the *álfar*, or 'elves': see *Flateyjarbók* 1944-1945: II, 441-446, Snorri Sturluson 1941-1951: II, 137 [*Ólafs saga helga*, ch. XCI], trans. in Snorri Sturluson 1932: 300). Secondly, at least one of these saga accounts suggests the festival represented a liminal time at which prophecies were made for the coming year.¹⁸ Thirdly, the *dísablót* was a festival that took place inside at night time: indeed in *Þiðrandu þáttur*, people are pointedly warned against going out of the building during the night. One man who breaks this ban is then killed by a group of supernatural women on horseback (the *dísir*) who come riding in from the wild area around the farm.

¹⁸ In *Þiðrandu þáttur*, both the sacrificial bull and one of the key guests are referred to as *spámaður* (prophet), and prophecies about the coming of Christianity are given at the end of the account. See also above.

Another interesting feature of this period is that several other saga accounts echo *Piðranda þáttr* in suggesting that the Winter Nights were a time at which people seem to have invited visits from women known as *seiðkonur* (a kind of witch) or *völvur* (seeresses), who, dressed in particular costumes made of skins, and surrounded by a group of chanting women, would climb up on to a raised platform and reach out to the nature spirits of the area for knowledge about the future which they would then pass on to their employers. Two famous accounts of *seiðkonur* which stress their associations with this time are the very detailed account of the visit by the seeress Þorbjörg *lítillvölva* in *Eiríks saga rauða* (*Íslendinga sögur* 1987: 523-524, trans. in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders* 1997: I, 5-7; and then another well-known account about a seeress called Heiðr from *Örvar-Odds saga* (1943: 286-289, 1985: 28-30).

Clear parallels to this belief that 'openings' into the future were particularly available during the festivals of the winter period can be seen in the widespread Nordic belief that Christmas and New Year were other key times at which people would engage in a range of activities to find out what was likely to happen to their families over the coming year. Numerous examples given in key works about Nordic Yuletide by scholars such as Bö (1974: 99-108, 1980: 47-50), Bringéus (1976: 97), Celander (1928: 216-228), Feilberg (1904: II, 73-136), and Ørnulf Hodne (1999: 144-145) effectively demonstrate the deep rooted nature of these superstitions: how people would carefully check the direction in which the wax from the candle(s) flowed to see who was likely to die the next year; how they would look for symbolic indications in the patterns of the corn or straw under people's seats, or the behaviour of animals or birds. Many accounts tell of personal rituals whereby people would sit alone in a room with three or four cups (containing for example ale, milk and water) in front of them, after going through a number of preparatory activities, the aim being to find who their future husband or wife might be.

Liminal Time

All of examples given above underline the fact that in Nordic folk belief and ritual in the past, the early and middle winter period was seen as being a period of prophecy, a liminal time at which the

doors between worlds and the future and the present were open. There is reason for going one step further, bearing in mind that according to Old Nordic mythology, and also those contemporary foreign commentators who wrote in Latin about the behaviour of the early Germanic tribes, the skill of seeing into the future was clearly one that was mainly limited to the sphere of women: essentially to the goddesses Frigg and Freyja, and to the Old Norse *norns* or fates, Urður, Verðandi and Skuld who were envisaged in *Völuspá*, st. 20, as sitting by a well (for the later, see *Edda* 1962: 5, *The Poetic Edda* 1996: 6).¹⁹ These figures might effectively be placed alongside the numerous archaeological finds from Iron Age Scandinavia containing images of women apparently holding horn cups; in many cases the women are seen offering their cups to warriors on horseback. The received idea is that the offered cup contains mead, and that the woman is a wife (or *valkyrja*) welcoming the warrior 'home'. However, I have a growing suspicion that it is essentially the 'mead' or well-water of fate or foresight that they are offering.²⁰ In short, one wonders whether the deep-rooted and widespread idea that acts of prophecy could be carried out in the winter period might have been related to the close proximity of the goddess (Freyja or Frigg) or *örlaganornir* ('fates') themselves at this time of the year, something reflected perhaps in later times by the various images of wandering supernatural 'hags' being associated with the winter in the folk beliefs of not only the Nordic but also the Celtic countries: the Norwegian and Swedish *Lusse* (see Bö 1974: 24-28, Celander 1928: 32-33, 45-48, Eike 1980: 265-266, 269, Hodne 1999: 135-136); the Icelandic, Swedish and Norwegian *Grýla* (see Gunnell 2001), and the Scottish and Irish *Cailleach* (see, for example, Ó Cruaíoch 2003).

¹⁹ Indeed, I have a strong suspicion that the images of individual women bearing horn-cups which have been found in archaeological finds all over the Norse world are images of such figures with knowledge and control of fate, rather than of 'barmaid-valkyrjur' in Valhöll as *Grímnismál*, st. 36 suggests (*Edda* 1962: 64, *The Poetic Edda* 1996: 57).

²⁰ See in particular the Eddic poems *Sigurdrefumál* and *Skírnismál* in *Edda* 1962: 76, 189-190 (*The Poetic Edda* 1996: 67, 166-167), where the offering of the horn appears to be part of an initiation ceremony of some kind, connected with the attainment of knowledge and manhood.

The suggestions made above about the connections between female figures, darkness and the 'internal' in winter seasonal rituals naturally demand some brief discussion of whether there were any obvious male associations in connection with summer, daylight and outdoor rituals in the past. Here one can immediately turn to Adam of Bremen's famous description of the pre-Christian festival which took place outside at Gamla Uppsala in between February and late March, or around the spring equinox, at a time when the crops were beginning to come to life in the earth (see further Gunnell 2005). This festival involves no women at all, but centres on the figures of Óðinn, Freyr and Þórr who has the central position (see Adam of Bremen 1917: 259-260 [Book IV, ch. 27], trans. in Adam of Bremen 1959: 208). It might also be noted that in the Old Norse poem *Hárbarðsljóð*, Þórr is depicted as being a young, if somewhat impetuous male, who has a wife who has lost her hair but had it replaced with a golden wig (cf. the harvested corn): in many ways he represents an image of the summer in opposition to his opponent in this poem, the adulterous, bearded Óðinn (here called Hárbarðr) who is much older, and engages essentially in various winterlike activities (see *Edda* 1962: 78-87, *The Poetic Edda* 1996: 69-77). In many ways, this dramatic poem is a kind of 'Battle Between Summer and Winter', comparable to various other works of the same kind found in other countries. Unfortunately, limitations in space prevent me from going much further here, but it should be enough for anyone to examine the accounts of Old Nordic government meetings in the sagas (and in the mythological accounts of the gods) to see how central the male role was in these essentially summer activities.

It is nonetheless important to make some comment about Óðinn's aforementioned 'wintery' role in *Hárbarðsljóð* which once again raises the question of the male gods Óðinn and Freyr also having connections to the midwinter period in certain early sources. Some scholars have even suggested that the word *jól* (Yule) might have an origin in one of Óðinn's names, *Jólnir* (see for example Árni Björnsson 1993: 316, 1995: 71). Others (including myself) have noted how the dramatic Eddic poem *Skírnismál* (dealing with Freyr's quest to sleep with the giantess Gerður) seems to be closely connected with a *hieros gamos* and midwinter,²¹ and have drawn possible parallels between this and

²¹ The poem seems to be set at around 'the longest night'.

another poetic reference talking of the association between 'Freys leikur' (lit. 'Freyr's game', whatever that was) and Yule (see Gunnell 1995: 28, Árni Björnsson 1993: 319-320).

Naturally, on the surface, these references might be seen as a challenge to the idea that winter was a time dominated by dark feminine powers. In actual fact, though, all of the material can be accommodated without any undue alterations. First of all, it is becoming ever clearer that over time, the increasingly popular figure of Óðinn seems to have 'usurped' a number of areas (and characteristics) that earlier belonged to other gods, and especially the goddesses, the most obvious being the skill of *seiðr* (witchcraft) which he is supposed to have 'learnt' from the goddess Freyja (see Snorri Sturluson 1941-1951: 13-20, trans. in Snorri Sturluson 1932: 2-6). Indeed, several comments in the poetry and sagas suggest that he (and any other male who practised *seiðr*) was seen as being more than a little perverted or effeminate because of his use of this essential feminine activity associated with looking into the worlds of death and the future (see for example *Edda* 1962: 101, *The Poetic Edda* 1996: 89). Indeed, the resulting overall image of Óðinn (like that of Loki) has become almost bi-sexual: just as he is supposed to be blind in one eye, seeing both into the feminine world of darkness and that of light (see Snorri Sturluson 2003: 34-36, 1987: 21-22), so too has he come to be associated with a dreamlike, ecstatic quest to see into the future, thereby gaining feminine knowledge. In this sense, as he gradually becomes more connected with the bloody results of victory (i.e. death) rather than victory itself, it is natural that he becomes ever more closely associated with the earlier feminine concept of winter in the minds of his followers. It comes as not surprise that for some he should have taken a central role in midwinter (in his darker female aspect).

As noted above, Freyr's main association with the midwinter period appears in two poems: while the aforementioned 'game' is unexplained, it should be remembered that *Skírnismál* depicts this fertility god (via his servant Skírnir) violently wooing a giantess associated with the earth named Gerður (meaning 'field'), herself a Freyja-like figure. If the winter period was associated with women (death and internal womb-bound life), it seems natural that a male needs to be involved somewhere in order to bring the life back to the surface. Furthermore, it seems clear that for many, the Old Nordic Vanir gods (Freyr, Freyja and Njörðr) were associated with incestuous

activities, even though these activities are never elaborated upon (see Snorri Sturluson 1941-1951: 12-13, trans. in Snorri Sturluson 1932: 2-6; also *Lokasenna* sts 32 and 36 in *Edda* 1962: 103, *The Poetic Edda* 1996: 90-91). Stepping tentatively even further into the minefield of relatively loose speculation, one might question whether the midwinter *hieros gamos* enacted in *Skírnismál* might thus have roots in the idea of the fertilisation of a female fertility goddess designed to produce the Nordic harvest eight or nine months later.²²

As I say, all of this is little more than vague speculation about the roots and customs of our own time. Time and the forces that govern the nature of our rituals have naturally changed radically. We are nowadays less dominated by the forces of nature and superstition than we are by economic forces, the interests of tourism and our regular need to underline personal and local identity in an age of increasing globalism. This does not detract from the fact, though, that it is still possible to detect overall spacial, temporal and gender related patterns to our present festivals which, while they may make no obvious sense to us today, may find some explanation in other much earlier concepts of the world that existed in the distant past.

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²² It is worth remembering that the main female festivals in ancient Greece, the Lenaia and the Thesmophoria took place in the months of Gamelion / Lenaeon (December to January) and Elaphebolion (February to March). In between came Anthesterion, which ran from mid-January to mid-February, and centred on the great festival of Dionysus, which involved a *heiros gamos* between a priestess and the fertility god. See further Price 1999, 25, 28, 43, 98-100, Parke 1977: 104-105, 112-113, 116, Burkert 1985: 225-234, 239-240, 290-291.

²³ Unless they have a family name, all Icelandic authors are listed here under their Christian names.

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The Ritual Year as a Woman's life

The Festivals of the Agricultural Cycle, Life-Cycle Passages of Mother Goddesses and Fertility-Cult

In Greek culture, ancient and modern, the religious festival is an important means of communication, an offering or a gift, most often dedicated to a deceased guardian of society, alone or together with a god (dess), for instance to the modern *Panagia* (the Virgin Mary, cf. pls. 1-2) or to the ancient goddesses, Demeter (Plut. *Mor.* 378e-f69, cf. *HHD.* 273 f.)¹ or Athena (*Il.* 2.546-551). In the festivals, we find fertility- and death-cult as well as healing.

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 deceased mediator also receives an ox- or lamb-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 fertility-cult is connected with important life-cycle passages, since the festivals follow a ritual calendar where celebrations are performed in connection with important phases during 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

¹ For a list of abbreviations, see pp. 321-326.

passage in the life-cycle of a divine person. In ancient Greece it was particularly manifested through the *Homeric Hymn* dedicated to the Corn Mother, *Demeter* (HHD.). Today, the liturgical year is established through Panagia's biography.

The cyclical perspective is central in connection with the festivals of the agricultural year. After harvest and the threshing of the grain, the modern festival dedicated to the Dormition of the Panagia marks a turning point towards autumn, by the end of the dog days, by the end of August, when the transitional period towards the 'productive part' of the year is about to begin again. The ancient Panathenaia dedicated to the birthday of Athena, the goddess of the olive tree, was celebrated in August, in the first month (i.e. *Hekatombaion*) of the official year, while the modern official ecclesiastical year starts again in the beginning of September when Panagia's Birthday is celebrated. The other festivals deal with other important passages, as the sowing when Panagia's Presentation in the Temple is celebrated, and marks the beginning of the winter-period as the Thesmophoria did in ancient Greece. Now, the 'female', wet and fertile period in the agricultural year's cycle replaces the male period, because the woman is looked upon as the productive partner in a relationship in the Mediterranean area. The mid-winter-festivals are celebrated around solstice and the first sprouting of the grains. The end of winter or the birth of spring is celebrated around spring equinox, following are summer solstice, the 'first-fruit'. The official ideological rituals are adapted to the agricultural calendar.

The article will compare some important ancient festivals and modern parallels related to the actual Mother Goddesses celebrated at important passages during the ritual year.

From modern to ancient festivals

In the modern and ancient religious festivals in Greece, we meet the cyclical perception of time of the farmer, since the economic basis of the community depends on the death and rebirth of nature, determining human life.²

² Cf. Leach 1961, 'Kyriakidou-Nestoros 1986', Hart 1992. Since 1985 I have had several periods of fieldwork in the Mediterranean, mainly in Greece where I have

Following from the cyclical perception of time and the cult of nature in peasant societies, the religion of the ancient and modern Greeks are related to goddesses who represent the agricultural cycle. Fertility-cult is present in the agricultural festivals, and we meet the perception of a cyclical passage between death and birth, or the regeneration of life. As a human life symbolises the agricultural year, the human body symbolises the divine cosmos, which in itself reflects the two sexes (cf. Jackson 1983a, 1983b; Hes. *Th.*). The Earth is conceived as an Earth Mother and a parallel to the woman. Further, women are the most important performers of the rituals during the agricultural festivals.

The cyclical mentality is reflected through the *Homeric Hymn* dedicated to the Corn Mother, *Demeter* in ancient Greece and the Christian parallel, the life of *Panagia* (the Virgin Mary). Even if the ancient Athenian as well as the modern official Orthodox festival calendars are ideological representations, they present a mixture of old agricultural festivals associated with divine persons and important phases in their lives.

Passage-rites have a broader significance in Greek religion than generally assumed, and particularly the celebrations performed in connection with important phases during the corn's cycle are connected with central women's lives, and their life-cycle passages. In ancient Greece, it was manifested through the life of *Demeter/ Kore* as presented through the Hymn. The modern parallel are important phases in the life of *Panagia*, as represented through the Orthodox liturgical calendar, and *Panagia* is invoked by childless couples as in relation to their pilgrimages to the Aegean island of *Tinos* (Pl. 20).

The festivals dedicated to Panagia

The orthodox liturgical year is established through *Panagia's* biography.³ It begins around autumn, and several important

also been conducting research on religious festivals since 1990, cf. Håland 2004. There, the topics discussed in the following article also are examined further. The problems and fruitfulness of working with anthropological comparative approaches (such as using material from Modern Greek civilisation as models) to Ancient Society are also discussed in my dissertation; cf. further Winkler 1990.

³ Håland 2004: ch. 4 and 6; Megas 1992: 247, 33, 240, 145, 187, 231, 240, cf. Hart 1992: 233.

moments in the life of 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. The year starts officially in September with her birth, celebrated 8 September. Her 'Entry into the Temple' is celebrated on 21 November. The festival has its parallels in a bride's 'entry into the new home' and a child's 'entry into the church'.⁴ On 9 December Panagia's conception is celebrated, 26 December, the day after the birth of Christ, 'The Gathering of Panagia' is celebrated. The female festival celebrating the midwife, Babo, *Agia* (i.e. Saint) Domenika, is celebrated on 8 January. *Agia Domenika* is the midwife who according to the tradition helped Panagia at the birth of Christ and until his baptism. Spring is also important: The Annunciation is celebrated on 25 March. The first Friday after the Resurrection of Christ, the festival dedicated to the Panagia under her attribute of the Life-giving Spring (i.e. *Zōodochos Pēgē*), is celebrated. 2 July, Our Lady the Sheaf-Burner is celebrated. Her death or 'Dormition' on 15 August, is followed by her burial or the '9th day's ritual of Panagia' on 23 August, thus, reflecting ordinary death-rituals and the following memorial service. 31 August, the 'Presentation of the Honourable Belt of the Virgin', is celebrated.

So, her birth is celebrated around vintage. Her 'Entry into the Temple' marks an important point in the period of winter sowing. The celebration of Panagia's Presentation in the Temple also marks the setting in of winter. The new agricultural year starts at the time of ploughing and sowing, when the grain is sowed 'into the womb of the earth', where it is going to rest until the harvest in May/June. 'Panagia's Gathering' is celebrated around winter solstice. The festival celebrating the midwife is celebrated at an important stage in the grain's growth. The Annunciation is celebrated around spring equinox. The festival dedicated to the Life-giving Spring, is celebrated before the barley harvest in May. After the grain harvest, Our Lady the Sheaf-Burner is celebrated during threshing. At this time, the dangers of fire or storm may destroy a whole year's toil. Disasters of this kind are naturally considered as a sign of divine wrath, so even if the liturgical festival on 2 July is dedicated to the day on which Her tunic was brought to the church of Blachernae, in

⁴ I.e. when it is baptised, see Papamichael-Koutroubas 1980: 131 ff., see 129 for the bride's entry.

Constantinople (i.e. Istanbul), the feast is commonly known as the feast of Our Lady the Sheaf-Burner; this attribute was given to the Panagia because it is believed that She burns the sheaves of those who do not abstain from work on Her feast-day.⁵ Her death is celebrated after harvest and the threshing of the grain, during the dead period of the grains' cycle. The festival marks a turning point towards autumn, by the end of the dog days, by the end of August, when the transitional period towards the 'productive part' of the year is about to begin again (cf. Bourdieu 1980), and the 15 August cycle ends by the memorial service nine days after her death. 31 August, the year closes with the celebration of the 'Presentation of the Honourable Belt of the Virgin'.

The Day of the Annunciation 25 March is both a major religious holiday and the Greek Independence Day, since the 'revolt against the Turkish yoke' started during this festival in 1821. In the 19 century the Annunciation was the most important festival on Tinos (cf. Bent 1965). The motive of the miraculous holy *icon* (image) on the island is the Annunciation. It shows Gabriel appearing to Mary with the announcement of Christ's birth. The Annunciation is also the name of the church of Panagia (i.e. *Euangelistriás*), and the street most of the pilgrims descends by after completing their *proskynēma* (i.e. to perform the set of *devotions* a pilgrim does upon entering the church), at the church during the Dormition-festival, which also announces the passage towards the fertile period of the year. The Dormition of the Panagia is the most important festival on Tinos today, and it is celebrated in a month of holiday and leisure. Now, the Panagia dies, while the following festival when she is born starts the official ecclesiastical year, and the agricultural year begins around her Presentation in the Temple. Several of the festivals, as her conception and her birth, are celebrated with representations paralleling those found in carnivals, parodying the actual life-cycle passage, and very often they are stuffed with obscenities. They are also connected to other agricultural activities such as harvest and sheep-shearing (Michaēl-Dede 1991: 31). Panagia's 'Entry into the Temple' is celebrated by offering the Panagia *polysporia* or *panspermia* (*pan*: all, *spernō*: to sow, 'all seeds'), a boiled mixture of all kinds of crop and several varieties of corn, i.e. all sorts of the

⁵ See Loukatos 1981: 75 f.; Megas 1992: 231 for this festival.

fruits of the earth, since she is the protector of the sowing.⁶ The ingredients are the same as in *kollyba* (a mixture of wheat, nuts and fruit), which is usually offered at harvest and to the dead during the memorial services at the tombs. The mixture consists of boiled stewed wheat mixed with honey or sugar, pomegranate – the symbol for abundance, cinnamon, raisins, minced walnuts – symbolizing the pleasures of life, sesame, parsley, currants, etc. The mixture is decorated with powdered sugar. Today, this equivalent to the panspermia of the ancients offered during the Pyanepsia festival (cf. sowing), the Anthesteria festival (cf. sprouting) and the Thargelia festival (cf. harvest) marks the sowing and the wish for a plentiful crop. People are offering the fruits from the latest harvest, as in connection with the ancient festivals at sowing, sprouting and harvest, to assure the future crop. At the time of sowing, a general mixture of the edible plants to be sown was boiled and offered to the Goddess, and her worshippers also partook of it, while praying for a renewal of these different crops next year. We meet the same ingredients in the thanks offering those about to be initiated into the Mysteries (i.e. the *Mystai*) offered to Demeter on the Eleusinian *kernos*.⁷ The fact that a similar meal is boiled on the festival dedicated to the Presentation of the Panagia in the Temple, illustrates that the mother of Christ has taken over the functions of an older pre-Christian Mother Goddess, and the ingredients in the mixture draw attention to the ancient goddess of the corn crop, Demeter.

The Demetrian festivals

The Homeric Hymn to Demeter describes the origins of agriculture, i.e. the institution of agriculture and grain cultivation, the seasonal cycle of the agricultural year, as represented through the various festivals for Demeter, which were placed at critical moments within the grains' cycle, particularly around sowing and sprouting. Demeter was the grain goddess par excellence, and her festival year is simply

⁶ Håland 2005; cf. Kyriakidou-Nestoros 1986: 13; Loukatos 1982: 132 f., 150 f., 198. See also Tsotakou-Karbelē 1991.

⁷ *Kernoī* (pl.) were circular earthenware dishes to which were attached numbers of tiny cups. See Parke 1986: pl. 22.

the year of the grain. Apart from the Mysteries at Eleusis, which were attended by men and women, the other agricultural mysteries dedicated to Demeter, Thesmophoria, Haloa and Skira or just 'mystēria', i.e. the secret rituals, were celebrated by women alone, since men could not participate. The preliminary Lesser Mysteries were celebrated during spring, in the month, Anthesterion (February-March), while the Greater Mysteries were celebrated during autumn in the month Boedromion (September-October). They were supplied with Chloaia in the spring month Anthesterion, the harvest festivals celebrated in Thargelion (May-June), and the Proerosia, i.e. 'before plowing-time', in Pyanepsion (October-November).

As the modern agricultural calendar, the ancient started at fall sowing. People celebrate particularly before sowing and in spring during sprouting. This is not accidental, since sowing and spring are and were the most important moments of the agricultural year for the farmer.⁸ Just before the sowing, the Eleusinian Mysteries and the Thesmophoria were celebrated. Certain secret rituals commemorated the annual rebirth of the grain and other fruits of the earth, and associated the annual vegetation cycle with the myth of the rape of Persephone (or Kore, 'the daughter') by Hades (or Pluton, 'the wealthy one') the King of the Underworld, and the subsequent sorrow, anger and revenge of the girl's mother, Demeter, and how she finally became reconciled. The Eleusinian Mysteries was a fertility festival designed to ensure the rebirth of the grain. The Thesmophoria was dedicated to the growing and the care of the grain.⁹ The festival was celebrated just before the rains have begun in earnest and the sowing starts. It was preceded by the Proerosia. The emphasis on sowing rather than on harvest makes it evident that, the more critical the occasion, the more elaborate and vital is the ritual. The threshing floor festival, Haloa, was celebrated in *Poseideon* (December-January), at the time of the solstice, when the crops are seemingly frozen and arrested in their growth. The spring is also precarious for the farmer.

⁸ Hes. *Op.* 615-17 sowing; 567-70 spring; 576-7 harvest. Cf. Tsotakou-Karbelē 1991: 219 ff., 231 ff., 98 f., 127 ff., 183 ff. Cf. Håland 2005.

⁹ Schol. Luc. *DMeretr.* 2.1, see Rabe 1906: 275.23-276.28. This and the other sources are discussed in Håland 2004: ch. 5.

Three different festivals of Demeter are attested in the important spring month, Anthesterion, *Antheia*, *Chloaia* (from an epithet of Demeter, *chloē*, i.e. young, green, cf. Paus. 1.22,3; Ath. 14.618e), and the Lesser Mysteries. This illustrates the importance of the spring, and the hymn also puts stress on this moment, as the time of Kore's original abduction (*HHD*. 6 f.), and also of her yearly return (*HHD*. 399-402, cf. Diod. 5.4,6; *ARV* 1012,1), connected with the harvest, while the Greater Mysteries were celebrated in October. Since Kore was abducted during spring, when the flowers were blooming, she should return in the fall, but according to the hymn, she returns in the spring. Since she remains in Hades for one third of the year (*HHD*. 399 f.), she goes underground at the sowing in Pyanepsion, and returns four months later, with the flowers in Anthesterion. Perhaps the myth is not an allegory, which is intended to have an exact application, since the point is that the symbols of the hymn are multivalent. Thus, Kore can be said to die when the wheat is reaped, when it is sown, and even in the spring, when Pluton abducts her.¹⁰ In this way, the purpose of life is established in a dramatic way both in relation to the life-cycle of a human being and the most important crop, which is a condition for the maintenance of mankind. The festivals, which mark the 'greening' of the fields, also have a magical function and a practical purpose. The farmer's worries are not really over until the grain is in the granary. The harvest was distinguished with local celebrations, as in modern Greece, because of the pressure of work.¹¹ In May, just before the barley harvest, the harvest festival, the Thargelia was celebrated. It was also a ritual purification. The festival was devoted to Apollo. Nevertheless, a goat sacrifice was made to Demeter Chloē, Demeter of the green shoot, on the first day of the festival, 6 Thargelion.¹² The sacrifice was dedicated to her in order to bless the harvest.¹³ After the harvest, the threshing was celebrated.

¹⁰ Brumfield 1981: 230 f. for discussion.

¹¹ Cf. Hes. *Op.* 576 f. (harvest), 597 f. (threshing), 607 f. (rest). See also Petropoulos 1994: ch. 2-3.

¹² Schol. *Soph. OC*. 1600, cf. Schol. *Ar. Lys.* 835; Brumfield 1981: 133 f., cf. ch. 8. Cf. *Ar. Lys.* 835; Paus. 1.22,3.

¹³ Cf. also *HHD*. 4 f. for her importance for life and growth. For her epithets, cf. *Ar. Ran.* 383, *Καρποφόρος* (fruit-bearing). On Sicily were statues of 'Demeter of the Grain' and 'The Mother of Abundance'. In Boeotia she was called *Μεγαλότρος* ('The Great Bread') and *Μεγαλομάζος* Ath. 10.416b-c. See also Nilsson 1961: 26 ff.

In the height of summer's heat, at the time of the solstice, the Skira festival was celebrated, marking the storing of the seed in underground silos. The ceremonial emphasis placed on certain moments during the ritual year reveals that the hymn may be interpreted to signify Kore's descent in the fall and ascent in the spring. In this way, the sowing and reaping of the grain is organized.

The story of Kore's descent to the underworld (*HHD*. 16 ff.) and ascent is an allegory of the agricultural year, and the hymn explains why it is that the grain does not grow year round, but only during two thirds of the year (*HHD*. 393-402, 470 ff.). The entire cycle of Demeter's festivals is recapitulated in each moment of the agricultural year, and in each festival marking that moment, much as the whole gospel is implicit in and relevant to, every major Christian feast. Point by point the festival cycle describes the agricultural year, and each festival marks the central moments in the grains' cycle, ploughing, sowing, sprouting, harvest and threshing.¹⁴ The cycle has its parallel in the modern agricultural calendar.¹⁵ The hymn and the Orthodox calendar serve more than one function and operate on more than one level. Accordingly, the festivals dedicated to Demeter were celebrated on every occasion of critical importance during the grains' cycle, when people had to influence the goddess to assure the crop, and the most important festivals were celebrated around sowing, when the Eleusinian Mysteries and the Thesmophoria took place. The Demeter myth could function as a metaphor for all the events of the agricultural year, and was therefore relevant to every festival of Demeter, and all are related to the hymn.

The relation between fertility and death is central in rites of passages. The Demeter hymn also tells about a woman's life and the institution of marriage. It describes an important rite of passage: the marriage of the maiden Kore, since it tells about Kore's departure from her mother, and the marriage with Hades. For Kore sexual awakening is death, just as death can be portrayed as a marriage. The Demeter/Kore myth is a paradigm for human marriage as a rite of initiation; in

¹⁴ Brumfield 1981: 231. See also Nixon 1995, for the connection between the Demetrian festivals.

¹⁵ Kyriakidou-Nestoros 1986. Cf. Tsokatou-Karbelē 1991; Megas 1992; Loukatos 1981, 1982, 1984, 1985, 1988.

marriage the bride could be thought to undergo a symbolic death before a symbolic rebirth and reincorporation into a new household as wife and mother. The hymn represents various elements, which are connected with the marital rite of passage, such as the rape or abduction of Kore, a central element at the Haloa festival of Demeter (cf. Schol. Luc. *DMeretr.* 7.4, see Rabe 1906: 279.24-281.3), celebrated by women around winter solstice. The festival included fertility-magic to stimulate and wake up the earth (cf. *ARV* 1137,25), as well as the sexual awakening of the young maidens, paralleling Kore's. The festival was also an initiation ritual of maidens, and a taboo of the pomegranate at this festival is explained by its role in the hymn: Kore was ensnared by means of a pomegranate (*HHD.* 412), and in this connection it is related to a purification ritual before marriage. Once, abducted, she has to marry her abductor. This situation is expressed in the hymn by Kore's eating of the pomegranate, a sexual symbol, which is eaten on the Thesmophoria, which is also connected with the institution of marriage, established by Demeter, along with agriculture.¹⁶ Kore's eating of the pomegranate forces her to remain, for a part of the year, in the underworld, thus paralleling the grain. The abduction was effectuated in a fertile meadow (i.e. *leimōn*), symbolizing the female sex organ (cf. Motte 1973), while she was picking flowers (*HHD.* 8), an act, which also symbolizes the loss of her maidenhood. Once a maiden has become a wife, she cannot return to her previous state. The hymn depicts women's view of marriage, and supports the idea that in antiquity, as later there was a tragic side to this inevitable rite of passage.¹⁷ Accordingly, the lament of her mother, Demeter while dressed in black, grieving and searching for her daughter, is an important aspect of the Thesmophoria festival since the second day was a day of mourning, when the female celebrants were imitating the sorrow for Kore's descent into Hades.¹⁸ The nuptial consummation in a cave, another symbol of the female sex organ, was important at the Eleusinian Mysteries. The result of the consummation, the birth of a child, was probably an important ritual during the Eleusinian mysteries (cf. Hippol. *Haer.* 5.8,39 f.), at least its importance at the Thesmophoria is recognized,

¹⁶ *HHD.* 473-479; Apollod. 1.5,2; Callim. *Hymn.* 6.19-21; *ARV* 459,3, 297,14.

¹⁷ *HHD.* 201, 304, 330 ff., 348 ff., 360 f., 404-437, cf. Foley 1994: xii, xiv and 118-137; Brumfield 1981: 225 ff.

¹⁸ Plut. *Dem.* 30.4, *Mor.* 378d-e, cf. *HHD.* 49 f., 98 ff., 200 f., cf. *Ar. Av.* 1519 ff.

since the third day was dedicated to fair offspring (Schol. Ar. *Thesm.* 80; Alciphr. 2.37,2).

So, after her eating of the pomegranate seed, Kore becomes the wife of Hades, i.e. Persephone, the queen of the underworld. In short, she gets a social identity independent from that of her mother (Foley 1994: 129). The most central topics in the myth are: Kore's departure from her mother, Demeter, who after the abduction of her daughter starts her lament; the marriage with Hades, which was situated several places, in a meadow (*HHD.* 7, 15-21; Strab. 14.649-650), or in a cave. Among the various elements, which are related to the ritual passage, is the purification before the wedding.

The relation between a human's life/-body, symbolizing the agricultural year, is also illustrated through the festivals dedicated to the dead at critical moments during the agricultural cycle, demonstrated through the temporary return of the spirits of dead, paralleling the myth of Kore and the rituals around spring equinox. In this period, the infernal, subterranean, but blessing forces are manifesting themselves, symbolized by the wealth of Pluton, the ruler of the underworld. The resurrections of Christ and Persephone are celebrated when nature 'wakes up'. At the same time the parallel, Attis' death and resurrection was celebrated, followed by a sacred wedding, *hieros gamos*, on 25 March through the wedding with Cybele. On the same day the Annunciation of Mary is celebrated today, followed by the birth of Christ nine months later. The Mother of Christ has replaced the Mother of the Gods, and similar rituals dedicated to the procession of Panagia or Madonna in a carriage decorated with flowers was once addressed to Cybele.¹⁹

The modern and ancient festivals dedicated to Mother Goddesses²⁰

The connection between the modern and ancient yearly cycle with the festivals dedicated to fertility-bestowing Mother Goddesses, is

¹⁹ Scott-Billmann 1987: 144, cf. 138. See also Romaios 1949: 46 f.

²⁰ See Pomeroy 1995: 13-15 for Mother Goddesses. Her and others' (such as Dubisch 1995: 246; Meskell 1995; Georgoudi 1991: 477-491) critical views are discussed in Håland 2004: ch. 6. See also Michaël-Dede 1984: 11.

clearly presented through the modern festival dedicated to the nurturing and healing Mother Goddess, Panagia, the 'All Holy One' (*Pan*: all/*Agia*: holy), the one who has domination over all the other, the most holy. She is the most important Saint in the Orthodox Church. She is at the head of the entire church because she was the vessel of Christ. 15 August celebrates the Dormition of the Panagia, and announces the passage from summer to winter, but this fertility- and healing-festival is also an important ideological festival for the Greek nation-state (Pl. 21).

An ancient parallel was the Panathenaia dedicated to the birthday of Athena, the goddess of the olive tree. As its modern parallel this festival was celebrated in the middle of August, by the end of the first month (i.e. *Hekatombaion*, July-August) of the official year.²¹ The two festivals may illustrate that the official political ideologies are adapted to deep-rooted rules or mentalities connected with the necessity of celebrating a festival dedicated to a Mother Goddess at the same time within the agricultural year, when we meet the same climatic imbalance of dry and wet.²² It may indicate that the modern festival dedicated to a Mother Goddess has supplanted the role of one or more earlier goddesses. The similarities between the festivals dedicated to the Mother Goddess Panagia and the Panathenaia may have connection with the protecting city goddess' chthonic aspect as Virgin and foster-mother of the mythical king of Athens Erichthonios/Erechtheus.²³ He was the divine child after whom the temple of Athena *Poliias* (i.e. 'of the city'), the Erechtheum is named. The cult of a Mother Goddess in relation to political-ideological festivals is also symbolised through Artemis.²⁴ The cult dedicated to this Mother Goddess, who was also the goddess of chastity, is connected with Panagia in different ways, not only through the house of Mary in the vicinity of the earlier temple of Artemis in Ephesus (cf. Acts. 19.27-35).

According to the Greek scholar, K. Makistou, there are connections between the festival dedicated to the Dormition of the

²¹ 1 Hekatombaion was fixed to the first new moon after the summer solstice.

²² Petropoulos 1994; Loukatos 1981: 88 f.; see also Ap. Rhod. 2.516-527; Hes. *Op.* 587 f., *Sc.* 393-400, and Alc. 347a and b, 352. Cf. Bourdieu 1980: 338.

²³ *Il.* 2.546-551; Apollod. 3.14.6. See also Neils 1992: 21; Burkert 1983: 156.

²⁴ Cf. Thuc. 3.104; *HHA.* 146-178.

Panagia and the ancient ritual dedicated to Artemis during the harvest festival, *Thargēlia*, because of etymological facts as well as the continuing cult dedicated to a Mother Goddess.²⁵ On the other hand, since the Thargelia was celebrated nearly two months earlier than the Dormition, it may, rather be connected to an earlier festival dedicated to the Panagia, the festival dedicated to her under her attribute of the Life-giving Spring. Nevertheless, the Dormition may also be regarded as a festival where the first fruits of the grain is offered, presented as the first loaf of bread made from the harvest. Makistou, however, presents a convincing argument to show that since the cult of Artemis was dedicated to the ideas around the Virgin and the Mother, the church proclaimed that the remains of these beliefs could be attributed to the cult of Mary, and this harvest festival was transformed to the festival dedicated to the Dormition of the Panagia in August. Other researchers have emphasized the relations between the pre-Christian feast of Artemis on 13 August which was converted into that of the Panagia.²⁶ The feast of the Dormition began in the seventh century, and in Greek Orthodoxy it still retains the name.²⁷ In the 5 century, Athena's Parthenon was transformed to a church dedicated to the Panagia after the termination of the Panathenaia in A.D. 410.

Before that, many festivals were dedicated to Athena through the ritual year of Athens and the Panathenaia was the most important. It has been claimed that this festival had no specific relationship with agriculture; it was a sort of national festival.²⁸ On the other hand, the importance of agriculture is illustrated through the offerings in the festival and rituals carried out in connection with this main festival dedicated to the goddess of the olive crop. It may also be argued that all her festivals 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,

²⁵ Makistou 1970: 157, cf. 111 f. See also Makistou 1978.

²⁶ Graves 1991: 255.

²⁷ There are also theological differences in the way in which Mary is viewed in the Orthodox and Catholic churches. In the Orthodox Church, Mary is not seen as immaculately conceived and bodily assumed into heaven. In Orthodoxy, the virgin remains a human intercessor and a Mother. Cf. Dubisch 1995: 236. See also Triomphe 1989: 351 n.5, cf. 349 f.

²⁸ Isager/Skydsgaard 1992: 166.

from the flowering of the olive tree (Thargelion), growing period of the fruit, until the gathering in later fall and in winter, when the Chalkeia was celebrated. Particularly the festivals celebrated from *Skirophorion* (June-July) may be related to the importance of securing the dew that was necessary during the months from then until the time of harvest if the fruit were to grow to an adequate size. Several rituals during the festivals are also important in connection with the rite of passage undergone by girls at puberty to prepare them for marriage: Prior to the Panathenaia a ritual was carried out, which was central in connection with Mother Goddesses, as Demeter, Persephone, and Aphrodite. Young girls were the main performers during the Arrephoria, and the aim of the ritual was to promote the fertility of both women and agriculture. The relation is also illustrated in the following Skira festival, which was dedicated to the grain goddesses, but the olive goddess was also important in connection with the Skira, and the main purpose of the festival was to stimulate the fertility of the earth and humanity. Accordingly, the reason to the festival devoted to Athena and Demeter at the same time, was that both were attributed the same general aim, to promote fertility. Since the Skira mainly was a women's festival and was celebrated during midsummer, it may, as the preceding Arrephoria, also be recognized as a preliminary ritual to the Panathenaia, which in itself also pointed towards the Chalkeia, when the olive crop was gathered. Simultaneously, the warp was set on the loom and the young girls started to weave the new dress for the goddess, the *peplos*, which was offered to her nine months later, on the next Panathanaia.²⁹ Through the ritual ploughing and sowing which was performed at Skiron, on the way to Eleusis, the Skira also prepared the new agricultural year. The central act of the secret rituals performed by women during the Skira, Thesmophoria and Arrephoria dedicated to Mother Goddesses was the descent of certain female participants into underground caverns, symbolizing the womb of the Earth. They were carrying down sacred symbolic offerings, i.e. fertility charms symbolizing female and male genitals and corn. When these fertility-symbols had absorbed the power of fertility from the womb of the earth, they were brought up, and were mixed on the altar with the seed corn to ensure an abundant crop. The act

²⁹ Håland 2004: ch. 5-6, also for the following. Cf. also Burkert 1983.

of bringing down and up indicate sowing and reaping, thus aiming to promote good offspring generally, human, animal and vegetable. In ancient and modern official festivals and rituals linked to life-cycle passages, fertility-rituals performed by women are of focal importance.

Greek women and Goddesses: festivals and cults connected with women and their sphere³⁰

Several ancient and modern sources which are related to festivals of the agricultural calendar put everything related to the wet and 'female', the production period or the gestation period of the agricultural year to the below, inside, the 'womb' or the 'productive part' of the cycle.³¹ This is the fertile period in the agricultural year, which starts at ploughing and sowing.

In connection with what has been labelled 'Woman's Time' (Kristeva 1986; Dubisch 1991), which is repetitive, i.e. cyclical, and the presentation of female space in Greek sources (Pla. *Ti.* 52, cf. Gal. *UP.* 14.7), there are cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm, which conforms to that of nature.

On Tinos, particularly women come to a female divinity who dies yearly on 15 August, is reborn and gives birth again, in the same way as Mother Earth and thus the agricultural year. According to the cyclical narrative of the Hymn to Demeter, mother and daughter separate and unite eternally in a seasonal pattern (cf. also Foley 1994; Zeitlin 1982).

The role of woman as performer of the agricultural rituals has always been central. The festivals of Demeter concentrate community's ritual attention on moments critical to the life of the crops, particularly the sowing, and try to magically and ritually influence the course of events. The women perform the central rituals on these occasions, because of their culturally determined value as bearers of the secrets of fertility. The myth relevant to this cult is represented in the hymn to Demeter.

³⁰ The following is discussed at length in Håland 2004. A shorter version, is found in Håland 2001.

In Greece, we find certain factors specific to that society which place emphasis on woman's role in fertility ritual. Among the central aspects, which are woven into the agricultural cycle are women, secrecy and obscenity. Many of Demeter's festivals are celebrated by women alone in secret (cf. Ar. *Eccl.* 443), thus, paralleling the ritual during the modern festival dedicated to Babo. Usually women are thought to be more capable of performing agricultural magic than men, since they are more in touch with the well-springs of fertility, for the obvious reason that they themselves bear children, and symbolize fecundity. Women are still thought of as having some mysterious understanding of the forces of nature, bestowed on them simply by the facts of their own biology. Human culture generally tends to associate women with nature and the supernatural. The growth of both human child and the seed occur out of sight; women are thus associated with the hidden sources of the fertility they produce. The relation between the fertility of the earth and woman is illustrated through several popular customs since antiquity. In ancient and modern Greece and other Mediterranean societies, women are in charge of fertility, while men are in charge of creation.³² As in other official male ideologies in ancient and modern Greece and the Mediterranean, the male sex is placed in the category 'spiritual', and the female in the category 'physical'.³³ This was the official male view in the ancient world, and despite recent attempts to develop cognitive theories of emotion, the common perception of emotion in our society is still one that defines emotion as physical

³¹ Cf. Bourdieu's model (1980: ch. 3 particularly fig. 2, 1998: 17), i.e. the yearly calendar or 'synoptic diagram of pertinent oppositions', presenting the agricultural year, the relations between humans and nature, and men and women and Hes. *Op.* 383-617, *Sc.* 393-400; Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 8.1160a 19-30, *GA.* 765a35-765b26, 728a19-22, 766a17-30, 783b26-784a12, *Metaph.* 1.5,986 a 23 ff.; Plut. *Mor.* 370e-f. See also Hp. *Vict.* 27.1-6, *Aër.* 10.84-87, cf. Gal. *UP.* 14.6. For the modern material, see also Campbell 1964; du Boulay 1974; Peristiany 1966.

³² Bourdieu 1980: 357, cf. Plut. *Mor.* 364a vis-à-vis 375c60. For women and fertility, see Schol. Luc. *DMeretr.* 2.1, Rabe 1906: 275.23-276.28, cf. Plut. *Mor.* 378d-f69, see also 141b-c23; Bourdieu 1980: 359; Papamichael 1975: 78, cf. 54. See also Brumfield 1981: ch. 12.

³³ du Boulay 1974, cf. Hirschon 1993 and Bourdieu 1980: 359. Cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1.1254b3-15, 1.1260a, *GA.* 738b26-28; Plut. *Mor.* 113a, 102e, cf. 103a, 145e, 142e, 769b-c. The earth, body, womb and menstruation are related to women: Arist. *GA.* 727a2 ff., 728b23-32, see also 716a14-24, 727b31-34.

and 'natural' as opposed to cultural. It has been argued that the disvaluation placed on women stems from the perception that woman = nature, man = culture, and from 'civilized' society's ultimate preference for culture over nature (Ortner 1974, but cf. Dubisch 1986). Nevertheless, fertility resides in the 'uncivilized' element who has to be tamed by the male component. This is a recurring theme in ancient and modern Greek sources written by men.³⁴

On the other hand, since women give birth, protect and nurture the life of the child through care, and the rationality of care privilege birth over death (cf. Ruddick 1990; Holst-Warhaft 1992), women are most competent to perform fertility magic. Under all circumstances, women experience the world differently from men. They have their own values in addition to, or running contrary to the male view, depending of how the male view suits their own thinking. Women compete in showing their motherhood, and women enjoy relative independence from male performance in the basic life processes. As Mother Earth who does the eight months' labour necessary to produce Demeter's grain, women carry the long burden of human generation. Women civilize Demeter's wheat, turning it first into flour, then into bread; it is women who nurture and train children.

So, women are in charge of fertility: Women are the sole participants in the festivals, using symbolic plants related to their own fecundity and the earth's. This demonstrates a religious belief in the identification of the fecundity of earth with that of women. Accordingly, they are given parallel expressions in the cults (Papamichael 1975). Women's knowledge of fertility magic means that they also have the power to prevent fertility, through their knowledge of the uses of magical plants (*HHD*. 412 f., cf. Nixon 1995), and thus, paralleling their mythical model, the Mother Goddess, Demeter (*HHD*. 305-307) who controls agricultural fertility. The women's festivals and mystery-cults dedicated to Mother Goddesses at critical moments during the agricultural year, illustrate the importance of women and their rituals to ensure the fertility,

³⁴ See Håland 2001, 2003 and 2004 for discussion of the ambiguous view ancient male sources present of women, a view which naturally is passed down by men, and the presentation of an approach to sort out the reasoning of ancient women, based on a comparison with the values found among modern Greek women.

and thus the food. The Demeter festivals promote the generation both of crops and humans. As goddesses, women have primary control of the process of production and reproduction, and during the Thesmophoria, the women's higher duties to Demeter and her grain displaced the men's political business (Winkler 1990). So, one may assume that ancient women saw in their religious actions involving grain and sprouts a celebration of their female power over life and sexuality.

The female body's association with fertility and the earth is clearly illustrated in connection with the festivals of Demeter, since the myth, which deals with the agricultural process, presents it in terms of a woman's life. This is a general assumption in the Mediterranean from antiquity until present-day's societies. The female genital is an entity hidden for the male culture. In this mysterious cave, a place that is inaccessible to man's sight, life emerges. There is a physical, ritual counterpart to the secret place of women, from which their fertility secrets derive, in the underground 'rooms' (*megara*), the entrances to the womb of the earth, which are central in several, particularly Demetrian, festivals. There is a correspondence between these grottos and a woman's sex organ. Women may be regarded as possessing the 'secret' of fertility, as they 'know how' to give birth, a process which man inevitably finds mysterious, because he cannot experience it. Feminine anatomy is more 'secret' than masculine. That women have knowledge of secrets derives from their anatomy, from the fact that they have a 'secret place', the womb, where miraculous things goes on, and of course it is assumed that women understand these miraculous events better than do men. Today, the female body symbolizes everything connected with conception, nourishment and birth. We meet a parallel in ancient male sources and their association between the earth, the meadow, the basket or the jar, and a woman's womb.³⁵ The term *pēgē* means spring/source. It also signifies a mother's milk (Pl. *Menex.* 237e), goddesses such as Hera, Magna Mater and Panagia who, like the Nymphs is worshipped as the '*Life-giving Spring*'. The source of life is often symbolized with a jar, vessel, container or ship,

³⁵ Aesch. *Eum.* 658-666; Pl. *Ti.* 49a, 51a, cf. 52; Arist. *GA.* 716 a 6-24; Plut. *Mor.* 366a, cf. 372e-f, 373f, 374b, 368c-d. Cf. n. 31 supra for Bourdieu's model (1980, 1998), etc.

as the female body, both in the ancient and modern societies, since the Virgin Mary was the vessel of Christ (i.e. *Theotokos*).³⁶ The female space is also considered as a cave, grotto or garden. The female body is assumed as a container, but also as a microcosm.³⁷ This assumption is reflected in the festivals of the ancient ritual year and its modern parallel, i.e. the relation between the earth and a woman's body and the agricultural year and a woman's life.

Conclusion

The festivals follow a ritual calendar where celebrations of Mother Goddesses are performed in connection with important phases during the agricultural year. The life-cycle passages of a person have the same function as those of divine persons and the agricultural festivals.

The cyclical symbolism, which is reflected in the agricultural cycle, is emphasized by the importance of Woman's Time and the woman's body, since the Earth is conceived as a woman's body and the agricultural year as a woman's life. The Earth is also seen as the female sex organ, such as illustrated by symbolic entrances as the cave where ritual consummations take place and where life emerges. Singular phenomena in the festivals as the descent into underground caverns, is also a usual ritual passage in the life of a person, such as young girls, and of the agricultural year in relation to sowing and reaping. The life-cycle passages of humans and in the cycle of nature are reflected in the rituals of the agricultural year.

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³⁶ Machin 1983: 114, cf. Ap. Rhod. 1.1220 ff. See also Håland 2003, 2004: ch. 6.

³⁷ Cf. Seremetakis 1991: 237; duBois 1988 and Motte 1973. See also Håland 2004: ch. 6 for discussion.

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Charms and the Ritual Year

There is a large amount of records concerning folkloristic medical beliefs in the Swedish archives (*folkminnesarkiven*) and in the archive of Nordiska museet (the Nordic Museum, Stockholm). These records have been collected between the 1880s and the 1940s. There are descriptions of medical rituals as well as medical magic. In the records of medical rituals and magic charms, interesting information lies hidden concerning pharmacological remedies, descriptions of medical treatments and information about animals and plants. There are also contextual, gender related information about the practitioners as well as time and space concerning the use of the charm.

A gender perspective

In my research about folkloristic medical knowledge in a gender perspective with emphasis on medical, magical charms used in the treatment of snakebites, I have also been in contact with other types of charms. Some of these charms are connected to the ceremonial year and especially spring- and wintertime. One example of charms connected to a distinct time of the year is charms used for cows when they are about to graze for the first time in spring. Animals in Swedish agricultural society could be forced to stay indoors for about seven months because of the long winter period, that is from November until May.

There are several precautionary methods connected to the release of the cows in spring and charms were chanted in a protective purpose. In connection with chanting, cows could walk over a knife or keys to reinforce the precautions made. In Sweden these protective charms have been called *pasture-prayers*.

The two following precautionary methods or pasture-prayers were chanted for the same purpose and at the same time of the day but at completely different times of the year. The first one (Linderholm 1918: 126) was chanted on Christmas Day morning, a day intimately connected to several magical measures in Swedish agricultural society. The second one (Linderholm 1918: 126) was chanted on the eve of May Day, probably at the same time as the cows were released for their first grazing in the spring. The practice of magical actions has therefore been appropriate to relate to these two days in Swedish agricultural society.

This is the prayer for the protection of farm animals, chanted in the cow-house in the morning of Christmas Day before sunrise:

- 1.1 Jesus and Holy Mary,
lend me now your keys,
while I pray for sheep and cattle!
Jesus and Saint Erwin protect us now
for wolf, paw
and fang
that nothing may harm cattle or sheep,
more than a snake can harm an earth-bound stone!¹

Another prayer for the protection of cattle, chanted in the cow-house on the eve of May Day, before sunrise.

- 1.2 Virgin Mary and Saint Peter lend me now your keys,
while I pray for sheep and cattle!
Saint Repa, keep my cattle safe
for wolf, fox and fang,
that they never shall harm anything brisk,
more than a snake can harm an earth-bound stone!
In the names of: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen, amen, amen.
(*The Lord's Prayer is read three times and the blessing three times.*)²

A completely different type of magical charm that can be related to a certain day of the year is the following divination charm which is believed to have been used by unmarried women to see their future

¹ Urshult, Småland, Sweden 1879-80 Mfr NM, 1897, s. 45.

² Östra Göinge, Skåne, Sweden, 1870's E.W. I I, 404.

husband. Maids who want to be married read this prayer on St Lucia's Eve, believing that they would certainly get married the following year (Hyltén-Cavallius I, 1921-1922):

- 2.1 Lucia the gentle
will make me know,
whose bed I shall make,
whose child I shall bear,
whose sweetheart I shall be
and whose arms I shall dwell in.³

To see a future husband early in the morning of St Lucia's Day one stands in front of a window with a candle in each hand, chanting (Linderholm 1918: 130):

- 2.1 Lucia, dear!
Please, oh, let me know,
whose cloth shall I spread,
whose bed shall I make?
whose sweetheart shall I be,
whose child shall I bear?
whose arms shall I dwell in!⁴

Another suitable time of the year to chant magic charms was at the feast day of St Thomas on December 21st. Several charms were used "to evict" or get rid of vermin like rats and mice. Women walked around naked, sweeping the corners of the house with linen while chanting (ULMA 25: 31, 9):

- 3 Get out of my house
rat and mouse,
you must to another place go
where they already have a lot of you!⁵

According to archive documentation there was another type of charm chanted at a special day of the year, and this was performed at Maundy Thursday. In both Swedish and Finnish agricultural societies, the Thursday was a suitable day for the treatment and curing of illnesses. This was thought to be most effective when the

³ Småland, Sweden, mid-18th century., Danish origin.

⁴ Told by Martell Johansson. No information about place, time or source.

⁵ Västergötland, Sweden 1870s. Recorded by H. Frödin.

moon is waning and most examples refer to the last Thursday of the month. According to documentation from the first decade of the 20th century, a person who is treated or cured on this day will certainly get well again.

There was also a “milk-charm” chanted on Maundy Thursday, which together with magical manipulation could attract milk. A person stands naked, early in morning before sunrise on a steady rock or a dunghill, banging a pan or something similar, while loudly chanting (NM 1897: 48):

- 4.1 As far as my voice heard can be,
bring milk and meat straight to me.⁶

A variation of this charm was used in mid-19th century. Its purpose was to make others cattle lose their vital forces. Before sunrise on May Day one climbed a tree or a hill, blew a horn and chanted (Linderholm 1918: 310):

- 4.2 As far as this can be heard, all belongs to me!⁷

The purpose of this magical ritual was to transfer the vital force from the neighbours cows to one’s own so that they produce more and tastier milk.

Good Friday is also connected to the practice of charms. There was a particular method to be used if one wanted to damage the wool-growth on the neighbours’ sheep whilst improving on the wool-growth of one’s sheep. On Good Friday night between midnight and 01.00 one had to go to the barn and cut nine locks of wool from three sheep and then go home and put the wool on a tray. Then one had to light the wool on fire while chanting the following charm (Forsblom 1927: 722):

- 5 As true as Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God
this night was stripped of all his clothes
likewise shall these sheep be stripped of all their wool?
and dressed upon my own
in the names of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.⁸

⁶ Småland, Sweden, 1879-80.

⁷ Södermanland, Sweden.

⁸ Replot, Finland, 1911.

Ash from the wool was dissolved in water and given to one's sheep to drink.

The material that I have had access to in this research consists approximately of 1000 Swedish magical spells. Due to the lack of contextual information, only a small number can be connected to particular days of the year. These charms are mostly charms of protection for farm-animals, charms of divination for women, charms to drive rats and mice away, and charms to attain something from another person, for example milk or the vital-force of cattle. It is an interesting fact that several charms can be connected to Catholic blessings in spite of the fact that they have been used more than 300 years after the Church in Sweden changed from Catholicism to Protestantism.

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Easter Trees and Easter Parades in Sweden

New Phenomena and Older Traditions

Customs are by nature ever changing, transforming with each new generation. Although these changes usually take place over extended periods of time, some significant and more rapid changes are now becoming evident in Swedish culture. In these times of change, tradition (or what is perceived as tradition) can lend a sense of security, leading to a re-awakening of dormant traditions or even to the invention of new ones, as seen for instance in the spread of the Easter parades and the introduction of Easter trees.¹

Introduction

In Sweden you will find Easter twig arrangements called *påskris* [Easter twigs] – usually made of birch or willow and decorated with coloured feathers and small ornaments – in most homes during

¹ The recently collected material, on which this paper is based, is a part of the project entitled *Förändring av sedvänjor* [Changing Customs], initiated by the Folklore Department at the Institute for Dialectology, Onomastics and Folklore Research in Uppsala, Sweden, in 2003. Lead by Research Archivist Marlene Hugoson and supervised by Head of the Folklore Department Bodil Nildin-Wall, the project has focused on the documentation of the more constant among the Swedish folk customs, such as the annual festivals and lifecycle celebrations.

Easter. Historically the first ones to wake up on the morning of Good Friday mischievously used *undecorated* birch twigs to whip the ones who were still in bed sleeping. In jest of course, but at the same time this custom was said to be performed in remembrance of Jesus' sufferings on that day. Over time these Easter twigs merged with the *decorated* Lenten twigs of the continent, and nowadays we seldom differentiate between the two (Ejdestam 1971: 82-84; Eskeröd 1953: 42-45; Schön 1998: 34). Today the whipping is obsolete and the Easter twigs remain safely arranged in vases in Swedish homes, constituting a holiday decoration only. The public Easter twig arrangements have varied in size though, and in most Swedish cities you can find large Easter twig arrangements outside the shops and in the town squares (Pl. 23). It is these arrangements that have now evolved into a new phenomenon: the Easter trees. This new custom bears important similarities with the public Christmas tree and the Maypole; The Easter tree is set out in a public place, often using the same hole in the ground that has already been created for the city Christmas tree – thus showing a *platskontinuitet* ['place continuity', i.e. a continuity of place] in the cities' holiday decorations. Anyone who wants to can help with the decorations, and in some cases there is singing and dancing around the Easter tree – just as with the Maypole (ULMA Thörn; ULMA 39183). All of this makes the concept of the Easter tree seem familiar to Swedes, even if they may never have seen an Easter tree before.

Easter trees

It seems that the first Easter trees in Sweden – those set up in Vimmerby 1997 and Mjölby 1998 – were the result of a series of attempts to get into *The Guinness Book of Records* with the world's largest decorated Easter twigs (<http://www.aftonbladet.se>; SOFI Johansson 2005: 9 Mar.).² Usually these 'Easter twigs' consisted of a full size birch tree that had been cut down, decorated, and then

² There are rumours of an earlier Easter tree in Säffle from the 1980s and onward. However, this information has not been confirmed, but dismissed, by Cathrine Gustafsson at the Tourist Information Office in Säffle (SOFI Gustafsson 2005: 8 Ap.).

re-erected in the town square. But there are exceptions to this rule. In Karlskoga, for example, they tried to get into the Guinness book with a planted old elm that had been decorated – first in 2001, then again in 2002 and 2003. The attempts were denied by *The Guinness Book of Records* all three times, as decorated Easter trees were not considered interesting enough to the general public of the world, regardless of size and number of feathers attached. During Christmas this same tree is decorated with lights – again showing the ‘place continuity’ in the cities’ holiday decorations (SOFI Björklund). Both planted and felled trees are thus used as Easter trees and they do not necessarily have to be birch, although this is the most common.

After the unsuccessful attempts at a world record, organisers of city events and local trade associations picked up on the idea and initiated the introduction of Easter trees as a ‘happening’ for the inhabitants of different villages and cities. In the village of Lenhovda, in southern Sweden, they raised their first Easter tree in 1998, a quite small event, but when the first Easter tree was erected in the city of Västerås on the initiative of Bengt ‘Spider’ Jansson in 2001, the size of the event had grown, drawing several hundred participants and using a much larger birch tree. When Bengt Jansson moved to Södertälje the next year, he brought the idea with him and continued the work to establish the Easter tree as ‘a tradition,’ making the celebration grander each year (ULMA Gullmander; ULMA Jansson).

A similar development took place in Sundsvall, where the city merchants had made decorations of feathered young birch trees outside the shops for a couple of years. However, they soon began to think them puny, and in 2002 they went for a full sized birch tree instead. Lisa Thörn, the woman who initiated the project in Sundsvall, then moved to Uppsala and like Bengt Jansson she brought the idea with her, and in 2004 the inhabitants of Uppsala received their first Easter tree (Pl. 24). When Lisa Thörn shared the idea of the Easter tree with her colleagues at a meeting for organisers of city events from all over Sweden, the idea was also picked up by other cities as a way of promoting themselves (ULMA Thörn), and today there are some fourteen places in Sweden where you will find Easter trees – Bollnäs, Karlskoga, Karlskrona, Lenhovda, Linköping, Malmö, Mjölby, Umeå, Uppsala, Sundsvall, Södertälje, Trelleborg, Vimmerby and Västerås – and the number is

steadily growing as new cities adopt the idea (ULMA 39183: 2-33, 62-161).

Both Bengt Jansson and Lisa Thörn search for sponsors and invite schools and nursery schools to help decorate their trees each year. The whole arrangement usually costs around €3,000-4,000, and when there are some 10,000-15,000 feathers to fasten you certainly need a few extra hands. Passers by happily join in and during their interviews both Bengt Jansson and Lisa Thörn commented on the fact that immigrants had also joined in to help decorate the trees, a further indication of the accessibility of the phenomenon (ULMA Jansson; ULMA Thörn). The media have also noted the feelings of accessibility and familiarity, and in an article in the local Uppsala paper in 2004 the Easter tree is already referred to as 'a new tradition' (*Uppsala Nya Tidning* 2004: 4 Ap.).

Easter parades

In both Sundsvall and Uppsala Lisa Thörn also developed the idea of the Easter tree by combining it with an Easter parade and hired entertainment for the children, thus picking up on the Easter custom of *påskkärringar* where children dress up as 'Easter hags' [i.e. Easter witches] on Maundy Thursday to go mumming (ULMA Thörn). The advertisement in the local paper in Uppsala, which invited children to participate in the decoration of the tree and to join the Easter parade, read: 'Follow us to *Blåkulla* [i.e. where the witches assemble at Easter]! Put on your headscarf, get on the broom and join the Easter witches' parade!' (*Uppsala Nya Tidning* 2004: 3 Ap.). In Sundsvall the young Easter witches were also given a note telling them at which store to collect their gift of an Easter egg after the parade – cleverly spreading the dressed up children all over town so that they could be seen and appreciated by many more (ULMA Thörn). In the advertisement for the Easter tree in Södertälje, the city event organisers asks if their Easter tree is the world's largest 'Easter twigs', showing trace of the Easter trees' origins as well as stirring up competition with other cities (SOFI Jansson; ULMA 39183: 33).

Approximately thirty towns and villages in Sweden organise Easter parades, and in some of them – Linköping, Sundsvall, Trelleborg and Uppsala, for example – they also erect Easter trees.

Most of these Easter parades were initiated in the second half of the 1990s, but some are older – those of Åmål and Karlstad, for example, where they have had parades since the 1950s (ULMA 39183: 34-61, 162-270; SOFI Jarnryd; SOFI Forsudd). Besides dressing up and walking in procession, there are activities such as music, singing, egg and spoon races, and clown performances (ULMA 39183: 34-61, 162-270; SOFI Jarnryd; SOFI Forsudd). Just as with the Easter trees there is also a connection between the Easter parades and *The Guinness Book of Records*, but here it seems only the more established Easter parades try for the world record – for example, in Vänersborg, where they have organised parades for some fifteen years, but only last year decided to make an attempt – on the basis of highest number of costumed participants (SOFI Goding). Discussing the Easter parades it is interesting to note that ecclesiastical processions are uncommon in Sweden since the population is mainly Protestant.³

Easter mumming

The customary thing to do during the Easter celebration is to let the children go mumming. However there has been a radical change in the organisation of the Easter mumming in Sweden in recent years. From being in the hands of the children themselves – dressing up as *påskkärringar* and borrowing aprons, head-scarves, makeup, coffeepots and brooms before going knocking on doors asking for treats or money – the mumming in the cities has declined. This is largely due to a social development from community to individualisation, where you no longer know all of your neighbours, and it is no longer considered safe for children to go knocking on doors of (unknown) neighbours on their own. The children who are allowed to go mumming are thus usually chaperoned by their parents, or the event is organised by a third party, introducing processions

³ Processions are only held in churches on certain occasions, such as during confirmation ceremonies or during the Lucia celebration, or in churches where the priest is influenced by the Roman Catholic tradition. Pilgrimages, although unusual, can also be found – on the island of Gotland, for example. There are also non-religious processions, for example, on the occasion of graduation.

instead of knocking on doors – showing a movement from creative play for a specific age group into an activity organised and planned on a larger scale by adults. Discussing this movement one could also bring up the rise of the so-called *curlingföräldrar* [curling parents], i.e. parents that over-prepare and facilitate, metaphorically sweeping the playing field as the participants do in the sport *curling*, so that their children do not have to deal with life's many obstacles (<http://www.bent-hougaard.dk/>).

There has also been a noticeable change in the dressing up part of the Easter mumming. The gaudy Swedish Easter witch has been joined by a Hallowe'en styled witch, with sombre black robes and a pointed hat – showing the international influences – and some of the young boys who do not fancy dressing up as Easter witches – with female head-scarves on their heads and aprons around their waists – decide to dress up as Easter men instead. In places that have previously had male Easter witches, this suggests that gender is now defined at a younger age. Some children also dress up as chickens, eggs or something entirely else, just as for an ordinary costume party – 'the Hallowe'en effect'.

Conclusion

The idea of the Easter tree combined with the arrangements around it – such as the Easter parades, the hired entertainment, and the gifts for the participating children – has been very well received by both the public and the media, thus spreading the phenomenon further, and suggesting a need for new traditions that correspond better with everyday life. Parents search for alternatives to the mumming and if one does not want to arrange one's own Easter party at home, the Easter tree and Easter parade represent one solution. I would therefore like to predict that Easter tree is here to stay and that it will become a common sight in Sweden in the years to come. It is a new custom presented as tradition after only a few years, facilitated by the accessibility and familiarity of the custom itself. It is, quite simply, an 'Instant tradition' (Hugoson 2006).

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The material from the SOFI research archive (coded ULMA),⁴ and the agency public records in Uppsala, Sweden (coded SOFI)⁵ has been collected by the author for the project entitled *Förändring av sedvänjor* [Changing Customs], and is published with permission.

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Easter in Estonia

Folk calendar is a long and evolving process, which has been changed mainly by the changes in the economic situation and environment, political and religious systems, fashion and media, taste, charismatic persons and other factors. Similarly, elements of folk calendar, such as the chronological system and calendar holidays, as well as traditions, beliefs, taboos and entertainment associated with it, have changed over the centuries.

Very little is known about the prehistoric Estonian folk calendar, as regular recording of calendar reports began only in the 19th and 20th century. Earlier traditions are mentioned in visitation and witch trial documents, travel letters, chronicles and books. Arguments based on the prehistoric Estonian folk calendar are largely hypothetical and presumptuous. Apparently, its most important function was counting weeks, each consisting of seven days. Prehistoric Estonians mostly observed the lunar calendar but also celebrated major solar calendar holidays. Celebrating the beginning and end of major works and the change of seasons has also been central in the tradition.

A critical change in the Estonian folk calendar was brought along by the establishment of Catholicism in the area in the 13th century: people began celebrating saints' feast days, construct churches, chapels and crosses dedicated to Catholic saints. Former sacred places were abandoned in favour of others recognised by the Catholic Church, and the reform of the economic calendar began; new holidays were adopted, several mythological beings were attributed new names and celebrating the rituals connected with these probably changed in manner and time. It is believed that around the same time the system of sacrificing at specific calendar days changed. Large stones and other natural monuments were associated with specific saints. While gaining ground, Catholicism integrated earlier beliefs and conceptions and introduced new traditions.

The influence of Catholicism is clearly evident in Estonian folk calendar even today, among other things it has somewhat retained the symmetry where certain saints' feast days celebrated in summer correspond to those celebrated in winter. Although the older part of the Estonian folk calendar includes strictly regional festivities, most of the tradition and customs are still analogous to the traditions and festivities of other European countries.

The next major change in the calendar was caused by the Lutheran reformation in the 1520s, which necessitated the reconstruction and destruction of the sacred places of the Catholic religion and resulted in the abandoning of saints' worship. References to saints, however, were retained in the names of calendar holidays and churches. Until the end of the 19th century the ministers of Lutheran congregations in towns and rural areas were mostly Germans, nevertheless, sermons were held in the Estonian language. Conversion to the Orthodox religion began in the 1840s under the influence of the then political and economic situation. Some people joined Protestant free churches, but Lutheranism still remained the dominant religion. According to the 1934 census, nearly 874,000 people considered themselves as members of the Lutheran church, constituting nearly four fifths of the Estonian population (Sild 1938, Plaata 2001).

The Lutheran reform could not change the entire system of calendar traditions, though it introduced changes, and many holidays were becoming irreversibly forgotten without official support. However, it is worth noting that regardless of the introduction of the Russian Orthodox religion (which became more firmly established in the peripheral regions of Estonia and in towns, see e.g. Sychoy 2004), it did not bring along major changes in folk traditions, folk calendar and religious practices, other than in the Setu County and in Northeast Estonia next to the Russian border, where the population had contacts with the Russian Orthodox neighbours already before.

The support of the clerical circles, the symbiotic relationship of official calendar holidays and folk traditions, or the disapproving of celebrating certain holidays by the church, has had a much greater impact on calendar tradition than would appear at first. It is also worth noting that since the 17th and 18th century, the Estonian folk calendar has been influenced by calendar and school literature, since the 19th century also by special albums, publications compiled for calendar holidays and fiction. During the past centuries, calendar holidays have been introduced mainly by the media, which has also

brought along changes in celebration, and promoted the celebration of e.g. St Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and other holidays.

Next to the church and media, folk calendar has also been influenced by the political regime. The Soviet regime managed to restructure the system of national holidays, and the celebration of many former customs was carried on behind closed doors. Likewise, the tides in national identity have caused the reinvention or abandoning of former customs. This article aims to present an overview of changes in the Easter tradition in Estonia throughout centuries and to characterise its celebration in modern times. A brief introduction of the local peculiarities of the tradition in a nation state, the role of an individual in continuing the tradition, as well as the impact of politics and the idea of ethnicity on calendar tradition will be also presented.

Material

With the help of local correspondents, calendar tradition has been collected in Estonia for over a century, and together with various omens, work restrictions, chores, special customs, ritual foods consumed on specific holidays, forms of entertainment, etc. it will constitute a corpus of nearly 180,000 text entries. Its major flaw is perhaps a certain retrospective emphasis: informants or collectors of the material have been encouraged to concentrate on as early tradition as possible, thus overshadowing the imminent empirical experience and information about the contemporary period. This, of course, does not apply to all the folklore correspondents, as the material also includes authentic recorded texts, filled with facts and often emotionally inspiring. The entries of the past decades, however, are critically different as the voice of the collector is far more explicit.

For the present article I have made extensive use of one of our most recent web-based databases/portals, which is intended to inform users about the ritual Estonian folk calendar. BERTA (2004, <http://www.folklore.ee/Berta>) was commissioned by the Estonian Tiger Leap Foundation, which is actively involved in establishing an Estonian-language learning environment, interactive web-based education, instruction in information technology and in a project of supplying Estonian schools with computers.

BERTA or the Database of Estonian Folk Calendar currently introduces about 80 folk calendar holidays of varied importance and is as such the largest and most comprehensive corpus of Estonian folk holidays, beliefs and music. The database also presents a selection of (major) Russian Orthodox holidays as well as holidays of Estonian school calendar (especially those exhibiting features characteristic of a popular calendar holiday).

Each holiday links to an introductory web page, which provides a brief overview of customs connected with a particular holiday and a short history of the day (specifying its origin, spread and adoption in Estonia, and the changes it has undergone). The introduction also provides information about the saint (if the holiday is a saint's feast day), comparative material from other cultures, and some most recent interviews. Additional key words to facilitate the understanding of the archaic tradition are added to the introductions of most holidays and feast days. Separate links refer to specific web pages and printed sources for further information on single topics.

Web gallery consists of photographs associated with various holidays from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 21st century. Photographic material was found not only in the photo archives of the Estonian Folklore Archives, and the Estonian National Museum, but also in private collections and, particularly in terms of the newer material, also from the web galleries of schools. Video and sound samples are provided on a separate page and originate in the Estonian Folklore Archives and private collections. Submitting comments and stories is made simple for the user, the stories written and added by users explains the actual meaning of the holiday to our contemporaries. Archive texts have been grouped in a separate database, containing texts about thirty of the most important holidays, which are searchable by means of a formalized key word of a separate search engine. This symbiosis of personal recollections and modern media interviews with folkloric archive texts helps scholars to study the changes in the tradition on a diachronic and synchronic level.

Easter traditions

As mentioned above, the sources to study the earlier calendar tradition are relatively scanty. Moreover, the material has been

primarily collected from the town population, especially members of the upper and middle class, which explains why the collectors recorded mostly the tradition of non-Estonians and integrated immigrants. Proceeding from the assumption that the social differentiation in Estonia was never very rigid and information and traditions were transmitted through various informal networks between members of different social classes, and that the calendar tradition included many collective activities and symbols that were adopted and observed by individuals, it is possible, to a certain extent, to extend the generalisation on what took place in other social groups.

The internal organization of the ritual system is usually a complex orchestration of standard oppositions that generate flexible sets of relationships both differentiating and integrating activities, sacred places and communities. Domestic rituals contrast with communal rituals, male rituals with female rituals, preliminary rituals with culminating ones.

Strategic differences in ritual traditions can differentiate specific communities, ritualisation can also operate to integrate communities (Bell 1992). In the 14th century the four most important holidays celebrated with drinking and festivities were Martinmas, Christmas, Shrovetide and Eastertide. Beer and wine also belonged to the celebrations of Michaelmas, Lent, in Livonia also Midsummer Day and the feast days of some saints. In the 15th century the major folk calendar holidays were Christmas and Shrovetide, whereas the expenses paid for entertainment and guild festivities of the Shrovetide often exceeded those of Christmas. Since the 15th century new festive holidays emerged, such as the Twelfth Night, New Year's Day and the holiday which in the Estonian language was called *hingepewe*, or All Soul's Day.

In the medieval period Easter was celebrated only for one day, when aldermen of Tallinn and Riga gathered to the Town Hall to drink beer or wine. Anu Mänd, who has studied medieval festivities in Estonia, has indicated that two kegs of dark beer were consumed at the Easter celebration in 1372, and a keg of beer was drunk by the Great Guild of Tallinn in 1363 (Mänd 2004: 66). People also sang songs at these festivities. In addition, on this day the town musicians got paid. Even in the 15th and 16th century people were known to gather to the Town Hall of Tallinn to drink wine and beer, though the celebrations were then held in the period following Easter. Therefore, unlike other folk calendar holidays, little is known about

the secular celebration of this period. Some reports mention the procuring of beer and wine for the time of Lent. Moreover, at Easter not only town musicians were paid but it was an important economic time for paying taxes and settling debts. There is no information about medieval traditions of private spheres, as the rituals centred on church and reportedly colourful celebrations of the holiday in public places.

If we attempt to tentatively divide a year into certain critical periods, which according to folk beliefs were the times when numerous mythological creatures and preternatural forces were actively around, we will have four tentative dates around equinoxes. A year could be divided in eight critical periods, whereas the number of important dates in the medieval autumn-winter period (four periods since Michaelmas to Whitsuntide) is considerably larger than in the summer season. For example, the best times for reciting spells were spring and winter folk calendar holidays such as St Matthias' Day, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, St George's Day, Whitsuntide, Midsummer Day, and autumn calendar holidays such as Michaelmas, Martinmas, and Christmas holidays (Kõiva 1990). Maundy Thursday and Good Friday were particularly good for performing smaller rituals of magic and for influencing the forthcoming year. The intense practising of magic was connected with the vernal equinox as well as with Christian teachings about the heightened activeness of evil forces and the Devil around the particular time. For example, a child who was nursed on three consecutive Maundy Thursdays was believed to become a witch.

In the 17th-19th century the reports are mainly complaints about practising witchcraft and fertility rituals at church holidays. As to the 19th century, the material is mostly from written press and concerns popular customs in public and private sphere. According to these data, Easter at the time was the symbiosis of the seasonal, commemorative and religious celebrations (Bell 1997: 103 ff.). As in other European countries in the period following the Lutheran reformation, the carnival tradition began to die out and was replaced with mumming and masking in villages and other public activities.

The most popular Easter custom in the European countries and also in Estonia was decorating and eating Easter eggs and giving these as gifts: this is the main private symbol of the date in popular culture. In the Orthodox regions of South Estonia it was also customary to roll the eggs. Easter eggs were a significant form of

social interaction, as they were given and received as gifts. While the nineteenth-century reports discuss widely the collecting of the eggs long before the Easter so that there would be enough to paint and give away to the family, relatives and egg-finders, in the 20th century things are quite different, as the growth of chicken farms and the trade system makes procuring the eggs much easier. The image and relevance of eggs as the symbol of Easter holidays and domestic culture undergoes significant changes, as they become symbolic statements of social order.

Even today eggs are given to friends, teachers, midwives and godparents. Formerly, the latter used to give Easter eggs as gifts to their godchildren. The most common custom of the 19th century and the early 20th century was that young men went around in the village gathering eggs, and godparents gave Easter eggs to their godchildren. After reaching adulthood, however, godchildren were expected to give Easter eggs as presents to their godparents.

During spring holidays we often rushed to the church to meet the younger ones. At other times we were not allowed to visit. The eggs were boiled, painted and given to godchildren. Godmother gave these to the godchild until he or she had finished confirmation classes. After confirmation the godchild gives candy or something else to the godmother. Boys visited girls to look for the Easter eggs. The boys always came in a crowd. Were shared with acquaintances and also strangers.

In the Vaikla village, boys and men went mumming as roosters. Had disguised themselves as roosters before sunrise, and cried like roosters, then you knew you had to give them an egg.

Easter eggs were red and coloured, but Pentecost eggs were yellow, dyed with birch leaves. Painted eggs were taken to an anthill, so that the ants would leave a pattern on them. Such an egg would have a nice smell and also taste. Such eggs were given only to the best friends.

(RKM II 362, 456 (16) < Otepää parish, Mõrtsuka village, Järva farm - Mare Kõiva < Rudolf Andrei, born in 1908 (1982))

Eggs were painted at Easter all over Estonia, whereas in the northern and central Estonia eggs were also decorated on Whitsuntide or Pentecost.

Easter eggs were decorated in a variety of ways. Even nowadays it is common to dye eggs with natural dyes like onion skins (for a brown or dark yellow colour), birch leaves (for light yellow), madder

(for red colour), and coffee (for brown eggs). In the 20th century silk or crepe paper and cloth were used for decoration. For patterns, grain or rice was added, dye was scraped off, or names were written or images drawn on the shell. Wax or different plants were also pressed against an egg wrapped in a piece of cloth – the latter resulted in a faint impression of a plant's contour. Different colours were obtained by using watercolours or egg paints, which were particularly common methods of decoration in the 20th century. In the period of deficit following the World War II, other colouring substances were used instead of egg paints, including even potassium permanganate, Brilliant Green (*Viride Nitens*), and other substances available.

Making use of different techniques, such as water stickers and adhesive labels, cut-outs and pasted pictures, and dyed feathers glued to the egg, became more widespread. At the beginning and in the final decades of the past century the name of the beloved or that of whom the egg was addressed to was written on the egg, also hearts and simpler images were drawn. In the second half of the 20th century eggs were crafted into chickens, comic figures of humans, animals, etc. – literally anything the maker could think of.

The 19th century witnessed the custom of hiding Easter eggs so that children could search for them, and the custom of preserving some Easter eggs. It was believed that if an Easter egg is carefully kept for seven years the egg yolk will start glowing and the shell becomes transparent. The tradition of painting eggs with children belongs to the 20th century. In the 1960s and 1970s and later, egg paints were often not available in stores, but eggs were inexpensive and easy to buy, thus painting the eggs was no longer the responsibility of young adults, but children's and teenagers'. This tradition is observed by families with children even nowadays. After the Second World War, painting eggs, hiding them in a house or apartment, and placing the painted eggs in a wicker bird nest lined with soft lichen or on green grass early in the morning while the children were asleep, became a symbol of Estonian domestic culture. Painting eggs with children and sharing these with family and friends was a deeply private family custom, especially in the Soviet period, when the celebration of Easter, as other church holidays, was disapproved by the authorities.

The oral narrative history of many families included the legend and beliefs addressed to or fostered by children that the eggs were

painted, brought and hidden by an Easter bunny, which sneaked in at nights. The first documented report about eggs delivered by the Easter bunny originates in Germany in 1572. In Estonia the custom is still actively practised, although from the 1960s onward, chocolate eggs and figures are hidden instead of dyed eggs in some families. In all the countries where Easter bunnies are known it is told that the eggs are their droppings, in the 20th century small round candy, such as raisins dipped in chocolate, were added among the Easter dishes. Here I would like to emphasise two aspects of this tradition: firstly, the searching for and promoting of ethnic Estonian customs in Soviet Estonian folklore studies and in media. Consequently, customs that were estimated to be only a hundred years old or even younger were automatically considered as non-authentic and non-ethnic (further on this see Kõiva 2000). The same applied to customs that were known to be of, for example, German origin, or to have an international spread or variant, or that belong (also) to urban culture, as folklore and ethnic Estonian tradition were primarily connected with agrarian culture (see e.g. Hiiemäe 2003). The first extensive set of topics – the symbiosis of different ethnic identities and continuity of culture versus strategies of resistance under the circumstances of an authoritarian political regime – deserves a separate study (e.g. on the structure of the celebration of Christmas as a family holiday in Soviet Estonia see Hiiemäe 2003). Secondly, the Easter tradition is particularly interesting because of its spontaneous playfulness, the creation of fiction tales and reinvention of the different forms of masking tradition. In the late 20th century townspeople were known to have walked around in bunny costumes, sometimes selling Easter eggs.

An important part of the 20th century Easter tradition was self-made or printed Easter postcards sent to friends and family. In Estonia, the postcards usually depicted chickens with painted eggs, Easter bunnies with eggs, pussy willows, etc. The first postcards that circulated in Estonia were printed in Germany and are therefore quite similar in appearance. Self-made postcards are far more interesting; many of these were created in the period following World War II when Easter could not be officially celebrated or Easter postcards printed. Owing to the unavailability of printed postcards, photographers photographed the old cards and copies thus obtained were spread as black-and-white or coloured photos. Sending out postcards was such an important part of the family tradition that

the Estonians deported in Siberia in 1941 and 1949 drew and sent self-made Easter and also Christmas cards home and to fellow deportees. Easter cards have also been drawn and designed by Estonian emigrants, who were unable to purchase Estonian-language Easter cards abroad.

It is important to emphasise that the self-made cards were particularly valuable because of their social significance and coherence, as they were the symbol of emotional bond, personal attention, human warmth and care. Nowadays the postcards are beginning to be replaced by e-cards and SMS messages.

There were two other significant customs of family tradition at Easter – bringing home pussy willows and looking at the dancing of the Sun early on Easter Sunday morning. Taking home pussy willows was an inseparable part of Easter tradition. Who had not brought them inside before did so by the Easter Sunday. If hepaticas were already in bloom, some moss and first spring flowers were brought inside. The budded branches with small leaves were used to decorate rooms. At the end of 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, pussy willows were taken to be blessed in the Russian Orthodox Church on Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday and were later used to whisk family members at home, which the latter rewarded with eggs or small gifts. In the 20th century people began growing grass on a plate or in a bowl to place the painted eggs on.

According to a widespread belief Easter Sunday is the day when the Sun dances while rising in the early morning sky (cf. Simpson and Roud 2000; Šmits 1940-1941). People gathered outside, sometimes even climbed on a hilltop or attic to observe it. According to another well-known belief water turns sweet, as if someone had put sugar in it, for one minute during Easter. In some places children reportedly threw sugar in the well or spring.

On the morning of the first day of Pentecost the so-called ‘playing of the Sun’ was on everybody’s mind. If you wanted to see it, you had to try to get out of bed by sunrise. It was said that the most beautiful golden rays were then cross-crossing, irregularly, in the Sun, this was said to be particularly important. Unfortunately, this fascinating play could be seen only in clear weather and often not even then.

(E 73060 (5) < Karja parish, Pärssamaa, Ratla v.. -
P. Tamm < Tiiu Lodi (1931))

Easter masking and mumming

Most of the 19th century holidays associated with the tradition of masking and mumming occurred in the period between November and Easter. Throughout the whole of Estonia (except for the Orthodox Southeast Estonia) the most important masking and mumming holidays with rich customs and regional idiosyncrasies were the eves of Martinmas (November 10) and St Catherine's Day (November 23). Already in the 19th century, the masking and mumming tradition was particularly rich in West Estonia and on the islands, and shared similarities with the corresponding customs in Scandinavia (Christmas and New Year's goats, whips, etc.; see Eike 2002) or customs of wider spread (Three Kings; Simpson and Roud 2000). Easter masking and mumming were formerly more widely known; they were later observed in the same area, probably because of analogous celebration of other holidays. A characteristic feature of the tradition in western Estonia and on the islands was 'mummers' in animal or bird costumes who visited people to wish them good luck or health. For example, a 'goose' visited families to birch them for good health on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. According to recent accounts the 'goose' no longer wore a costume, but the name was retained.

Another masked creature characteristic of the region was the Meat Woman, sometimes called Meat Kai, who appears in texts recorded in the 19th century. Meat Woman is a personification of Lent and is believed to keep guard of how people observe fasting and work prohibitions, and is therefore similar to the personification of hunger around New Year. A female creature who peeps through windows during Lent before Easter makes sure that nobody does forbidden needlework or breaks the fast. According to a popular saying, she breaks the neck and pulls out the guts of whoever is caught at a forbidden activity.

The fast abandoning of masking at Easter may be partly attributed to the belief system, which did not allow the transmitting of the tradition to women and children. In the 19th century, it was considered bad luck if the first visitor after the Christmas Eve was a woman. For this reason young men were sent ahead to ask for beer or just to greet. There was also another prohibition – namely, children were not allowed to go to visit, and if they did so, old leather shoes were thrown around their neck. Only in the final decades of

the 19th century New Year's goats were accompanied by women, but even then the women hid behind the mummers or stayed outside. Masking at Christmas, however, strictly remained the privilege of adult men.

Communication and constructing locality

The description above indicates that in the Estonian Easter tradition, decorated Easter eggs played an important role in the communication between relatives, godparents and godchildren, and villagers. Things have no meaning apart from those that human transactions, attributions and motivations endow them with (Appadurai 1986: 5). Until the Second World War searching for Easter eggs alone or together with a group of village boys was considered a fun and widely-spread form of entertainment. At the beginning of the 20th century, eggs were gathered in the village in such great numbers that some boys even had trouble with eating all the found eggs. It was also customary for girls to give the most beautiful eggs to one's sweetheart or the favourite boy, and, in return, boys gave eggs to the girls they liked. In many regions young people gathered to dance and eat eggs in the evening.

Eggs were painted and then they walked around in the village. Full grown men were coming along, and eggs were searched for at the girls' homes. Afterwards they cracked the eggs, to see whose egg-shell will break; he had to give the egg to the other contestant. One guy even had a wooden egg, painted and all. Got everyone else's eggs. Guys were pestering him to let them see the egg, but he wouldn't show them.

Someone had buried all the eggs he had won under lichen, to come fetch them afterwards. But later could not find the eggs anymore. Perhaps someone else found his eggs and took these away. It was fun.

In olden times people went to the inn and cracked the eggs there.

(RKM II 362, 456 (16) < Otepää parish, Mõrtsuka village, Järva farm - Mare Kõiva < Rudolf Andrei, born in 1908 (1982))

Next to expressing liking, respect and family ties, Easter eggs were also used to demonstrate dislike and ridicule. Raw eggs were secretly given to or placed in the baskets of the egg gatherers who were disliked or for picking a quarrel. When young men gathered to



Egg rolling in South-East Estonia, 1913.

© J. Pääsuke, courtesy of ENM, 213_167.

crack and eat eggs together, discovering a raw egg was quite a shame. Another popular trick was taking a wooden egg to overcome contestants at egg cracking. A masterfully coloured egg was almost identical with the normal egg. Crushing Easter eggs was a part of the interaction between boys and girls. At schools and in towns boys used to crush girls' eggs for teasing. As a result, the girl could not fulfil her role in important social interaction on the holiday.

While cracking eggs was a very popular and widespread custom, egg-rolling was mostly known in South-East Estonia, which the whole village gathered to look on. As the time coincided with the beginning of the swinging period, people used to swing, sing, eat home-baked pastry and chat. In the Russian Orthodox Setu County in Southeast Estonia, eggs were rolled downhill or along a special wooden channel. The person whose egg touched someone else's egg won his egg. Eggs were rolled as long as they could be won, after which all the eggs were gathered and the next person could take his turn. The won eggs were eaten at once, though the winner was also allowed to take them along. The custom of egg-rolling and gathering was primarily limited to men. In the recent decades, however, this custom has also

become more liberal, and eggs may be rolled also by women. The transformation of the tradition and the mitigation of gender roles had many reasons, among these contacts with Lutheran neighbours as such gender polarisation was not common in Lutheranism, general secularisation, and also changes in the social position of women in the community over the past half a century, etc. Southeast Estonians who had settled in other Estonian regions tried to preserve the special features of their tradition. The Setu who settled in towns modified the egg-rolling custom by carrying it out in one's home yard, house or apartment. The custom was carried on mostly in families with children and mainly for the sake of children, and mothers played the vital role as painters, hiders and initiators of egg-rolling contest.

Over the centuries there have been many outdoor activities and celebrations during Eastertide. In southern Estonia Eastertide also marked the beginning of swinging. Formerly, swinging was attributed magical significance and therefore it had definite beginning and end (Vissel 2003: 35). Easter swinging (which served a magical purpose) was known among all Balto-Finnic peoples, but



Egg rolling in South-East Estonia 1975.

© V. Kutsar, courtesy of ENM, 1754_20.

also among the Balts and the Russians (Talve 1961: 33–36). Since the beginning of the swinging period fell on an important holiday, it symbolised the creation of health, vitality and happiness for people and cattle. Setting up the village swing was the responsibility of young men. In the 19th century this work was rewarded with mittens and belts, and most certainly with eggs. Swinging was a highly important form of entertainment for youths, and was accompanied by singing, games, contests of strength and dancing.

Another Easter custom practised in northern and central Estonia was board-jumping, which was skilfully mastered by youngsters and children. A person was standing on either end of a board supported on a stone, tree-stump or log. If either of them jumped up, the person standing on the other end fell against the ground. The jump had to be performed masterfully to land on one's end of the board. The game of board-jumping has been practised until now, though presently it is mostly practised in summer instead of swinging, rather than as a part of Easter tradition. This custom was also believed to secure health and happiness.

Symbolic rituals and securing good luck

Similarly to other folk holidays of the same degree, such as the New Year's Day, Whitsunday, and Midsummer Day, it was also forbidden to clean rooms and sweep floors – preparations for the major calendar holiday were indeed thorough. During the Holy Week and the Easter Sunday smaller rituals of magic were performed to secure good luck and health for the performer: for example, washing eyes before sunrise guaranteed good health and diligence. In the early 20th century some silver was scraped into the water or the water of pussy willows was used for washing eyes.

On an Easter Sunday morning a silver coin or some other silver object was slipped in the washbasin and the water was used to wash one's eyes. It was believed that the eyes will remain clear and healthy, if washed with this water.

(E XIII 17 (90) < Nõo parish -
Matthias Johann Eisen < Aliide Räss)

Early on Maundy Thursday morning people brought in shingles or tried to grab as many chunks of firewood from the stack – the

more firewood was grabbed, the more bird nests were found this summer. The ritual was also believed to bring strength and diligence. The same custom was used for predicting marriage – if firewood or shingles happened to be in pairs, a wedding was expected in the year to come. The ritual has been performed on Annunciation Day, Palm Sunday, and during Eastertide, though it was followed most widely on Maundy Thursday.

Magic of the period focussed on cattle, aiming to procure them health and growth, and also to protect them against evil external magic. Since formerly it was believed that there is only limited amount of happiness and luck in the world, people wished to secure oneself as sufficient or as large part of it as possible. This was done primarily by bewitching other farms and neighbours. This is why people feared bewitching of milk and cattle. For protective purposes salt was added to the animals' food and spread in the shed; iron objects were also hidden under the shed threshold on Maundy Thursday. Other people's milking luck was turned by gathering cattle's footprints or debris from these on cattle-trails; people called out from the top of the tree or some other higher place to secure milking luck for one's own family, or imitated the milking on juniper bushes or fence pickets, and so on. Among such measures was fleecing other people's sheep by cutting a small tuft of wool, which was believed to bring luck in court and while dealing with legal matters.

Maundy Thursday marked the symbolic beginning of outdoor work (for example, three shovelfuls of manure were thrown on the field, a few furrows were made, egg shells were placed in the corners of the field to protect against evil, fishnets were spread out in the water or mended, and rifles were cleaned). These preparations guaranteed fertility luck and protection and the works could be started at the best possible time. For better luck, tools, such as fishing nets, farm tools, etc., had to be at least moved or their mending and cleaning imitated.

In the 19th century, fruit trees, especially apple trees, were covered with white or red cloth to make the trees blossom and yield more fruit, thus improving harvest. Apple trees were also smoked with various herbs for protection against evil. In some regions it was customary to surround the house or sometimes even fields with edge tools to keep evil away. Good Friday was also good for love magic, to make someone love you or break up someone else's relationship.

On Maundy Thursday and Good Friday it was important to beware of not going outside without breakfast in the morning, lest the birds might lead one astray.

Modern Easter traditions

In the 20th century many folk feast days turned into important family holidays, which united and strengthened family ties, village communities, relationships between godparents and godchildren, teachers and pupils, friends and relatives (cf. Vesik 2001: 189). The bulk of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday rituals have disappeared. Easter traditions, on the other hand, have changed over the past few centuries but have retained their manifold relevance. Even today, decorating and exchanging eggs, as well as bringing inside pussy willows or budding birch rods, is an important custom for families with children.

During the past decades, kindergartens, schools and museums have become increasingly important in celebrating Easter and other national and calendar holidays. For example, the list of holidays celebrated in Estonian schools includes a remarkable number of former folk calendar holidays (cf. BERTA). Of course, the list of holidays somewhat varies depending on the region: in western Estonia many holidays coincide with Scandinavian holidays, whereas in eastern Estonia many Russian Orthodox feast days are celebrated. The list contains holidays that have been popular for centuries, like Martinmas and St Catherine's Day, revived holidays like All Soul's Day, St Lucy's Day, as well as newcomers like Halloween, St Valentine's Day, Walpurgis Night, and revived medieval festivities and rituals like the so-called electing of the Count of May (or *Maikrahv* in Estonian), etc. During Easter, children are given instruction in egg-dyeing, introducing also old holiday customs, special holiday foods, handicraft skills at kindergartens and more progressive museums opened within the past ten years. Children bring home the eggs they painted at kindergarten, and some more nicely decorated eggs are sometimes displayed on an exhibition at the kindergarten, or used to decorate trees in the yard. Children are instructed to wicker imitations of bird nests to place Easter eggs in, and taught songs, etc. At museums, children are sometimes taught to make an Easter crown decorated with blown eggs: making such a

crown used to be a popular Easter custom in the mid-19th century and earlier (Õunapuu 2001) though this has been revived in single families. Whether and how the tradition is preserved and transmitted in such institutions providing instruction, education and involved in preserving and passing on cultural heritage often depends on a specific instructor's knowledge, skills and active work. Official institutions have helped to support and promote the celebration of Easter, which is primarily a holiday of domestic culture; such institutional celebration has helped to preserve many folk calendar holidays (Feast of the Annunciation, St George's Day) and has revived the celebration of others (Walpurgis Night).

Many calendar holidays are promoted and financed by departments of culture of municipal and county governments and local communities. Several traditions have been introduced or revived by young university graduates and people who share their views, who have moved to work in smaller places and have used the holidays to revive local cultural life (cf. Lukka-Jegikjan 2005). In Estonia young people who have studied cultural management at Tallinn University, have been trained at courses at the Estonian Folk Culture Development and Training Centre; students of Mikko Sarv and Ene Lukka have a particularly important role in this. These people have been taught to adapt and customise old customs and rituals for modern life. Among the promoters of the older traditions are also the followers of the prehistoric Estonian religion *maausk* ('Earth Faith'). Their homepage presents an overview of the holidays of their faith (Maavalla Koda 2005), basically a calendar version of adapted holidays, though avoiding saint names. Even though the number of the members of this religious group is rather modest, the group has devised its own traditions and mythology, grouping together intellectuals, artists, cultural workers, people from various fields of life.

The role of the press is also undergoing changes. Longer introductory articles and studies are published less frequently. The focus of the written media appears to be on newer holidays – namely, those which have entered our cultural scene only recently. For this purpose people are interviewed and folklorists and historians are asked for their expert opinion. Since journalistic discourse also includes mediating the news, academic research and traditions may receive wide publicity in the context of some sensation. Such was the case of discovering the body of St Nicholas and publishing his reconstructed portrait, for example.

Egg-rolling in South-East Estonia has been an important expression of regional identity – people continue to observe the custom even after moving to larger cities, either by constructing an egg channel in the apartment or going outdoors to roll eggs. Youth societies of the Setu have organised public egg-rolling in several towns outside Southeast Estonia. This custom, as well as village parties still held in the Setu County which have disappeared elsewhere in Estonia, distinguishes the Setu from other Estonians. This Easter tradition has thus developed into an element of regional identity, which enables to distinguish one cultural group from others.

Final comments

The secularisation of the Estonian population began in the late 19th century, and the process continued well into the 20th century. The characteristic features of the post Second World War period is urbanisation and major economic changes, which has also affected the calendar customs as quite a number of holidays lost their relevance and disappeared. An important turn in calendar traditions had taken place after World War I, but the Soviet period with its upward-downward regulations, which thus far has unfortunately been largely overlooked, influenced the natural course of tradition with the same intensity. Political pressure speeded up the secularisation process, causing abrupt changes in the tradition not only by political decisions but also by deportation and fast internal and external migration, thus making the construction of locality and continuity of tradition more complicated. The influence of single persons has therefore been much more valuable: next to charismatic church ministers and schoolmasters the traditions have survived largely owing to cultural activists and energetic families and local youth. In the Soviet period, the celebration of folk calendar holidays (as only few calendar holidays were celebrated collectively, among these were Shrove Tuesday, Women's Day, Mayday festivities, Midsummer Day, Martinmas, and St Catherine's Day) shifted from public celebration to completely private family circle – and the same happened with Easter celebrations. However, the relationship of folk calendar holidays and the Soviet period are not that unambiguously black-and-white, as the then ideology required the

assimilation of the national with supranational, resulting in state financing of some officially accepted holidays.

The power relationships and influences deserve a separate study, especially since at that time Easter as an important religious holiday was among the unacceptable and objectionable holidays.

Another characteristic feature divides generations: for some Easter stands for gathering eggs and common celebrations, whereas for the post Second World War generation Easter is first and foremost a family holiday. Today, Easter is largely still a family holiday of sharing holiday greetings, sending postcards, decorating and exchanging eggs. Even nowadays eggs are given to friends, schoolmates and colleagues, although the tradition is less wide-spread. Among the actively practised Easter customs is growing grass, budding birch twigs, bringing home pussy willows, decorating homes with flowers, and hens and chickens made of wool by children or bought from stores. It is a time of small gifts, candles and eggs.

During the last ten years the holiday has become strongly institutional. The role of the church has changed the least, but has become more explicit since the previous century. In the period of Estonia's regained independence Easter was reinstated as a public holiday accompanied with thematic media programmes and official acknowledgement. While the written press appears to have abandoned the role of promoting and informing their readers about calendar tradition, this role is increasingly taken over by the Internet and regional websites.

Different groups, including schools and 'institutions of memory' like museums and archives, which promote and remind the general public of older customs, have actively worked in the name of preserving the tradition. Egg fairs and displays, thematic performances, and other events organised by commercial enterprises and departments of culture diversify the celebration; the same is achieved by cultural activists of varying background, leaders of local societies, who attempt to innovate tradition and modify and revive older phenomena of family culture. In the situation of commercialisation Easter paraphernalia can be bought at stores, which has made the observing of customs more convenient and stifles initiative, but preserves its fundamental significance and continues to unite close relatives and acquaintances. Or, as a schoolboy has put it:

When we were little, the exciting quest began after dinner. The Easter bunny had visited and hidden eggs somewhere in the house. But the eggs weren't ordinary eggs, but of chocolate (there was also candy and chocolate bunnies). Whoever found some was allowed to eat it right away. It was such fun! We haven't played it anymore, because we are all grown up.

We also visit grandma and grandpa to wish them happy holidays and exchange Easter eggs. They also have a holiday dinner with holiday food on the table. This why on holidays we traditionally have dinner at their place. Either on Easter Sunday or some other holiday.

Holidays are very nice and enjoyable. Then you can spend time with your family, sometimes meet an old friend who has moved elsewhere and visits the place only once in a while.

(http://www.miksike.ee/docs/referaadid/minu_pere_traditsioonid_ranno.htm)

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Liminal Periods in the Udmurt Ritual Year

In our cultural space we usually imagine our lifetime as a journey. Wayfarer or pilgrim is common metaphor for us as travellers on the road of life. We have several stages or parts on our way and many mental milestones and turns for marking and separating them. Actually we can say that linear time of human life is also structured by the cyclic rhythms of year and day. These contain for us periods of different significance.

Holy periods

There are interim periods during a person's lifetime as well as during the calendar year, which are characterised by a state of indefiniteness or being without borders due to lack of everyday boundaries. These times are open to both good and evil and are close to the supernatural. Mental boundaries and landmarks are part of our system of orientation. Without them, space would be homogeneous; there would be no difference between familiar and unfamiliar, good and evil, sacred and profane places. It is the same with time. The expressions good times, hard times, crazy times, fast times, holiday time, everyday time, childhood, youth, manhood etc. contain obvious judgements and defining of limits. Transitions from one time, one period of life, one status to another are kind of crossroads or fork in the road in time. As we well know from the mythologies of different peoples, crossroads are liminal places in space where homeless or restless spirits gather and miscellaneous magic will be done (Puhvel 1989). If liminality causes ordinary orientation to be unable to function, then usual behaviour will also turn out to be ineffective or unsuitable. Specific times require specific behaviour. This is why throughout the ages people have carried out practices related to

various periods of time and various conditions of liminality which analytically are called rites of passage.

Liminal time in the Udmurt popular calendar

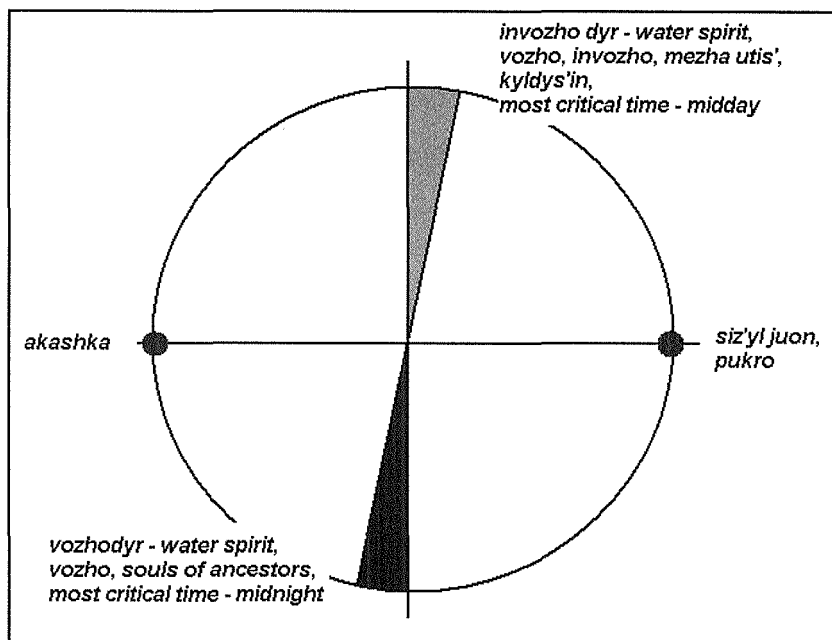
There are two main liminal periods in the Udmurt¹ folk calendar – the period after winter solstice is called *vozhodyr* (time of the *vozh*) or *uivozho* (night+*vozh*), and the period after summer solstice *invozh* *dyr* (time of the heavenly *vozh*) or *vozh* *poton tolez'* (month of *vozh* emerging).

The semantic field of the Old Permian word *vezha* enabled its use as an equivalent for the Christian concept 'holy/sacred': *ien vezha lov* – Holy Spirit, *vezha kuima* – Holy Trinity, *vezha lun* – holy day (Sunday) (Lytkin 1952: 156). In Modern Komi² language *vezh* also stands for 'holy/sacred', but also for 'cross': *vezha va* – holy water, *vezhai* – godfather (holy/cross father), *vezhan'* – godmother. *Vezhadyr* is yuletide (Russian *sviatki*), but the Komi-Zyrian *vezha* also means 'filthy/impure' and 'the Devil' (Gribova 1975: 110). The verb *vezhny* stands for 'exchange', *vezhöm* was the child exchanged by the Devil or evil spirit in the Komi mythology. In the Udmurt language *vozh* does not directly mean 'holy' – this particular meaning becomes evident in connection with yuletide, called *vozhodyr* among the Udmurts, as well as the Komi. The Udmurts have a different name for its summer counterpart – *invozh* *dyr* – (sky + *vozh* + time/tide). The *vozh*s are also demonic spirits related to the water spirit (Lintrop 2004: 8-11).

It is likely that the Permian *vezha* or *vozh* is originated in Finno-Ugric root associated with liminality, or existing somewhere in-between: **vajesh* > Early Permian *vezh-* > Udm. *vozh* 'crossroad, river mouth, either of two warps, the crossing of warps and woofs',

¹ Udmurts (in older literature Votyaks) are Finno-Ugric people of Permian language group (Uralo-Altai Family, Uralic languages, Finno-Ugric branch, Permian group). Their number in 2002 was 636 935. Most of them are living in Udmurt Republic of the Russian Federation; smaller groups are settled in Tatarian Republic, Bashkortostan, and Kirov Region.

² Finno-Ugric language, together with the Udmurt language it enters into Permian language group.



cf. *vozhen-vozhen* 'alternately, *vozhmin* 'in turns', perhaps also *invozh* (sky + *vozh*) 'horizon'; Komi *vezh, vizh* – *tui-vezh* 'crossroad', *vezhny* 'change'; Finnish *vaihe*, Estonian *vahe* 'difference, interval, gap' (SKES V: 1592–1593).

Finnish linguists have speculated on the relation of the Finnish *vaihe* and the Permian *vezh-*, but had they been acquainted with the Udmurt or Komi mythology, this would not have been a mere speculation. In the Komi compound and its Udmurt equivalent the first component signified liminality, the solstitial period, or the extraordinary transitional period between two ordinary periods.

Several restrictions were established for the summer and winter *vozho*-period. Russian scholar of 19th century Nikolai Pervukhin wrote: "The Votyaks of the Glazov county still hold a belief that during *vozho*-time it is forbidden to make noise, especially near a body of water: this is why people do not swim, or play singing games, or do the laundry in or near bodies of water in summer. In winter people do not do laundry in the river and avoid singing while crossing a bridge. During this winter period it is also forbidden to put out embers, like those falling from burning chips, by stomping... In the

Gyia, Lyp and Polom parishes the period of *vozho* was associated with the blooming of rye.³ Soiling water during this period was considered a grave sin – therefore it was forbidden to swim, wash the laundry or the dishes (even near a well), and even drive the herd into the river. The restrictions had to be followed especially around noon, when people tried to make no loud noises.’ (Pervukhin 1888, 1: 59-60).

Finnish researcher Uno Holmberg notes that violating the restriction caused suffering for the whole community, either in the form of storm or hail storm (Holmberg 1914: 174). Women in the village of Kuzebaev (Southern Udmurtia) have told the author that during the summer *invozh*o-period it was forbidden to work with wool or hemp and it was also forbidden to mow and pick flowers. In Kuzebaev this period ended on St. Peter’s Day (July 12th) with sacrificing ceremonies in great prayer house (*byd’z’ym kual*a) and holy grove (*lud*). On next day the haymaking time begins. The *invozh*o-period was often associated with the blooming of red catchfly or red campion (*invozh*o *s’as’ka*). In June 2003 some people of Varklet-Bodia village told: ‘*vös’*, *pe*, *voz’ vyle pote invozh*o *dyria’* – there is saying that during *invozh*o period faith⁴ walks on the meadows.

In our context significant observation is made by the Udmurt folklorist Irina Nurieva that unlike spring or autumn calendar festivities the acoustic code of summer and winter liminal times feasts excludes loud ritual singing (Nurieva 2004: 74).

The winter *vozho*-time was the main story-telling and riddle time for the Udmurts (Shkلياev 1989: 36). Even as late as in June 2002 three informants, living in the Udmurtskii-Karaul and Deby villages in the Krasnogorskoie region (Northern Udmurtia), claimed that the words for ‘riddle’ in local dialect are *vozho kyl* (*vozho* language/word/story) or *vozho mad’* (*vozho* speech/word/story)⁵. Even though N. Pervukhin assumed that the word *vozho mad’* may be interpreted as ‘the story of the winter *vozho* period’ (Pervukhin 1888,

³ The motif of water sprites walking in the fields during the blooming of rye is also known in Russian folklore (Krinichnaia 1994: 23).

⁴ *Vös’* means in the Udmurt language not only faith or religion, but also prayer, sacrifice.

⁵ The ethnic genre name for riddles, *vozho mad’*, is mentioned in Gavrilov 1880: 54, Pervukhin 1888, 3: 70; Wichmann (1901: 6-7). Pervukhin has used the same word for folktale. The more common modern term for riddle is *mad’is’kon kyl* or *mad’kyl*.

3: 70), and Tat'ana Vladykina seems to agree (Vladykina 1988: 11), this interpretation does not seem justified. On the one hand the word *vozho mad'* referred to the traditional, ancestral nature of the text (cf. *vyzhykyl*: fairy tale, legend – root/gender/tribe/generation + language /word/story), on the other hand the word may have indicated the existence of a special style for communicating with visitors at solstices, the artistic style of folk tales and riddles. There was direct restriction for riddle after the winter *vozho*-time: '*iö vyle sulton bere madis'kyny ug iara: pudo vera kare'* – riddling is forbidden after the Epiphany of Jesus:⁶ cow's udder fills with milk [before calve] (Vladykina 1988: 73).

Visitors of the liminal period

The Udmurts of the Glazov County (Northern Udmurtia) believed even in the end of 19th century that water spirits came into the villages and inhabited the saunas before Christmas. In the twilight they could be encountered on the street: 'During the summer *vozho dyr* it sleeps, but on winter solstice (before Christmas) it leaves the water and spends most of its time in saunas, though it could be met on the street. This is why no Votyak dares to walk alone on the streets without a burnt chip during Christmas.' (Pervukhin 1888, 1: 75).

The water spirits of the Christmas period were mostly called the *vozhos*. Pervukhin continues: 'From December 25th to January 6th small (no longer than a few archines tall), colourful, though relatively similar-looking devils (with tails and horns) walk on the streets of villages, settlements, even the town of Glazov. The Russians call them *kulish*, the Votyaks *vozho*. Like water spirits, the *vozho* fear even the smallest piece of burnt chip.... Those, who walk around without a chip, will be tripped up by the *vozho*.... For the same purpose they turn into a post, or a corner of a house... They may take a man to his neighbour's house instead of his own, and may make a woman drive other people's cattle to her own yard...' (Pervukhin 1888,1: 99-100).

⁶ January 19th, a feast day called *vozho kel'an* 'the sending off, or the departure of *vozho*' or *iö vlyln sylon/sulton* 'standing on ice'. See n. 7, below.

For the Udmurts, *vozhodyr* is the period for mumming. The most common name for mumming is *pörtmas'kon*, cf. *pörtmany* – ‘to change, to transform, to slander’. Other words for mumming are *pendzas'kon* (cf. *pen* ‘soot, ashes’, *pendzyny* ‘incinerate, to burn to ashes’, referring to the most common way of masking by smearing the face with soot or ashes), *vozhois'kon* (‘*vozhoin*g’; in several regions the mummers called themselves the *vozhos*) and *chokmorskön*. The latter derives from the word *chokmor* – wooden club (cf. Russian *chekmar* ‘wooden club, beater’ < *cheka* ‘wedge, pole’) and refers to the banging of house corners and floors with sticks and clubs, a characteristic activity for the mummers, which helped to repel evil spirits and diseases from the house and the village (Vladykin 1994: 227). The Udmurt Christmas mummers almost seem to have split personalities: the fact that they wore clothes inside out, had faces smeared with soot, men were wearing women’s clothes and women were wearing men’s clothes, indicate that they were visitors from the otherworld (where, according to the universal belief, things are the reverse to this world). The fact that they were believed to bring luck in herding relates them to the souls of ancestors, who were universally considered the primary bringers of herding luck in many cultures. And, last but not least, the mummers were addressed to as the *vozhos*, which were undoubtedly related to dead ancestors (Pl. 26).

The Udmurt Christmas mummers also functioned as repellers of evil forces. Modern Udmurt ethnologist Vladimir Vladykin mentions an account, describing how mummers ran along village streets, screaming loudly, banging against the corners of houses, and on the floors inside the houses, frightening the sauna spirits (*munchokuz'oos* Vladykin 1994: 226), though according to a fairly commonly held belief the *vozhos* inhabited the saunas. As I have indicated before, no clear distinction was made between the sauna fairies and the *vozhos*. The exorcistic function of the Udmurt Christmas mummers very likely originates in the traditions associated with the end of the solstitial period.

The winter *vozhos*-period ended on January 19⁷ (or the Epiphany of Jesus according to the Orthodox calendar) with a feast day called *vozhos kel'an* ‘the sending off, or the departure of *vozhos*’ or *iö vylyn*

⁷ January 6 by the old style.

sylon 'standing on ice'. On the night before January 6 the youth of the village walked from sauna to sauna, singing songs and 'listened to their fate' and told the *vozho*: '*pot tattys' mi'emesty-les!*' ('Leave us!'). The next morning all the men went to the river and banged on the ice with their axes and clubs, shouting: '*koshki tattys!*' ('Leave this place!' Pervukhin 1888, 2: 105-106). In some Besermian⁸ villages during the send-off *vozhos* were called back in summer for bringing good crop (Popova 2004, 1: 126).

Symmetry of liminality

In the mythologies of Permian and Ob-Ugrian peoples the communication between our world and underworld takes place mostly by river. Moving downstream has also the meaning of going towards the underworld and vice versa. Mansis⁹ named the soul component that left human being after the death and went to the land of the dead *longhal' mine is* – the soul going downstream. Water spirits were often demonized and connected with the underworld (cf. Mansi *vitkas* 'water spirit', Komi *kul* 'devil', *vasa* 'water spirit', *vakul* 'water devil'). In the Udmurt mythological geography downstream also means towards the land of the dead. So we can draw conclusion that winter liminal period *vozhodyr* was clearly connected with dead ancestors and evil spirits of the underworld, who were most active at nighttime (cf. *uivozho* – *nightvozho*). Most critical time of the day was midnight.

Summer liminal period was vice versa related to heaven. Restrictions connected with *invozho dyr* had to be followed especially around noon, when people tried to make no loud noises. In some places *invozho* was regarded as midday spirit. In Komi mythology *vezhadyr* is connected with the spirit named *pölödnica* – possibly connected with the Russian creature *poludnica* (midday spirit) – who lived or walked on rye field and was most active during the blooming time of rye (Holmberg 1914: 175). It is very interesting

⁸ Besermians – ethnic group in Northern Udmurtia. Besserman language is actually a dialect of Udmurt language, but their culture (especially the material one) is quite different.

⁹ Finno-Ugric people in West Siberia.

that in Russian mythology *poludnica* – woman in white – forces human being to compete with her in riddling, and tickles the loser to death. As we mentioned before one of the ethnic genre names for riddles is *vozho kyl* or *vozho mad'* (*vozho* language/word or speech/story). We also mentioned the saying that during *invozho* period faith walks on the meadows. There existed also belief that one of the main Udmurt deities, *kyldys'in* himself walked between rye fields and protected the ripening crop, but often the guardian spirit of crop fields had name *mezha ut'is'* – protector of headlands. Unlike to Russian *poludnica mezha ut'is'* reveals himself as man in white. We have to mention here that Slavonic *poludnica*, *polednice* is very close to water spirit. In Polesie (region partly in Belarus, Ukraine, Poland and Russia) one of the names for the water spirit was *poludenik* – midday spirit (Levkievskaja 1995: 339).

Here we have to remember that mythical world river connects all three worlds. So upstream also means towards the upper world, towards the dwellings of Gods, and supernatural beings connected with water may sometimes be messengers descending to the land of men.

In some opinions summer liminal time *invozho dyr* lasted till August 14th (August 1st by the old stile), and ended with the festivities named *vu vylyn sylon* (standing on water, cf. standing on ice after winter liminal period). In Besermian village Iunda was recorded next information: 'Then *vozho* is sent in the water. It happens in summer. In such a day people do swim last time. Pope submerges cross under the water. *Vozho* was already leaving.' (Popova 2004, 2: 113). During summer *vozhodyr* Besermians had similar restrictions as Udmurts: 'In summer also was *vozho*. It was forbidden to launder at daytime. Washing was permitted only early morning or late evening. They were afraid that hail will beat their crop.' For taking water from river or spring only wooden or bark vessels were used (Popova 2004, 2: 114).

Final comments

On the example of the Udmurt material we can see that there are two symmetrical liminal periods in the Udmurt folk calendar. Both their names are etymologically derived from the word associated with liminality, existing somewhere in-between. These periods differ

considerably from spring and autumn equinoctial times – there is remarkable connection with water, interdict from doing noise etc. Spring festivity *akashka* is characterized by loud ritual singing, horseback riding and swinging. In some places they contain initiation rites – prayers by the boys and girls reaching full maturity. Autumn festivities *siz'yl iuon* and/or *pukro* are also accompanied by loud singing and making noise during dancing. Spring and autumn equinoctial times were not expanded into long periods, but marked with concrete festivities. They were starting points for summer and winter halves of year. Liminal times were conversely long sacred periods with strong restrictions. It is probable that summer liminal period was originally dedicated to the heaven (upper world) and winter liminal period to the underworld (land of the dead). It was quite usual belief that after the winter *vozho*-period all *vozhos* went downstream.

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The Question of the Ritual Year and the Answers to It

As we begin our researches together in the working group on 'The Ritual Year' under the aegis of SIEF it seems more than ever necessary that we should address the basic question concerning the nature and identity of the ritual year. There are wonderful possibilities for looking at the rich detail of customary activities operating in a wide variety of cultures within Europe, and relating them to general principles of folklore and ethnology, but we shall be missing the unique opportunity offered by the existence of our working group if we do not put our micro-studies into the framework of a general understanding of the ritual year. This may appear obvious but it seems to me very likely that consensus is lacking at present, and this would be fully understandable since scholars have been working on quite different materials from a variety of perspectives. We now have a forum and a forum is a place for debate. Sometimes scholars, perhaps out of politeness, fail to engage with each other's views and talk past each other, as it were. And sometimes (and I have found this particularly true in relation to past studies of the ritual year) scholars express themselves with a belligerence that produces more heat than light. There is too much important work to be done for us to take either of these roads. Real debate is much more stimulating than the alternatives since it challenges each participant to review his or her starting position and to be prepared to clarify it and, if necessary, to modify it.

What is the ritual year? Throughout Europe over many centuries there has been a layer of Christian liturgy and this is, of course, worthy of study in its own right, but it is clearly parasitic on what preceded it and the preceding free-standing ritual year is of special interest and is particularly elusive when we try to pin it down. This

is why, in my title, I speak of 'answers' to the question 'What is the ritual year?' rather than any one answer. I look forward to debate, expecting that some scholars will wish to emphasise the agricultural year, or the pastoral year, or the astronomical year, or some other *formulation*. *My own approach emphasises analogical thinking and takes the human life cycle as a key to the understanding of the patterning of the year and I shall develop this idea shortly.*

Other supplementary questions that can be asked are whether it is actually possible to locate an underlying coherence at all and, if so, what historical and geographical contexts would embrace it most fully. These questions may have different answers depending on the scale of the enquiry. It is perfectly legitimate for scholars to study the calendar ritual sequence within national boundaries, for example, or within a particular town or parish or village or workplace or household or within the experience of an individual. We would find, I think, that whatever potential dissonances can be identified by the enquirer they have often been resolved at the community or individual level and that there is a coherence of a kind. If dissonances remain, they are likely to be the focus of political or religious tensions so that there may be points of the year that have a particular explosive potential, and this may serve to remind us that sometimes in our quiet scholarly pursuits we may be handling dynamite. Although we cannot hope in the short term to defuse tensions arising from different world views and associated factors related to wealth and power, I am utopian enough to think that in the long term we could make a significant contribution to humanity's self-understanding and ability to draw out the common elements that may give coherence to its total value system.

To go forward successfully, we may have to look back and insert some of the missing pieces in the jigsaw of our cultural heritage. We have been subject, I think, to a culturally induced selective forgetfulness, and have been discouraged from asking the far-ranging questions that we now urgently need the answers to. Why is there no recognised current theory about the ritual year? Perhaps some people here may tell me that there is, and I shall be happy to hear it and to take the discussion forward from that point. But it seems likely that one area that we have to explore is the history of ideas from the eighteenth century onwards, and in particular the ideas of about a hundred years ago that are so close to us that some scholars are still defining the field in terms of reaction against it

and implicitly or explicitly denying the possibility of comprehending any overall coherence. It seems to me that it is easier in the present climate with its emphasis on cultural studies for scholars to reflect historically on recently past eras than to move into a fresh field that must seem totally speculative in its early stages, and I should emphasise that historical studies will be very welcome.

However, I hope some scholars will begin to enter and assess the new theoretical field developed through the exploration of traditional cosmology. This gives the necessary depth and range to the study of the ritual year as one aspect of a structured social network. The ritual year has been one of the most resilient elements and is or has been accessible through the fieldwork of contemporary or recent times, which gives it a magnificent abundance and conveys an immediate sense of its human value. Without roots, though, we cannot understand it fully, and, as no one can point to its origin, we must move out of history and have to address questions of how to reach into prehistory, as I have been doing in positing an underlying structure of the life stages of youth, maturity and old age behind the three functions that Georges Dumézil picked up in the historical records of the Indo-Europeans in relation to the social groups of warriors, cultivators and priests. But diachronic study, which is necessarily speculative at this stage in our enquiries, is not the only approach possible. We can co-ordinate our activities by adopting a reference set, which has the potential for allowing widely disparate materials to be seen relative to a fixed sequence. This is not necessarily a standard. It might become so if it proves useful, but a reference set can be quite arbitrary. We do not have to decide in advance if it is supported by sufficient evidence. It is a heuristic tool.

And now I will lay out some aspects of my own approach which, as I mentioned before, emphasises analogical thinking and takes the human life cycle as a key to the understanding of the patterning of the year. Although analogy can take us to the extreme reaches of time and deal with whole eras or time itself at the large scale and with seconds or less at the small scale, our basic series of analogies has the human life cycle as the largest in scale and works down through the year and the month to the 24-hour day as the smallest. I suggest that we will find it useful to be aware of all four of these levels. In establishing a reference set, we have two tasks. The first is to become familiar with the patterning of these examples of the

overall cyclical sequence, and the second is to categorise the divisions of the cycle.

I will start with the levels of the day and the year for I am very happy to say that the analogies here have already been worked out and published by the distinguished Russian scholar Nikita I. Tolstoy (1923-1996) who was the founder of the Moscow School of Ethnolinguistics. He discusses the analogies in an article that was published in Russian in 1997 and in English, with the title 'The Magic Circle of Time' in 2005 (Tolstoy 1997, 2002 [2005]). I owe my knowledge of it to Irina Sedakova who drew on it in Edinburgh last year in her paper at the Traditional Cosmology Society's ritual year conference which preceded the inaugural meeting of our own ritual year working group.

Tolstoy, after detailing the ethnographic data from the Slavic world and presenting the information in diagrammatic form, then observes:

Analysing the fore-mentioned data as a whole we cannot fail to notice the strict isomorphism of the scheme of the 24-hour-cycle division into periods and the scheme of the year division into periods. One can only admire this isomorphism.... We can see from the scheme that **night** correlates with **winter**, **day** with **summer**, **midnight** with **Christmas**, **noon** with **The Day of John the Baptist**, **sunrise** with **Annunciation** and **sunset** with **The Exaltation of the Cross**. Noon divides the day, and midnight divides the night. The whole 24-hour day is divided by sunrise and by sunset into day and night and, in exactly the same way, the year is divided by the Annunciation and the Day of the Exaltation of the Cross, or St George's Day and St Dimiter's Day. The point of special interest in these two schemes is the isomorphism of the periods after midnight in the diurnal circle and after Christmas in the year circle.

This is a rich statement and I shall take the various points of it in turn and develop my own diagram (Pl. 25) in dialogue with it.

The whole diurnal period is divided into day and night and correspondingly the whole annual period is divided into summer and winter. We shall later find it useful to apply colour terms to these periods and I shall at this stage use red for the summer half and white for the winter half. Day / night and summer / winter are polar opposites and in previous studies I have called this particular opposition the B-axis polarity (Lyle 1990a) with day and summer

being at the positive pole. The divisions between day and night are unambiguously marked by sunrise and sunset but the case is different for the year where clearly nature has a helping hand from culture in sharply distinguishing summer from winter. This is apparent even in Tolstoy's summary statement where there are alternatives drawn from different Slavonic traditions; the summer half runs either from Annunciation (25 March) to the Exaltation of the Cross (14 October) or from St George's Day (23 April) to St Dimiter's Day (26 October).¹ Similarly, on a visit to Estonia three years ago I was impressed by a museum exhibit in Tartu which showed the halves of the year with summer running from St George's Day (23 April) to St Michael's Day (29 September), and it seemed to me then rather striking and appropriate for the divisions between the two halves of the year to be guarded by the two warrior saints. Up to this point in the discussion, all the markers have been expressed in terms of the Christian calendar but Tolstoy's study is not confined to these terms. Within the Slavonic world there are two very strong ascribed indications of the halves of the year that owe nothing to Christianity, one in the sky and the other on and below the earth. The first relates to the sun and, in its most extreme form, speaks of there being two suns, a winter sun and a summer sun, with the change between them taking place at the marker days in the Christian calendar. On these days also, the snakes are said to change location, going into hibernation under the earth for the winter half and emerging onto the earth's surface for the summer. I had last heard of the two suns at a conference held in Edinburgh in 2001 when Patricia Lysaght mentioned, in the Irish context, the belief that the big sun is in the sky from Bealtaine (1 May and its eve) to Samhain (1 November and its eve) and that the little sun replaces it in the winter half of the year. There are no snakes in Ireland – St Patrick is said to have banished them – but in another area of the Celtic world, Galicia in Spain, snakes are regarded as important indicators of the two periods of the year with a summer part running from May to the end of September, when the snakes are visible and dangerous, and a winter part running from October to the end of April, when they remain hidden and are not to be

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¹ The Russian dates mentioned in this paper are according to the Julian calendar.

feared.² We can see that, while there is a strong sense of the year being divided into summer and winter halves, the actual dates are variable. The day, with its clear markers of sunrise and sunset, is the more explicit partner in the analogy between the day and the year as divided along the B axis.

Tolstoy also indicates that noon divides the day and midnight divides the night while correspondingly St John's Day (24 June, midsummer) divides the summer and Christmas (25 December, midwinter) divides the winter. Since we cannot observe the sun at midnight, the year with its solstices is the more explicit of the two partners in the analogy between the day and the year when divided into halves in this other way, which I have called the A-axis division. But this A-axis division is even more obvious in the case of the lunar cycle and so I shall now introduce the moon into the discussion. We can have halves of the lunar cycle along the B axis with divisions at the first quarter and the last quarter giving periods of maximum and minimum moonlight corresponding respectively to day and night and summer and winter, but the sharper polarity in the lunar cycle is that of the waxing and waning halves which is along the A-axis divide. This is to say that the moon growing from new to full corresponds to the half of the year with increasing light from midwinter to midsummer and that the moon decreasing from full to old corresponds to the half of the year from midsummer to midwinter. The first of the two periods mentioned, that of increasing light, is at the positive pole. Full moon corresponds to St John's Day in the year and to noon in the day and the period of dark moon corresponds to Christmas and midnight.

I shall now develop Tolstoy's observation concerning 'the isomorphism of the periods after midnight in the diurnal circle and after Christmas in the year circle'. Within the Church calendar, the special period is the set time of The Twelve Days of Christmas that runs from Christmas (25 December) to Epiphany (6 January). The

² Mandiales-Castro 2004. I first became aware of the importance of the snake as a seasonal marker in Galicia when Manolo Mandianes-Castro gave a paper on 'Le calendrier et le serpent en Galice (Espagne)' at the Traditional Cosmology Society's conference on 'Calendars' held in Orkney on 20-22 June 1993. Patricia Lysaght's observations on the two suns were made at the Traditional Cosmology Society's conference on 'Beginnings of the Year and of Seasons' held in Edinburgh on 3 March 2001.

period is strongly marked by ritual activity and one widely known belief is that it is possible to prognosticate the weather of each of the months of the coming year by observing the weather on each of the days. This belief holds whenever exactly the twelve days occur for it should be noted that folk calendars have some flexibility. For example, I have been told of an extremely rich and intricate means of foretelling the weather in the year ahead employed in Malta in the days running from the 13th of December.³ In general terms, we are dealing with a special period of twelve days in the vicinity of midwinter, which of course falls within the winter half of the year. It is of the greatest interest that the Slavic evidence indicates that there was also a special period within the night half of the diurnal cycle, which could be called 'deaf night' as the twelve days could be called 'the deaf days'. This ran from midnight until cock-crow, which is the time of first light as distinguished from sunrise. The Slavic evidence adduced by Tolstoy does not take any account of the period from last light (as distinguished from sunset) up to midnight, but I have argued (Lyle 2000) that it is the period of full darkness between last light and first light that corresponds to the twelve-day period in the year and it may be noted that in the Slavic world the twelve days were thought of in two halves – first the sacred evenings and then the fearful evenings – so that a balanced pair of times before and after midnight would provide a match, although, as I said, Tolstoy gives no evidence for characterising the time before midnight in a special way. The time of total darkness in the diurnal cycle corresponds to the period of the moon's invisibility between the last sight of the old crescent and the first sight of the new. The sense of a gap is very strong in the case of the lunar cycle and it appears to correspond to the period of death perceived as a gap between dying and being born. In studying the life cycle, it seems that we have to deal with this time of invisibility as well as with observable human life.

I earlier characterised the summer and day half (and the period of maximum moonlight) by the colour red and the winter and night half (and the period of minimum moonlight) by the colour white, but we can now see that the winter half is split in two by the special

³ I am indebted to George Mifsud-Chircop and Tony Cardona for discussing this matter with me.

time of the twelve days corresponding to full darkness and dark moon, and the parts on either side of the split can now be identified as the seasons spring and winter (both within the winter half) and given the separate colours, white for spring and black for winter. In Figure 1, the two pairs of halves discussed by Tolstoy are presented on either the B axis or the A axis. The special period attached to the A axis in the winter half is also shown and the new and old moons indicate the positions in the lunar cycle.

The white and black of winter form a triad with the red of summer and enable us to enter the Dumézilian system which is remarkably valuable for the level of our analogical series that relates to human life. I say remarkably valuable since the theories of Georges Dumézil about Indo-European conceptual and social structuring have not appeared to have a great deal to do with life-cycle concerns. The matter is complex and I cannot enter fully into it here, but I have developed the idea, first put forward in any detail by the Irish scholar, Kim McCone, that Dumézil's triad of functions of physical force, prosperity and the sacred relates more fundamentally to the life stages of young men, mature men and old men than to the social groups he mentions of warriors, cultivators and priests (Lyle 1997, 2004). Since males enter the posited age-grade system on initiation, young boys are disregarded but the old men overlap with them as the system cycles through time in such a way as to place the old men in the first position in the set at the time of spring, as shown in Pl. 27. My theory is that the transitions between the life stages (death and birth, initiation and marriage) are being reflected and celebrated during the course of the ritual year (at midwinter, the beginning of summer and the beginning of winter) and happily this theory is open to detailed examination and testing in the light of the results of fieldwork in the past and present.

I cannot conclude without mentioning the point that the Dumézilian triad expressed by the colours white, red and black appears to be predominantly male and that the female is expressed in a different way as an undivided totality that can take the form of the queen, and that it is her marriage that is celebrated at the remaining point of the quartered year at midsummer. The beginning of winter is also marked by the celebration of marriage and both these events bind society together. The other two transition points at midwinter and the beginning of summer have elements of conflict, both well known in the ethnological literature. In the first, the dead

have to be driven out after a time of carnival, and in the second there is a battle between winter and summer (Lyle 1990b, 2000).

The analogies presented here do not form a complete statement. We can build on this reference set and add such things as agricultural and pastoral activities, which will vary widely according to climate and location. As we work with the individual cases in our experience we can, however, relate them to the reference set and, where there are differences, we can note them as differences without needing to come to perhaps premature conclusions about diachronic order and hence direction of modification. I believe that we have here a valuable heuristic tool that could enable scholars to advance the study of the ritual year in full communication with each other in the years ahead.

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International Considerations of the April Fool*

The first of April, some do say,
Is set apart for All Fools' Day.
But why the people call it so,
Nor I, nor they themselves do know.
But on this day are people sent
On purpose for pure merriment.

Poor Robin's Almanac (1760)

As I sift through childhood memories of holidays and family traditions, the first day of April comes to mind. I can see my mother, a reserved and proper New Englander, watching my father dip into the sugar bowl and put a spoonful of salt into his coffee at breakfast. 'April fool!' she says, as he tastes the bitter surprise. My brother and I cannot contain our mirth as we watch him fumble towards the sink, desperate for a quick gulp of water. 'Priscilla!' he says, shaking his head as he refills the glass. 'You did it again.'

On any other day, for my mother to substitute salt for sugar and wait for her husband to begin his day as a fool would be absurd. Quiet and patient, she was not known as a prankster. But on that one day and that day alone, this unexpected change in her behaviour was perfectly acceptable.

* A longer version of this paper was published in *Western Folklore* 61/2, Summer 2002, 132-51, under the title 'Purposeful Deceptions of the April Fool.' Copyright 2002, California Folklore Society. This paper for The Ritual Year Conference is printed here with permission of the editor of *Western Folklore*.

The gowk, April fish, and other customs

In North America, Europe, Iceland, New Zealand, and Australia, the first day in April is an unofficial holiday that is marked by pranks and lies. It is a time when untruths are expected. April Fools' Day is also known as All Fools' Day and April Noddy. Addison and Steel's *Spectator* describes April 1st as 'the merriest day in the year in England' (1760, 1: 47), presumably referring to the merriment of conducting April Fools' pranks. In the north of England and in Scotland, April 1st is called Huntigowk Day and it is the day of the fool's errand. A person is sent off to deliver a letter. When the recipient reads the letter, he or she tells the naive deliverer to take it to someone else who lives – always – farther down the road. The letter actually reads, 'It's the first of April! Hunt the gowk another mile.' Eventually the gowk, which means a cuckoo or simpleton, is sent back to where the delivery began, a place where friends have gathered to shout 'April gowk! April gowk!'¹ (Santino 1995: 100; Dundes 1989: 99). An April gowk text collected in northeastern Scotland by Peter and Iona Opie cautions each person who reads the letter to keep a straight face and thus guard the joke: 'Don't you laugh, and don't you smile; Hunt the gowk another mile' (Opie and Opie 1959: 245; Dundes 1989: 99).² In Iceland the April Fools' Day prank is only valid if the victim can be tracked into taking three steps (or, alternatively, crossing three thresholds) before realizing the hoax (Björnsson 1995: 110). In the Orkney Islands, off the northeast coast of Scotland, children enjoy a 'Huntie Goak' day of fools' errands on April 1st. On the second of April, according to Orkney scholar Ernest Marwick, they celebrate Tailing Day, when they can pin a tail on anyone they please (Marwick 2000: 108).

In France and Italy the term April Fish (*poisson d'Avril*; *pesce d'Aprile*) refers to a wide range of ritual pranks.³ The fish, or fool, is

¹ From 'the gowk' (the fool or half-witted person) comes 'to give the gowk to,' meaning 'to befool.' Similarly, 'the gowk's errand' is the fool's errand, profitless undertaking (Oxford English Dictionary, Compact Edition, 1979: 1182).

² The same fool's errand has been documented in Ireland, though the term 'gowk' is absent (Danaher 1972: 84).

³ In France, the term *recevoir un poisson d'avril* refers to the current recipient of a prank. Discussions of the prominence of the fish in April 1st customs leads to consideration of the zodiac sign of Pisces, the fish, which includes the first of April (Spicer 1958: 35) and to documentation of the fish as a phallic symbol (Dundes 1989: 102).

often marked by the sign of a fish (Dundes 1989: 102). Confectioners' windows display chocolate fish on April 1st, and friends anonymously send each other humorous postcards imprinted with pictures of fish (Spicer 1958: 34-35). According to folklorist Jack Santino, '*Poisson d'Avril* is still the current term in France, and there the fish is to April Fools' Day what the shamrock is to Saint Patrick's Day – the primary symbol of the holiday' (1995: 97). French school children delight in the chance to fool their classmates and teachers on the first of April, taping cutouts of fish on the backs of their clothing. On this day alone the April 'fish,' or 'sucker' is indeed caught by a patient and ensnaring prankster, and put into an awkward situation, like 'a fish out of water.'⁴ Folklorist Alan Dundes notes that the fish prank is also practiced in Holland, where a paper herring is affixed to the back of the fool's clothing (1989: 102). Further north, Swedish pranksters recite the following verse on Första April:

April, April, you silly fish,
I can fool you as I wish. (Liman 1985: 71)

Similarities can be found between April Fools' customs and those associated with the Hindu Festival of Holi (or Huli) in India. Once an ancient fertility rite at the beginning of spring, Holi is a five-day festival that includes bonfires and outdoor dancing. On the final day of the festival, March 31st, the unsuspecting are sent on fool's errands (Motif J2346; also Motifs J2300-2349 Gullible fools), just as they are on April Fools' Day (Brand 1905: 12; Hatch 1878: 315; Harper 1957: 93; Santino 1995: 100). The spirit of Holi is to make people ridiculous (Thomas 1971: 7). According to Brijendra Nath Sharma of the National Museum in New Delhi, the Festival of Holi falls 'when the season is neither cold nor hot and the fields and trees bloom with different types of enchanting flowers. People feel themselves happy, gay and healthy.' Sharma gives this description Holi's final day of festivities:

... From early morning till noon, people irrespective of caste and creed amuse themselves by throwing handfuls of coloured powder on their friends and relatives. Or they spray coloured water with sprayers. Boys and persons of the lower castes come out in the

⁴ Observation of Catherine Jonet, French-American graduate student at Indiana State University. Interview, May 24, 2001.

streets and throw coloured water through syringes, using at the same time, abusive and obscene language. But the elderly people gently put red powder of the faces of each other. The damage to one's clothes is taken in good spirit. (Sharma 1978: 67)

One exception to the time of year for the holiday can be found in Mexico, where All Fools' Day falls on December 28. Here it focuses on the borrowing of objects. If anyone is foolish enough to lend personal possessions on that day, the borrower is not obliged to return them. Instead the lender receives a poem that identifies him or her as a fool (Ickis 1970: 75). All other practices of All Fools' Day occur consistently in early April, a time when the weather is changing from winter to spring. Historical considerations of All Fools' pranks take us back to the year 1564, when Charles IX of France adopted the Gregorian Calendar, moving the New Year from March 25 to January 1. Presumably those who forgot about this change or who refused to go along with it were referred to as April fools (Cohen and Coffin 1987: 147; Hatch 1978: 315; MacDonald 1992: 223; Santino 1995: 97).⁵ Under the Julian calendar, French people had visited each other and exchanged gifts (*étrennes*) on April 1, the final day of the New Year's celebrations. As one can imagine, change of this magnitude came slowly, partly because communication was slow, and mainly because of the popular attachment to tradition. Eventually those conservatives who objected to the change of New Year's Day to January 1 were ridiculed with April 1 visits that mocked the original ceremony of visiting and through the exchange of foolish gifts (Christianson 2000: 248; Spicer 1958: 35).

⁵ Not all of these sources agree on the date of the proclamation of Charles IX (1564) as the key date for consideration. The year 1582, in which Pope Gregory XIII decreed that the new calendar be adopted, is also mentioned. Compliance to the Gregorian Calendar came about slowly, with much confusion as a result. England did not adopt the new calendar (Gregorian) until 1752. Japan adopted it more than 100 years later, 1873, and Turkey held out until 1927. Dates recorded in the Julian Calendar were marked O.S. for Old Style, and those in the Gregorian Calendar were marked N.S. for New Style.

Nature as pranster

Spring, the dominant seasonal theme of All Fools' Day, is an essential part of its definition. Although the origin of the word April is uncertain, the most plausible theory is that *Aprilis*, the Roman name for the month, is derived from the Latin verb *aperire*, meaning 'to open' (Christianson 2000: 246; Dundes 1989: 108). The dead of winter is behind us and we open ourselves to what lies ahead. The weather changes dramatically with April's 'opening'; the earth is in transition from one major season to another, and nothing is certain. The sun may shine warmly on April 1st, yet it may just as likely be a day of snow showers.⁶ Alan Dundes notes that the other holiday that celebrates pranks and deceptions, Halloween, also occurs at a point of dramatic seasonal change from fall to winter. While ghoulish trick-or-treaters scurry through dark streets on October 31st, the winds that swirl around them usher in winter's chill. Dundes concludes that the occurrence of pranks at a time of calendrical transitions from death to life, or cold to warmth (April Fools' Day) *and* at a time of transitions from life to death, or warmth to cold (All Souls' Day) is not coincidental (1989: 108-09; Siporin 1994: 52). At a time when the weather is wild and unstable, our human society plans and executes its own celebrations of the absurd.

Verbal and physical pranks

Although some April Fool's pranks are verbal (such as oral exchanges, letters containing falsehoods and exaggerations, letters written backwards that can only be read in a mirror, or forged memos in an office), many of them are physical. The fool will have a fish or a note ('Kick Me') taped to the back of his shirt; the fool will look down when warned, 'Look, your shoelace is untied,' or will rush to the window at the prankster's call, 'Look, a flock of geese!' The fool

⁶ A colleague in the English Department at Indiana State University, Matthew Brennan, recalls a childhood experience of the weather playing an 'April Fools' joke.' The family attended church services on April 1st. When they exited the church at the close of the service, they found that an unexpected snowstorm had made an April Fools' surprise (Interview, May 24, 2001).

will stoop to pick up a coin that has been glued to the pavement; or he may try to kick a hat that has a brick concealed underneath it. The fool will pick up a coffee sack that is filled with dirt, the fool will add salt instead of sugar to a favorite hot drink; the fool will find his or her clothing turned inside out, or the fool will arrive late to class after a prankster roommate has set back the clock. Over time, pranks adapt to the vagaries of style. William Hone's 1826 publication, *The Every-day Book*, notes how men's shoe preferences might change from buckled shoes to laced shoes, or to boots, yet the purpose of the prank (innocent embarrassment of the victim) would remain intact:⁷

Thirty years ago, when buckles were worn in shoes, a boy would meet a person in the street with – 'Sir, if you please, you shoe's *unbuckled*,' and the moment the accosted individual looked towards his feet, the informant would cry – 'Ah, you April Fool!' Twenty years ago, when buckles were wholly disused, the urchin-cry was – 'Sir, your shoe's *untied*.' ... Now, when neither buckles nor strings are worn, because in the year 1825 no decent man 'Has a *shoe* to his foot,' the waggery of the day is – 'Sir, there's something out of your pocket.' 'Where?' 'There!' 'What?' 'Your hand, sir-Ah! You April fool!' (Hone 1828, 1: 410)

'Sir, there's something out of
your pocket.'
'Where?'
'There!'
'What?'
'Your hand, sir – Ah! You April
fool!'

(Hone 1828)



⁷ Hone also notes that in Lisbon, Portugal, people 'play the fool.' He writes: 'It is thought very jocose to pour water on any person who passes, or to throw powder in his face; but to do both is the perfection of wit' (1826, 1: 412).

Assessing the prank

According to Hone, 'one subject of diversion is to send people on errands and expeditions that are to end in disappointment, and raise a laugh at the expense of the persons sent.... The laugh is always in proportion to the trouble given.' In other fools' errands, the victim is sent for a left-handed screwdriver or wrench, a board-stretcher, a stick with one end, a bucket of striped paint, a bucket of steam, pigeon milk, a jar of elbow grease, a book called *The Life of Adam's Father* or *The Adventures of Eve's Mother*, or a fallopian tube; after receiving a false alarm, he or she will run anxiously to the police station to pay a nonexistent fine. An English girl recalls the following prank that involved both verbal and physical tricks:

We played a trick on a boy aged about six. We told him to ask the man in the shop how much the long stand was and he said that he did not sell furniture, 'but if you would like a long stand you can stand there as long as you like.' (Opie and Opie 1959: 245)

George Mifsud-Chircop of the University of Malta notes that two prominent Maltese April Fools' pranks are to ask someone to 'go and buy eel's feet' or to 'go and bring back St Michael's wings,' clearly impossible tasks (Mifsud-Chircop 2005). According to Maltese scholar Vincenzo Busuttil, '... the favourite jest in Malta, on the first day of April, is to send someone upon an errand for something grossly nonsensical.... When the person falls into the snare, the term *L-Ewwel ta' April*' (the first of April), which amounts to 'April Fool' is applied with laughter' (Busuttil 1896: 49-50).

The April Fools' prank is bound temporally, and reminders of the boundary are well understood by pranksters and fools alike. It is generally understood that pranks on April 1st are best accomplished in the morning, when potential fools are less apt to be aware of the date. When appropriate pranking time has ended, you run the risk of becoming a fool yourself if your tricks continue (Palmer and Lloyd 1972: 132; Hole 1976: 22). Folklorist Brian Sutton-Smith notes that New Zealand school children adhere strictly to the 'code' of completing their pranks before the noon hour. The child who pulls a prank too late is more of a fool than the intended victim:⁸

April Fool's Day is past
And you're the April Fool at last,

Four farthings make a penny
And you're a bigger fool than any. (Sutton-Smith 1981: 209)

While the April Fools' prank usually focuses on an individual, it can also deceive many people at once. In 1860 an elaborate hoax caught several hundred London dignitaries. They all received invitations to watch the ceremony of Washing the White Lions at the Tower of London. Admission, according to the invitation card, would be by the White Gate. There was, of course, no White Gate, nor any white lions (Palmer and Lloyd 1972: 133). One of the earliest recorded examples of this hoax is recorded in *Drakes News-Letter* for April 2, 1698, where 'a number of people received invitations to see the lions washed at the Tower of London on April 1st, and duly went there for that purpose' (Hole 1976: 21). Alan Dundes cites a London *Evening Star* prank in which the paper ran an announcement on March 31, 1864, stating that a grand exhibition of donkeys would be held the following day at the Agricultural Hall in Islington. 'Early on the morning of April 1st, a large crowd assembled outside the doors of the hall only to discover that they themselves were the donkeys' (1989: 103; Wight 1927: 40). In 1948 the April 3 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post* featured a surreal Norman Rockwell painting that contained dolls with Rockwell's face, three animals contained one body, quill pens with erasers, a plant growing on a red-hot 'April Fools' stove, and even Rockwell's signature in reverse. In 1977 the London *Guardian* printed an article on the nonexistent Island of San Seriffe; its name was a spoof of 'sans serif,' the well-known designation of unadorned typefaces (MacDonald 1992: 223; Knightly 1986: 45; de la Cour 1995: 37-40). Comments about that article continue to this day, as do mock contests for the best photograph of San Seriffe.⁹

In 1957 the British TV show 'Panorama' introduced its viewers to a family of Swiss spaghetti farmers. The show depicted members of the family 'harvesting' strands of spaghetti from 'spaghetti trees.'

⁸ Other examples of the rhyme are found in England and Scotland, documented by Peter and Iona Opie: 'April Fool's Day's past and gone, You're the fool for making one' (1959: 246-247).

⁹ See Letters to the Editor, Monday April 5, 1999, for recent examples of responses to the 1977 editorial hoax in the *Guardian*.

After the broadcast, hundreds of people phoned the BBC, asking for tips on how to grow their own crops of a food that had only recently been introduced into standard British cuisine. In April 1985, *Sports Illustrated* published a story about a phenomenal pitcher, Sidd Finch, who reportedly could throw a ball with pinpoint accuracy at 168 mph. Although many readers thought that Sidd Finch really existed, he was a fiction created for April Fools' Day by writer George Plimpton.¹⁰

Pranks on the internet

April Fools' pranks on the internet abound. Many of them are connected to reports of widespread computer pranking ('Creators admit Unix operating system is an elaborate hoax') or outrageous behavior of famous people ('Bill Gates running for President'). These stories often contain a disclaimer: 'Attention! Warning! This web page is either a SATIRE or a PARODY. This web page contains HUMOR. This web page is a JOKE.'¹¹ Some users fall for the hoaxes nonetheless, with unpleasant e-mail exchanges as a result.

So great is the perceived power of April Fools' Day that some people refuse to embark on important journeys, get married, or start up a new business on April 1st. Some cite historical fact to support their apprehensions, such as April 1, 1912, the day that R.M.S. Titanic completed her builders' sea trials and was declared ready for her maiden voyage to New York (Lord 1986: 33);¹² or the famous April 1, 1810, marriage of Napoleon I of France to his second wife, Marie-Louise of Austria. For this, presumably, his subjects called him 'April fish' (Hatch 1978: 316; Hone 1826, 1: 409).

¹⁰ See www.museumofhoaxes.com for excellent summaries of the Top Ten April Fools' Day Hoaxes of All Time.

¹¹ See <http://www.2meta.com/april-fools/> for this April Fools' Day hoax.

¹² Another perplexing issue related to the R. M. S. Titanic is the short amount of time devoted to the sea trials for the ship, a mere 36 hours. The trials began on March 31 and ended on April 1. Trials for ships with comparable dimensions, such as the S. S. United States, took two weeks (Christie, Interview. May 23, 2001).

Symbolic inversion and gender

Fish or fool, individual or group, April Fools' Day quickly moves beyond merriment to the question of why we create and act out such elaborate deceptions. The ritual pranks that so many of us conduct, year after year, are good examples of symbolic inversion. As defined by Barbara Babcock, this is 'any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values, and norms' (Babcock 1978: 13-35). Although symbolic inversion occurs within the course of jokes, parodies, and pranks year round, it is on April Fools' Day that it can be keenly anticipated. To assume an alternative role in our social groups, our families, our occupational groups, provides a sense of power. For one day, we are free from the restrictions of our roles in everyday life. The greater the distance between the prankster and the fool, whether in age or professional position or perceived social status, the greater the victory for the prankster. Children who have been fooled by their parents on April Fools' Day look forward to playing pranks on their parents in the future. They want to 'get them back.' French school children get much more pleasure from taping a fish to a teacher's back than they do 'catching' only a classmate (Jonet 2001). One of my former students, Jack Trump, took special delight in playing an April Fools' prank on a resident assistant (R.A.), a student who had authority over a floor of undergraduate students. The prank involved taking the R.A.'s couch and rug as 'hostages' and photographing them outside of several Terre Haute restaurants and gas stations.

Issues of gender also inform the April Fools' Day prank. A girl can test the patience and fidelity of a boyfriend; a wife can test those same traits in her husband. Another Indiana State University student, Amy Watson, told me about constructing an elaborate lie about the unavailability of tickets for a rock concert, a concert that she knew her boyfriend wanted very much to attend. As she informed him, several times, that his tickets could not be obtained, she watched his behaviour. Although he was frustrated, he 'passed the test' and stayed relatively calm (Watson 2001).

Not all pranks end well, however. Taking the joke too far may lead to bitterness, an emotion seldom associated with April Fools' Day pranks. Indiana State University student Stevanne Steadman recalls a prank that turned sour. Smarting from a recent breakup

with her boyfriend, an acquaintance of Stevanne's called the boyfriend to announce that she was pregnant. As one can imagine, the false news caused tremendous anxiety (Steadman 2001).

Boundaries of tradition

The April Fools' Day prank, verbal or physical, inverted or gender-sensitive, derives its power from the moment of recognition of the prank. For the prank to succeed, it must first be plausible enough to be taken as 'truth,' and then, with the climactic recitation of the customary phrase ('April Fool!' 'April Gowk!' 'April Fish!'), be revealed as 'fiction.' In this aspect alone the April Fools' prank is distinguished from other pranks, such as those commonly advanced on Halloween night, in which a revelatory phrase is noticeably absent. In many cases, people who open their door to the cry, "Trick or treat!" do not know the pranksters who stand before them, nor would they likely know who moved their lawn ornaments or soaped their windows later in the evening. Tradition does not require that Halloween pranksters reveal themselves – or explain their pranks, whereas revelation or explanation is a key part of April Fools' Day activities.

The April Fools' Day prankster thus operates within a clear behavioral framework. He or she must succeed in bringing one, several, or many people into an unreal world – for a few seconds, for a moment, or longer. The boundaries of this unreal world are determined by practicality, by tradition, and by emotional concern. As we know, a prank attempted early in the day is more likely to catch an unsuspecting fool. It is often the understanding of pranksters and fools alike that pranks should not be attempted past the noon hour, and certainly never past the day of April 1st. Further, the prank should not extend to the point that it hurts the fool, physically or emotionally. Pranks conducted within these boundaries are 'good pranks,' and those that go beyond them run the risk of failure or, at worst, damaged relations between the prankster and the fool. In most cases, the prankster and the fool know each other, and count on the delightful revenge of 'getting each other back.' In cases where one or a few pranksters fool large numbers of people, feelings of anger and resentment are more likely to occur, as there is no relationship to protect. The moment of revelation, so crucial to

the resolution of the prank, is best conducted in person. This is the climax of the April Fools' hoax, the verbal realignment of all that has been temporarily reversed. The April Fools' prank is folk theatre. The actors must play it out according to the unwritten 'script' of tradition if it is to succeed. In Erving Goffman's well-cited discussion of pranking behavior in *Frame Analysis*, he notes that the fabricators, those who 'engineer the deception,' will contain the dupes or victims in their construction or fabrication (1974: 83). At the moment that the 'deception is up,' or in this case, at the delivery of the words 'April Fool,' the victim discovers that 'what was real for him a moment ago is now seen as a deception and is totally destroyed. It collapses' (1974: 84-85).

Because many of these pranks are benign, this collapsing of deception can result in laughter. The return to 'reality' can bring relief, and this relief overcomes the sting of humiliation at having been 'caught,' or duped. The prankster and the fool reconsider each other, and, if there is still time, plot further pranks. As we have seen, the prankster who sustains the inverted order for too long, who 'takes the joke too far,' is not playing fairly. Similarly, the fool who is not capable of laughing at his or her demise is not a 'good fool,' and does not pass the test of selflessness—a valuable social skill. As *Poor Robin's Almanac* advises,

To take away a little blood,
May cool your veins and do you good. (1795: 15)

On this day of widespread, purposeful deception, each of us becomes the fabricator – or the fool, acting out a drama of the absurd. Freed temporarily from the strictures of work and polite social exchange, we take joy in enacting a wide range of tricks. There is indeed 'pure merriment' on April Fools' Day, yet as with many forms of play, just beneath the surface lie deeper, provocative concerns.

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Christmas through a Swedish Folklore Archive

Chronicles dealing with the Ritual Year and the Calendar are very common among the folklore collection at The Institute for Dialectology, Onomastics and Folklore research in Gothenburg. In the old systematic catalogue the index cards for the Calendar goes in alphabetical order – beginning with Advent and ending with the name Urban. In between there are all sorts of beliefs connected to the month of the year, special festivity days and name days. But the material, which appears most frequently when it comes to The Calendar and The Ritual Year deal with the three main feasts in Sweden – Christmas, Easter and Midsummer. I will here try to give you some example on how the old material (and here especially material about Christmas) is represented in, and reshaped through, a folklore archive in Sweden. The folklore experts and archive managers obviously had a major power in the material that was collected, as for example Agneta Lilja show in her thesis (Lilja 1996). But through the archive, and by being given the possibility to tell their stories, also society has had a influence in the choosing of what today is a big part of the Swedish, so-called immaterial, cultural heritage.

It was the nineteenth century's modernisation that led to the documentation of the folk's culture. And folk in Sweden, as in so many other places, were the same as people in the peasant society, a society and a way of living that was thought to die with the industrialisation. National romanticism and cultural patriotism made the peasant people genuine and true and the fear of its dissapering led to action – saving all that could be saved.

The beginning

The folklore collection in Gothenburg began in 1919. Professor Carl Wilhelm von Sydow came to Gothenburg for a seminar in how to collect folklore and the West Swedish Folklore Society was founded. In 1926 it was linked up with the University of Gothenburg through the Institute for Folklore and later on, in 1979, The Institute for Folklore merged with the Institute for Dialect and Onomastics and became the Institute for Dialectology, Onomastics and Folklore Research in Gothenburg. Today the archive is a part of a state authority whose task it is to collect, preserve and publish material dealing with dialects, personal names, onomastics, ballads, folk music and folklore. The state authority is placed in four different cities – Lund, Gothenburg, Uppsala and Umeå – and each archive has responsibility for its part of the country. The Department for Folklore Research in Gothenburg is mainly collecting material from the regions of Värmland, Dalsland, Halland and Västra Götaland.

Nowadays we frequently use computers to carry out research. It is often quicker and more convenient. When I made a search on the word 'Christmas' in the archive's computer register it came up with 2 242 hits. However, the computer alone will not provide an accurate idea as to what the chronicle is about. All I can be sure of is that somehow it deals with Christmas. To find out more about the contents in a chronicle I will have to use the card index in the old systematic catalogue which was set up in 1922 and has changed several times throughout the years as the management of the Folklore Department has passed through different hands. This is also the best way to find out what the folklore experts and the former managers of the Folklore Department found interesting to save from falling into oblivion. In addition to headings such as the Calendar, Christmas, Easter and Midsummer, the card index contains Black magic, Dreams, Medicine, Nicknames, Nobility, Riddles, Treasures and much more. The volume of the Christmas material makes it one of the main titles in the old systematic catalogue with most subtitles being:

In general; Alcohol; Devotion; Bath; Visitors; Wedding; Carry out Christmas; The dead; The dead's Christmas dinner table; Animals could speak; Dolls out of straw; Dipping in the pot; Costume; Juniper shrub; Preparations; Prohibitions; Fir; Fir twigs and juniper twigs; The dunghill; Straw; Domestic animals Christmas;

Dog, cat, chicken and pig; Headless at the table; Christmas goat; Be a Christmas goat/Christmas man; Christmas dinner table; Christmas fire; Christmas brew; Christmas arch; Christmas decorations; Christmas drink; Julgoppa (a figure generally made out of straw and used for games etc); Christmas piles (special word for the different kinds of bread); Christmas presents; Handing out the Christmas presents; Christmas fare; Christmas chandeliers; Corn sheaf; The Christmas cheese; Early church service on Christmas day; Christmas poles; Christmas trees and Christmas crosses; Jultyppa (almost the same as julgoppa); Christmas songs; Party; Racing; Crib; Games; Playhouse; Candles; Candlestick; Making candles; Almond in the pudding; Food; Food in the early morning; Clear out the dung; Cheese; Sneeze someone out; Rhyme; Protection; Shooting; Slaughter; Go sleighing; Predictions; Signs in the ash; St Stephen; St Stephen's ride; St Stephen's songs; Star-boys; The Christmas cottage's dress; Steel; Duties at Christmas Eve; Duties in the barn; Sow cake etc.; Grain of corn; Beggars; The gnomes Christmas; The washing; Indicates and signs; Under the table; The firewood; Weather marks.

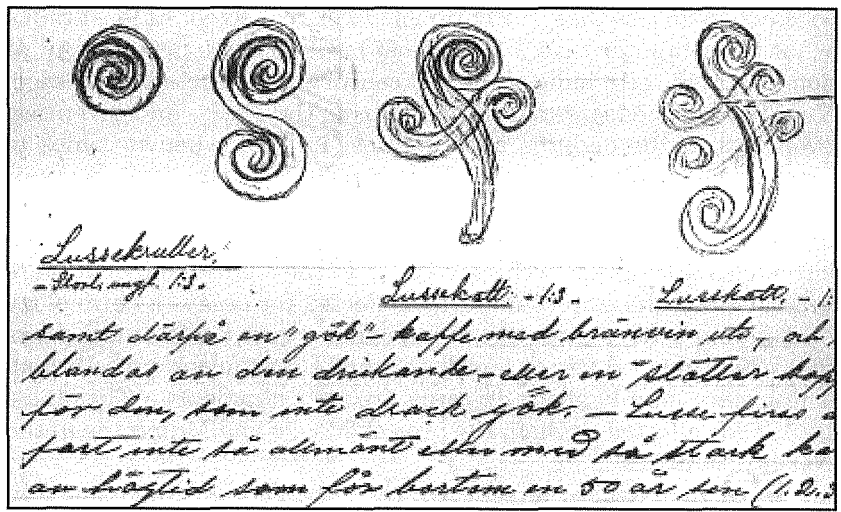
School essays

There has always been a great interest in Christmas in the Folklore Department in Gothenburg, right since its inception. In fact, the first material that was ever collected in the year 1919 dealt with this subject. This was in the form of school essays on the topic 'Lucia in my District' and 'St Canute's day in my District'. In 1919 there was also a big prize competition in one of the Gothenburg newspapers, which was called 'How was Christmas Celebrated in Former Times?' The jury contained members from the West Swedish Folklore Society, and the same members of the jury provided guidance to those competing on how to go about collecting material. There were no direct questions, but to be sure of getting useful material they had special requirements, such as: 'Particularly welcome are information about Christmas candlestick or Christmas branches, chandeliers or other special decorations in the Christmas cottage and above all the Christmas straw and the corn sheaf and everything that are connected with this. Were there any special figures (made out of straw or similar) and were there any customs connected with these?' (IFGH 773: 100). Other things that were

considered desirable was information about the Christmas buffet and the Christmas dinner table and special customs and ideas about the Christmas bread and Christmas beer. They also indicated that they wanted to know about supernatural beings, for example gnomes, the Christmas goat or the belief that the spirit of the dead would come and be around the living during Christmas. They were also interested in special games, practical jokes, songs and plays that took place during Christmastime.

Around one hundred contributors were eager to win the first prize for one hundred and fifty Swedish crowns. No small wonders that there were such a lot of contributions as this was a great deal of money at the time. The name of the man who won this competition was Klas Olofsson and there is no question why he became the winner. He came up with exactly what the folklore experts in the jury were looking for: an extensive piece of research of forty large pages with several illustrations on for example different kinds of shaped breads and buns made especially for the celebrating of Lucia – so-called ‘Lussekatter’.

Klas Olofsson recorded his own experience of celebrating Lucia and Christmas, but also asked about twenty elderly people in three nearby districts about their experiences and memories, customs and



‘Lussekatter’ – an example from Klas Olofssons chronicle. (VFF 395: 6)

beliefs around these themes. The archive has many chronicles made by Olofson. He was an experienced writer and has also written several newspaper articles and books on the subject folklore.

Third prize went to elementary-school teacher S.N. Fridèn who submitted twelve pages and also three photos of different games that used to be played in the Christmas straw. He has also asked elderly people in his district about their experiences. But today we appreciate it when we find chronicles, which are written in the form of a free story and not directed by questionnaires. The contribution that won second prize is one of these. Sally Peterson has recorded her ninety-year-old grandfather's story on how Christmas was celebrated in the first half of the nineteenth century and she has let her grandfather speak through her. His story started like this:

'I grew up in a cottage deep in the darkest of Småland and as we were many brothers and sisters we had to start early to learn how to work hard. That's why we longed so much for Christmas because we would be able to rest from all the work, and probably most of all we longed for nice and rich food instead of herring and potatoes with oat bread, which was the main course during the year' (VFF 356: 1).

The years 1920-1950 saw the collection of a great amount of folklore, and the big year for collecting materials on Christmas was 1927 when no less than 192 chronicles were collected. At least that's what the computer says. I am almost positive there is more. But at some point in the middle of the last century the collecting decreased. Very few chronicles were collected during the sixties and seventies, even less in the eighties and nineties. In fact, when it comes to Christmas, hardly any materials were collected after 1965. A major part of the chronicles that were recorded during the fifties and sixties are tape recordings made for dialect research. Around fifteen chronicles were made in the seventies. In the eighties only two were recorded and these were material collected for essays by ethnology students in 1988. During the nineties none were made. In the years 2000-2003 about thirty chronicles around Christmas were collected. These were mainly about dressing up, for example as a Christmas goat, and collected through the project 'Masks and Mummings in the Nordic Countries'.

One name that appears frequently at the Folklore Department in Gothenburg is Carl-Martin Bergstrand who worked for the archive

for nearly forty years. He started out as an informant somewhere in the 1920s, then became the manager and retired from the archive in 1964. Bergstrand is one of the reasons why some of the material at the archive in Gothenburg differs from other folklore chronicles (Skott 2002). In 1934 Bergstrand made his own book of questionnaires. This book contained questions that were much freer compared to the questionnaires that had been used before (Bergstrand 1934). Bergstrand also made illustrations to several of his chronicles and many of these illustrations depict Christmas scenes.

In one of the archives chronicle Alfred Kristensson (born in 1837) tells this story about the corn sheaf: ‘As long as I lived there has always been a corn sheaf. It should be up by ten a.m. so the birds had time to get enough to eat – they should also be able to be full and have a good time, they as well as anyone else’ (Pl. 28). And he continues: ‘One would get poor crops the next year if one didn’t give the birds a corn sheaf’ (IFGH 1936: 16f).

I have here tried to give you some examples of how one of the most celebrated, if not *the* most celebrated festivity in the Swedish Ritual Year, has taken place in a folklore archive. Today we use this old material to understand and to learn about a part of our history and see which parts of our culture heritage that remains through traditions and customs. I believe that, particularly around Christmas, traditions and customs are of great importance. It might be something that our grandparents always used to do, then our parents, then ourselves. By looking into the old chronicles at a folklore archive we might find out how, and why.

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Chronicles

Dialekt-, ortnamns- och folkminnesarkivet i Göteborg. The Institute for Dialectology, Onomastics and Folklore Research in Gothenburg.

IFGH 773 (press cutting 100), 6858, 1936

VFF 356, 395

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Contemporary Political Carnival Procession on Palm Sunday in Bulgaria

The new political events following the social and political changes in Bulgaria and all of Eastern Europe after 1989 were accompanied by the development of some new or not very popular in the recent past folkloric forms, as well as of non-folkloric forms that were propagated in a typically folkloric way. These were mainly oral and visual forms, such as rhymes, puns, authored songs and slogans chanted at rallies, demonstrations or sit-ins, drawings, cartoons and inscriptions on posters and placards in demonstrations and other forms of mass political protest, as well as graffiti on the buildings of public and political organizations or on monuments in honour of political figures and events from the recent past. At the same time, classical folkloric forms – such as folk songs, anecdotes and some calendar festivals – acquired new meaning. All those phenomena constituted a syncretic complex of contemporary ‘political folklore’ that developed in the course of the transition from totalitarianism to democracy.

Political folklore

The so-called ‘political folklore’ as such is not a new phenomenon. It commonly appears in situations of political changes and conflicts, as well as in conditions of war, occupation, aggression, threat or other forms of political violence and dictatorship. Political folklore is the product of the inner need of particular social groups to express their dissent against the social and political reality by publicly demonstrating their protest. In this way they dissociate themselves

from the present political regime, identifying themselves politically and socially on the basis of the us/them opposition and the consequent oppositions between informal and formal, unofficial and official, own and other, good and bad, and so on. Political folklore is a form of protest but also of self-defence, serving as a way to release built-up political and social tension. In other words, we use 'political folklore' as a provisional term for a type of unofficial culture which, by its essence and way of functioning in all its forms, constitutes a 'counterculture' in opposition to the official culture of the holders of political power (usually imposed by force) in a given society in a particular period of the development of the society in question. By its function as total opposition to what is considered 'high' in socio-political life, Bulgarian contemporary political folklore differs from classical folklore, in which the opposition between high and low is at a different level and the element of confrontation, protest and provocation is either absent completely or it is secondary.¹

New meaning

In the course of the change of the totalitarian communist regime in Bulgaria, street happenings and carnival processions staged in big cities by different political and public organizations and movements became particularly popular because of their emphasized symbolic content and meaning. The phenomenon of lending new meaning to traditional folk festivals developed especially in spring festivals, rites and customs before Easter. A typical example in this respect is the 'Flowers for Democracy' carnival organized on Palm Sunday (*Tsvetnitsa*) by the Green Party and the so-called *Ecoglasnost* environmental movement for the first time in 1990, and held once more the following year, 1991. Carnival customs are not specific to Bulgarian folk culture (Kraev 1979: 164-165). In this particular case, however, the carnival as a new form also had some new functions that are not typical of Bulgarian classical folklore but are common in contemporary political folklore as a whole.

¹ The problem of the difference between contemporary political folklore and classical folklore, and of its functional characteristics has been examined in greater detail in Polish folkloristics. See Jackowski 1990; Łysiak 1990; Robotycki 1990.

Functional characteristics – parodying and debunking

To determine the functional characteristics of the contemporary carnival 'Flowers for Democracy', we must first consider its temporal and spatial characteristics. It is most important that the carnival was held at the particular time of year that marks the passage from winter to spring. In the Bulgarian folk tradition, this is the time for performing important calendar rites of passage that are associated not only with the passage in nature but also in the socialization of the individual in the community and the transformation of the community as a whole. This change in the cosmic order occurs by rejecting the old state and everything outdated, bad, unclean connected with it, and its replacement by something that is qualitatively new. With its specific poetics and symbolism, the new for Bulgarian culture form of the carnival proved especially suitable for rejecting the old order in the contemporary Bulgarian context – the new layer of political events and developments was superimposed very successfully on the archetypal mechanisms of the progression of the carnival. The criticism against everything old was political – it was directed against the totalitarian system. In this case, what was outdated, unclean and bad was the political power of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) and the dominant communist ideology, personified in the carnival procession by a dragon led by a Red Guard (*Hong Wei Bing*) bearing a red banner. The dragon was followed by a worker carrying a hammer and sickle, and children waving red flags and balloons in the manner typical of parades in the recent communist past.

The main idea of the 'Flowers for Democracy' carnival was the need of changing the political system in contemporary Bulgaria. The political regime was condemned, opposed and taunted by being ridiculed and parodied, using appropriate masks, costumes, facial expressions and gestures. The de-heroization of the political leaders of the old totalitarian society, the destruction of norms, stereotypes, symbols and values of the old regime and its ideology, the lowering and de-sacralization of until recently glorified figures and ideas was achieved by presenting yesterday's world in inverted form, 'upside down'. The contemporary 'political' carnival employed the substitution of the roles of master and servant that is common in the classical scheme of carnivals. The former head of state of communist Bulgaria Todor Zhivkov was represented riding on a cart drawn by two richly decorated horses instead of being chauffeured in a black Mercedes.



The devil and the priest in the carnival.

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Todor Zhivkov's portrait was likewise carried by the paraders upside down. The three top leaders of the Bulgarian Communist Party – Todor Zhivkov, Alexander Lilov and Andrei Loukanov – were depicted as common folk with jester's masks; they walked on foot, greeting the crowd. The characters of the priest and the devil in the carnival procession are especially revealing. The devil was dressed in a shirt made from the newspaper *Douma* (the renamed in 1990 former daily of the Bulgarian Communist Party, *Rabotnichesko Delo*). In his turn, the priest, his face blackened like a devil's, held a volume from Todor Zhivkov's *Collected Works* instead of a Bible. What until yesterday had cult status and was taken seriously, sometimes causing fear and tears, was now presented in a way that evoked laughter – just as the devil and the other monsters in carnivals are funny rather than fearsome.² The BCP and its junior brother, the Komsomol (the Young Communist League), were represented as monsters; the veteran prominent member of the Politburo of the BCP's Central Committee,

² For details, see Abramian 1990a; Abramian 1990b. On carnival poetics, see mainly Bakhtin 1978.



The evil witch in the carnival.

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Tsola Dragoycheva, as the fairy-tale Baba-Yaga (the evil witch), broomstick in hand; the person carrying the slogan 'Lenin's ideas are our victorious banner' was disguised as death; communism was represented as a spectre (a figure draped head to foot in a white sheet, with slits for the eyes and a big red cardboard five-pointed star pinned on the forehead, carrying a poster bearing the inscription 'A spectre is haunting Europe').

Another means of parodying and debunking the targeted individuals and phenomena in the carnival was the presentation of some of their flaws that are in conflict with their proclaimed perfection. The deformities were external, usually represented as a physical handicap, but they indicated an internal – that is, spiritual or ideological – deficiency (for example, the lame *Udarnik-Otlichnik* or 'Top Shock-Worker' of socialist labour hobbling at the end of the procession with a red sash bearing the inscription 'Success' (*Spolouka*), the slogan of the Socialists in Bulgaria). Or, conversely, the attempt of something old and outdated to pose as something new, reborn and good, was parodied. An example of this is the slogan of the carnival procession, depicting a red rose blossom with an inscription that translates literally as 'I protest against my use by a party that isn't a flower to smell' – a pun on a

Bulgarian idiom meaning that someone is bad, despicable, reprehensible. The slogan refers to the choice in 1990 of the rose as a symbol of the Bulgarian Socialist Party, the renamed BCP.

The old aspects of social and political life in Bulgaria were also ridiculed in the carnival procession by the representation of some realia from the recent past in an extremely serious or deliberately exaggerated manner. For example, the long and enthusiastic chanting of the slogan 'BCP! Glory!' by the participants in the procession in front of the tribune of the mausoleum of the embalmed leader of the Bulgarian working class Georgi Dimitrov, from where the members of the Politburo of the BCP's Central Committee used to wave to the citizens who were forced to parade on public holidays in the years of the totalitarian communist regime. (The mausoleum has since been demolished.) The same purpose of ridiculing the old regime was also achieved by the parade of military officers, members of the Militia (the communist police) and Pioneer children chanting 'BCP'. The parade included about a dozen people dressed in spectacular theatrical costumes, among whom were a military general, a soldier in Red Army uniform, a soldier in a Russian overcoat and *budyonovka* (pointed cap formerly worn by Red-Army men), and a major from the Militia. The group was headed by a sergeant-major from the Militia carrying Todor Zhivkov's portrait upside down. The group marched noisily, enthusiastically chanting non-stop 'BCP! BCP! BCP!', followed by Pioneer children waving red flags and rattles. The true essence of the old social and political system, however, was represented best by a procession of people in disguise following the chanters. Among them was a silent group of forced labour camp inmates in rags, with inscriptions reading 'Lovech', 'Belene', and 'Skravena' (the names of the best known forced labour camps for political prisoners in communist Bulgaria). There was also a character representing the *kulaks* (a man in prison clothes with the inscription 'Kulak' on his back) – that is, the more propertied peasants who were thrown in prison in the course of land nationalization. Perceived as serious in the past, now everything old (including old ideas, values, symbols and mores) became comic because of the new age in which it was presented – new in a natural and especially in a social sense.³

³ On the transformation of the formerly 'serious' into the newly 'comic' in time, see Bakhtin 1978: 233-234; Meraklis 1987; Passy 1972: 190; Propp 1976: 144.

The inadequacy of the old 'inverted world' was also highlighted by the spatial characteristics of the festival – the direction of the carnival procession was opposite to the usual direction followed by yesterday's festive processions and parades organized by the communist regime. Because of the qualitatively new situation, the old realia now seemed outdated, anachronistic and absurd. The only appropriate place for them in space was the museum. That is why during the carnival procession the masks representing political leaders from the recent communist past were displayed as museum exhibits and offered for sale. The carnival ended with an auction sale of 'totalitarian' objects: mini-busts of the 'leaders' Georgi Dimitrov, Vassil Kolarov, Lenin; books by Stalin, Beria, Lenin, Zhivkov; orders, medals; BCP membership cards, and other artefacts.

That all those phenomena belonged to the old world and were to be condemned was also suggested by the costumes of some young participants at the rear of the carnival procession. A young man in a domino held an empty portrait frame in front of his face in one hand and carried a book by Stalin in the other, reminding onlookers of the now insignificant remnants of Stalin's personality cult. He was followed closely by a pompous, smiling and proud Statue of Liberty. A little boy carried a poster evoking spontaneous laughter and approval: 'Liberty – Democracy – Sausages', the first letters of which in Bulgarian are identical to the acronym of the opposition Union of Democratic Forces, a coalition of political parties formed in 1989 after the fall of the totalitarian regime in Bulgaria. The posters bringing up the rear of the procession read 'Never again socialism' and 'Communism is going away'.

The 'inversion' of the 'high' and its representation as 'low' in both time and space, its profanation and condemnation, eliminated a series of social and political taboos and functioned as a regulatory mechanism of transforming chaos back into cosmos, of restoring the upset social order and rebuilding society along new democratic lines. Condemning by means of the cleansing power of laughter everything old, retrograde and bad that dominated Bulgarian society during the long political winter of totalitarianism, and rejoicing at the rebirth of the individual and society as a whole to a new life in the coming spring of democracy – this was the idea guiding the entire political carnival mottoed 'Flowers for Democracy' on Palm Sunday.

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The Role of Symbols' Reflexivity in Calendar Rites

An Example of Trans-Kama Udmurts

The Trans-Kama Udmurts are an ethnic group living in the west-central part of the Ural mountains on the left bank of the Kama River in Russia. Udmurts have kept their pagan beliefs until the present day. Their religion is an oral tradition divided according to tribal and territorial characteristics.

Two calendars

Today this ethnic group lives according to two calendars: the conventional calendar used in Russia, and the traditional folk calendar. In general, the latter system has been influenced by the regional climate, agriculture, cattle breeding, and beliefs. Four seasons are known, but nevertheless, according to the folk calendar the astronomical year is divided into two parts, perceived as independent divisions of the year: *tol* – winter, and *guzem* – summer. Spring and autumn in this system are perceived as periods of transition from winter to summer, and then from summer to winter. In this division, the position of the sun plays the main role, with the

¹ Field researches in Bashkiria, Russia: 1995, Asavka Baltachevo district, 2000; Kizganbash Baltachevo district, 2002; Baishady Buraevo district, 2003, and Vot. Urada Janaul district.

length of days depending on it. In both divisions the phases of the moon are taken into account, meaning that instead of the year starting on one particular calendar date as stipulated by the Gregorian Calendar, the phases determine it.

The next part of the folk calendar contains a special system that first of all takes into account the economical (agriculture and cattle-breeding), phenological (blooming of flowers, migrating of birds, etc.), and ritual circumstances. In addition, there are some cases connected with hunting, fishing, gathering, climate, and weather. Hence, the names of the month reflect these phenomena, and many periods of the year have different names. This calendar is flexible, meaning the length of the periods of the so-called 'months' is different, (unlike the Gregorian Calendar with its set number of days in a month) but the periods that these 'months' represent are clearly defined and named.

The ritual calendar – sacrificial rituals

Here I will discuss the ritual calendar only.¹ There are two ritual calendar types in the culture being examined: the calendar of sacrificial rituals and the calendar of religious festivals and festive occasions that are carried out without sacrifices.

The calendar of sacrificial rituals includes the following events: *Bydz'ynal* – the Great Day or the beginning of the summer/summer year, *tulys kis'ton* and *siz'yl kis'ton* – Spring Funeral Repast (where dead ancestors are visited and remembered) and Autumn Funeral Repast, *kuregpuz ulljan* – Rolling of Eggs, and the Feast of Celebrating the Beginning of Sowing, *Bydz'ym Vös'* – the Great Summer Worship in the period of the summer solstice, *Kuar vösjan* – Consecration of Fresh Greenery, *Muzjem vordis'kon* – the Birth of the Earth, *Keremete pyron* – the *Keremet* Worship, *vil'* – Freshly-harvested Corn, *Siz'yl vös'* – the Autumn Worship in the period of the autumnal equinox, *Tol vös'* – the Winter Worship during the winter solstice.

The calendar of religious festivals and festive occasions is represented by the following events: *Vil' ar* – the New Year according to the Gregorian Calendar, *Vuz Vil' ar* – literally Old New Year i.e. the New Year according to the Julian Calendar, *Vöj* – Pancake Week, *Vöj keljan* – Pancake Week's Send-off, *Bydz'ynal* – the Great Day,

Bydz'ynal keljan – the Great Day's send-off, *Sabantuj* – the Feast of the End of Sowing. The examples and empirical sources were chosen from some of these rituals that are, in my opinion, the most typical and most expressive.

In this paper I will discuss the concept of the reflexivity of symbols in calendar rites, mainly according to the culture of the people from the Trans-Kama region. I propose to examine those symbols that people have a clear idea of, can explain and can also interpret. I will also show the reasons, methods and ways these symbols are used at one special ritual moment or another, and which people do not use for other rituals. If these symbols are used in other rituals, then they may have a different meaning). However, I will only attempt to concentrate on one of their meanings.

These events took place in the Trans-Kama region last year. I also participated in these ritual ceremonies. According to the Udmurts, and my own beliefs, the religious symbols are allowed to express themselves as much as possible in the rituals, and they are used here with a special purpose.

Time and space

What is peculiar to the calendar rites is the conversion of time and space simultaneously. When the time of the ritual begins, the space proves to be sacred too, and both these parameters become sacred. It is peculiar to the calendar rites because all the stages are predetermined.

Some of the processes in life are sudden, while others are gradual and expected. The latter are the ones desired by many societies, especially societies with traditional rules and principles, where more or less all processes are under control and observation. Practical necessities are the stimulator of progress. Expectations are realized through different kinds of activities and through the behaviour of the members of this particular society.

Progress seems predictable and understandable when it is continued. Continuity in being able to predict future events seems stable and potentially favourable when all goes in the desired direction. In such a situation, it appears that the community is stable. Hence, it is necessary to maintain continuity and contribute to its continuation.

Reflexivity

The ritual calendar also aims at maintaining continuity. Here it is accomplished in different ways. One of these ways is with a ritual symbol. However, the most effective connection is displayed in the reflexivity of these symbols, represented in verbal expressions, actions or behaviour of people, and real objects. According to the opinion of the Udmurts, all these symbols are used to maintain the world and its natural existence. A symbol is something that can reflect and instil the people's wish and desire. There are no other ways to achieve and attain aims.

The Great Day

I observed the first of these rituals in 2003. *Bydz'ynal*, or the Great Day period, (the most important calendar rite) symbolises the beginning of summer or the summer year and lasts two weeks. During this period, every day is devoted to some purpose, and the carrying out of this purpose, for which different kinds of events and actions are necessary. Until recently, all days in this two-week period were strictly regulated. In addition everyone, including adults and children, attended to one's duties – everyone knew his time, methods and actions, regulations and norms. In other words, everyone knew what was expected of him.

Not all ritual actions are observed or used in equal measure today in the communities. But nevertheless, the tradition lives on. During the first days of the Great Day period, people clean all parts of the farmstead not only in the real sense, but also in a figurative sense.

Wednesday evening is the time where wicked and malicious spirits can do anything against people, animals, etc. This time is not 'forbidden', because it is their time. If somebody wants to be protected from these spirits, or guard himself, his family, cattle and property against evil spirits, one must do something. To be protected, people carve amulets out of wood and tie them to their neck and arms. These amulets are fastened onto domestic animals and poultry as well. They also put a branch of a rowan tree, juniper tree or feather grass in the corn in the granary, on doors and gates, in windows and oven doors, etc. In addition, a metallic instrument

is used to make an outline around the house, cattle-shed, granary and bed where they sleep. Later the instrument used to outline the objects is put under the pillow and slept on at night.

It is clear that those protected by amulets lie outside these borders. Things are done to keep order and balance. These special circles protect people from malicious influences, because bad spirits cannot enter these circles. Importance is attached to the circle itself, which has a special semantic form to protect one from all bad spirits.

All day long the following Thursday is the most active day of the year. People rise early in the morning and run into the cattle-shed and hen house. All hens should be thrown off their sleeping places with a rake. Near the main village gates a new fire is made by all the males in the village. They bring home a piece of wood lit by this fire and make a fire in their own stoves and outside of the doors in the yard. Then all family members jump over the fire in the yard. Women bring water from the spring. The wood amulets, which were used on the previous night, are considered unhealthy and dangerous, and are burned in the stove. Of course, the stove is lit not only to burn the amulets, but later to bake pancakes, bread, pies and other items of food prepared in honour of dead ancestors.

Ancestors and cleansing

Representations are clearly connected with the cult of dead ancestors and still play a significant role today. During the Soviet period, especially in the last decades of the 20th century, religious ceremonies and activities were forbidden. Only the dates of honouring dead ancestors had been observed strongly in every community. Many rituals on this day represent different ways of having contact with the dead. Activities are devoted to the deliverance to negative powers. Honouring ancestors makes the community immune from negative influences. If dead ancestors are pleased with them, then their support is guaranteed for the future.

One of the most important peculiarities of this day is the making of a new fire by the husband while his wife brings a fresh supply of spring water. These two things, water and fire, are necessary for creation. Participation of male and female family members is also not coincidental.

On Thursday there is another cleansing action: young animals

are marked in what is named *vir potton* – or the letting of blood. Of course, there are many meanings and interpretations, but one of them is that the blood represents a means of purifying the surrounding area or a person. Purification, during these days, in a broader sense, is indispensable, because then the purified space can enter the next sacred stage, which confirms and maintains the changed, reorganized space and time. Sacred time and sacred space also possess a supernatural power. As was mentioned above, such a change or reorganization of space and time is peculiar to calendar rites only.

The next day is Friday, or the Great Worship Day. Ritual food is prepared for this day: bread, meat, gruel, eggs, butter, honey, beer, etc. From the early morning a mistress or the oldest female member of the family sets aside two eggs at the windows for every family member. It is thought that the god *Inmar* comes down to Earth and ‘gives the gifts’. After breakfast the children go to their relatives and neighbours and gather the eggs. Then they go to the forest or a grassy area to roll the eggs, and then make a fire, play and dance.

A fire is also made on this morning in the stove. A sacrificed goose and gruel are cooked. However, on this day everything is devoted for prosperity in future, and it is forbidden to mention dead ancestors. When food is ready to eat, the family offers prayers and then eats the sacrificial food. The gruel should be put on a big plate (the bigger the better) with butter in the middle (I would interpret this dish as the Universe, with the hill-like shape of gruel with butter on the top as the peak of perfection). While eating, this balance should not be destroyed, meaning that no mixing of the gruel is allowed while eating, nor can one move the plate. On the other hand, while the gruel is cooking, it is necessary to stir it clockwise without stopping until the gruel is ready to eat. When the meat is eaten, the bones of the sacrificial goose are later buried in a sacred place, i.e. in the south-eastern corner of the garden, which is considered a sacred corner.

In addition, a magic fertilization of the earth is carried out by the rolling of the eggs, games, and dances, too. Children then make a fire in the woods or on the hills. This fire is intended to make the weather warmer. It is an example of ‘contagious magic’, which means that if one thing is done, it affects the outcome of something else. This day is followed by the period of walking and feasts.

Masked women and weaving

One of these days is the day of the masked, when only women walk on the streets. It is forbidden for men to be on the streets. Women wear masks and make a lot of noise, sing songs, drink a special kind of beer, and are allowed to behave aggressively. In the event they suddenly meet a male, women can treat him in a very free and easy manner. They can pull off his trousers by force and without ceremony, rudely grab his penis and then shake it while saying '*Kidys vijatis'kom, kidys*' – 'We spill the seed'.

It is clear that these actions by women are focused towards insemination, reproduction and creation of more life. Here male sexual organs symbolise something real and important, and the ability to influence these should heighten the fertility of every living being. In addition, breaking traditional norms or disturbing the ritual rules is considered misbehaviour. One who breaks these rules should be punished.

Traditionally the next Saturday, the day before the Great Day's send-off (*Bydz'ynal keljan*), a weaving-loom is constructed, and a piece of linen is woven, but not completed. This unfinished piece of woven linen symbolises the beginning of the New Year. Transgression implies that the New Year would also finish. Here the symbolic 'non-completeness' plays a major role. 'Non-completeness' is associated with the idea of maintaining the existing status, the stability of the world's order, and its non-destruction.

The Great Worship

The next instances are connected with the Great Worship at the summer solstice, which I observed in 1995. In the early morning, priests and their assistants prepared the worship place for the ceremony. They mowed the shape of a circle in the meadow, marking the area of the ceremony. 'Gates of heaven' were constructed, and towels were hung on them. These ritual towels are used once in a year and only for this worship ceremony. This sacred place is divided in parts: the eastern side is for the females, the western is for males, and the southern part is the so-called 'very sacred space' where only priests and their assistants can stay, while behind the 'gates of heaven' entrance there is no one, because that is the space reserved

for the gods and spirits. The towels hung on the 'gates of heaven' symbolise the road or way to the gods.

Keremet

The next examples occurred after the worship ceremony in a sacred place named *Keremet*. In former times, usually only the male members of the community participated. The cult of *Keremet* was associated with malicious spirits or powers. Today the functions of *Keremet* have changed, although the name has remained. In some villages, *Keremet* is still carried out as in former times according to tradition, while in other places traditions have been modified and all community members participate.

Before the *Keremet* ceremony, every family fixes the towels and headscarves to the trees, while after the ceremony they put coins in holes in the trees. Fastening the headscarves and towels to the trees represents the desire for happiness and success for the family. As a rule a ritual devoted to a special purpose harbingers success. Here, family members imagine the period starting from this day to the following year's ceremony. They mentally imagine important current and future events. Headscarves and towels contain prosperity and life of the family during a specific period of life. These headscarves and towels are taken away the next year and together with new headscarves and used towels are burned in a fire on the worship ceremony site of the village.

One of the special moments at this ceremony is an offering of coins. In former times, only silver coins were used, but since silver coins are no longer in circulation, people use the so-called 'white coins', which are cleaned beforehand in spring water.

Final comments

Symbols can certainly have different meanings, people interpret these symbols, reflecting and further instilling their wishes too. People's behaviour cannot provoke unlucky reactions; however, it can cause a number of negative consequences for individuals in particular as well as for society in general. People expect a positive response or behaviour according to their expectations, but not to be rewarded or punished.

The representation and concept of reflexivity is constantly represented in the consciousness of people. It regulates their actions and behaviour. People are guided by general knowledge. The purpose of life helps to model not only ritual life but also everyday life. Reflexivity brings to light a pragmatic aspect of thinking. In every case there is a sender and an addressee connected by special communicative intention. Therefore, symbolism is very strongly organized not only on the semantic level but also on the pragmatic level, demonstrating a particular sequence and consistency.

The examples given above clearly show how a special mode of thinking can be a way of creating and establishing the world around us, and also the whole world. This aspect shows that during his lifetime man takes part as an active power, not only depending on the world, but also as someone able to influence the world around him, his circumstances, and his own destiny. This reflexivity of thinking has many 'functions' and can be shown and interpreted in different ways – thus the importance of having many more different examples to find interpretations for obvious and hidden purposes of statements. For society it is important that here the mental processes of the participants of communication are recognized and analyzed, including ethnographic, psychological, socio-cultural perspectives and strategies of beginnings and comprehension of discourse in different situations.

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Scourging Rituals in Southern Italy

It is well-known that in various cultural areas which constitute the south of the peninsula, differing strongly from each other, there have survived – in spite of the wear and tear and radical changes – many festive contexts of popular Catholicism. These contexts differ through meaning and content linked to the pastoral and countryman's universe which forms its historical basis.

Among this variety, particular interests mask the rituals of self-flagellation which take place during the processions of Good Friday or, as in the case of the '*Battenti*' (flagellants) of Guardia Sanframondi in the month of August, in the processional context of the Assumption of Our Lady.

Three rituals

Two of these rituals take place every year at Nocera Terinese, a small hilltop village in the province of Catanzaro and at Verbicaro in the province of Cosenza, in Calabria. The third, as I have just mentioned, takes place in August every seven years, or in exceptional cases, at Guardia Sanframondi in the hinterland.

The three ritual occasions differ by means of very diverse explicative modalities, although they have in common similar motives manifest in the process of being identified with the Passion of Christ and his successive redemption through the sacrifice of his blood.

I am giving a brief description of the rituals of Nocera Terinese, observed in Easter 2002, and of Guardia San Framondi, in August 2003. However, I shall dwell specifically on the flagellants (*battenti*) of Verbicaro (Easter 2002) which is perhaps the ritual least influenced by external phenomena and which in the last years has

been seriously in danger of coming to an end. Suffice to think that, on an average, the number of flagellants at Verbicaro does not exceed five or six units, in contrast to sixty to seventy at Nocere Terinese and to about a thousand in Guardia Sanframondi.

The 'battenti' of Verbicaro

At Verbicaro, a small farming village of some 5,000 inhabitants in the province of Cosenza, in the evening of Maundy Thursday, tens of men, relatives or friends meet in improvised cellars (*catoji*) where they eat and drink in ritual. Women are allowed to participate and the food eaten on this occasion is prepared by the self same men. Because of the Lenten fasting, meat is not eaten. The meal consists of various cheeses, olives, pickles and the ever-present traditional dish of pasta with sauce made from stewed '*ventricialli*' (innards of dried cod).

Favoured by drinking wine aplenty, the atmosphere is very lively. Laughter and jokes without giving a thought, drinking each other's health are the order of the evening.

At about eleven, after some three hours of merry-making, the tables are cleared and put aside in the cellar to make way for the '*battenti*'. The cellars are in fact the place where blood is first drawn. In 2001, the year to which my observation refers, two different cellars had been prepared in each of which there were two flagellants.

They had tied a kerchief round their head and wore a vest and short trousers, both tendentially red.

On the arrival of the flagellants in the cellars, the atmosphere changes, becoming rather serious. In absolute silence begins the meticulous 'preparation of the legs' which are repeatedly slapped and rubbed with a woollen cloth to cause the blood to flow more rapidly in the epidermal capillaries (Pl. 29). At this stage, the flagellant is often helped by a person close to him, a relative or a friend. In our case, the moustached man we see is the father of the young first time flagellant. We were therefore lucky to assist at a veritable handover witnessed at first hand, since in the past the father himself had been a flagellant (Pl. 30).

When one notices that the first phase has been completed, the same person takes charge of bathing the legs and the '*cardillo*' – a cylindrically shaped narrow piece of cork into which sharpened pieces

of glass has been fixed with a casting of wax – with wine which has disinfecting powers.

After this the flagellants begin to whip themselves with the '*cardillo*' vehemently on the quadriceps, letting out a lot of blood. He who has helped in preparing the flagellant is also very attentive in taking care, so to say, of the aesthetic side of the blood, before the flagellant appears in public. In fact the thigh must be completely covered by the vital lymph and the 'helper' himself sprinkles the wounds with wine, after having filled the flagellant's mouth with it to prevent congealment.

Having left the cellars, about an hour after the first preparatory phases, the flagellants set out towards the parish church of the village, while carving for themselves a wide passage among the crowds visiting the sepulchres, they crouch on the floor of the church parvis, sitting on their heels. After having asked the people to stand aside for a full view of the altar, they gather the blood from their own wounds and sprinkle it on the white marble floor of the parvis. Then, still sitting on their heels, one of the positions for flagellation, they whip themselves repeatedly.

The flagellants leave the parish church at a light step, with arms crossed on their chest and head bent, accompanied by a small group of people, mostly young, to carry out three devotional rounds of the steep narrow streets of the village.

Meanwhile, the people continue entering the church taking care not to step on the blood the flagellants have poured on the floor. During their three rounds, the flagellants beat themselves for as many times on the parvis of the other churches and at places rendered sacred, among which are the sepulchers decorated with flowers, candles and Adonis gardens or Our Lady's plates – plates filled with grain which has been left to grow in the dark.

One should note that the devotional route of the flagellants has no fixed itinerary and every flagellant, in this case a couple of flagellants, follows his own itinerary, passing through streets with a personal significance: the only condition is that they must beat themselves in front of the churches and holy places.

To signal their way back, the flagellants leave in these places their handprints, after having covered them in blood flowing from their own wounds.

During the devotional round, the inhabitants of the village offer warm drinks to the flagellants, by now feeling cold and

tired, and to their followers whose duty it is to sprinkle wine on the wounds.

At the end of the three rounds, the ritual is concluded with the public washing of the wounds in an old local fountain.

The flagellants then return to the cellars, from where they had set out, to put on their usual clothes and they often meet their friends for a last bout of merry-making which confirms the sacralisation of the ritual.

In the depth of the night, at about three o'clock, the people of Verbicaro take the place of the flagellants and with songs and prayers set out on the Good Friday procession which lasts all morning.

The 'vattienti' of Nocera Terinese

On the other hand, at Nocera Terinese, on the morning of Easter Saturday members of a confraternity take out a heavy wooden statue of Our Lady in procession along the impervious streets of the village. During the procession which drags through the whole morning, the 'vattienti', barefooted men dressed in black, in short trousers and a crown of thorns, to accomplish a vow or as a family tradition, beat the back of their legs with a cork ('cardo') in which thirteen pieces of glass have been stuck, causing abundant blood to flow. The 'vattiente' beats himself several times during the ritual procession along the village and he is accompanied by a bare-chested child or a boy wearing a red loincloth and holding a red cross (the 'Ecce Homo') and by another friend whose duty it is to pour wine over the wounds so that they will not heal quickly and to prevent the blood from congealing (Pl. 36).

The 'battenti' of Guardia Sanframondi

The 'battenti' of Guardia Sanframondi are a different matter. In 2003, during the interminable procession of the Assumption of Our Lady, which concludes a week of celebrations and processions in her honour, there were hundreds of faithful. There were also about a thousand flagellants, wearing a rudimentary white habit and a hood with two holes for the eyes, to hide one's identity. They beat their chest rhythmically with the sponge (a cork with thirty-three fixed pins) at the level of the heart, till blood is drawn.

The *'battenti'* are placed in two very long files, preceding the *'misteri'*, small and choreographic pageants representing episodes from the Bible or important historical events which involve the whole community.

The description of the rituals of self-flagellation shows how they are articulated in precise phases and how they have been 'institutionalised' to a cultural level. They also show that although in the last decades they have undergone inevitable processes of change (new interpretative and explicative codes on the part of the 'actors' of the rituals) they recall in the observer archaic symbology linked to blood from the early human sacrifices to the pre-Christian mystical rituals, in order to reach the penitential exercise of the flagellants, which developed in the Christian Middle Ages. For example, the oldest historical source for the rituals of Verbicaro goes back to 1473.

Today, the intrinsic motivations of the flagellants obviously spring from new needs and from articulated processes of actualisation of tradition. In these last years, these processes have been minutely observed by various scholars (De Vincenzo, Lombardi-Satriani, Ferlaino) – to quote but a few – who have provided them, in some cases, with an exhaustive amount of literature. Emblematic is the case of detailed anthropological research on the *'vattienti'* of Nocera Terinese. This has been going on with intense 'participatory observation' for more than twenty years – led by Prof. Augusto De Vincenzo of the University of Rome who has contributed notably with his presence and his studies to revive the ritual.

Final comments

In the last century, these penitential rituals, underwent ups and downs, and often, as in the case of Nocera Terinese and Verbicaro, have been strongly opposed by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, unleashing negative popular reactions. However, these reactions have had diverse effects in the two communities. Whereas at Nocera Terinese, due to various factors, a sense of identity belonging developed strongly around these rituals, at Verbicaro there has been a slow process of disintegration, which has only stopped in these last few years, due to a renewed historical and anthropological legitimization which comes from various quarters.

In this instance, time limits impede an adequate analysis of the 'ideology of blood' at the base of self flagellation rituals. This will be taken up in future. Generally speaking, we can affirm with certainty that in traditional societies, the rituals of Good Friday, with their culturally codified apparatus, supply a tangible opportunity to observe death without suffering it, overcoming it outright in the possibility of symbolic interpretation.

Regarding the commemoration of the event of the dead Christ, as L. M. Lombardi-Satriani observes, 'Even on the historical horizon, it liberates men from their precarious life and the anguish connected with it, including them in a strategy of hope, essential for the continuation of their existence. The resurrection of Christ therefore celebrates the victory of life, the feast that commemorates it is particularly '*renovatio temporis*': our life won't be any longer a time of deprivation, anguish, danger, sorrow, but a time of abundance, serenity and joy'.

In this sense, the rituals of self-flagellation under examination reassume and exalt the antinomy of suffering and celebration and are themselves, as a whole, lived by the participants as rituals of a symbolic death and rebirth and out of which they emerge psychically reborn.

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Christmas in Sweden 2004

Tendencies in New Research Material

Documents concerning annual festivities belong to the oldest and most demanded material in our folklore collections. I work at the *Swedish Institute for Dialectology, Onomastics and Folklore Research*, at the department in Göteborg, called DAG. The original Folklore Archive started in 1919 as an independent entity and among the first areas of research were Christmas, Easter and Midsummer. In her paper my colleague Lina Midholm describes how festive customs appear in our old collections. We have a long history of studies on this subject, but previously there had been few opportunities for us to research the variations and multiplicity of today. This paper describes a new project involving most of the Swedish folklore archives and focuses upon annual rituals of our times. Since this is a new project and material I can now only point out some tendencies, or thoughts, after a first impression.¹

The beginning

The first idea of starting our project originated some years ago when I started to work at the Swedish Institute for Dialectology, Onomastics and Folklore Research, in Göteborg (DAG). Although I knew that Folklorists are of special interest to journalists in times

¹ The research material as described in this paper has not yet been classified.

of annual festivities, I was struck by how often I had to answer questions about these traditions. Yet, no one asked me about my present area of research – everyday singing. However, during my first December at the archives I had to answer questions about Christmas for several newspapers, radio and television. Most journalists were deeply interested in the origin and meaning of Christmas traditions. Annual festivities seem to be of special significance in our times and are also seen as important parts of our history. Some journalists also wanted to know why so many people suddenly flooded their gardens and houses with electric lights, if there were further changes during the past years and how our new multicultural society has influenced old traditions. Concerning these last questions we did not have any new material in our archives.

In May 2004 I co-ordinated a new project for which the first common topic was Christmas 2004. The archives and institutions involved are the three folklore departments within SOFI, Nordiska Museet in Stockholm, Folklivsarkivet in Lund, the Multicultural Centre in Fittja, Göteborg City Museum and the Department of Ethnology, Göteborg University. We decided to document Christmas from different angles of incidence and with different methods. We wanted to examine both new and old Swedish relations to Christmas in times of change and how Christmas is communicated and ritualised in different contexts.

Method of research

Together with Nordiska Museet and Folklivsarkivet in Lund we decided to have common cause through a questionnaire on Christmas 2004, called '*Nu är det jul igen*' – 'Now it is Christmas Again'. We formulated open-ended questions under the following themes: what I do during Christmas, what I feel and think about Christmas, which food, which things and decorations make Christmas for me. We also made a special enquiry about Christmas food. These questionnaires were sent out to the archives' ordinary correspondents. As we in Göteborg didn't have so many names on our informants list, we issued a press-release inviting people to write to us. We also made another list of questions – Ten questions about Christmas – in these contexts, as a method; maybe not quite '*comme il faut*'. But for us,

with little resources, it was a way to collect quiet comprehensive material. Questionnaires and lists were distributed through libraries and museums.

Christmas is often described as a time of special significance for children. One of our most successful methods was a new way to cooperate with schools all over our region. Through e-mails we asked school teachers for pupils 10-12 years old if they wanted to take part in our project. We got answers from 35 schools. We gave them three different exercises. We wanted children to research their own surroundings for Christmas and describe what they saw in words and drawings. We gave them a list with some basic questions about their own Christmas and we asked them to keep diaries of Christmas days. By the beginning of March we had received material from 30 schools and had created a new contact-net with dedicated teachers. A first impression says that for the children some of the most important things during Christmas are to be together with family and friends, the Christmas tree and Christmas presents. At the Christmas dinner table they prefer sweets but also '*köttbullar*' (meatballs) and '*julskinka*' (Christmas ham).

For two months of this special project we also had the opportunity to engage an ethnologist, Carina Ahlqvist, for a photo documentation of Christmas in official and commercial contexts. She also collected newspaper articles and advertisements.

Something special

Time preceding Christmas tends to be of considerable importance. Many interests compete for people's attention – business people, restaurants, organisations, churches, charitable institutions, museums and others. When we started our photo documentation in the beginning of November we were slightly late. For example, one journalist who was going to write about our project thought that Christmas had almost come to an end in the middle of December. During this period official arenas outside home became more significant. Here one meets friends and colleagues from work. In the written answers many of our informants spoke of the time before Christmas as something important, as a time to light a candle and '*mysa*', making it cosy. There are several ways to lift one up to a special before-Christmas-spirit. It seems as if the times of preparing

and awaiting Christmas are as much important as Christmas days (Pl. 31).

What we did not know when we started was that we were working in a special Christmas place. Göteborg, the business people and events calendar had decided during the year to market the town as '*Julstaden Göteborg – The Christmas Town*'. This can be included in a wider context, where several places in Europe concur about almost the same thing (most of them want to be the hometown for Santa). This can also be seen as a sign for a widespread interest in Christmas in our times, a kind of revival movement. The special thing in our town is that we have the largest amusement park in Sweden, Liseberg, which also provides the 'biggest Christmas Market' (<http://www.liseberg.se>). The park is filled with cabins and market stalls for Christmas shopping. Electric lights are central elements: during the dark nights there are more than three million light bulbs strung from the park's trees. The marketing is mostly directed towards describing the amusements and things as old, authentic and traditional – handicrafts are unique, sweets are homemade, candles are hand-made. The tradition-concept brings authority, as something important from our common past (cf. Glassie 1995). But the concept also contains innovations. The Christmas Town introduced blue-lights all over the big City Avenue, as something new and special for Göteborg – a way to create contrast, to be seen among many announcements. The venue can be described as an important territory for official rituals. The blue lights gave rise to very strong, negative reactions from many of the inhabitants.

Old ideas and new patterns

One of the most common Christmas decorations of the year is an old friend – the Christmas goat. It was sold both by IKEA and as a handicraft at Christmas Markets. The goat itself has a long history connected with Christmas, as well as the red ribbons and the straw-work, and has appeared in different times with different meanings (see Bringéus 1999, Swahn 1993). Today the object itself embodies genuineness and continuity; but the goat of today also says something of how Christmas takes place in commercial contexts (Pl. 32).

Even if we, at one level, can see that Christmas is recreated in new ways and in new times, 'tradition' and similar words are frequent

also in the written answers. A first overview says that for children and adults one of the qualities of Christmas is the return to rituals and artefacts. The feeling of Christmas as a time that connects us to former generations is strong. For a young woman who has broken away from her family, the thing that creates Christmas most is her grandmother's three-armed wooden candlestick in the form of a Christmas gnome. It is connected with many memories of her childhood. The same kind of candlestick is found in a drawing in another answer – this time it is linked to the memory of a grandfather. Several informants write about Christmas decorations, which they cannot describe as beautiful, but which value lies in the memories that are connected to them.

Even if one does not want to celebrate it seems that one has to be involved in Christmas in some way – and the returning memories can also be hard to face. A middle-aged man writes that his wife died earlier this year. For him it is hard to live with the memories and knowledge of how Christmas is supposed to be. A woman in the same situation refused to answer the questionnaire: she should not celebrate at all, but she told me that she was anyway forced to hang up the Christmas curtains and put the electric candles in the windows, so her neighbours would not wonder.

The idea of Christmas as a time to be together with family and relatives is present, but not determinate. The woman who has broken up with her family now lives alone and celebrates with friends. Another single woman describes a joyful Christmas together with friends. They have created their own traditions where each person contributes something special for the Christmas dinner table. Each person also brings two Christmas gifts; they play a game and let the dice decide who should get which presents.

In times with new family patterns it is not always easy to live tradition. A middle-aged woman says that for her Christmas is a time for 'marking our social boundaries, a manifestation of with whom you belong' (DAG). But this can be quite complicated. For many years she has celebrated Christmas together with her first husband, though they were divorced, and their children and his parents. But since the former husband met a new woman with her own children they changed traditions. Now the informant is celebrating Christmas with her new partner, his grown-up children and one grandchild, her own grown-up children and old mother. Together they planned Christmas for eleven people, when a young

woman who is the daughter of the new husband's ex-wife from a former relation, wanted to join the family in company with her new husband and a small baby. 'We talked about Holy Mary who did not get a place for her child, so we thought that we should hold our doors open', she says. The Christian ideals of humanity are present in several ways, even though not many say they go to church during Christmas.

There are also tendencies to create new arenas for Christmas meetings with friends. A former student wrote that he and his wife are very proud of their own way of making Christmas and creating new traditions. An important part in their celebration is a sing-along-open-house in their small apartment some weeks before Christmas. In one particular year there were 52 friends singing and eating Christmas cake. Since two or three years ago they also go to a new European capital for one weekend before the big holiday. He writes:

We check the Christmas spirit. We have visited Paris, Brussels and in 2004 we went to Oslo. Since we have two small children, we can't do much, but we try to go to Christmas markets and museums. We buy some local Christmas music and Christmas food. Eventually we bring some of these dishes to our own Christmas table. The French Christmas cake '*Buche de Noël*' is now a tradition. In Brussels we tasted beer, waffles and chocolate. In Oslo we bought '*Pinnekjött*', which is some kind of lamb meat, dried and smoked ... [This] is supposed to be put to soak in water for twenty-four hours and therefore it's still left in our refrigerator. We also bought a record called 'Children's Best Christmas Songs' – a mixture of everything from Alf Prøysen to A-teens. (DAG)

A mixture of traditional elements

The modern market offers a mixture of traditional elements to pick up in one's own, individual way. This, I think, can be a question of generation and other categories, but it seems as if some people have increased their 'competence in rituals' (cf. Briggs 1988). Naturally this is also connected with our multicultural society. Some of the children with a background from other countries describe in their diaries how they celebrate Christmas in different ways in different places with different people. Some of them even have two Christmases. A girl with relatives in Bosnia is proud of her knowledge of different traditions. Another girl, an orthodox Christian born in

Macedonia, is interviewed in one of the morning newspapers. She says that in her family there are two Christmas celebrations – the 24-25 December and 7 January. ‘In Macedonia we don’t have any particular Christmas food,’ she says, ‘so we eat the Swedish *julskina*, Christmas ham. In my old country it’s most important to be together during Christmas. We have taken the best parts from two traditions. That is a privilege’ (GP 2004-12-19). One 16-year old Muslim boy writes that in his family they do not really celebrate Christmas, but since they live in Sweden, automatically they celebrate a bit anyway. They have a Christmas tree and buy Christmas gifts. ‘It started when we were small so as not to be outsiders. During Christmas we are together with relatives, eat a good meal and have fun. Christmas is fun and a very beautiful feast, but it doesn’t mean anything particular to me, since we don’t really celebrate.’ (DAG). Rituals can be used, but with different meanings.

One can describe Christmas as a dominating, but not a determining period. This special time of the year is filled with rituals, traditions, things and interactive meanings. The many cultural elements that create Christmas have their background in different contexts, times and places. An older woman gives a picture of this when she describes her Christmas decorations, including a table with a crib.

There are figures of all kinds in improbable proportions. Bullfinches which are bigger than St Stephen and his five horses, black cats around a herring barrel, an old man with a plate of boiled rice pudding, dancing small gnomes, a boathouse beside a sea made of a mirror inside cotton-wool, trees in different materials and dimensions; St Lucia and star boys are crowded together with the animals at the savannah. On a small mountain stands a model of my old home church. And in the middle of everything [there] is the Holy Family in a plastic crib (DAG).

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Genuine Swedish Christmas Food, such as Lasagna!

Eleven Ways of Spending Christmas in Contemporary Sweden

Over the past several years, the Multi-Cultural Centre¹ in Stockholm has been involved in a study called *Holidays and Feasts: Folklore, Migration and Heritage*. The main purpose has been to study what happens to traditions and customs when they are transplanted into new cultural environments via migration. As a part of the project we have been studying Easter in the Orthodox Church, the Kurdish Newroz and the Muslim Ramadan celebrations.

In this paper we concentrate on how migrants deal with domestic complexes of traditions by discussing how some of them despite their non-Christian background have included Christmas celebrations in their family traditions.

The presentation includes a brief background on how Christmas is celebrated in contemporary Sweden and the method used in the study. This is followed by a presentation of three case studies and concluding remarks.

¹ The Multi-Cultural Centre is situated in a suburb of Stockholm. It is a forum for research and for exchange of knowledge and experiences on migration as well as social and cultural diversity.

The Swedish Christmas

Christmas in Sweden is a holiday celebrated for both religious and non-religious reasons. It is the largest and most celebrated holiday of the year and everyone in Sweden is affected by it, whether they want to be or not, since it involves a larger number of work-free days compared to many other countries.

The Traditional Christmas

Of course, the idea of what is a traditional Christmas differs according to the interviewee. For the generation born between 1960-1970, the image of the standard Christmas has one of its source in a book, written by Astrid Lindgren in 1947, *The Kids in Noisy Village*. This book presents Christmas as an event where everyone in the family is happy, satisfied and sharing in the preparations together. It presents a picture of the nuclear family where everyone is involved in some way, even if the children are the main celebrants. It is, however, only a model of a traditional Christmas and it is doubtful whether it is an ordinary way to celebrate Christmas these days. However, some things that are similar to contemporary celebrations are that celebrations take place in the privacy of the family, which sometimes causes problems if one does not get along with one's relatives. Christmas is still a closed family event and this fact makes it a very exclusive holiday. However, it is now also popular to go abroad and leave Christmas stress behind.

Contemporary Christmas

Almost all families in Sweden have one thing in common on Christmas Eve and that is to watch a Donald Duck TV show that starts at three o'clock in the afternoon. The show is more or less the same every year and has been broadcast for the last 30 years. When the TV Company dares to change it or even stop broadcasting it, heavy protests follow in the newspapers all over Sweden.

The point is that the Swedish Christmas, whatever its form, is connected to ideals and previous traditions. This gives rise to the following questions: how does one form the celebrations when one



Sepidar's mother is asleep on the sofa during the 'Donald Duck and his Friends' show on TV at 15.00 on Christmas Eve. © Anna Ulfstrand

does not have any previous experience of it and which are the influences when one creates one's own tradition?

Method

In addition to traditional methods (interviews and participant observation), we have employed a method called *photo elicitation*, namely the use of photographic images while conducting interviews.

In this case we handed out single-use cameras to a number of people and asked them to put together a visual story on the way they spent December 24. In the subsequent follow up interviews, the pictures were used as a starting point and as a common reference in the conversation.

We decided to use the expression *December 24th* instead of *Christmas Eve* in order to clarify the fact that we did not take for granted that our informers celebrated Christmas at all.

The group of participants (eleven persons) included individuals with Christian, Muslim and Hindi backgrounds. The youngest

participant was fourteen and the oldest forty-four years old. We are aware of the fact that our reflections are based on few interviews, but we have also had many informal talks with different people throughout our fieldwork. Hopefully, we will get the opportunity to continue this study next year.

It is interesting for methodological reasons to notice that several participants used the pictures to stress aspects of the celebration that they thought were important instead of documenting the holiday chronologically as we expected they would. One example is a picture of a bucket full of dirty clothes carried by a young Muslim woman as a symbol of *not taking notice of the fact that it was Christmas*. She commented on the picture by saying that December 24 is a perfect day to use the washing facilities in her building as nobody else wishes to use it on this day. However, the main purpose of including the picture for this woman, was definitely to lead the conversation to a point where she could talk about how hard it is, as a Muslim, to protect your children from being forced to participate in Christian rituals in kindergarten and school.

Three contemporary celebrators

From our eleven informers we picked three to illustrate different angles of the Christmas celebration.

Tara

Tara is a 15-year-old girl who emigrated to Sweden from the Kurdish part of Iraq and has been living in Sweden for 4 years. Tara and her family are practising Muslims and before migration they had never celebrated Christmas. Tara's uncle, aunt and cousins have been living in Sweden for a long time and for Tara it is natural that the Christmas celebration takes place at her relatives' house every year since, as Tara says, 'They have been living in Sweden for 15 years, they know everything!'

On the other hand, the two families celebrate all the traditional Kurdish and Muslim holidays, like Kurban Bayrami, Seker Bayrami and the Kurdish New year, Newroz, at Tara's house.

The fact that the families choose to celebrate in different houses

depending on what kind of holiday is being celebrated and the significance the holiday has, is a good example of Tara's need to keep apart the two different complexes of traditions from each other.

Tara compares the different celebrations and explains that at the traditional Kurdish holidays it is very common to dance a special Kurdish folkdance, something that is absolutely unthinkable at Christmas. Instead, Tara stresses the importance of watching 'Donald Duck and his Friends'. The TV show starting at 15.00 is also the beginning of her Christmas celebration.

Tara's aunt has the leading part in the Christmas celebration as a family expert in the tradition. She decorates the house and does all the cooking. When Tara was asked about the food dishes on the table as shown in the photos, she referred to them as either Kurdish or typical Swedish Christmas food such as 'salad, a special Christmas lemonade, Coca Cola, bread, lasagne, sausages and ham as well as turkey for those who don't eat ham'.

For Tara it is important to celebrate Christmas even though she is a Muslim, just because she lives in Sweden. On several occasions she points out that 'we do everything just like the Swedes do'.

Savita

The second example is Savita who was born in the north of India and now lives with her husband and her two sons in a suburb of Stockholm. She came to Sweden as an adult and is a practising Hindu. Savita is very close to her two sisters-in-law and this year Savita organized the December 24 party. Her main motive in celebrating Christmas is that she finds it important for her sons to be a part of the surrounding society, but she also admitted that she thought it was an experience for herself.

When Savita told a friend at work that she was going to organize the party, the latter immediately assumed the role of 'tradition expert,' helping her in decorating the Christmas tree at work in the proper way. She even made some decorations for Savita to put on her Christmas tree and informed her that a real Swedish Christmas must include watching 'Donald Duck and his Friends' on television at three o'clock in the afternoon. Savita tried to follow her advice but thought that the obligatory Donald Duck-part was slightly ridiculous. The willingness of Savita to celebrate Christmas the 'right'

way definitely excluded food traditions as the majority of the family are vegetarians!

Savita showed us a picture of herself and her sisters-in-law, all dressed in red 'Father Christmas Caps'. Savita is wearing a long blue skirt with a pair of matching blue trousers and she told us, laughingly, that her son was upset when she was dressed that way. He did not think it proper to wear what he described as 'Indian clothes' at what he referred to as 'a Swedish holiday'. For him, it was serious business to celebrate the 'correct' way. We got the impression that for adult family members it was rather a matter of putting form to a Swedish family celebrating Christmas in a playful and imaginative way.

Sepidar

Sepidar is a pensive eighteen-year-old young woman. She has grown up in an intellectual family and her parents originated from Iran. Her family has celebrated Christmas for as long as she can remember. In this family the children have been careful to celebrate Christmas in a proper Swedish way and have learned the proper traditions from kindergarten and school.

Sepidar took a picture of her mother sleeping on the couch during the Donald Duck show, and for Sepidar it symbolises what she always suspected, that her parents have been celebrating Christmas mostly for her and her sisters' sake. Sepidar believes it is the image of Christmas that is presented on television that has formed her opinion about the perfect Christmas celebration and when she talks about *the* Christmas tree, the model comes from the Donald Duck show.

The typical Swedish Christmas Eve dinner contains various small dishes quite similar to the well-known Swedish smorgasbord. Many of Sepidar's photos depict the dinner table at Christmas. When she was younger she demanded to have a typical Swedish Christmas dinner and did not accept any Persian dishes that her parents tried to slip in. She describes herself as a fundamentalist of traditions. Nowadays she accepts new dinner courses as long as none of the traditional ones are taken away (Pl. 33).

We have noticed that the Christmas dinner is an arena for family negotiations, which is clear in our interview with Sepidar: 'We eat herring and beet root salad, it feels like we have become very

Swedish. My parents eat meatballs but my sister and I have become vegetarians; so nowadays we have fake meatballs, and actually this year we also had some tzatziki and guacamole'. This story about the changes of the Christmas dinner is a good example of how one can use traditions within a stable framework to understand the changes of individuals, families and maybe social changes.

Final comments

The first interesting aspect of our study is the importance for young participants, brought up in families that have recently incorporated Christmas celebrations in their culture, to keep the celebrations clean from the influence of 'non-Swedish' elements, such as food associated with their country of origin. An example of this is the young Kurdish woman who labelled lasagna as a typical Swedish Christmas dish, mainly because it symbolized *a new tradition* when eaten on Christmas Eve. In her family the holidays were kept apart physically by celebrating them in different homes.

This can be understood as a way of using tradition to negotiate, within the family, the relationships between the new country, one's native culture and the culture of the majority. On the other hand, when traditions connected to one's home country, ethnic group or religion are celebrated it is rather a matter of negotiating relations to the family and relatives left behind and to the rest of the Diaspora.

In all our examples there is one person who takes on the role of 'traditions expert'. It could be a Swedish friend, a relative with longer experience in Sweden, the media in the form of various TV programmes or society via school or kindergarten.

A final observation is that it is obvious that most people in our study consider Christmas as a non religious holiday, the reason why they celebrate it even if they are Hindu or Muslim.

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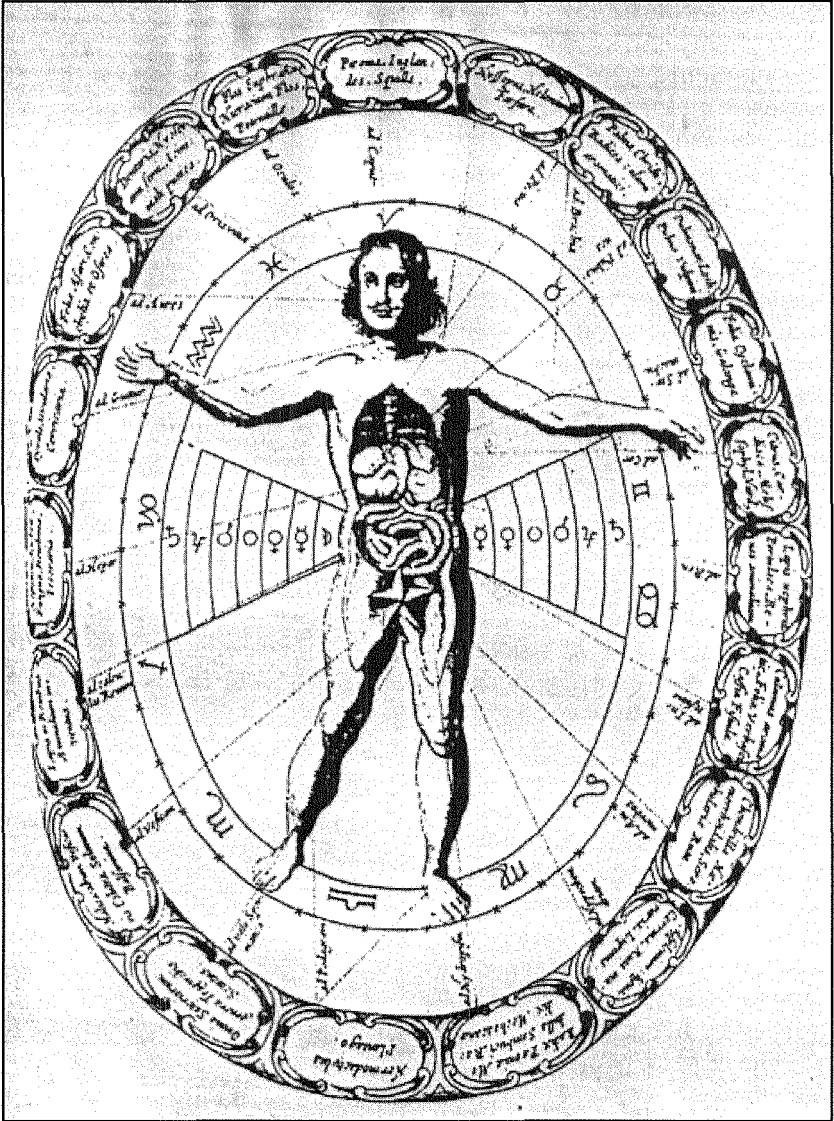
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Rituals in Magic

Arnold van Gennep first published his work *Les Rites de passage* in 1909. He tried to expand ritual research, which was in his time mainly applied to magic and religious acts, to other fields and categories. He showed that 'these rites happen in many ceremonies' (preface) and he examined their function in non- or para-religious ceremonies. At first he distinguished between two types of rites: sympathetic rites and contagious rites (van Gennep 16). In doing so he criticises the research of his contemporaries 'that does neither consider the contexts of rites nor their sequence' (van Gennep 17). Subsequently he tried to establish a classification, sytematization of rites concerning transitions in life history and biography respectively.

I prefer, however, not to speak here about that. Victor Turner, one of the most innovative theorists in the field of social and cultural anthropology, in his book *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969) interpreted ritual as an adequate instrument to treat phenomena that do not really fit into conventional patterns of classification. In doing this he provides us also with an instrument of analysis for rituals of complex industrial societies. Proceeding from rituals of tribal (African) ethnic groups, he then applies his theories on European order-societies and hippy-groups of the 1960s too and finds surprising correspondences.

Since occult and magic practices had their astonishing revival during the last decades, it seems to me appropriate here to deal with contemporary rituals of magic, including some retrospectives onto earlier historical situations.



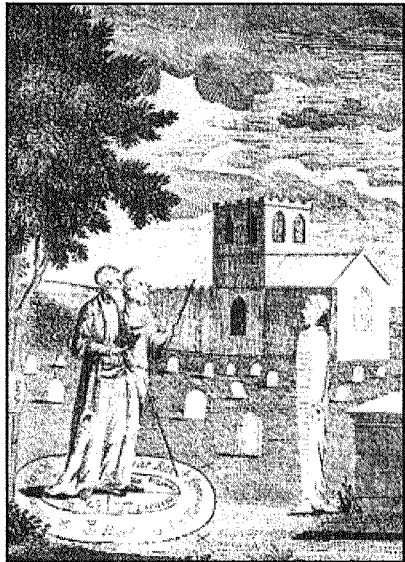
The connection between Marcocosm and Microcosm. (Athanasius Kircher, *Mundus subterraneus*, 2, Amsterdam, 1665)

Principles of magic

The elementary principles of magic include the ‘Sympathy of universe, an idea that was already widespread in classical antiquity and proceeded from the assumption that men and nature are identical in their basic character and that everything in nature is related with everything,’ as Eduard Spranger (1934: 622) marked it. The term ‘sympathy’ is to be understood here in its original meaning of Greek *‘sym-pathein’* for ‘sympathizing’. From the belief in sympathy derive such ancient concepts as sympathetic animals or sympathetic plants, as were told in the Grimm Folktale of ‘The Two Brothers’ (Grimm nos. 60, 85). Two lilies are growing also with the two brothers as their sympathetic plants. As a consequence, whatever happens to brothers is mirrored in the growth of the lilies and so they show the two brothers’ fate abroad.

The metaphysics of sympathetic relations derive from the archaic concept of the animated environment (animism), whose simplest form consists in the personification or the anthropomorphism (humanization) of objects in the surrounding environment. Such a concept can still be observed in children’s psychological development. This means that in place of relations of causality, nature surrounding human life is to be understood as a complex texture of mystic participation. The natural and supernatural form in it a magical totality. This way of thinking also excludes from human life, beside others, the case of coincidence since every event is a manifestation of a supernatural power, only to be grasped by intuition.

The practice of magic implies the use of certain means, including actions, rituals, gestures, charms, special ways of speaking and formulas of conjuration, circling, three time repetitions, hitting, and the



Necromantic ritual. Sixteenth century.

Christian sign of the cross. Of course, these acts and their desired effect are only effective in systems of collective believe.

The ritual is a standardized manifestation through belief-sanctioned processes of magic and religious action. These are frequently 'exceptionally monotonous and boring, strictly limited in their possibilities of action' and the ethnologist 'finds to his disappointment an entirely sober, prosaic, even clumsy art, enacted for purely practical reasons, governed by crude and shallow beliefs, carried out in a simple and monotonous technique', as Borislav Malinowski (1954: 70) states, because only their meticulous execution guaranties the success. The tendency towards automation and mechanization, as inherent in rituals, often makes the border line between cultic rites (in high religion) and magic ritual appear as a flowing one.

Closely connected with instrumental character of magic is the conviction of the automatic effect and compelling power of magic ritual. The belief in natural effectiveness of its means – a belief that is shared also by the clients –, the renunciation to appeal to a superior, helping instance, is in direct opposition to the attitude of subjection and referential veneration typical of 'religious' people.

Based on his field research among the tribes of the Trobriand Islands, Malinowski (1954: 70) describes in a very drastic way the monotony and limitation of magic rituals:

Primitive magic – every field anthropologist knows it to his cost – is extremely monotonous and unexciting, strictly limited in its means of action, circumscribed in its beliefs, stunted in its fundamental assumptions. Follow one rite, study one spell, grasp the principles of magical belief, art and sociology in one case, and you will know not only all the acts of the tribe, but, adding a variant here and there, you will be able to settle as a magical practitioner in any part of the world yet fortunate enough to have faith in that desirable art.

Based on the belief of 'sympathy of the universe' is the magic of sympathy, the magical principle 'similar causes similar' (*similia similibus*) and the 'principle of opposition' (*contraria contrariis*) respectively. Both principles play a dominant role in spells of magic and blessing as well as in their instructions for healing. Rites in the magic of fertility and weather are also laid out according to the principle of imitative magic: if rain is brought about through magic,



Three rituals for seeking a treasure. Petrarca, *Von der Artzney bayder Glück*, 1532.

water should flow; illnesses are connected with the waning moon in order to one make them disappear. 'Contagious magic' (magic of contact) is based on the belief that surface contact leads also to an inner relation of those objects that once belonged together, having preserved something of the essence of the entire structure. The worship of relics is mainly caused by this concept: in magical belief every particle of a saint's body contains the same power that once belonged to the entire body. This leads us immediately to the principle of *'pars pro toto'* as a form of expression of mystic participation: whatever happens to a part happens also to the whole. For instance, blood, nails and hair as parts of the human body are connected with his vital energy.

In the Middle Ages a distinction was already made between white and black magic (Theurgie/Goétie). The criteria for assignment are rather provided by the object of the magic than by its methods. White magic (*'magia licita'*) often consists in rituals performed commonly and publicly (partially with apotropeic character) that should be to the advantage of the group, as with the repulsion of supposed or real dangers from persons outside of the community in their use of magical practices, hunting rituals, magic of fertility and magical rejection. In the social context white magic is to be

seen as acting and being tolerated within the group, whereas black magic (*magia illicita, magia daemoniaca*; nigromantia; nekromantia) counts for asocial behaviours (Durkheim 1981). The latter serves egoistic purposes that are only advantageous to the single practitioner of magic: harmful magic that aims at the elimination of obstacles or the attainment of advantages by harming others (e.g. rivals); magic of love that is practiced in order to gain the favour of a beloved person; as well as all the other gravamina mentioned in witch trials, milk charms, weather charms, and so on. Here can be observed how the two terms of magic and charm (performance of magic) are used synonymously and in a non-critical way.

Closely connected with the instrumental character of magic is the conviction of the automatically effectiveness, the forcible powers of magical rite. Essential seems also the aspect of tradition that was stressed by Marcel Mauss (1974: 52): 'Actions that are not to be repeated are not magical. Actions whose effectiveness is not believed by the entire group are not magical.'

As was to be expected for hunting cultures or for agrarian oriented societies, the use of magical means was primarily for matters concerning the success in hunting or the growth and prosperity of crops: charms for weather or rain as witnessed for Germanic peoples at the begin of the 11th century, and fertility charms where magical rituals were employed mainly following the principles of analogy (*similia similibus*) and of opposition (*contraria contrariis*). Both principles also play an elementary role in Old High German spells and blessings and their instructions for healing (healing customs and magic of healing). The rituals of fertility and weather charms are particularly constructed according to the principle of imitative magic: if you want to cause rain by magic, water needs to flow, and so on.

In the fifth chapter of Book XIX of his *Decretorum libri viginti*, defined as *'corrector et medicus'*, Burchard von Worms (+ 1025) mentions various magical rituals and practices: creation of illnesses and healing; magic of love and creation of impotence; rain charms; witchcraft; oracles; and use of phylacteria and amulets. These amulets are mentioned in can. 80:

Fecisti filacteria diabolica, vel characters diabolicos, quos quidam diabolo suadente facere solent.

Here without doubt 'charakters' can be understood as 'scratch tablets' i.e. tablets of wood or clay with scratched runes.

A detailed description of a magical ritual of a rain charm is also given by the author: 'quod quaedam mulieres facere solent, dum pluvium non habent...'. A small girl is to be put naked in a river and be bespattered with water by others; henbane (*bilsenkraut*) was tied with its root to the smallest toe of the right foot. Then she had to go backwards out of the water into the village. The magical elements of this ritual are clear: nakedness, virginity, henbane, and incantations.

In Edda poetry the god Wotan-Odin is considered as the father of magic (*galdrs fadir*). He owes his abilities, including the healing of wounds, love charms, expulsion of rainy clouds, transformation into various appearances, to runes and *galdrar* (spells, songs). The most important ritual is the magical conjuration by the use of spells, which were structured according to rhythm, as shown by the two spells from Merseburg.



Hexensabbat and Adoration of the Devil. The ritual of kissing the devil's backside. *Compendii Maleficorum*. Liber secundus. Milan, 1609.

Within the Germanic context magic is primarily connected with rune charms. More than their phonetic value, runes are in first instance magical symbols and they own magical qualities. Only those who are especially qualified are able to scratch runes. Every rune had a special value independent from its linguistic meaning. In the saga of Egil the daughter of the farmer Thorfinn is healed by Egil through the scratching of runes into a fish bone that is put under the bed of the ill woman.

In the tenth chapter of his *Germania*, Tacitus described the magic Germans performed using sticks with scratched signs that were thrown over a cloth. From the position of the sticks (*'Buch-staben'*) the future could be foretold. In using magical formulas the magician could ban ghosts or call them. This is the way the sorceress Skuld manages to kill Hrólfr kraki and his family (Hrolfssaga).

The special form of word-magic, where language, rituals and (healing) gestures coincide, shows essential narrative elements in spells. In the *'historiola'* a historic precedent, an exemplary, or an analogous case is called upon in order to guarantee the success of magical action as an example.

In tens of thousands of spells and invocation formulas, in writings from prehistoric times to the tradition of popular belief in modern times, the same principles of action and 'modes of archaic thinking' become effective as they are formulated in the second spell of Merseburg (*'ben zi bena bluod zi bluoda lid ze gliden'*). In other words, all magical actions are based on the re-establishment of a unity ..., that is unconsciously or less complete than these actions themselves (Schultz 2000: *passim*). It is about the re-establishment of a disturbed order. The roots of magical thinking go back to prehistoric times. The complexity of this phenomenon in different cultures and cultural areas, however, calls for a limitation of the analysis of magical behaviour within one specific cultural area or culture, in diachronic approach of course. One should keep in mind that magic and religion are in a genetic relationship.

Undoubtedly we can proceed from a fundamental anthropological constant in magical thinking that has a historic and an evolutionary dimension. Originally magic had a social function in everyday life and was not separated from religious cult. As a matter of principle everyone has the ability to charm, provided he knows the magic words and ritual. Magic is determined in the first instance by its instrumental character, a 'practice', that obviously is only effective

within collective systems of belief – in the use of certain means, actions, rites, gestures complete the magical ultimate purpose. Magic expresses itself in charm as plastic action, i.e. charm is the performance of magic in magical ritual.

Like other peoples, Germanic tribes had also the idea of magical power that enables supernatural charm. Undoubtedly there were women and men who knew magical formulas and exerted magical rituals. In Icelandic sagas, especially those referring to animosities between Icelandic farmers, witches and sorcerers are frequently mentioned as those who are to be called for help. The *Njáls saga* tells about a weather charm that hinders enemies in their pursuit. Hellgerdt sent Thjostolf to the sorcerer Svan. As the Fylgjen of the pursuers come closer, he performs a strange ritual and causes bad weather by analogical magic. He wraps a goatskin around the head and pronounces the spell. The pursuers suddenly are wrapped in a heavy fog (so that they can't see any more, like Svan), lose their weapons and horses, and come into a swamp and into the forest. Only when they decide to turn back, the fog disperses. However, once they do not return, the fog comes back for three times, until they do return.

Magic and the folktale

The way of thinking in primitive magic, the concept of sympathy, participation and analogy is to date preserved in the folktale and is constantly renewed in popular tradition because it is not bound to any special religious world view. Such connections are not immediately identified, of course, in European folktales as in the traditions of indigenous tribes. One has to analyse folktales and penetrate into their oldest layers of religious history. Here magical thinking and magical rites play a dominant role particularly within hunters' concepts of belief, or, more precisely in the relationship between man and animal. Parallels between European folktale motifs and collective traditions of indigenous peoples can be demonstrated in the animal helpers motif complex. This raises the question of temporary stratification in folktales. This is of special importance in connection with the problem of magical world view. The magical flight shows archaic motifs of transformation. This is the resulting of totemic thinking in many folktales of indigenous peoples, leading

to the self transformation of humans in an animal or object or vice-versa (anthropomorphization), a process that happens naturally, even without magic influence.

Only few European folktales show this state. Different historic layers of development can be identified here, often to be frequently found side by side in folktales. The transformation accomplished by the use of magical rituals corresponds to the concept of the temporary ability to deposit animal skin, a concept documented in European folktales as well as in beliefs of indigenous peoples. The magical element only starts to play a role in such narratives, when the 'natural' transformation is not located any more within the range of human imagination. It is then replaced consciously through the various magic rites, transformation into an animal, or magic of harm or intentional transformation.

Here different levels of conscious perception of reality become visible in two different forms: firstly, in relation to the function of single elements in European folktales, secondly, in the difference resulting from their creation that characterizes mental concepts of indigenous peoples. At the end stands the question on reality of magic in folktales. This question is closely connected with the general issue of the reality of belief in folktales. It becomes clearer that magic rituals and actions in folktales seem to be peculiarly colourless in comparison to folk legends.

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Christmas Mumming in Labrador

When I first arrived on a study visit in the Canadian Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I was told by a distinguished folklorist that mumming (i.e. seasonal house-visiting in disguise) no longer took place in any real sense and that all that was left was nostalgic recreation. During fieldwork visits to the community of Mary's Harbour, on the south east coast of Labrador however, my contacts told me of the mumming tradition that still takes place there each year. During the winter of 2003-04, a grant from the Smallwood Foundation enabled me to return to Mary's Harbour, where I was able to witness, and document on film, the practice of Christmas mumming. I have since edited material together to form a film 'Labrador Jannies'.¹ Although this tradition is in decline, everything points to it being continuous, i.e. having been practised continuously since the establishment of Mary's Harbour in the 1930's (and indeed before then in the communities that supplied the population of Mary's Harbour, such as Battle Harbour) until the present day, rather than having been reintroduced at some point.

Newfoundland and Labrador form the most easterly part of Canada. Labrador lies along the eastern seaboard continental Canada, and Newfoundland is the nearby island. Despite (or because of) the fact that they are the areas of Canada which are closest to the British Isles, and which experienced the earliest European activity, they are the newest parts of that country, only becoming part of Canada in 1949. The Province's strong contacts with the old world, relative economic underdevelopment, and demographically conservative character mean that it has been, and to a degree

¹ Roper 2005. The film was shown during the SIEF Ritual Year conference in Msida, Malta, March 2005.

remains, an important relict area for anglophone folklore. For example, the last great haul of traditional anglophone Märchen was made in the Province in the 1960s.²

Labrador, while being geographically larger than Newfoundland, has a much smaller population, approximately 30 000. The village of Mary's Harbour lies at the mouth of St Lewis Inlet in south-eastern Labrador, where St Mary's River meets the sea. There had been salmon fishery here from the 1780s, but it was only after a fire at the formerly important nearby island of Battle Harbour in 1930, following which the Grenfell Association decided to relocate its hospital and boarding school to Mary's Harbour, that it became a site of permanent settlement. Nowadays there are approximately 500 residents. The population of Mary's Harbour is of largely south-west English derivation, although there has been some degree of intermarriage with Inuits. Typical surnames in the community include Acreman, Butt, Jones, Moss, Pye, Rumbolt (by far the most numerous surname), Russell, Snook, Spearing, Stone, and White.

The coastal villages of southern Labrador have traditionally supported themselves by cod-fishing. With the failure of the cod stocks, crab fishing is currently the mainstay of the local economy.³ The coastal settlements of south-eastern Labrador lying north of Red Bay have not been connected to the outside world by road until very recently. 'The Road', in the shape of the Trans-Labrador highway, reached Mary's Harbour in the year 2000. Before this, the only ways to reach the community were by biplane or (in summer) by boat. It was very much with the newly-built road in mind that I decided to document the mumming in Mary's Harbour on film. During fieldwork in the village of Burnt Islands in south-western Newfoundland, I had been told of how the coming of 'the Road' in the 1970s to this previously isolated community had led to the curtailment of the mumming traditions. The fear of crime had led to people to turn away masked strangers into their homes who they could not be sure were from their own village (or from immediately neighbouring villages). Nowadays mumming still takes place there,

² Halpert and Widdowson 1996.

³ For more information on the past and present economic and social situation in this part of Labrador, see Kennedy 1995 and 2000. Kennedy 1996 was written about the nearest village to Mary's Harbour, Lodge Bay.

but in a somewhat reduced form. The mummers ring round in advance to let the hosts that they are coming – while this ensures they are let in, it removes the central element of mumming: the guessing interaction. It may be that such fears, or other social changes, will lead to the curtailment of the mumming tradition in south-eastern Labrador as well.

In Mary's Harbour, mumming, or 'janneying' to use the more usual local term, occurs throughout the Twelve Days of Christmas (from Boxing Day to Old Christmas Day, i.e. December 26th – January 6th), with the exception of Sundays, and of New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. This meant that in the year I was there were eight potential nights on which janneying could take place, and janneying did indeed take place on most (if not all) of these nights. The janneying does not begin until dark. 'Little jannies', i.e. children aged between 6 and 14, usually in pairs or threes, and sometimes, in the case of the younger children, accompanied at a short distance by a parent, make their visits in the period between approximately 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Older jannies, usually in the age range 35 to 65, tend to form groups of somewhere between three and seven individuals, and make their house visits between approximately 8 p.m. to 1 a.m., or conceivably later, if they find lights still on in a house where one or more of the jannies has close friends. While the little jannies usually form groups of friends, the older jannies attempt to group together in unexpected combinations, involving people who do not normally go round together, in order to make guessing their true identities more difficult.

The jannies wear bed sheets about their upper body, which they may draw together around their face to disguise their identity. Another, although less common practice, is to wear a mask. They generally wear coats and trousers that are either rarely-worn, or old, or that belong to another member of their family, in order to avoid instant identification. In no instance did I observe any use of a 'veil' to cover the face, or the use of pillows or cushions to disguise the shape of the body, though these have been reported in the literature regarding other settlements.⁴ A visit begins with the identification of a potentially welcoming house. The door is knocked

⁴ E.g. in Halpert and Story 1969.

on, and a variant of the words 'Jannies allowed?' is usually spoken in a queer, high-pitched voice (I rarely observed the use of ingressive speech, which is commonly mentioned in the literature,⁵ although voices are disguised in a variety of other ways, including speaking lower, higher, or more gruffly). In about 80% – 90% of cases, the householders then allow the jannies in – for example, on one typical night, I joined a set of jannies who were let into twelve properties and denied entry to two others. The jannies then proceed, usually to the kitchen, where they may stand, or more typically crouch, waiting to be identified.

Identification proceeds by observing physical characteristics (especially hands), by asking questions (which are answered truthfully, or by misdirection, but not usually by outright lies), and by trying to make the jannies laugh (an individual's characteristic laughter being less disguisable than their speaking voice). There is a great deal of laughter involved in the guessing interaction, particularly when jannies adopt a bantering tone toward the householders. Shy people often become uncharacteristically forthright when dressed as a janney. One such usually shy man remarked, when he was finally guessed remarked to his host, 'Well, you can't be yourself when you're janneying!' Generally it is only after a substantial period of verbal interaction that the householders (and the householders' own visitors) dare to touch and squeeze the unidentified jannies in an attempt to guess them (Pl. 34). Jannies may attempt to fend off such physical contact with 'splits' (small lengths of wood). The jannies may also be asked to dance, and if music is provided they usually do so, although dancing is not particularly common. Jannies may attempt to give their own identity away if they have not been guessed and are beginning to feel uncomfortably warm and sweaty in their disguise (the difference in temperature between indoors and out can be thirty degrees centigrade or more). In no instance that I observed did jannies leave a household without having first all been identified (Pl. 35).

Having been identified, they are then offered an drink (usually alcoholic, and most commonly dark rum and coke, Canadian whisky, homebrewed beer, or store-bought beer). The little jannies are of course offered only soft drinks, and some adult jannies also chose to

⁵ E.g. by several authors in Halpert and Story 1969.

drink non-alcoholic beverages. The jannies are also offered cakes and sweets. Generally the overall length of the visits is short, 10-30 minutes, and, having been guessed, the jannies often 'chug' (consume rapidly) the drinks they are provided with, in order to proceed quickly to another house, especially at the start of the evening. The main exception is when the jannies have come to what they have decided will be the last house of the night, where they may stay for thirty minutes to two hours. Jannies may travel from house to house on foot. A troupe of hooded figures trudging through the snow in the streetlight makes for quite an impressive sight. If a distance of several hundred metres is involved, jannies may travel in and on the back of an open truck (the most common form of motor vehicle in the village) – this is also quite a sight.

Traditional music making is not generally common in the community – I twice observed that when householders asked the jannies to dance and the jannies had complained there was no music to dance to, there was a prolonged flurry of activity on behalf of the householder to find the right cassette or cd, and the right track on it, by which time the jannies had already been guessed, and the recorded music rendered superfluous. On another occasion, a householder had a mouth organ to hand and was able to play a dance tune for the janney. The janney did then step it a little, but also continued the bantering tone of their interaction by exclaiming 'Call that music!' On one occasion, a group of male jannies and the male host sat round a table in the last house and sang various types of songs – country songs, contemporary Newfoundland songs, someone's own composition, and 'The Lobster Song', a representative of Roud 149 (a song type first noted in the early seventeenth century).

The tradition of Christmas mumming in Mary's Harbour, although it is unusually strong for the Province, is recessive. This is most clearly indicated by the absence of local jannies in the age group 15 to 35 (although there is an interesting exception to this, in that people belonging in that age range, who no longer live in Mary's Harbour, e.g. university students, may go janneying during their Christmas visit to the Harbour). Interviews with seniors reveal that they themselves went janneying when they were aged between 15 and 35, so such a gap in the age profile of jannies would seem to be something new. Furthermore, the testimony of everyone I asked was that there was much less janneying now than in the past – although this year (2003-2004) was said to have had the most

janneying for any of the last three years. I overheard a janney explain to her daughter that I was filming to provide a record 'for when in thirty years time nobody knows what janneying is'. Such comments certainly suggest that local people feel that janneying is on the way out. But a realisation that the negative picture emanating from interview data must be interpreted in a nuanced way is provided by the fact that several seniors living in the community told me that there was now no mumming in Mary's Harbour. One can only conclude that they are able to support that belief, as they do not go out after dark, when they might encounter jannies on the road, and are not among the households visited by the jannies, which also tend to be of the same age as the jannies themselves, i.e. approximately 35 to 65 years old.

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The Life Cycle, Agricultural Rites, and the Annual Ritual Cycle among Czechs and Slovaks

In the past, village society was in some ways a closed community that conformed to its own customs and rules. In closed patriarchal conditions of the village the system of family and annual rites formed an integrated whole. What nineteenth century ethnographers and folklorists valued most about these rites was their aesthetic importance, but those were in fact utterly secondary. The system of ceremonies had mainly a regulatory, utilitarian function. For each member of the village community it determined what he or she should do and when, and how to behave; at the same time it was meant both to ensure, with the help of various magic practices connected with the ceremonies, the desired positive result or, conversely, to exclude possible negative phenomena.

Groups of ceremonies

During his or her lifetime each member of the village community was confronted with two groups of ceremonies. The first one was linked to the cycle of the calendar year. In the climatic conditions of most of the European continent, with only one harvest every year, this calendar cycle was inseparably linked to agricultural tasks done during the year. The aim was to ensure a plentiful crop and thus 'economic reproduction' as well. That meant in practice that the farmer had to win the favour of the forces of nature. Participation in the system of annual ceremonies was essentially the same every year, though it depended also on the social status of a person within the social structure of the village. A prosperous large scale farmer

who has mastered modern methods of farming has tended to free himself from various magical practices more than the smallholder. Consequently, participation in the cycle could change in the course of a lifetime, if a change in social status occurred.

The second group was the family or life cycle, which was connected with reproduction of the family. The ceremonies of this cycle were linked with the main events of human life: birth (baptism), the starting up of a family (marriage and giving birth), and death (a funeral). During a person's life cycle, the person participating repeated some acts of the individual ceremonies, but usually in a different personal role. Whereas the farmer went through the farming (calendar) cycle of ceremonies every year, he was usually the principal actor in the life cycle only once.

Both cycles were interconnected. According to the ideas of the time one could often control neither personal nor family life, but needed the help of supernatural forces. Human life often hung on a thread, being threatened by diseases or natural disasters, particularly for little children. The similarity between human life and the changes in nature was therefore taken entirely for granted. As understood in the patriarchal village, birth, the founding of a new family, and death were closely connected with the annual natural cycle, when in spring new life seemed to be born, which departed in autumn (after harvest), to be renewed the next year (Richlik / Rychlik 1997: 8–11).

In a way, the system of ceremonies also contained kinds of penalties as well. A person who did not abide by the rules that were established by the village community and then became set by the system of ceremonies was running the risk of being excluded from the community life of the whole society. Openly breaking the established rules (for example, not participating in customs, the public contravention of the officially expected prohibition of extramarital sexual relations, the ignoring of the obligatory respect for parents or large-scale farmers, which governed the community) resulted in being socially ostracized: the offender could not participate in the life of the community, and was boycotted by it. In conditions where people were dependent on mutual help, that also meant considerable economic difficulties for such a person.

Even though both the life (family) cycle and the farming (agricultural, calendar) cycle were interconnected, the second group of ceremonies and customs was in fact the determining factor.

Agriculture represents a special kind of production, because it is closely connected with climatic and soil conditions and with the changing seasons. Even today, in consequence of activity in agriculture, a considerable role is played by factors that man either cannot influence at all or can influence only in part. For example, we cannot stop rain or thawing of snow or floods resulting from them, or hail or frost, and although we can partly eliminate drought by artificial irrigation, we do so at enormous expense.

In the distant past the dependence of agricultural production on the whims of nature was far greater than today. In the closed conditions of the patriarchal village, when agricultural production was on a much lower level than it is today, there was, in addition disasters that could destroy a year's work by the farmer, a wide variety of plant and animal diseases that he did not know how to deal with. In the past, man did not therefore draw a clear boundary between himself and animate and inanimate nature, nor did he separate his personal and family life from the natural cycle: on the contrary, patriarchal man consciously became part of nature and its changes. Not only people, plants, and animals, but also inanimate things and the natural elements had their spiritual doubles, their alter egos (*Slovensko* 1975: 1023).

These animistic ideas lasted long into the modern age. They were gradually overlaid with more complex theistic systems, but no major religion was able to eliminate them completely. In the village milieu, monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, or Islam) in the folk form thus changed into syncretism, in which the original ideas could on the whole continue to exist without serious obstacles (Rychlík and Rychlíková 1997: 31–40).

The farmer resorted to practices that were essentially magical, which he believed would help him to influence the very factors that he was unable to influence or which could not in fact be influenced at all. These practices and acts usually came about so that a chance connection or apparent one was raised to a general principle, which was able, when the procedure was precisely followed, to bring about the desired effect. If the anticipated result was not achieved, man believed that it was he himself who was to blame rather than the system. Consequently, the original ceremonies and acts became more complicated and more precise, and thus apparently closer to perfection. The person who performed them believed that in this way he/she was increasing their effectiveness (Stránská 1931: 7).

Agricultural rites

If we had to define the term 'agricultural rite' we would say that it concerns the forces that are embodied by the factors decisive for agricultural production (of plants or animals). These factors are the soil (the land), the crop, or the object of plant or animal reproduction (the plant, its fruits, or a useful part and the product from it; in the area of livestock production, the animal) and the natural forces necessary for the growing process. This force comprises water in the form of sources, such as rain, wells, and rivers. Among the natural forces is fire, which has a magical protective function (Váňa 1990: 119–22, *Slovensko* 1975: 1024). In agriculture the fire rite tends to manifest itself figuratively in the form of worshipping the Sun or some other source of light and warmth. The rite of the home, the fireplace, and the 'family hearth' is thus actually a derivation of the rite of fire. Although rites worshipping the forces are separated in time and often also in space (locally), they form a single, indivisible whole and only with respect to a concrete need can any single rite be more intense than another. All these factors – soil, seed (fruit), water, and fire – and therefore also all the rites concerning the elements work in conjunction; in practice it is impossible to separate them if one does not want to disrupt the annual growing cycle and thereby threaten the peasant's work that results in the crop.

From the point of view of aims in the veneration of agricultural rites we can distinguish two groups. There is, on one hand, the elimination of forces that could be disruptive (demons, evil spirits, witches), and, on the other, the soliciting of help from positive supernatural forces that are meant to work together to achieve the desired result (Rychlík and Rychlíková 1999: 89–96). Both groups again can sometimes interact by means of the same magic operation. The difference is, however, that while the forces of evil can usually be eliminated by the precise performance of the ritual act, the solicitation of help from benevolent supernatural forces depends on the good will of those very same forces. Even though the willingness of those forces to fulfil the request of the petitioner here is to a certain degree dependent on his behaviour, particularly on the respect for the object of the rite and on the intensity of the ceremony, he cannot be angry if his request for help or protection is ignored (Rychlík 1980: 34ff.).

We may be so bold as to call the rite of the earth one of the strongest of the agricultural rites. Within the calendar cycle it is connected with spring, because it is meant to prepare the soil (the earth) to carry out its main mission – namely, the provision of a new crop. The connection with liturgical festivals of the Christian calendar is only an apparent connection, because we find the rite also in other religious systems. We may consider, for example, the New Year for Trees (*Tu Bi-Shevat*) among the Jews (on 15 Shevat, in other words at least a month before Easter) to be a festival of the land, when, according to tradition, nature begins to awaken from her winter sleep and the trees began to burst into leaf again (on *Tu Bi-Shevat* it was customary to eat fifteen kinds of fruit, some of which were meant to be typical of the Holy Land; among the fruit were meant to be those that were to be eaten for the first time that year). The Greeks worshipped Demeter, goddess of the soil and the crop, who was known to the Romans as the goddess Ceres (Parandowski 1980: 110–111, 281–282).¹ The Romans had a special goddess of arable land named Tellus or Terra mater – mother of the earth, also called Dea Dia, the divine goddess. Her cult was attended to by the *Fratres Arvales* ('Priests of the Fields'). The festival, usually celebrated in May, lasted three days. The ceremonies consisted of a feast in her honour, at which the participants blessed bread from the last crop or even from the new crop (in southern parts of Italy), where a feast was held, at which participants poured out wine from a cup onto the earth as an offer to the goddess, sacrificed a lamb in the temple, read old prayers to the goddess, and danced in her honour (Parandowski 1980: 280–281). Also among the Slav population on the territory of what are today the Czech Republic and Slovakia the earth was venerated as the mother of all creation, as the giver and maintainer of life and strength. The ritual was reflected also in the family (life) cycle. A newborn child was laid on the ground so that it could draw strength or a dying person was laid on the ground in order to return to the earth the residue of all the strength, which he or she no longer needed. People put objects into the earth, which were things they believed to be connected with the forces of evil (*Slovensko* 1975: 1024). In the wine-growing areas of western Slovakia the custom is maintained of pouring wine from a glass

¹ Citation according to the Slovak translation.

onto the ground during the tasting of the new grape harvest up to this day.

Upon closer examination we see that agricultural rites fall not only into worshipping the individual elements necessary for the successful cultivation of the crops, but are also based on the worshipping of the individual phases of the growing process and its initial or end product. From that point of view we can talk about the rite of the crop, which may be divided into the rite of sowing or the rite of the seed intended for sowing, the rite of plant growth, and the rite of the harvest or of the fruits and products resulting from them.

The rite of sowing as the prerequisite for securing a good crop is probably one of the parts of the agricultural rite of the crop, which has been best maintained to the present day, though it has of course acquired a somewhat different meaning from what it originally had. The danger for the farmer began at the very start of the agricultural cycle, because in the past, much more so than today, the crop was threatened by frost damage to the seed. Ploughing was also relatively shallow, which increased the danger of the seed being washed away (*Československá vlastivěda* 1968: 233). The rite concerned with the result of the crop was meant to eliminate that danger. Consequently, even before sowing, the peasant prayed to the corn. We know of ceremonies among the ancient Jews for the blessing of the corn to be sowed, which were meant to ensure its power of germination and fertility and we find similar acts also among the heathen peoples of Classical Antiquity. After the adoption of Christianity there appeared among the eastern and southern Slavs (for example, among the Russians and Bulgarians) the custom of the Orthodox priest praying right on the field or blessing the grain on the village green. In some areas the priest himself began the sowing (Stránská 1931: 11). Generally, the sower, no matter what his religion is, calls upon the Creator, as the one who makes life, and therefore also makes the growth of the crops, possible.² During the actual sowing a wide variety of methods or orders and injunctions were employed from

² Stránská 1931 discusses the sower's turning to God the Creator, the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ, and sometimes to various saints. In this sense the relationship is limited to the Christian religion (1931: 12). In fact, however, invoking the Creator in an attempt to ensure the success of the seed is employed in any religion or theistic system.

the sphere of positive and negative sympathetic magic,³ which are in places maintained to this day in the form of a tradition that is now void of its original magical content.

The sowing rite is much like the rites ensuring success in livestock production and the reproduction of the family or, as the case may be, private life in general. Even in the distant past of course people discerned parallels between the generative strength of the earth and the fertility of (female) animals. The successful ensuring of reproduction of farm animals and protection of their health (mainly from a 'curse on the livestock') was ensured by equally complex magic practices, such as sowing or the harvest (*Československá vlastivěda* 1968: 248–249). Man also realized the connection between the growing process in farming and the preservation of the human race. It is therefore logical that in folk society woman was always understood as a symbol of fertility and on the basis of contagious magic she was attributed with the ability to transfer fertility to every living thing that she came into contact with (Stránská 1931: 52). Among the southern Slavs, particularly the Bulgarians, where the closed nature of the patriarchal village lasted much longer than among the western Slavs, there existed ceremonies, for example, that were in their origins very similar to each other, performed between the occasion of sowing (and the beginning of farm work in general) and at weddings (ceremonies to ensure the fertility of the bride) and upon the birth of a child (*Bălgarska narodna poezija i proza* 1981: 239–243, 302ff.; Dinekov 1972: 282ff.). Something similar existed among the Greeks, even in the Classical form (Arnaudov 1972: 83ff.).⁴

After the seed had been successfully sown, the peasant was still far from assured that all would turn out well. It was necessary to ensure enough warmth and moisture and to eliminate great fluctuations in temperature. On this occasion, too, therefore the peasant invoked either the personified forces of Nature or God the Creator, in order both to thank them or Him for what they or He

³ On sympathetic magic, see Frazer 1977: 24–33; for specific examples of magic practices during sowing see Stránská 1931: 13–18, 26 ff.

⁴ Arnaudov has investigated this question using extant folk ceremonial carnival games, which continued in Greek areas into the first half of the twentieth century. These Greek influences affected other Balkan peoples, in this case Bulgarians.

had done for his crop, and therefore to ask their or His continued favour. It is reasonable to assume that the festival Passover (*Pesach*), which the Jews still celebrate (on 15–22 Nisan) to commemorate their having been led out of Egypt by Moses (the Exodus), and which became the Easter of the Christians, dates back to well before the thirteenth century BCE, when the Exodus allegedly took place, and the festival existed even among the Canaanite tribes, where it had the farming implication we have just discussed. That provides the best logical explanation as to why on this occasion the Jews eat the ceremonial unleavened bread and certain other ceremonial dishes, and remove all yeast from their homes.

Another Jewish festival was undoubtedly also connected with agricultural rites – namely, *Shavuot* (the Feast of Weeks), which falls on the 49th day (in other words, the end of the seventh week, hence the name) after the second day of Passover (according to the Jewish lunar calendar, on 6–7 Sivan). On Shavuot the Jews gave thanks to God for the first crop, yet it is almost certain that the ritual was originally not connected solely with Yahweh as the only Jewish God, but that offerings were made to other Canaanite gods (for example, Baal) as well. The religious character of the festival in the form firmly connected to Judaism, when Shavuot became the festival in memory of God's having given the Ten Commandments to Moses at Mount Sinai, is of a later date. Another Jewish festival connected with the agricultural rite of the crop is *Sukkot* (the festival of the Tabernacles), celebrated on 15–22 Tishri, that is to say, in autumn, usually in October. In its religious conception it is a festival in memory of the Jews' forty years of wandering in the desert after the Exodus from Egypt, where the Jews lived in tents (booths or tabernacles), in fact, however, it is an earlier festival corresponding to harvest festivals. The Jews gave thanks to God for a bountiful harvest, later they wandered to Jerusalem and made sacrifices to the temple of Yahweh. The Greeks made sacrifices to the goddess Demeter and the Romans had several gods who embodied the harvest, for example Consus, the god of the harvest, originally having an underground altar in the Circus Maximus in Rome, and Ops, the goddess of the wealth of the harvest, to whom sacrifices were made. The goddess protectress of gardens and the embodiment of the vegetable harvest was Venus Genetrix (Venus the Universal Mother) among the Romans, sometimes identified with the Greek goddess Aphrodite, the goddess of the flowers was Flora, and the god of

orchards and fruit trees was Vortumnus, the god of the changing seasons (Parandowski 1972: 282).

Among the Slavs there were special demons for the growing crops, whose help one had to obtain for the crops or whom one had to prevent from damaging the crops. Among the Russians it was *polevoy* or *polevik*, among the Belorussians *belun*, or *sporysh*, among the Czechs there were *žithola* and *kosířka*, among the Serbs *serpolnica*. The spirit was personified as a double ear of corn, from which wreaths or special puppets were made. These supernatural beings, with the character of field fairies or water nymphs, looked after the crop and the herd (Váňa 1990: 123). Closely related to this category of spirit are the *lesní duchové* (forest spirits), personified in forest cover or trees. Also among the Slavs a special corn ritual in particular was the centre of attention. A stock with a double ear, called the '*zhitna matka*', or 'mother corn' was saved for sowing as a guarantee that the next crop would be good. Particular respect was enjoyed by plant roots that resembled the human figure (Váňa 1990: 144–145). The most sacred tree of the Slavs was the oak, which symbolized strength and power, and to which the Russians sacrificed cocks, hens, bread, and meat. Respect – primarily among the western Slavs – was also enjoyed by the walnut tree and, later, amongst the southern Slavs, the lime (Váňa 1990: 142–143). Of the farm animals the ox and horse enjoyed the greatest respect and it was forbidden to kill and eat them. Anthropomorphic ideas were attached also to the bull as a symbol of generative force (Váňa 1990: 146).

Respect for ears of corn, grain, some trees, and animals appears to a high degree also among the Czechs. From Cosma's chronicle we know of the intervention by Prince Břetislav II, who 'felled and burnt groves or trees, which in many places the simple folk had worshipped', because the 'villagers, still half heathen, maintained [superstitious customs] on Tuesday or Wednesday at Whitsuntide, bringing presents, sacrificing at the wells, and making offerings to evil spirits' (*Československá vlastivěda* 1968: 235).

The last phase of the crop rite was manifested in the harvest itself. At harvest time the farmer feared sudden hard rain or hail as well as hot spells and drought, which would wither the crop. The crop needs not only to be protected but also to be ensured, so that it can be repeated next year. Ceremonies connected with one season occur of course at different times from place to place depending on the climatic conditions. In the mountainous parts of Bohemia,

Moravia, and Slovakia, where the harvest comes late, they are held later than in the fertile lowlands. Perhaps most pronounced are the efforts to thank the natural forces or the Creator and to ensure similar success in the next year too in the form of sacrificing the first crops and first-born animals. Another form of offering was alms to a beggar. The harvest festivals are also related to the ceremonies connected with the harvest ritual, which we find among all peoples. The custom was to leave in the field either the last ear or a few of the best ears, which contained in a concentrated form the growing force of the field and gave it back to the land for the next crop. Later, a wreath of ears was given to the farmer. The custom is observed to this day particularly in west Slovakia: sometimes in large agricultural concerns today a wreath is given to the owner or manager or head of the agricultural concern. Similarly, for example, among vinters (winegrowers) there was a custom of giving several bunches of grapes to a statue of St Urban, patron saint of winegrowers, which is also a survival of offerings to the gods or demons of the crop (*Slovensko* 1975: 1020).

The offering of ears of corn or, as the case may be, the bringing of wreaths of ears of corn, is undoubtedly a survival of the custom of offering corn to the gods, like the custom, chiefly among the southern Slavs, of baking special ceremonial bread for ritual purposes, for which special grain has to be used, or to adhere to unusual methods of magic (Janeva 1989: 14–29). The Third Book of Moses in the Old Testament contains regulations about various offerings, among which fresh unleavened bread is a ‘grain offering’ (Leviticus, 2: 4), which the Jews are meant to bring to Yahweh by means of priests (Leviticus, 2: 1). Wine enjoyed similar respect. Among other things, as a ritual drink, we find it not only among the Greeks but also, for example, among the ancient Thracians and of course the Jews, where it is important mainly at the Seder.⁵

The ritual related to the forces of nature, which enable the growing process, is concentrated chiefly on water. The Bible contains much information about the veneration of the wells and rivers by the Canaanite tribes, although the fact that in the Old Testament there is repeated criticism of these rituals and also warnings that

⁵ The festive evening meal on the first night of Passover in Israel, and on the second in the Diaspora.

the Jews should not take part in them is evidence that a similar ritual was also common amongst the Jews. In the area around the River Jordan, at Sinai, and in the Negev desert there are many sources of underground water, which are connected with biblical figures. There are also numerous sources, which Moses allegedly discovered with his staff when the Jews were wandering in the desert (the best known source of this kind is near Petra, Jordan), in the original oases there are wells often connected with Abraham of the Bible, both in the Jewish tradition and in the Arabic,⁶ such as the Tel-Sheva oasis (at Beer-Sheva, on the northern rim of the Negev Desert). They are probably old ritual sites, where springs were venerated as the residence of the water elements.

Without the annual floods, which brought silt, without the river water, which irrigated the fields, the old civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt would probably not have existed at all. Among the old nations we therefore find respect for the big rivers and streams, which are deified. The river, as a giver of life, stands out among the peoples of Mesopotamia and also Egypt, in the former the Euphrates and Tigris are worshipped, in the latter the Nile. In Classical Antiquity the worshipping of water deities was widespread among the Romans, more than among the Greeks, because Italy is far richer in water than the Peloponnesian area is (Parandowski 1980: 289) (if we leave aside the cult of the sea with its powerful god Poseidon – or Neptune for the Romans – who is of a somewhat different nature). Sacred groves were established and altars were erected at wells. Among the Romans, rivers were held in high regard, and were personified, and changing their flow was considered sacrilege. It was forbidden to bathe in some rivers, and on others it was forbidden to sail. The rivers and streams, wells, sources of water in general, were considered the residences of water deities, which had to be worshipped by making sacrifices that were thrown into the water. It was common, for example, to throw in flowers or coins (Parandowski 1980: 290). The custom has been maintained to this day, though it has of course long lost its original meaning.

Among the Slavs we find in the earlier historical records from the tenth to the thirteenth century evidence of reverence for springs, rivers, and lakes (Váňa 1990: 105, 110–111). Apart from the

⁶ Moses' sources of water appear both in the Jewish tradition and in the Arab.

importance for agriculture clean water was considered a way of purification and therefore had magical meaning. Veneration of rivers by the Slavs was written about as early as the sixth century by the Byzantine chronicler Procopius. In the waters lived water beings (such as water sprites and nymphs), which personified the source of water. Sacrifices had to be made to the forces of the waters to ensure that the source did not dry up or, alternatively, that the forces of the waters did not get angry and cause floods (apart from managing the water as the prerequisite of agricultural production, the water being could have both a positive and a negative meaning for people; an example of the latter is that it could cause people to drown).

Making sacrifices to wells and springs continued in Bohemia well into the Middle Ages, as is evinced by Cosma's entry about Břetislav II. In Slovakia, there was the decree of László I, King of Hungary, who, in the eleventh century, forbade making sacrifices to wells and rivers (*Slovensko* 1975: 1024). The cleansing of the wells continued in some places until the early part of the twentieth century. It was done mainly in periods of drought, and was meant to ensure a good rain. Ritual ceremonies are therefore not connected to a concrete date or liturgical festival, but concentrate on the spring season. The magical function of water in the consecration of the first fruits of the harvest was taken over by holy water in Christianity.

Final comments

The existence of agricultural rites and the ceremonies connected with them is linked to smaller-scale agricultural production and with the patriarchal village. With the advance of new methods of farming the rites and ceremonies have been losing their importance. In some cases, however, they have been changing into customs without their original meaning, becoming a spectacle for the public or an ordinary amusement. This transformation has been taking place in Bohemian lands since the late nineteenth century, but the main impulse was the forced collectivization of agriculture, which began in 1949 as a result of the Communist takeover of the year before. The independent farmer has gradually become a wage labourer in a large agricultural concern and was therefore no longer immediately interested in the preservation of the crop. Also, in the

new conditions after the restoration of private land ownership (after 1990), various ceremonies connected with rituals lost their original content. They now exist mainly as a spectacle for the public.

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The Ritual Year as Reflected in Proverbs – General Notes*

This paper discusses expressions of folk wisdom which allude to the concept of time, its calendrically structured system and the rituals, performed on certain dates. The year cycle has developed a system of folk aphorisms¹ concerning almost every day in the calendar and covering all the activities of man and of nature in great detail. These oral genres offer a vast field for research. The question of whether we can speak of ethnic paremia or not, as queried by the prominent folklorist D. Ben-Amos (1969) and supported by other scholars, is still very topical, especially in view of the type of proverbial sayings under discussion. The main issues I will be examining here are: what is universal and what is unique.

Folk perceptions of time

Since my study focuses on sayings which concern the ritual year, the specific features of folk perception of time must be briefly outlined as reflected in the calendar. It has been commonly observed that the old, pagan principles of dividing the wheel of the year were integrated into the Christian Church calendar resulting in a complex

* The study is supported by the research programme of the Russian Academy of Sciences 'Structure and linguistic organization of the Slavonic text in synchrony and diachrony', # 9.1, 2003-2005.

¹ I use terms *aphorisms*, *proverbs*, *sayings*, etc. denoting various folklore oral genres depicting the ritual year in a rather provisional manner. Apart from the genres mentioned above, I am also examining idioms, comparisons and some spells and curses.

structure. In Slavonic countries this unique combination survives in rural areas and smaller towns, functioning as Christian in form, but pagan in content of the customs and interpretation of ritual activity (Tolstaya 2005: 9-10). In addition to that, each traditional calendar has evolved a system of folk calendrical terminology (chrononyms), which consists of the names for religious holidays and fasting periods, and the names of the saints celebrated on a certain date. The folk calendrical terminology, which adjusted the name of holidays or saints to the traditional Weltanschauung, greatly deviated from the official religious one. Meanwhile each tradition, sometimes contained within a locally restricted area surrounded by a larger area, has its own ethnic specifics – as is well-known to scholars of ethnography and folklore. The differences in languages and dialects are of a special importance in this field – they determine the routes of folk etymology, thus reflecting and reconstructing the major ethnic peculiarities in the rituals and folklore. Cultural and geographical differences also add to the unique character of each folklore tradition, including proverbs.

Despite certain divergences in the ethnic versions of the ritual year, there are characteristics which unify them and form universal ideas. These are the solar and lunar cycles, agricultural activity, cattle breeding, seasonal life of birds, insects, animals, and so on. All these are important factors which influence the folk perception of time and are reflected in every calendar system and its corresponding proverbs.

Folk aphorisms reflect the ritual year through names of holidays, terms of ritual objects, food and participants, and through allusions to certain celebrations throughout the year. Paremia can express direct meaning, appropriate for only one situation, or they can be of a metaphorical nature, describing a set of situations.

Themes and usage

Proverbs and sayings with a direct meaning are numerous in all traditions. The general themes of these paremia are the weather and change of the seasons (folk meteorology), the sun's movements (folk astronomy), the lifespan of nature, agriculture, pastoral practice, hunting, bee-keeping, social life, and occasionally the ritual calendrical practice (the latter is more typical of the metaphoric

proverbs). These sayings denote the openings (beginnings) and endings in the ritual year, they express the idea of cycles and reiteration of natural events, by means of connecting or opposing some dates. The date serves as a marked border – what is good (recommended) before that day and what is bad (prohibited) after it (Russian ‘*Do Ilji muzhik kupaetsja, a s Ilji – s rekoj proshchaetsja*’² – ‘Before Eliah fellows bathe in a river, after Eliah they bid to the river’; ‘*Do Ilji dozhdj – v zakrom, posle Ilji – iz zakroma*’ – ‘Rain before Eliah and into the barn (it is good for the crops), rain after Eliah and out of the barn’) (Korinsky 1994 [1901]: 259, 261). There are also sayings which illustrate what happens before and after a certain date: Polessian³ ‘*Kukushka do Pjatra kue, a posle Pjatra kurej djare*’ – ‘Before St Peter (28 June) the cuckoo cries, after St Peter it eats chicken’ (Tolstaya 2005: 172). The holidays mentioned in some proverbs relate to what should / should not to be done during that day: Polessian ‘*Na Blagustu sej kapustu*’ – ‘On Blagusta (the day after Annunciation in the folk calendar) plant cabbage’, or what happens every year: Polessian ‘*Mikhajlo – snegu namakhalo*’ – ‘St Michael (8 November) brings over snow’ (Tolstaya 2005: 38, 148); Russian ‘*Pridjot Ovdoshka, i otkroem okoshko*’ – ‘St Ovdoshka (1 March) will come, and we shall open the window’ (TKU 2000: 75). Social life (the relationship between young men) is also reflected in such sayings: Ukrainian ‘*Do Dimitra divka khitra, a posle Dimitra lavku neju vitri*’ – ‘The girl is shrewd till St Dimitri, afterwards she is good for nothing (the wedding period is over)’ (Ukraintsi 2000: 396).

Each saying has its own means to educate the people. From the point of view of the intention of these short poetic genres they include bans and prohibitions, advice and recommendations, tokens and symbolic signs, prophecies, conditional predictions (if you do X, then you will get Y), or just statements. Again, a certain date here may mean an important time border, a marker for a definite type of activity: Ukrainian ‘*Na Gleba i Borisa za khleb ne berisja*’ – ‘On St Boris and Gleb do not touch the bread (lit. ‘crops’); Russian ‘*Kto seet*

² I give all Slavonic proverbs in Latin transliteration because of technical reasons. I give a literal translation without referring to English equivalents.

³ For information about the unique archaic East-Slavonic cultural zone of Polessje, see Tolstoy 2005; Tolstaya 2001.

rozh na Frolov denj, u togo rodjatsja florki – ‘Whoever sows rye on St Flor’s (8 August), will only have *florki* (flowers, not crops)’ (Snegirev 1999: 406, 146).

As mentioned earlier, the usage of all these sayings may be restricted by time – they exist only in the context of a certain date or a certain holiday, and they are used automatically as an important part of these particular beliefs. Their usage is also restricted by place – they are mostly local, dialectal (their grammar and the vocabulary is not standard) based on the climate of a certain zone. As such the geography of the sayings is important for every region, especially for Russia: if we compare, for example, the folk meteorology in the northern and the southern parts of the country, as presented in sayings, we can see drastic differences in timing and in attitude to the rain, droughts, winds, and so on.

We can also speak of the social dimensions of the sayings: these mostly concern villagers involved in agricultural activities. During Soviet times, people in the rural areas still followed the folk wisdom despite the ideological pressure and the widespread neglect of the past. However, in the cities or in mass media such aphorisms were definitely not a part of everyday discourse. Nowadays, after perestroika, the situation has changed drastically. The reconstruction and reinvention of Russian folk culture has become a new ideology (Sedakova 2001: 132-133). Every day radio stations, TV programmes, newspapers and magazines provide ‘folk’ information on that particular day in the ritual year⁴. Being pressed upon the people, proverbial sayings become ‘common knowledge’, which includes folk meteorology, the agricultural calendar, ritual activities, fortune telling, etc. It has become nearly obligatory to use such a saying in the weather forecast on TV, or to allude to a Church or folk celebration. Fifteen years ago Soviet people would not have known what the Annunciation was, while now, in 2005, on that particular day, 7th April, all the people I spoke to repeated the same

⁴ The calendar as it is denoted in mass media and everyday life has changed. People do not chose months or official holidays as time markers, but Church feasts, or folk customs. Shrovetide is one of the most popular time denotations, especially fashionable in the commercials, see illustration of the site www.machaon.ru ‘Shrove for everyone!’ (Fig. 1). See also sites with many calendrical proverbs, prophecies and weatherlore: www.token.ru; www.primeta.nm.ru; www.days.ru, and others.

meteorological prediction: 'They say that whatever the weather is on the Annunciation, it will be the same in summer'. Automatically, knowing another version of this saying I would add 'Whatever the Annunciation is, Easter will be the same'. Speaking about weather is an eternal topic, but using the 'old-new' paremia in such a conversation is a new development, vividly illustrating the social character of short oral genres.

Another thematic group of paremia which is presently topical and popular today is connected with the folk agricultural calendar. These are used in broader contexts than just TV programmes and publications for those who grow fruit or vegetables (these people very passionately take into account what proverbial wisdom recommends and prohibits in their work at their dachas or farms). Everybody who reads newspapers and magazines or listens to the radio *cannot* avoid knowing now what kind of the proverbial saying is applied for this particular day. Often, these proverbs are far from the activities of Muscovites and other Russians, for example, people in old Russia used to say: '*Pridjot prorok Amos pojdjot v rost i ovjos*' – 'When Prophet Amos (15 June) comes, oats will start to grow' (Korinfsky: 1994, 229); what is more, the names are not familiar to them at all. It seems to me, I repeat, that these sayings partly (together with the commercials) play the role of the Soviet ideological slogans.

Images and poetics

The images and the poetics as well as the linguistic means based on folk etymology are of special interest for ethnic scholars of proverbial sayings. The names of saints (which were foreign for Slavs – Greek, or Hebrew (Tolstaya 2005: 377-384)), and the name of Church festivals (in Church Slavonic, not Russian) have been thoroughly transformed, thus becoming associated with Russian words, or folk names with a transparent meaning.

The onomasticon (list of names) of saints and folk names for holidays had many versions and epithets, describing their peculiar folk, not Orthodox Church content and allusions. Thus one name has several versions which helps to make a rhyme (a typical poetical means of the short folklore genres, including proverbs). In Polesje St Evdokia (1 March) has 16 short names, St Paraskeva (14 October)

– 6 versions and St Andrew 30 November) – 5 (Tolstaya 2005: 379-380). Compare rhymes: '*Khto naprjaje na Eudoky, to budut goly boky*' – 'Whoever spin on Eudoky, he will go naked (nothing to wear)'; '*Evdoki – s gory potoki*' – 'On Evdoki springs (flow) down from the mountains', '*Eudokej – vody po bokej*' – 'On Eudokej water comes up to your waist.' (Tolstaya 2005: 95-96)

A very important principle for calendrical proverbs is usage of the folk semantics of chrononyms and their relationships with changes in nature or with agricultural activities. The ideas of action, movement, and corresponding associations are very popular. For example, Russian '*Sretenie, Ustretenie*' (2 February) is associated with '*ustrecha*' ('meeting'); compare Russian, Polessian '*Na Sretenje zima s letom vstrechajutsja*' – 'On Sretenie winter meets up with summer' (Korinfsky 1994: 114; TKU 2000: 74; Tolstaya 2005: 240).

On *Vozdvizhenje, Vzdvizhenje* (Exaltation of the Holy Cross, 14 September), the root *dvig* ('to move') is chosen so as to describe the changes in the world: '*Na Vozdvizhenje solntse dvizhetsja*' – 'On the Exaltation the Sun moves'; '*Na dvore Vozdvizhenje, poslednjaja kopna s polja dvizhetsja*' – 'When the Exaltation arrives, the last haycock moves from the fields'; '*Na Vzdvizhenje ni zmija, i nikakoj gad po zemle syroj ne dvizhetsja*' – 'On the Exaltation no snake, no reptile moves over the ground' (Korinfsky 1994: 307); '*Na Vozdvizhenje ptitsa v poljot dvinulasj*' – 'On Exaltation the (migrating) bird moved'; '*Vozdvizhenje osenj navstrechu zime dvigaet*' – 'Exaltation moves autumn towards winter' (Dal' 1955, 1: 226), etc.

Some other Christian autumn holidays in folk perception have similar ideas of seasonal changes. *Vvedenie* (Presentation of the Ever Virgin to the Temple, 21 November) has the root *ved*, which means 'to bring over, to begin': '*Vvedenje prishlo – zimu na Rus' zavelo*' – 'The Day of Presentation has arrived and brought over winter to Russia' (Korinfsky 1994: 374). *Pokrov* (Protection of our Most Holy Lady and Ever Virgin Mary, 1 October) is associated with the Slavonic *krytj* ('to cover'), which is expressed in sayings with various semantics: Russian '*Pokrov zemlju pokroet*' – 'The Day of Protection will cover the earth (with snow)' (Korinfsky 1994: 326), Polessian '*Svjata Pokrova, pokroj zemeljku listochkom, a golouku venochkom*'

⁵ According to folk etymology this day in Polessje is celebrated as the imagined day of St Pokrova.

'St Pokrova, cover the earth with leaves and my head with a wedding garland' (Tolstoy 2005: 348).

Not only Church holidays, but saints' days are often used in proverbs based on folk etymology. Saint Luke in Russian sounds like the noun *luk* ('onions'), St Helen (21 May) in Russian – *Oljona* – is similar to *ljon* ('flox'), St Mokrina (19 July), St Mokey (11 May) have in Russian folk etymology root *mokr* ('wet'): '*Mokro na Mokeja – zhdi leta eshche mokree*' – 'If it is wet on St Mokey's day, summer will be even wetter'. *Makavei* – is associated with the Russian *mak* (poppy seeds), St Korniliy (12 September) is connected with the Russian word *korenj* ('root'): '*Korniliy svjatoy – iz zemli kornevishche doloj*' – 'On St Korniliy all the roots sprout out of the soil', '*S Kornilja korenj ne rastjot, a zjabnet*' – 'After St Korniliy's the roots do not grow but become cold' (Korinfsky 1994: 297). Saints days connect the date with a human characteristic: *Gordej* – through the root *gord* ('arrogance'), mental abilities: *St Naum* (1 December) – through the Russian word *um* ('brains, reason') as in '*Svjatoy Naum nastavit na um*' – 'St Naum will give you reason' (Korinfsky 1994: 383), and so on.

There are many examples with a similar structure of associations which is typical for various folk traditions. I would here like to give some examples of the ethnic specifics of the sayings which are based on different terms for holidays and, by doing so, also provide various examples of folk etymology. In Polesse Ascension Day is called *Vshestje*, *Ushestje* and the root *shest* (number 6) serves to help people to remember the day when it is celebrated – 6 weeks after Easter (Tolstaya 2005: 59). In Bulgaria the Church holiday of the Transfiguration (6 August) is called (in dialects) *Pribrizhene*, *Priblizhene* (Stojnev 1994: 284) and through the root *blizh* ('near', 'to come closer') is associated with coming of autumn. The Russians do not have such allusions for Ascension Day and Transfiguration Day.

In spite of this we can speak of universal features in choosing the date for a proverbial saying. The most frequent dates, as we can see, are those which concern weather changes and the beginning and close of a season. Annunciation Day is one of Russians' favourite folk holidays, the first ritual in the set of rituals at the beginning of spring. They say that on Annunciation Day even a bird does not build the nest (compare one of the versions of this proverb: 'They say that the cuckoo does not have a nest because she had built it on

Annunciation Day' (Dal' 1955, 2: 214). Numerous proverbial sayings reflect this attitude: '*V kakoj denj Blagoveshchenje (B), v takoj denj vse dela nachinajut*' – 'On whatever day of the week Annunciation (A) falls, on that day people start all their work'; '*Koli vesna ranee B., mnogo morozov uperedi*' – 'If spring arrives before A., there are many frosty days ahead'; '*Na B. moroz – mnogo ogurtsov*' – 'If A. is frosty, there will be many cucumbers'; '*Mokroe B. – mnogo gribov*' – 'Wet A. – many mushrooms'; '*Groza na B. – tjoploe leto, k oreksam*' – 'Thunder storm on A. – worm summer, many nuts'; '*B. bez lastochek – kxolodnaja vesna*' – 'A. without swallows – a cold spring'; '*Nakanune B, sej gorokx*' – 'On the A. eve plant the peas', and many others (Dal' 1955, 1: 91).

Division of the year

The folk division of the year into two parts, as a set of pairs (Chicherov 1957; Propp 1963; Tolstoy 2005) is very well illustrated by sayings. There are usually two dates, or two saints, which link conditions occurring at different time of the year. Thus connected are St Alexej-the-warm and St Alexej-the-cold, St Nicholas-in-summer and St Nicholas-in-winter (same with St George, in Russian *Egorij, Jurij*, several holidays of John the Baptist, etc.).

Russians used to say 'There are two Georges in Russia – George-the-cold and George-the-hungry', 'There are two Nicholases: warm and full, and cold and hungry' (Korinsky 1994: 194). Not only saints with similar names (or the two feasts of one saint) are used in the proverbial sayings, but different saints whose days are successive, compare '*U Evdokeji voda, u Egorija teplo*' – 'If wet on St Evdokija's (1 March), then on St Egorij's (23 April) it is warm' (Korinsky 1994: 134); '*V osenj Egorej s mostom, a Nikola s gvozdjom*' – 'In autumn Egorij (26 November) comes with a bridge, and Nikola (6 December) comes with the nail'; '*Egorij s vodoj, a Nikola s travoj*' 'Egorij (23 April) comes with water, and Nikola (5 May) comes with grass' (Snegirev 1999: 73, 103). A widely spread saying concerns three saints whose feasts are in December: Russian '*Varvara zavarit, Savva zasalit, Nikola zakujot*' – 'Varvara (4 December) will cook, Savva (5 December) will use the fat and Nikola (6 December) will forge it up' (Korinsky 1994: 385); Polessian '*Varvara zavarytj, a Mikola potverdytj, a Ganki zobjutj sanki...*' – 'Varvara will cook, Mikola (6

December) will make it firm, and Ganka (9 December) will make sledges' (Tolstaya 2005: 42); Serbian proverb '*Varvaritsa vari, a Savitsa khladi, Nikola kusa*' – 'Varvaritsa cooks, Savitsa cools it and Nikola eats' (BNM 1968: 40); and the Bulgarian saying '*Varvara vari, Sava go soli, Nikola jade*' – 'Varvara cooks, Sava adds salt, Nikola eats it' (Slavejkov 1972: 110). Here we can see how the connections between the saints differ (note only the usage of the same verb +*variti* describing *Varvara's* activity because of the phonetic affinity of the two Slavonic languages). The Russian and the Polessian sayings express the idea of snow and the beginning of winter, while the Serbian and Bulgarian deal with the ritual food, when a set of special dish *panspermia* is eaten for the three days and the temporal closeness of the saints' days.

In Bulgaria there are symmetrical feasts such as St Athanasius in the winter (18 January) and St Athanasius in the summer (5 July). According to the folk belief of some Bulgarian and Bessarabian villagers, these dates indicate the beginning of the other half, of the turn towards the warmer time or colder time (PA 1984). In Russia the celebration of two days dedicated to St Athanasius does not reveal this symmetry in the sayings. While St Athanasius in January marks the coldest days, his summer feast (5 May) is connected with the beginning of the sowing season (Sedakova and Tolstaya 1995: 119-121).

Context and behaviour

I will now concentrate on an analysis of a group of proverbs which have a figurative meaning and can be used in the context of a whole range of situations that are not directly connected to a specific holiday. Such sayings can be applied on various occasions that are not necessarily chronologically related to the date mentioned (Permjakov 1970). A number of proverbs concern calendrical rituals that are major celebrations. Meanwhile references to Christmas or Easter in the sayings rarely describe the religious meaning of the holidays, but denote only a great feast. The semantics of a special, unusual day is expressed very often. The choice of the holiday can differ in various folk traditions, as can be illustrated by a number of Balkan proverbs with the same meaning and structure: Bulgarian '*Seki den ne e Velikden*' – 'People do not celebrate Easter every day';

'*Seki den ne biva kolada*' – 'Christmas cannot be celebrated every day'; Turkish '*Her gun bir bayram olmaz*' – 'Bayram cannot be celebrated every day'; Romanian '*Odata-i craciunul intr-un an*' – 'Christmas is not celebrated every day'; Albanian '*Pashke s'eshte per dite*' – 'Easter is not every day' (BNM 1968: 226). In spite of differences of the celebrations (Easter, Christmas, Muslim Bayram), the various cultures express the same wisdom 'One cannot celebrate every day', which is normal. Compare the opposite: Bulgarian '*Za ludija vseki den e praznik*' – 'For a crazy person each day is a holiday'; '*Za ludija kata den e Velikden*' – 'For a crazy person Easter is every day', i.e. an abnormal situation (Slavejkov 1972: 208). The opposition of normal and abnormal is frequently encountered in proverbs, compare Russian '*Znaet vsjak, chto Khristov denj prazdnik*' – 'Everybody knows that Easter is a holiday' (Snegirev 1999: 399).

A calendrical holiday is a symbol of merriment and excess eating. This is reflected in many proverbs, especially alluding to the Shrovetide: Russian '*Maslenitsa objedukha, denjgam pobirukha*' – 'Shrove is a glutton, a squanderer of money' (Snegirev 1999: 158); '*Ne zhitjo, a Maslenitsa*' – 'It is not life, but Shrove' (meaning 'real feast'); '*Ne vsjo kotu Maslenitsa, budet i Velikij post*' – 'Shrovetide is not every day for a cat, Great Lent will come' (Dal' 1955, 2: 302). The excessive drinking can be alluded to by referring to two holidays that are apart: '*Pili na maslenitsu, pokhmelje na Radunitsu*' – 'We drank during the Shrovetide, but the hang-over came after Easter' (Korinfsky 1994: 124).

Allusions to a specific calendrical custom may also construct a semiotic situation with the semantics of a deadline or a temporal border. Some proverbs illustrate thus the ritual content of the holiday but emphasize the idea of ritual behaviour, usage of right/wrong ritual objects, and so on. Modelling of the situation of the proper/improper way of behaving can be connected with timing: Russian '*Dorogo jaichko k Khristovu dnju*' – 'An egg for Easter is very precious' (Dal' 1955, 4: 675), Bulgarian '*Kato mine Velikden chervenite jajtsa pari ne struvat*' – 'After Easter the red eggs cannot be sold'; Bulgarian '*Sled Koleda Koladele*' – 'Carols aren't sung after Christmas' (Slavejkov 1972: 459). The same idea can be expressed with the image of wrong dress: Bulgarian '*S edin pantof Velikden pravi*' – 'S/He celebrates Easter with one shoe' (Slavejkov 1972: 432); '*Velikden ide, Stojan gashti njama*' – 'Easter is coming, Stojan does not have any trousers' (Slavejkov 1972: 131); non-festive dish: Bulgarian

'*Obicham go kato leshta na Velikden*' – 'I love him like eating lentils at Easter' (Slavejkov 1972: 187); Russian negation '*Bez blina ne Maslena*' – 'There is no Shrovetide without a pancake' (Dal' 1955, 2: 302) (cf. Pl. 37).

Another particular feature of the proverbs based on the strict timing of the Church holidays is the semantics '**Never**'. Compare Russian '*V Voznesenie, kogda ono budet v Voskresenie*' – 'On Ascension Day when it falls on a Sunday' (it is always on a Thursday) (Dal' 1955, 1: 200) and Bulgarian '*Na Vrabnica v srijada*' – 'On Palm Sunday, when it falls on a Wednesday' (Slavejkov 1972: 300). The correlation between two close holidays constructs the semantics of a very short time, which is used in curses: Bulgarian '*Da te pozhivi Gospod ot Badni vecher do Koleda*' – 'May you live from Christmas Eve till Christmas ('I wish you death')' (Slavejkov 1972: 162) or the Russian ironic saying '*Zareksja pitj ot Voznesenja do pervogo podnesenja*' – 'He gave up drinking from Ascension Day till first serving' (Dal' 1955, 1: 199).

Each European culture has developed its own ways of seeing the ritual year through metaphorical proverbs, idioms and sayings. Although the set of holidays chosen by each folk paremiological tradition may be different and unique, the major principles of mentioning a rite in a proverb have universal value and correspond to the structural and semiotic rules of the folklore genre.

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Midsummer Celebration in Denmark

Sankt Hans aften ('Saint John's Eve'), celebrated on 23rd June, is the second most popular festivity in Denmark, next after Christmas, its winter counterpart, with which it has both common and contrasting features.

Like Christmas, Saint John's Eve is the syncretic result of older pagan rituals in summer, of Christian teaching and of peasant concerns with the agricultural year cycle, on which modern industrial society has grafted new reasons for celebrations and new forms of social gathering. As with Christmas, Saint John's Eve is commonly assumed by most Danes to be an ancient, unbroken and monolithic tradition. But as I hope to show in the following, this tacit assumption is a delusion.

St John's Eve in contemporary Denmark

Saint John's Day itself (June 24th) is no longer a public holiday in Denmark. It was dismissed as a holiday in 1771 as part of the government's general policy of reducing the yearly number of non-working days. Yet, the midsummer celebration in Denmark still takes place on Saint John's Eve, that is on the evening of June 23rd, even though people have to go to work on the morrow – contrary to Sweden, where the Midsummer celebration has been moved to 'Red Saturday', the Saturday closest to 23rd June, so that people can rest on the following Sunday from the exhaustion of the festivity.

Nowadays Saint John's Eve is both a private and a public festivity. The private festivity consists of a party for friends and relatives, often with a bonfire if one is lucky enough to have a garden. The public festivity, transmitted on television, is centred round a communal bonfire, organized by the municipality on a beach or in a

public garden, with official speeches, communal singing and professional musical entertainment.

Nowadays, the ritual core of the celebration is the lighting of the bonfire and the burning of the 'witch', a human-sized doll made of thatch and rags. Once the 'witch' is burnt down, the participants sing Holger Drachmann's *Midsummer Song* from 1885, usually referred to by its first line '*Vi elsker vort land*' ('We love our country'). It is not a nationalistic song, however, actually ending with the lines: 'Oh! Saint John, oh! Saint John, We want peace in our land...'. It is rather a nostalgic love declaration to the countryside of Denmark, which is at its loveliest around midsummer. However, its beautiful melody, by P.E. Lange Müller, is quite difficult to sing. Some fifteen years ago the pop group 'Shubidua' provided Drachmann's text with a new melody, heftier but easier to sing, which quickly became a hit. Since then, attendants to the bonfire sing both versions of Drachmann's *Midsummer Song* one after the other. If the weather permits it, people spend the evening around or near the bonfire with a picnic basket and a large supply of wine or beer and stay there until the small hours. If the weather gods are unkind, people eat first at home and make a brief attendance at the bonfire, to sing *Midsummer songs* under their umbrella. Denmark lies around the 56th. parallel, and at this latitude, the night is never quite dark at the time of the solstice, which is a huge contrast to the dark and endless nights of the Danish winter. So, whatever the weather, Danes enjoy the brightness of Midsummer Night, which is the highlight of the celebrated 'bright nights' of summer.

The Christian element

The birth date of John the Baptist was fixed to June 24th in 330 in reference to Luke's Gospel, which tells that John's mother Elisabeth was six months pregnant when the angel Gabriel visited the Virgin Mary. The choice of the summer solstice for the date may also have been influenced by the Gospel of John, in which the Baptist says about Jesus that 'his fate is to increase, mine is to decrease' (3, 30), since the days become shorter after John's birthday and longer after Christ's birthday. Anyway, as a general rule, the Catholic Church has ensured that the dates for Christian celebrations should coincide with earlier, pagan ones – though it has to be noted that neither

Saint John's Night nor Christmas coincide exactly with the solstices, which are respectively on June 21st and December 21st. This point had led French folklorist Arnold van Gennep (1999: 1432-1433) to dismiss categorically the solstitial theory about the origin of both festivities. (The picture is undoubtedly more complicated by the accumulated inaccuracies of the Julian calendar until the reform by Pope Gregorius).

Visual arts mostly depict John the Baptist as a child together with the Holy Family. As a grown-up the frescoes in Danish churches show him baptising Jesus, as a decapitated martyr, or as an interceptor for mankind together with the holy Virgin on Doomsday. According to folk tradition John had a special healing power. This is not documented by the Scriptures, and probably has more to do with pagan folk beliefs connected with the solstice. On his feast day people would go in churchyards and gather dew, which was supposed to cure eye ailments. Up to the 17th century the dominant element in Saint John's celebrations was the pilgrimage to local healing sources (see later).

Saint John's celebrations in Denmark – a brief historical survey

In his 'Chronicle of the Nordic People' (1555) – a precious source of information about Swedish folk-life in the 16th century – the Swedish scholar Olaus Magnus (1972 [1555]) describes the celebration of Saint John's Eve in the following way:

When every wood, field and meadow is in full bloom, at the time when the sun enters the Cancer, on the day of John the Baptist (an evening which already our ancestors celebrated with huge feasts, and which they have taught their descendants to keep celebrating), all people of both sexes and of all ages use to congregate in groups on the village place and in the open fields, there to chain-dance happily in the light of the numerous bonfires which are being lit everywhere.

While dancing, people sing ballads about the deeds of ancient heroes – either from the homeland or from other countries. These are songs about chaste women and shameless women. Both songs and melodies have been kept by tradition since our ancestors' time, and they are being accompanied by the sound of the cithar and

pipes. Girls sing about husbands' many shortcomings, their gambling and fighting in the ale-house, their bad company together with fools and jesters, their drunkenness. In reverse, youngsters sing about the laziness, falsehood, gossip, vanity and faithlessness of women (my translation)

The pagan celebrations of Midsummer continued after the Reformation in 1536, at which time John the Baptist's Day, June 24th, still was a holiday. But the Reformers disapproved highly of the folk celebration, both of its pagan sinfulness and of its 'popish' remnants. The vigils, i.e. the nightly religious services preceding the holiday, inherited from Catholic times, were apparently accompanied with 'dance and night-drinking, ritual parrying of youth, shouting, singing and drinking throughout the night... and all the sinfulness that ensued from this' (Hemmingsen 1576: 208). Again and again priests were summoned by the bishops to replace this pagan merry-making by sermons about John the Baptist's conception and birth, his teachings and decapitation (Palladius 1925-1926: 133). In 1604, the rector of the University of Copenhagen reported that he had been on inspection at the student hall and to his great surprise only found very few students. All other students were away on a drinking bout that had started on Saint John's Day 'with may feasts and maypoles, etc.' and lasted no less than thirteen days (Rørdam 1868-1869: 186). So there is some ground to believe that at all times 'Saint John's Eve' celebrations in Denmark have had more to do with pagan midsummer than with the Christian worship of the saint.

The Midsummer bonfire

The bonfire and the burning of the thatch witch-doll are the essential element and main symbol of modern Midsummer celebrations in Denmark. Whereas the bonfire itself is an old custom, the burning of the witch figure is quite recent. Ritual bonfires are not specific to the summer solstice. Romans, for example, lit a bonfire to keep wolves away and save cattle from diseases during the shepherds' celebrations of *Palilia* on April 21st. The oldest testimony of bonfires in connection with Midsummer Day comes from the African bishop Fulgentius in the beginning of the 6th century. The lighting of ritual bonfires on June 23rd is a custom known in many parts of Europe as

well as in Morocco, and has been exported to America by the Spaniards. But 'widespread' does not mean 'universal'. Detailed folkloristic inquiries have shown both in France (van Gennep 1999: 1439-1463) and Germany that in many districts ritual bonfires were not lit at Midsummer, but at other times of the year. In Germany bonfires were used in connection with Saint George's Day (April 23rd) and Valpurgis Day (May 1st). In Denmark too, although we do not have as systematic and minutious inquiries as in France, ritual bonfires were lit in many districts up to the 19th century not at Midsummer, but on other dates, mainly during 'Valborgnat' (Valpurgis Night), and also Easter and Whitsun. On the isle of Romø a ritual bonfire was lit instead on February 22nd since most men were away fishing on Midsummer Night. It was called '*Pers pig bål*' ('Peter's stock'), a name that refers to the three stars that make up the Orion Belt. So bonfires have not been the sole prerogative of Saint John's Eve, and conversely Saint John's Eve has not necessarily been celebrated with a bonfire (Schmidt 1930).

Maybe the main bonfire night of the year in the whole of Scandinavia was originally Valpurgis Night, and has since moved to Saint John's Eve – as has the equally labile tradition of maypoles and maytrees. Yet, Valborg bonfires continued well into the 19th century in parts of Jutland.

Whatever the date, ritual bonfires used to be lit on local hills with the help of '*vild-ild*' (literally 'wild fire'), an archaic lighting method consisting of rubbing a piece of oak tree against a rope until it gives sparks. Many folk beliefs have long been associated with this technique. For instance, in Norway, herds that had been bit by a crazy wolf and thus risked to spread the disease to the rest of the cattle were cured by being led through the smoke of three fires lit by 'wild fire'. In the Dales of Sweden sick people could regain health by springing through a bonfire lit in this way. In Denmark ashes of such a fire were spread over plants as a protection against worms.

In 1736 Bishop Erik Pontoppidan complained about the lighting of bonfires. Pietism was gaining influence in Denmark and a few years later, in 1744, bonfires were forbidden by the authorities both on Valpurgis and Saint John's Night. Like many such official interdictions, this seems to have had limited success. Anyway, in the beginning of the 19th century, bonfires became widespread again and are nowadays the central feature of Midsummer celebrations.

Maytrees and maypoles

The decorating and raising of the maypole is to this day the main characteristic of the Midsummer celebrations in Sweden. This is not the case with Denmark. Even in the 19th century the maypole and maytree tradition was only enacted on June 23rd in some parts of Denmark, mostly the south of Sjælland. In the rest of the country it happened earlier in the spring.

Young people would go in the woods to pick the newly blossomed birch leaves to decorate homes, and especially to fetch a young birchtree, which they would then bring back and plant again on the village place or at the top of a nearby hill. The tree would then be decorated by wreaths made of leaves and ribbons, which young girls would have made and presented to their boyfriends of the year. Each youth would then put his wreath on one of the tree's branches. If there were not enough branches for all the wreaths, the boys would plant their knife in the trunk of the tree and hang their wreath on it. Once the maytree was fully decorated, young people would dance around it, first a ritual dance, later on a more ordinary dance.

Describing the dancing and singing around a bonfire during Saint John's celebrations in the 19th century, folklorists sometimes included it under the heading 'May Feast', though it took place in June. There seems to have been a linguistic shift in the Scandinavian vocabulary derived from the word 'may' ('maypole', 'maytree', 'to go maying', 'to may oneself', etc.) so that it has gradually come to mean a certain *type* of ritual, celebrating the nature renewal whenever it took place during spring or early summer, rather than a certain *month* of the year.

Folklorists are prone to explain this shift by the calendar reform, which replaced the Julian calendar by the Gregorian calendar. Though edicted by Pope Gregorius XIII in 1582 (when October 4th was immediately followed by October 15th), the reform first reached Scandinavia in the 18th century (1700 in Denmark, 1750 in Sweden). This meant that ten days were suddenly ripped off the calendar. In the Danish climate these ten days at the beginning of May are crucial. The birch tree, the national tree of Denmark, comes into bud between the 8th and the 12th of May according to our modern calendar. The first appearance of buds on a birch tree is to this day an important event, usually announced on TV news! Before the calendar reform

one could be sure to find green buds on birch trees with which to decorate houses and maypoles. This was no longer the case after the reform. So the spring/summer 'maying' celebrations were gradually moved to Saint John's Eve, which moreover coincides for Danish peasants with a recess in fieldwork between sowing time and harvest time.

But there may well be another explanation. There is good ground to believe that for peasant ritual festivities celebrating the coming of the summer do not follow strictly a calendar date, but fluctuate in accordance with the natural seasons. In 19th century Denmark festivities 'for the coming of the summer', with their ritual decorating of the maypole or the maytree, could take place on any Sunday between Easter and Saint John's Eve. When it happened at Whitsun or on Ascension Day, this was for purely practical reasons and had no religious significance.

So I would claim that bonfire tradition and maypole/maytree tradition are structurally different elements, though they were often celebrated at the same time. Moreover, solstice celebrations at a fixed date (June 23rd) and celebrations of vegetation renewal on a movable date, have different functions.

Witch burning

Drachmann's *Midsummer Song* has the following lines:

Every town has its witch and every parish its trolls
We will keep them from life through our fires of joy....

Most Danes are convinced that the burning of the witch-like doll is an essential and ancient element of the midsummer celebration. But in fact, it is not older than 1900. We first hear of a witch-doll in connection with Saint John's Eve in Elsinore. Around 1850 some schoolboys had run about the streets of this city carrying a doll on a ladder and singing: 'Now we ride to Bloksbjerg' (one of the places where witches were supposed to meet for their yearly sabbath). Police had forbidden that 'street disorder', which 'of course was repeated year after to the great merriment of the youth, who dislike interdictions' (Galschiøtt 1960: 270 ff.). However, in Elsinore the rag- and thatchdoll had not been burnt. The modern custom of burning a witch figure on the bonfire first appeared in Jutland in

1900. It seems to have been started by some students from a training college in the small province town of Jelling. It spread to other towns in Jutland (Århus, Horsens, Vejle and Fredericia) and became common in the rest of Denmark in the 1920s, first in the district of Kalundborg, where many German guest-workers were employed during the first World War.

None of the earlier descriptions of Midsummer Night, nor of the paintings representing Saint John's Eve bonfire (for instance, P.S Krøyer's famous painting *Saint John's bonfire on the beach of Skagen*, 1906) has a witch on the bonfire. Nor is the burning of the thatch witch part of the Swedish or Norwegian Midsummer bonfire. On the other hand, in part of Germany and Austria people used to burn a 'Hexe' on Saint John's bonfire, but the term 'hexe' seems to have meant very generally a straw puppet dressed up as some frightening being. Throughout Europe various figures have been burnt at various times of the year, representing something negative: 'the old year', 'Judas', etc., but never a 'real' witch.

This newer tradition, apparently special to Denmark, is all the more surprising since historical witch-hunting has been less important in Denmark than in other European countries. When burning the 'witch' on the midsummer bonfire, modern Danes are probably thinking less of the real, historical witch burnings (of which the last took place in Nykøbing, Falster, in 1693), and more of the folktale characters, familiar from Grimm and Walt Disney. Though the actual burning of a witch figure is not older than some hundred years, Midsummer Night has always been heavily loaded with magical forces in general, and marked with a number of protection rituals against witchcraft.

Healing springs

Up to the 19th century the most constant and important element of the Midsummer celebrations in Denmark was the pilgrimage to a holy spring. Six-hundred and eighteen such holy, healing springs have been recorded in Denmark (cf. Svane 1979, 1984). Their water was said to cure eye diseases, paralysis, boils and sores (but, curiously enough, not epilepsy. In French the popular name for epilepsy has long been '*le mal Saint Jean*' ('Saint John ailment') – though I cannot say which saint it was associated with, whether John the Evangelist

or John the Baptist. Pilgrims would drink the healing water and bathe in it, take some of the water back home to use it as medicine during the rest of the year, where it had to be kept in the open air, so as not to lose its power.

Pagan and Christian beliefs seem to have mixed smoothly, since in some places the jar had to be carried three times around the church if it was to work optimally, and up to the 19th century parish priests would fetch christening water from such a spring.

But some pilgrims did not just bathe in the healing spring, they also spent the whole night next to it, with their head on a stone. This led sometimes to fights in order to get the best sleeping places, closest to the spring. The sick had to leave something in return: a piece of clothing, some hair, or their crutches if they happened to be cured during the night. One spring in the isle of Lolland was called ‘crutch spring’, because of the number of crutches found there on Saint John’s morning. Another widespread custom was to erect a home-made cross near the healing spring during Saint John’s night.

But the expected miracles did not always happen. Mention is made of several corpses found near the holy springs on Saint John’s morning – people who had died during Midsummer night, but were lonely or too poor for their families to afford to take them home and give them a burial.

The most famous of all Danish springs, Helena’s spring in Tisville in north Sjælland, is named after Saint Helena from Sweden, a pious Swedish duchess who was murdered by her son-in-law’s relatives. Several miracles are reputed to have taken place at her grave. She was canonised in 1164. A hundred years later her body drove to land near Tisville (Denmark) on a large stone. According to legend she laid on her stone with a shining aureole. As bearers were carrying her to the nearby church the rock opened in front of them to make their way easier. At their first resting place a healing spring spouted up.

Holy springs have to be visited during Midsummer Night when the water is especially powerful. But Saint Helena’s spring is so holy and so powerful that it can be visited with success at any time from Saint John’s Eve until 31st July, Helena’s death day. It is usually salted since it is sometimes flooded by the sea, but its water are renowned to be completely fresh at Midsummer.

King Christian IV was a very eager visitor to Saint Helena’s spring. He had a bath-house built nearby, so that he and the nobility

could drink the water from a different tap than the common people. On several occasions he intervened personally when the authorities tried to forbid the erection of home-made crosses around the spring at Midsummer Night. But the high clergy disapproved of this spring worship as 'remnants from popish times', and probably too of the social life around them. Gradually, the sale of drinks to the pilgrims near the springs eventually evolved into regular markets, with jesters and musicians and entertainment, markets which were attended both by the sick and the healthy. Some of these spring markets continued well into the 19th century.

The most famous of them has long been the one that took place near the 'Tiergarten' north of Copenhagen, which started in the 1700s around 'Kirsten Pirs' spring. This was so popular that people had to queue for a long time before they could drink its water. Its popularity may be partly due to a famous play by the romantic dramatist Adam Oehlenschläger (Oehlenschläger 1803).

In the island of Bornholm, Saint John's spring is still the centre of a folk celebration, although it is now an artificial spring, since the genuine one was taken away by the storm flood in 1872. Otherwise, unlike bonfires, holy springs have died out of Midsummer tradition.

The healing powers of Saint John's Night had also given birth to another tradition, that of the 'rags trees' (cf. Brøndegaard 1981, 1: 321; Evensen 1968: 1 ff.). There are forty-five hollow trees in Denmark, which are said to have healing powers against various ailments, such as boils, rheumatism and swollen glands. If you went naked through the hole of one of the trees several times, from three to nine according to local variations, while saying a formula, you would be cured. They are usually called 'rag trees' because thankful or hopeful people used to bind a rag to their branches. Rags were especially numerous on the morning of Saint John's Day. Some of these trees still exist and people still bind rags to them, although more to follow a tradition than as a real belief in their healing power.

The Magic of Saint John's Night

For up to well in the 19th century, Midsummer Night was especially loaded with magic, both positive and negative, like its winter counterpart, the twelve days of Christmas, and very likely for the

same reasons. The solstice is a time of cosmic reversal, and as such the world is open to supernatural forces. You had to take special precautions during that night, including throwing salt in the wells to prevent witches churning butter in them, and locking cats in the houses so that witches would not ride them that night.

Traditional healers made sure to collect most of their herbs on Saint John's morning because on that day plants were at their most powerful, especially 'Saint John's herb'. Several plants go under that name, for example *hypericum*, but mostly *sedum telephium* (Brøndegaard 1973: 5-19).

Midsummer night was also a good night for reading omens. The song of the cuckoo is a wide-spread midsummer omen: you can read the future by counting the number of his 'coucou'. But whereas old people could deduce from the cuckoo's song the number of years they had yet to live, young girls could deduce how many years would go before they got married. Here again, the ritual year is articulated with the life-cycle. Folk rituals are not empty shells. They only exist because they are enacted by individual tradition bearers, that is active subjects with their own preoccupations.

On the whole, young girls' concern with love and marriage had ample nourishment during Midsummer Night. If a young girl filled a pail from a holy spring, the water would show the face of her husband-to-be between the first and the twelfth stroke of midnight. Putting nine summer plants under her pillow, she would likewise see her future husband in her dream. A girl would also hang two bunches of Saint John's herb on the ceiling beam, one representing a young man and the other one herself. If the two herbs turned towards each other after a few days, this meant that the boy and the girl would be married; however, if they had turned away from each other, the girl would have better set her eyes on another boy.

The province of Vensyssel in the north-west part of Jutland had a very special tradition, the Saint John's cow, with which only few Danes are familiar these days. At Midsummer young girls would decorate cows with garlands of flowers and birch leaves in honour of Saint John. Boys would ride the cows and display them from farm to farm, where they were given a few coins or some goodies, and then ride them in competition through the village streets. The winner would not be the one who comes first, but in the middle of the group. He would then be called 'king' or 'emperor of Saint John'. At the end of the day, garlands were thrown upon the roofs of the

stables as protection. The custom, which lasted long, was already mentioned in 1737 with the following remarks: 'It was done to prevent the witches from stealing milk from the cows or preventing cows' distended udders to slop.' This custom decreased in importance in the 1890s but was temporarily revived around 1910. Although the decorated Saint John's cow was restricted to the province of Vendsyssel, this custom was known as well in Germany and in France.

The many elements of magic and witchcraft associated with Midsummer Night gradually disappeared from the Enlightenment onwards, and very few Danes, if any, now practise special rituals for protecting cattle from milk-stealing witches. Yet, solstice rituals have been taken up again by various New Age movements, with their holistic view of the human being, in close harmony with nature and with the cosmos.

Beware of the Saint John's worm

When an unmarried girl became pregnant, she was said to have been 'stuck by the Saint John's worm'. Both civil and religious authorities throughout times have complained again and again that the Midsummer celebrations led to improper merry-making and sexual looseness. This testifies not only to their prudishness, but also to their lack of understanding of folk rituals. I would claim that bringing nubile boys and girls together in a ritualistic, institutionalised way was indeed one of the purposes of the midsummer festivity. That was both part of the year cycle (for the community as a whole) and of the life cycle (for young people).

In Scandinavia youth guilds played an essential part in spring and summer festivals. Youth people went into the woods to pick birch trees and plant them again on the village place. The maytree ritual, like the lighting of the bonfire, is first of all prerogative of youth guilds. Married couples and elderly people would attend, but it was the youth guild that played the active role.

It was also the members of the youth guilds who went from farm to farm singing and collecting foodstuffs for their age-group parties. These ritual caroling tours did not only take place before Christmas, but also before Shrove Tuesday, Easter, Valpurgis, Whitsun and Midsummer. This was not considered as begging. On

the contrary, it was both a ritual custom – bringing blessings upon the farm – and a social custom, a way of redistributing goods within the community and of asserting the identity of the group. The ritual quest songs had also a verse or two, calling curses on the household if the farmer be less generous than expected.

Midsummer celebrations had also a strong element of male competition in front of females, for instance who would jump highest over the bonfire. Cosmic, erotic, magic elements seem to have mingled intrinsically in the Midsummer celebration.

Although nowadays youth guilds as such have long ceased to exist and young people do not have an institutionalised part to play in the community's celebrations of Midsummer, the modern Saint John's festivity still connects to a certain extent the life cycle with the year cycle. In Denmark Saint John's Eve, a few days after the summer solstice, coincides with the end of the Danish school year. The celebration of the shortest night (in a country where the summer is very short and very precious) is a milestone in the ritual year. It marks also the beginning of summer holidays for schoolchildren, and for the many adults who choose to take their holidays at the beginning of school holidays. Moreover, in families with a 19 year-old, the Midsummer party held for relatives and friends also celebrates his/her success at the GCE (end of High School Examination) and therefore his/her coming of age. In Denmark all students get a substantial state grant and supplement it with part-time jobs, or go out working for a year or two before going to university. So whether they are going to work, travel or study, most 19 year-olds become economically independent and move away from home into college digs or a shared rented flat. So the GCE is a more important rite of passage than, say, in France, where most young people live at home until they marry. The Midsummer party is both a milestone in the ritual year for the community as such, and a milestone in the life cycle of the 19-year old... and of her family. For parents it may mark a new phase in their life, when all children fly from the nest. Like all folk rituals, Midsummer celebrations are and have always been enacted by social actors, with specific age-, gender- and social belonging. Youth groups play an important role in this yearly ritual, which, in turn, plays an important role in the life-cycle of their members.

Saint John's Eve celebrations in Denmark are a conglomeration of various elements: lighting of a bonfire, festive gathering around

it, burning of the rags-and-thatch witch, decoration of a maypole or maytree, pilgrimage to healing springs, rituals of protection and omens taken during this magic night. Some of these elements are very old, some are recent innovations, some have completely died out. They have combined into varying patterns through time and space and have also been merged with other rituals.

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The Ritual Year and the Cycle of Work in the Life of the American Cowboy

The American cowboy is often cited as either a living icon of American culture – as shown by his portrayal in Hollywood and in advertising – or as a ‘dying breed’, a species of human fast dying out and impossible to preserve. In actuality, the cowboy – who can be either male or female – still exists and arranges his or her life according to old patterns that were well established by the Mexican *vaquero* in the mid-nineteenth century. In the mountainous interior of the American West, the rhythms of the work year are dictated less by economics than by natural phenomena: the breeding cycles of cattle and horses, the four seasons, spring and summer rains, the harvesting of hay, the chill of winter. The yearly cycle rotates through the birth of calves, spring branding, breeding the cows, moving cattle from spring to summer to autumn grazing, growing and harvesting hay, fall roundup, sending cattle to market, training colts and horses, and winter feeding – and then the cycle begins again (Pl. 38). This cycle is paralleled by social events that mark and in fact punctuate the yearly round of work. These events include community dinners, dances, rodeos, county fairs, music and poetry festivals, and the celebration of major holidays, including Easter, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day.

Yearly pattern

The basic pattern of cowboy life in the American West is fairly predictable, although schedules may vary according to climate and

terrain. Beginning with the winter, calves are born in February and March. In April, the calves are weaned from their mothers, branded, and given medical treatment. The bull calves are castrated at this time. At the same time, the cows and the bulls are put together in fenced pastures for mating. The calves, their mothers and the bulls are allowed to graze on the pastures owned by the ranch and then are usually driven onto public land – land owned by the federal government – where they graze for the summer. Such grazing may require driving the cattle many miles over several days or a week. While the cattle are gone, some of the cowboys irrigate and harvest the hay crop and store it for the winter. In September, the cattle are driven down from the summer range, and the owner decides which ones to send to market. On a predetermined day, those cattle are brought together and loaded onto trucks or railroad cars for shipment to feedlots, where they are fattened before being slaughtered. The remaining cows, young females, and bulls are allowed to graze on the hayfields until the cold weather begins. After that, the cowboys spend most of each day feeding hay to the cattle from wagons or trucks or sleighs.

The social and community events that interact with this cycle of work do more than provide opportunities for cooperation, friendship, courtship, and bonding. The events that are emphasized often serve to mark the beginning or end of a particular period in the yearly work cycle; for example, ranch families try to finish their haying before the county fair and Labour Day weekend, the first weekend in September. In other cases, social events serve to provide a break in the midst of a long period of tedious work. Christmas (celebrated in the family) and the annual New Year's Eve dance and party interrupt the long winter of feeding cattle and horses with hay every day.

Polarities

In addition, a set of polarities adds a dynamic tension in the lives of cowboys and their families, a tension marked by movement across the landscape as well as through the seasons of the year. For example, much of the cowboy's work is long and lonely; in the summer, cowboys work from 'can see to can't see,' that is, from before dawn until dark. Yet at certain times – when calves are born in March, when

they are branded in April, when they are shipped to market in September –neighbouring families come together for cooperative labour and community celebration, to express *communitas*, in Victor Turner’s formulation (1969: 96-97). This tension between lonely isolation and *communitas* is one of a series of polarities in the cowboy life. Another polarity is between human and animal; at times, the human asserts his or her domination over animals by placing a personal brand on them and, of course, by shipping them off to the slaughterhouse. At other times, the human must rely utterly on horse and dog, which have speed and instincts far superior to humans in finding, herding, and controlling cattle.

The yearly round of work features two other polarities between which cowboys oscillate. The first is civilization vs. the wilderness. Typically cowboys and ranchers live on a ranch far from the nearest town, and much of their time, especially in fall, winter, and spring, is spent on the ‘home ranch’, that is, the headquarters ranch. But when the cattle are grazing on public lands – on open range without fences, in the mountains or on grasslands owned by the federal government – the cowboys often spend long days checking on the cattle, helping them if they’re sick, pulling them out of streams and bogs (muddy areas), watching for wild animals like bears and mountain lions, and checking fences that may need repair. Another polarity is between ranch and town. Except for trips to buy supplies every few months, opportunities to have fun in town are few and far between. When a town-based community event like Independence Day (July 4th), the rodeo, the county fair, or Labour Day occurs, however, ranchers are tolerant of the cowboys’ ‘going to town’ and in fact may give extra time off and otherwise encourage them to break their work routines. Traditionally, cowboys would use this time to buy new clothes, drink (sometimes to excess), gamble, and visit bordellos, but those activities are less common now. Modern cowboys are more likely to use the opportunity to look for a better job or for work that will carry them through the winter, and perhaps to do some courting of the local maidens.

The calendar

The cowboy’s life, then, is a predictable seasonal round in which activities are determined more by the calendar than by local

conditions. Social and community-based activities interrupt the cycle of work to provide a sense of community in a largely lonely existence. The cowboy's isolation is particularly pronounced in the winter. January is the coldest month of the year as well as the darkest, and cowboys spend most of their time feeding the cattle from hay that was stored during the summer. By the middle of February, the cows begin to give birth to their calves and, especially for young cows who have never had a calf before, the process can be very difficult and life-threatening. For that reason, the cowboys are constantly on patrol, watching over the cows and looking for signs of impending birth. Sleep is a rarity and comes only occasionally and for short periods of time. When the calving is over, the cowboys have a chance to rest while continuing to feed hay. By March, spring has come to the land, and as the weather warms, the cattle are moved to pastures to graze.

About the time of Easter, usually in April, the calves are separated from their mothers and are weaned from the mother's milk. At the same time, the new calves are brought into corrals or pens, and, using ropes to catch them, the cowboys give them injections to help them avoid diseases and brand them with hot irons that identify them as belonging to the ranch. Those calves with horns have them cut off, and their ears are notched or cut so their ownership can be determined. The bull calves are castrated at this time as well. Because a single ranch may have 500 or more new calves each spring, a large number of cowboys are required for this work, so neighbouring ranchers and their employees come to help. One ranch will brand for one or several days, then another ranch will take its turn, and so on (cf. Pl. 39). At each of these brandings, as they are called, the women of the ranch are responsible for feeding all the neighbours, and they may spend days in advance preparing food which is ordinarily eaten out of doors near the site of the branding. If the branding takes all day, an evening meal will be served, often with a little beer or whiskey before and after. In the past, it was common to collect the testicles of the male calves, clean them, and cook them in hot oil for an evening meal; these are called 'Rocky Mountain Oysters'. This cooperative work and feasting together mark the beginning of spring and the return of warm weather; the mood is happy and optimistic for a good year.

Once the branding is finished, the cattle are 'turned out' to graze on the home pastures of the ranch. At the end of May comes Memorial

Day, originally a day of remembrance for those who have died in war, but in the last fifty years a day to remember family members who have died. This is the weekend when families care for the graves of their ancestors in the local cemetery (some ranches have their own cemeteries). Graves may be decorated with American flags, wild or domestic flowers, even stuffed animal toys for children and young people. Flower seeds or plants may be planted, gravestones repaired, new gravestones purchased and installed. Families often have picnics during this weekend since it marks the end of spring and the beginning of summer and warm, dry weather.

In June, the cattle are trailed (that is, driven on a trail) or sometimes taken in trucks to their summer range, the area where they will live throughout the summer. If the range is far enough from the ranch, the cowboys may spend several nights on the trail with the cattle, with bedding and food brought to them at campsites by truck. Once established, a few cowboys are left behind to watch over the cattle; they usually stay in 'line camps', small houses without electricity or running water. During this time, when the work load is relatively light, the rodeo is usually held in a nearby town. Contestants may come from all over the West to compete for cash prizes, and a few local cowboys may participate as well. The rodeo provides cowboys with another opportunity to go to town, socialize, meet members of the opposite sex, go to parties and dances, and generally enjoy themselves. The rodeo competition is less important here than the opportunity for socializing.

Independence Day, usually called the Fourth of July, provides another opportunity to go to town. Parades, picnics, and the traditional fireworks display in the evening are attractions, and many ranchers and cowboys spend hours beforehand preparing their horses, old wagons, and other equipment to be in the parade. Thus, Independence Day becomes the end of the quiet part of the summer.

As soon as the holiday is over, crews begin haying. On very large ranches, hay crews are hired separately and the cowboys continue to supervise the cattle on their summer range, which may include looking for sick ones, repairing fences, moving them from poor grass to good grass, making sure they have access to water, watching for wild animals, and rescuing the cattle from mud holes, swamps, and streams. On most ranches, however, a few cowboys are assigned this duty while the rest work in the hayfields. Early in the summer, water is diverted from streams to irrigate the fields

(most of the American West is very dry in the summer, and hay cannot be grown without irrigation). Soon after the fourth of July, the first cutting is made and the hay must then be dried in the fields, raked, packed into bales, and taken to a storage area. Further irrigation follows, usually requiring the crews to move pipes from one field to another, and a second cutting is completed in late August. This is hot, tedious, backbreaking work; everyone is covered in dust and bits of hay by the end of each day.

In the midst of the haying season, in August, the community holds its ranch rodeo. This is not a professional rodeo but one in which local cowboys, both men and women, compete for small prizes and for what they call 'bragging rights' – the right to boast about oneself. This event provides another opportunity for ranchers and cowboys to get together, talk, be entertained, and compete, before they go back to work.

But once haying is over, it's time for Labour Day, the first weekend of September and the day when working people are traditionally honoured, though the labour unions associated with the day are absent in cowboy country. It's also time for the county fair, which is usually held on Labour Day weekend or a week or two later. The fair, based on medieval models, includes stock shows, carnival rides, food sales, games of chance, horse races, and competitions for the local residents. People compete for the best stock (cattle, horses, swine and sheep), poultry, baked goods, preserved fruits and vegetables, handicrafts, flowers, sewing, and quilts. There's even a competition for the largest pumpkin. There are also competitions for local cowboys who compete in branding, roping, horseback riding, and other ranch-like activities. Labour Day is also the long weekend when people who have spent the summer working in the wilderness – cowboys, loggers, miners, government workers – traditionally come to town for enjoyment and entertainment. Everyone goes to the fair, meets old friends, and begins preparing for winter. In most of the American West, this is also the time when the first cool breezes from the north begin to be felt, when 'winter is in the air'.

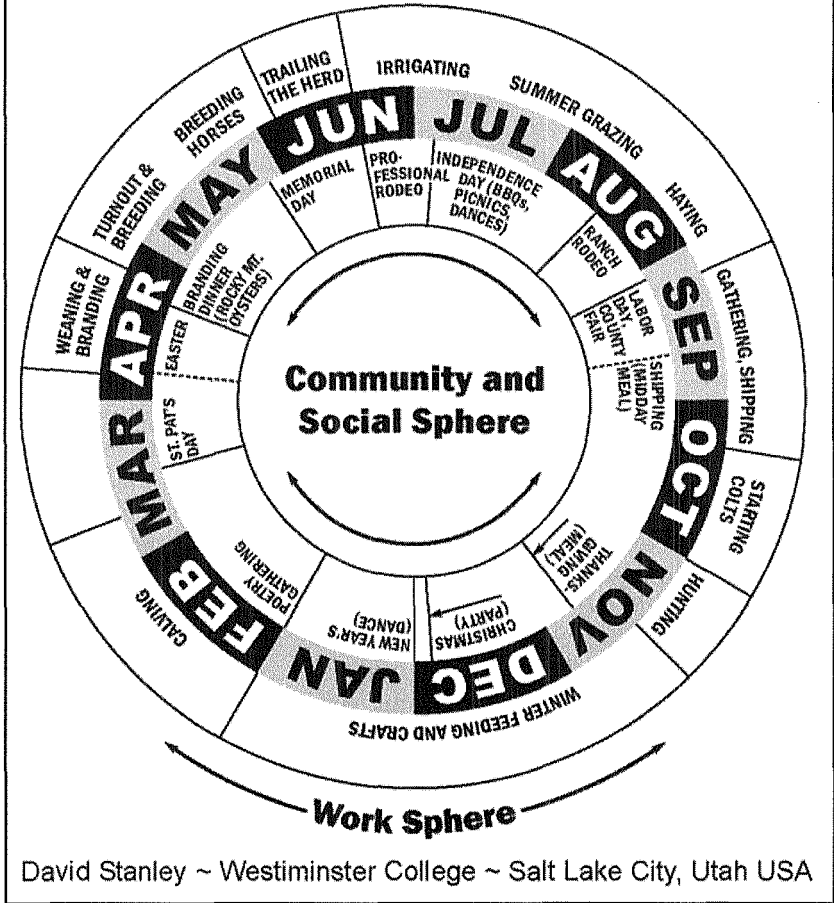
When the fair closes, it's time for shipping. Cowboys, ranchers, and neighbours ride into the mountains or out on the rangeland to 'round up' the cattle. Some, particularly the cows, come in from the summer range on their own, but others, particularly young steers and bulls, are likely to hide out in forests or brush; these are referred

to as 'outlaws' or 'mavericks' and are very difficult to find, to catch, and to drive. A few, in fact, may escape notice and spend the entire winter away from the ranch, and few animals can survive throughout a long winter. Once the cattle are collected at the ranch again, there is 'catch up' branding, when calves born late or animals that were not previously branded are marked. Then they are allowed to graze on the hayfields where the hay has been cut. In times past, cattle buyers would come to the ranch to examine the cattle and to make bids to the rancher, usually a certain price per pound. Nowadays, the buyers look at the cattle on the internet using videotape and make their bids from a distance. But when shipping day arrives, a convoy of large trucks arrives, the buyers come to supervise the loading, and the cattle are weighed and driven onto the trucks. Usually they are taken to a feedlot hundreds of miles away, where they are packed together into muddy pens and fed corn and other grains to fatten them and tenderize the meat before slaughter.

Shipping day, which occurs roughly six months after branding, is another occasion for comradeship with neighbours and a great meal, which serves both to celebrate the end of the seasonal cycle and mark the end of summer. As with branding, the meal may be outdoors or indoors, depending on the numbers and the timing of the shipping, but once again, neighbours help each other and prepare for the winter, when cold temperatures and snow make it difficult for people to visit each other. Shipping begins another quiet time in the year's cycle. This is a time when cowboys may begin training young horses, when ranches may host a potluck dinner to which all the neighbours contribute food, when fund-raisers for local clubs are held, when turkey shoots and other competitions are held. It's also hunting season, and many cowboys will go to the mountains in hopes of putting a deer, elk, or moose in the freezer.

The first snows fall in October, and soon the cowboys are engaged in feeding hay and providing water. They move cattle from one area to another to reduce the amount of mud and standing water which can affect the cattle's hooves and legs. Equipment is repaired, and many cowboys make ropes, bridles, and other gear from rawhide leather and from horsehair. Thanksgiving and Christmas are usually focused on the family, but cowboys who have no family to be with are always invited for the meal. The end of the year is marked by New Year's Eve, when traditionally communities come together for a dance and an all-night party that breaks the long winter almost

Ritual Year of the American Cowboy



Work and social life intersect in the cowboy's ritual year.

© Alan Bowes, Westminster College

exactly at the halfway point. Here as throughout the year, the rhythms of work are reflected and amplified by the rhythms of play; the individual cowboys move between independent work and working with others, between ranch and wilderness or ranch and town. The yearly round is varied yet predictable; the hardest work periods are

broken with opportunities for recreation; the quiet times tend to be marked with social occasions that mark their beginnings and endings.

Liminality

The cowboy is, in Turner's terms, a liminal figure who lives on the margins of both town and ranch society (1969: 95-96). His (or her) occupation – and the image that Hollywood has given to the cowboy as an independent spirit – marks the cowboy as both mysterious and unconnected, a figure who has the freedom associated with lack of obligations and schedules. At the same time, the cowboy's periodic visits to town make him a part of the community, however marginal, and provide a connection between urban and rural.

In the sense that both the work cycle and the social cycle of the cowboy are calendrically governed, that activities are predictable, that they have an ebb and flow and a rhythm that carries them through the year, and that they are highly responsive to the seasons, the birth and growth and ultimate death of animals, they have a dimension of ritual about them, a ritual that is based in work associations, families, ranch communities, and towns. It is not the *rite de passage* that marks the individual's passage through life, for weddings are held anytime in spring, summer, and autumn, and births and deaths are, of course, unpredictable. Young cowboys and young horses do experience initiation and training, but working cowboys can be teenagers or old people; one famous cowboy was still working and riding horseback and herding cattle when he died at 91.

What is remarkable is the extent to which cowboy poetry and song reflects the repetitive and ritualistic nature of cowboy life. Cowboys have been composing poems and songs since at least the 1860s, and many of these are passed along from one generation to another. Many of these poems and songs reflect the cyclical nature of the cowboy's year, serving to reiterate and underscore the cowboy's dependence on the parallel and mutually reinforcing cycles of work and community throughout the year.

The poems and songs that cowboys have created in the last 150 years reflect these cycles. Charles Badger Clark's poem, 'The Christmas Trail' (c.1908), for example, portrays a cowboy riding through the snow to visit his family at Christmas. As he does, he reflects on the four seasons: sleeping outdoors in spring, interacting

with other cowboys in the summer, rounding up cattle in the fall, and finally visiting his parents in the winter. In contrast, Buck Ramsey's song 'The Christmas Waltz' (c.1990) portrays three cowboys at a cow camp far from civilization doing their best to celebrate the holiday with decorations, crafts, food, music, and dancing. S. Omar Barker's poem 'Bunkhouse Thanksgiving' (c.1954) provides a humorous yet serious look at the Thanksgiving holiday from the cowboy's point of view. And two songs by Ian Tyson, the cowboy's favorite singer and songwriter since the early 1980s, offer recognition of the importance of the yearly cycle. 'Springtime' describes the wonders of spring and the birth of the new crop of calves, and 'Short Grass' shows the seasons changing from the melting snow and swelling rivers of the spring to the dust and heat of summer to the recognition of the timeless cycles of life in the American West.

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Systems of Approaches to Hungarian Calendar Customs

The traditional Hungarian folklore research assorted folk customs mainly thematically in the 1930s. Later, only some parts of this classification were taken over and retained. New fields of research have become independent, such as children's folklore, popular religiosity and legal customs. The research of folk customs has primarily focused on rites of transition that are related to the turns of life and on calendar feasts. Calendar feasts are usually classified according to intervals and thus constitute cycles of feasts. Some examples: Christmastide feasts, carnival time feasts, spring or Eastertide feasts, Whitsuntide feasts, summer feasts and autumn feasts. In some cases researchers establish subgroups within these temporally based cycles, to which subgroups they assign the feasts accompanying the phases of agricultural work. This categorisation seems to be too mechanical, and in this way the distinctive features of various feasts cannot really be discerned. Predictions, folk-belief based actions, or sequences of customs varying in complexity and intensity may be assigned to a distinguished period of time.

Division and distinction of feasts

As a matter of fact from the very beginning of research of folk customs in Hungarian folklore studies, a tendency prevailed whose purpose was to present and detect the traces of folk poetry, folk epic and folk drama. Attention was drawn therefore to so-called 'mystery / miracle plays', that are nowadays called 'nativity plays'. Parallel to this tendency, from the middle of the 19th century there are such

descriptions at our disposal that reported the colourful manifestations of folk life with plenty of actions. When in 1934 the first ethnographical synthesis in Hungarian was published, under the summarizing category of *custom* the outcome of these two tendencies emerged together. From the end of the 1930s those folk dramatic events that resembled theatrical performances were identified as *festive* customs. The division and distinction of feasts by seasons remained unchanged.

This implied a problem: from the aspect of folk customs what should be identified as the beginning of a year? Most researchers, without any special argumentation, have usually set the winter feasts as starting point, in this way more or less fitting it to the liturgical year. Finally, researchers of course reported about numerous small customs in villages in order to give an account of the order of peasant life. However, those habitual, everyday, ordinary actions that accompanied for example ploughing, sowing, marketing or washing were not regarded as probable issues of a further or deeper investigation.

Adequate terminology?

At this point a brief excursus must be made. The terms and concepts of the international research such as *rite*, *transitional rite*, *crisis rite*, and the various theories of rites as well as the argumentations of the related debates are well known for all of us. At the same time I believe that the concept of *rite* as it is used by ethnology, the interpretations of rite as they are used in anthropology, and especially their extension to the various phenomena of life are not really adequate to be applied for the various levels of customs. Since this problem could be the subject matter of another conference, therefore now I am not going to deal with the issues related to the use of the concept of *rite*.

Criteria of classification

I think both Hungarian and basically international research of folk customs has had a common shortcoming: the *structurally simple* phenomena of customs as well as the *discrete* and (in terms of form,

sequence of actions and devices of expression) *complex* actions have not been treated in the framework of one comprehensive system. I've tried to find a solution to this problem when in a comprehensive university manual on Hungarian folklore we elaborated such a classification that distinguishes major fields of folk customs on the basis of certain criteria. We regarded custom as an action that is temporally fixed. The meaning of action in this context is derived from the way it is interpreted in drama theory. But this was only one criterion of our classification.

It is also necessary to take into consideration the criterion of *occasion*, which functions as the basis or framework of the custom. That is why we found it important to differentiate between feasts and the customs of everyday life. We are well aware of the fact that on the basis of these two criteria only a classification establishing essential further research can be accomplished, and it is also necessary to elaborate a more precise and detailed system of classification within major clusters of customs. Moreover, the dividing and contact lines, as well as the grades of transition between everyday and festive levels cannot be represented in a standard scheme, since it is the relationship of multi-dimensional sub-systems that should be delineated.

Two levels

The socially accepted, traditional, constant and homogeneous customs regulate, arrange and organise human life. Two levels are easily identified: at the first level the stereotypical actions of everyday life can be found, whereas at the second level are assigned such customs which are related to an occasion or a period of time and are made up of complex and discrete patterns of action. These are the actual, proper customs, ceremonies, and dramatic folk customs.

At the third level such systems of actions can be found which might be interpreted with legal and ethical concepts, perceived in a framework external to folklore, and which can also emerge at the formerly mentioned levels of customs as well.

Reverting to the classification based on the criterion of the action, let me present the scheme of the classification of customs.

Customs		
customs related to work	legal customs	
customary action	• dramatic folk customs	folk theatricals
children's games	• related to occasion • related to a period/point of time	folk religiosity

As the detachment of folk/popular culture from other strata of culture took place in a temporally well definable manner and established a peculiar mode of existence in some fields, these phenomena can only be interpreted in historical dimensions set in the appropriate current social context. This is valid for the customary actions as well.

The researches carried out by Norbert Elias and other scholars, especially by representatives of historical anthropology or, to use another designation, new historical school (*l'histoire de la vie privée*) are basically related to those problematic issues about which we have spoken with regard to the customs of everyday life. Everyday life, commonness as a framework, can be well characterised. At the same time, at the present stage of research, the various types of customs within this framework can only be indicated, not defined. At present, besides the custom-like elements related to various jobs and process of work, it is the relationship between man and his body that provisionally seems to connect other cycles of customs, such as hygienic customs, sexual behaviour, everyday use of space, customs related to propriety of conduct, social relations and conventions.

Re-definition – two aspects of investigation

The research of folk customs has already established its own peculiar traditions and methods, which require renewal and re-definition from time to time. Obviously, such a re-definition must take into consideration the foregoing achievements. The research of folk customs, as a way of understanding culture as such, cannot lack determining those specific sub-fields, which can be assigned to the notion of 'folk culture'. The review of the historical achievements of the Hungarian research of folk customs should highlight aspects

and possible prospects of the presented approaches. The preservation of the tested and valuable research methods and traditions makes it possible for us to introduce and utilise new interpretive strategies, which furthers a deeper understanding of folk customs.

The traditional research of folk customs focused upon *festive* customs. I have proposed the introduction of two aspects of investigation, making use of those approaches of the Hungarian and international research that have laid special emphasis on *common* customs. Let me summarize my propositions.

1. It is quite difficult to provide a description and characterisation of people's diffused daily actions. Yet, we have at our disposal a system of notions that is capable of grasping the essence of commonness. Let me refer to such themes and methods that can be utilised in the research of folk customs just as well as in the investigation of social and mental changes of *processes of civilisation*.

2. Let me mention some aspects that can be revealed in the scrutiny of *cognitive patterns* as they are manifested in everyday life:

2.1 spatial mobility and practice of customs

Communities, organised at different levels, have elaborated various strategies to offer alternative choices for the individual to cope with everyday situations. The individual's detachedness from the community or his/her acceptance of the community identity is also manifested in everyday actions.

2.2 social factors and common customs

Research usually describes customs in a modelling manner. It has less frequently provided a consistent presentation of active and/or passive participation in a given custom. It has also ignored the importance of the presentation of social division of the community concerned.

2.3 religions – ethnic

The investigation of the religious-ethnic factors shaping folk culture has practically flourished in the last decade in Hungary. I suggest focusing upon the previously mentioned determining factors in the research of common customs.

2.4 common mind and practice

Customs are regarded as actions that are based on 'a practical way of thinking'. This way does have a value-oriented logic that

can be revealed if the everyday actions can at the same time be understood as symbolical social actions.

2.5 *the role of personality in everyday life*

Focusing on the agent of an action makes it possible to reveal the relationship between cognition and action as well as between individual and community in the sphere of everyday actions.

3. The spatial frame of commonness

Any sort of action is realised spatially. This also refers to customary actions of course. It is the *usage* of space that indicates in practice the *quality* of space. All the more so as in peasant culture the specialisation of various spaces was not entirely accomplished. (This refers to the distinction between everyday and festive spaces, not to the distinction between sacred and profane.)

4. The temporal frame of commonness

Besides the philosophical interpretation of time it is also necessary to explore how the *activity types of commonness* constitute time.

5. Memory as a human capacity

Memory as such has scarcely commanded distinguished attention on behalf of the discipline, although it is precisely this human capacity that ethnographical research relies on. The relationship of individual remembrance and social memory is an important category from the point of view of common knowledge, which, therefore should be investigated in itself.

6. The role of institutions in everyday life

It is a well-known and widely accepted view that there is an unending interaction among the various strata of culture. Yet, the channels of this interrelation and their role, for example, in the formation of customs have rarely been clarified. In my view, school and church had a deep impact on folk culture in several respects such as hygienic habits, meal habits, and work ethics.

A theory

The research of folk customs has concentrated on feasts from its very beginning. I am deeply convinced that the elaboration of a theory

of feast would promote the elaboration of the typology of folk feasts more considerably than the standard arrangement does, which distinguishes calendar feasts, feasts related to the life turns and feasts related to work activities. This proposal is justified by the fact that not only nowadays, but also historically, several types of feasts co-existed in village communities.

1. The traditional folk feasts are of agrarian and of rural character.
2. A feast as a social symbolic form is constituted of several factors:
 - the order, system and rhythm of actions and gestures
 - nourishment
 - costume
 - text
 - acoustic form
 - kinetic forms
 - dramatic forms
 - visual devices
 - objects
3. As far the *aspects of expression* are concerned, the issue of *trans-coding* is an important, independent sub-field of research.
4. The manifestation of festive space and time.
In any description of feast it is possible to grasp an important, characteristic feature of festiveness with the application of the notion *chronotopos*.
5. The code of the expression of feast.
The 'contents' of the feast as well as the festiveness itself are manifested via various codes in the realisation of a feast.
6. The analysis of *proportions* between the types of feasts and the assigned codes can be a means to point out the *extent* of festiveness.

A typology of folk feasts

As a summary, it might be claimed that the interpretation of everyday life from the point of view of commonness and festiveness calls on for the revisiting of the achievements of the research of folk customs from new aspects. These investigations may lead to further thematic and methodological innovations as well.

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Final Overview

EMILY LYLE

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Approaches to the Ritual Year

I like to think that, after we have all gone, George and Marlene will sit down for a quiet cup of coffee, and I hope that they may like to have with it a piece of this Scottish shortbread. I also hope that, before too long, there will be a time when all those helped with this conference will be gathered together and may like to share the warm spirit of Malta that has made us so welcome in the form of this honey liqueur.

On a personal note, although this is the first time I have been in Malta, it is not the first occasion when I have experienced the pleasure of being made welcome at a Maltese gathering, although in the earlier case I was very much on the periphery. I had the opportunity some time ago of spending six months in Australia collecting oral traditions from Scots and those of Scottish descent. I was keen to visit the Sydney Opera House and the only time I was free to do so turned out to be a Maltese evening and so the Opera House was full of Maltese. There are clearly excellent opportunities for fieldwork on Maltese traditions in Australia as well as in Malta itself.

I said at the opening of the conference that all of us were strongly aware of beginnings, but I did not know then that among the beginnings we were going to become acquainted with were the world's first free-standing stone monuments. That was a remarkable experience for us and Malta has indeed been an ideal place for us to hold our first conference, and I can only reiterate my thanks to all those who have worked to make it a success. It is good to know, too, that it will be possible to publish the papers, which will give us something very tangible to remember this conference by, and I should like in this connection to express our sense of special indebtedness to the APS Bank.

Vilmos Voigt mentioned earlier that there are two approaches that can be taken to the topic of the ritual year, and I should like to add a third. There is the contemporary one where, for example, one can take photographs of events. Then there is the historical one that draws on the documented past. And, thirdly, there is the approach to the archaic level which can take the form of such methods as structural study. All approaches are equally valid and equally welcome, and I would like to offer a caution against the confusion that is sometimes found between 'the contemporary' as an object of study and 'contemporary' thinking in scholarship. Our *theories* can be totally up-to-date whether we are dealing with the contemporary, the historical or the archaic level.

We are all looking forward eagerly to our future conferences and will always remember this one with special affection. Thanks again to those who made it possible.

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Some Random Thoughts

The conference was intensely stimulation. The contributions provided a fascinating overview of developments taking place in the field of calendrical rituals. My comments are random, provoked from the selection I was obliged to make from the rich assortment. It was evident that ritual traditions were being actively and colourfully invented and reinvented. Those doing so were bricoleurs who borrowed from the past and used their imagination to (re)construct rituals.

I was particularly struck by the way Glastonbury had become a site for new age and traditional ritual practitioners celebrating neopagan incarnations as well as Anglican, Catholic and feminist rituals and icons (Butler). Equally fascinating was the vehement refusal of today's Danish celebrants to accept that the witch-burning during their newly developed midsummer ritual was not an ancient custom but had been invented by students in the early 1900s (Simonsen). Other rituals were constructed in Sweden during the past decade around totally new artifacts and activities, such as giant Easter trees and Easter processions with children dressed as witches. These rituals quickly spread but had no traditional anchorage. They appear to have eclipsed the carnival-type Samba processions (of all things!) which had been prevalent in the early 1990s (Hugoson). Another interesting invented tradition was the new Green Olive festival in a village in the south of France. Introduced for commercial reasons, it was quickly incorporated into the local calendar and endowed with some of the traditional ritual trappings borrowed from an older ritual (Fournier).

The vested interests of those who introduced the rituals as well as of those who participate in them remained tantalizingly vague. They provide questions for future research. The motives of both the inventors of traditions and the participants are as interesting as the rituals themselves.

Another aspect that interested me was the way some of the current ritual developments have affected the calendrical cycle, partly turning it on its head. Since most festivals are no longer linked functionally to the agrarian productive cycle, when they are celebrated is now a matter of convenience. In Malta, for example, many feasts that according to the liturgical calendar should be celebrated in winter are now celebrated in summer. Summer weather ensures greater participation and protection of festal decorations. Foreign and local tourists also arrive in summer. In a way this marks a new harmonization of ritual and productive cycles, for they are now geared to the new work-leisure cycle of the industrial regime in Europe. Summer is the traditional time of relaxation for locals in Mediterranean Europe. But for the scores of communities in the south of Europe economically dependent on tourism, summer is the busiest time of the year. It is a time when many local communities are awash with outsiders and a new cycle of festivities are celebrated for these visitors. What happens in the winter months that have been stripped of the festive celebrations of their patron saints? Summer feasts celebrate the extended community, comprising increasing numbers of holidaying emigrants, summer residents, new comers and tourists. It is only in the winter now that locals, the 'insiders' have the time to celebrate. They can also do so in private, away from the attention of the crowds of visitors for whom they work and perform in the summer. Do they in fact develop new 'insider only' celebrations? Is the growing celebration I have recently noticed in Malta of St Martin, Carnival and Halloween or the apparently increasing importance of non-summer celebrations in the Jerte Valle in Spain (Cruces and Diaz de Rada 1992) a reflection of this? Elsewhere I have suggested that they are and that these 'insiders only' hidden rituals seem to be increasing (Boissevain 2000).

Much of the renewal of traditional rituals and the invention of new ones that were discussed during the conference involved not the solemn mode but the ludic mode of ritual activities: the costuming, music, dancing, colourful processions, exotic decorations. Why is this so? It has been argued that the increase in the play mode may be seen as a comment on ordinary life (Handleman 1977: 186; also see Manning 1983). To my mind the increase in playful celebrations is a comment on and a reaction to the increasing isolation of people from each other due to the impact of the market economy and the resulting alienation and commercialization of daily life.

These persons wish to recapture, for a few moments, the feeling of togetherness, of being part of a community, even if it is a fleeting, imagined one. They can achieve this by engaging in a ludic communal activity – by dancing, praying, socializing, parading with others. In short, by celebrating together the stressed, mobile, often rootless members of market driven societies (re) create a sense of community and thus a sense of identity, of belonging.

A final thought. At the conference there was, generally speaking, relatively little attention devoted to problematizing the developments that were noted and discussed. Perhaps in future meetings of the SIEF Working Group on The Ritual Year more ‘why’ questions might be asked.

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New Seeds for the Future

To keep within the general imagery of this conference, it can be said that we have reaped a very rich harvest of material here in Msida. There is good reason for celebration. During the course of our own academic 'harvest festival' we have travelled from Malta to Tibet, from Latvia to Rumania, and from Labrador to Ireland, even stopping by in the Prairies, and all in the space of five days. In five days, we have flashed through an entire ritual year, from midsummer to Hallowe'en, and Christmas to Easter, examining in the process proverbs, liturgy, musical instruments, sacred processions, pilgrimages, mumming, archaeology, Arthurian imagery, Jack of Lent, St Olav, Brigit, Buddah, trees, snakes and cowboys, just to mention a few. And in the meantime, of course, we have carried out our own conference rituals, processing from room to room like stations of the cross, bowing our heads in respect, clapping and uttering songs of praise to the priests at the front, and notes of philosophical speculation in between; we've broken bread and pasta together at lunch and had our evening moments of Bahktinian carnival, both formal and otherwise (and here there is particular reason for us to be grateful to the conference organisers for the excellent banquet of local food, music and song that they provided us with on Thursday.)

In short, we have gone from the wide to the focused, from old age to New Age, and from ancient ritual to cultural heritage; we have analysed some of the key forces behind the rituals that we have created and continue to create, and the fact that their roots today are not only in nature, but also in politics and the economic forces of tourism. We have considered the relationships between year and life festivals and their connections to gender and the body. We have also regularly returned to the structures and dynamics of

the celebratory 'games' that we annually play (in Huizinga's sense of the word 'play'): their place in space and time; and the various aspects of the physical and dramatic "performance" that they involve. Again and again, we have underlined humankind's psychological need for regular times of celebration, times when people not only gain emotional release but also have a chance to re-examine their identities and their place in the societies they have created.

As I say, this has been a time of very rich experience; and while it represents a form of academic 'harvest,' it has also been a time where new seeds have been sown for future developments. To keep the the festival imagery: our feet have marked out the territory, but we have also underlined the fact that the soil we have danced on is still very fertile.

As Emily Lyle has already pointed out, now that the wider borderlines have been set, the next task for future conferences is to start examining different aspects of the space we have delineated: it is of course possible to concentrate on particular types of festival (such as aspects relating to marriage or death). However, at the same time it might be useful to take up different themes, such as the setting of borders in time and space in a festival; the overall concepts of (sacred) festival time; the symbolism and function of the masks and costumes used; the overall dynamics of celebration; or the aspects of the comic and the tragic in festivals of the kind we have been examining: indeed this is a temporal "space" that seems to encourage and inspire strong emotional outbursts from the participants and the observers. It is no surprise that the Norwegians and Icelanders refer to festivals as *høytider/ hátíðir*, literally "high times" in all senses of the word.

All in all, we have good reason to be particularly grateful to two people for getting this festive show on the road: first of all to Emily Lyle for all of her hard work as the initiatory force behind the establishment of this new forum for discussion of this ever-regenerating field of ethnology; and then secondly to George Mifsud-Chircop and his colleagues at the Junior College of the University of Malta for daring to take on the demands of setting up the first conference. This has been the perfect environment. I think that we can look forward to some very fruitful gatherings in the future.

VILMOS VOIGT

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest

A Typical 'First' International Conference

Our conference took place during Holy Week in Malta. In Hungarian, my mother tongue, we call that week the 'Great Week' (*Nagyhét*) – and, I am convinced, for all of the participants our conference time was a Great Week indeed. We express our thanks to the organizers, the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year, and to all the people of Malta whom we had the good fortune to meet.

Because the other participants in the Closing Session have already contributed so many important comments (with which I fully agree), I will add here only a few brief remarks.

Since we work on tradition studies, I might begin by reminding you about some traditions of comparative folklore studies in Europe, first of all by the ISFNR (International Society for Folk Narrative Research) from 1957 on and by the SIEF from 1964 on. From its very beginning SIEF was active also in several committees and working groups (concerning bibliography, folk ballads, iconography, folk religion, food, etc.). In this extended family, the Ritual Year Working Group is the youngest child, a very promising and fast growing infant. It was conceived about two years ago, was born about a year ago, is celebrating its first anniversary now in Malta, and is already looking towards a secured future: it will convene next year in Gothenburg (Sweden), and the following year in Uherské Hradiště (East Bohemia). Let us hope that we shall see as many Swedish participants in Sweden as they have come to enjoy sunny springtime in Malta! And, since the Czech town's name means 'Hungarian Fortress,' in 2007 we hope to send cohorts of Hungarian ritual folklorists to the third Ritual Year Conference!

It is a sign of the importance of our Malta conference that so many chief functionaries and congress organizers of SIEF and ISFNR are present here. First of all, I thank Prof. Nils-Arvid Bringéus,

former president of SIEF, and Prof. Leander Petzoldt, organizer of the Innsbruck ISFNR congress for their participation here.¹ Last, but not least, the chief organizer of the next congress of the ISFNR, Dr Mare Kõiva, is among us. Many of us will meet again in July 2005 in Tartu, Estonia. Also I have to stress that it was heart-warming to see here in Msida not only the veterans of folklore studies, but also so many young persons. The geographic and interethnic diapason of our conference was a very positive one indeed: papers on Eskimos and Udmurts, Jewish and Neo-Pagan rituals have testified how close and how different we are in our common rites.

If I have to choose for you some highlights of our conference, you will agree that both descriptive/informative and theoretical/summarizing lectures could be mentioned. Some papers dealt with historical sources, others were devoted to changes in the rituals. As for the research methodology, traditional methods of folklore and anthropology have been presented, but in some cases the most modern techniques were also involved. We are very thankful for the series of fine lectures on Maltese topics, which enabled us to understand better the unique cultural history of the country. A very typical feature was the restrained presentation of Malta's rich cultural heritage. While in some other places the guides boast of several-hundred-year-old monuments, continually adding more and more years to them, inflating and exaggerating everything, here, in Malta, you almost always told us only the facts, and often added such qualifications as 'we do not know exactly,' or 'we cannot tell why it was so.' Of course, the organized tours to world-famous archaeological sites, and seeing the Passion play, definitely will remain in our memory.

All SIEF working groups have to deal with comparative approaches. As is typical for any 'first' international conference, 'reporting' papers were dominant. But the audience could compare and combine them, thus gaining a fairly good picture of the present state of ritual research in Europe. Especially in the discussions following the papers, the comparative aspects of our conference could be well observed. But in the future we have to pay more attention to comparative studies. Perhaps if the same topic were to be addressed

¹ The 1989 ISFNR Congress in Budapest was organized by V. Voigt.

by several papers, or by panelists from different countries, it would improve our comparative ritology.

There was no single overarching method in our discussions. Still a common understanding of the major problems in our research was present. What, in fact, is the ritual year? What systems (ergological, religious or cognitive, speculative) are detectable behind the actual calendar customs? How and why is the ritual changing? Luckily we have not heard 'final' answers to those questions. But we could think over the problems and could understand how important it is both for the individual and for the community to have ritual capacity. The conference papers dealing with actual rites did serve this purpose very well.

Finally, I have to come back to praise Malta's charm. I list here only three aspects of it.

First, we were enchanted by the astonishing prehistory, which may give to us many hints for a better understanding of our own rituals. Secondly, the strength of the living traditions was very impressive too. And we know the Holy Week is only a culmination of ritual in Malta: the Maltese take care of their folk traditions throughout the year. And scholarly folklore research in Malta is equally rich and prosperous. We could only see some of your scholarly publications, but, I am convinced, we will look into them and use your results in our researches. Thirdly, we have found the people in Malta so friendly, that we should give them separate, special acknowledgment.

And the friendliness of the Maltese people is not a new phenomenon. I believe that most of us first heard the name Malta/Melita from the New Testament passage (Acts 28: 1-6) in which Paul the Apostle arrives on the island and performs his famous miracle with the viper's bite (I assume here an allusion to the veneration of snakes, which is still an element in Central Mediterranean rituals). But the sentence I have in mind is in the previous verse, describing the people of the island, who expressed τὴν τυχοῦσαν φιλανθρωπίαν to Paul and his crew. As all of us who participated in the conference could easily recognize that the 'profound philanthropy' still exists in Malta.



Pl. 40 and 41 The opening session of the conference.

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Pl. 42 Dr Paul Clough (*first from left*) of the Mediterranean Institute, University of Malta, delivering his address in the opening session. Also in the picture Dr Emily Lyle, President of the *SIEF* Ritual Year Working Group, Dr George Mifsud-Chircop, Convenor of the conference, and Prof. Manwel Mifsud, Head of the Department of Maltese, University of Malta. © *University of Malta Junior College*



Pl. 43 Mr Joe Sciriha, *first from right*, Vice-Principal at the University of Malta Junior College, welcoming Dr Emily Lyle during the Official Reception in the College Foyer. © *George Mifsud-Chircop*



Pl. 44 Participants enjoyed the Gharghur Passion play-cum-traditional Good Friday Procession. © George Mifsud-Chircop



Pl. 45 The Birgu Good Friday ritual procession. © George Mifsud-Chircop



Pl. 46 Participants at the Haġar Qim Temples



Pl. 47 Anthony Mangion showing participants at the Żurrieq Parish Church.

© George Mifsud-Chircop



© Aado Lintrop



Pl. 48 Miller George Sammut (*second from left*) describing the milling process at the Xarolla Windmill, Żurrieq.

© George Mifsud-Chircop



Pl. 49 Mare Kõiva and Dace Bula during dinner following the cultural tour.

© Aado Lintrop



Pl. 50 Visiting Limestone Heritage, Siggiewi.

© George Mifsud-Chircop



Pl. 51 Prof. Leander Petzoldt (*first from left*) and Vilmos Voigt at the Ritual Banquet.
© Aado Lintrop



Pl. 52 Maltese musicians playing during the Ritual Banquet. © Aado Lintrop



Pl. 53 'Rituals in Malta', a photographic exhibition organized by the Malta Photographic Society.

© George Mifsud-Chircop



Pl. 54 Dr Francis Zammit-Dimech, Minister for Tourism and Culture, delivering his address during the Closing Plenary Session. Also in the picture (from left to right) Prof. Vilmos Voigt, Dr Emily Lyle, Dr George Mifsud-Chircop, Dr Terry Gunnell and Prof. Jeremy Boissevain.

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FRANCIS ZAMMIT-DIMECH

Minister for Tourism and Culture, Malta

A Node in a Networking Process

I am of course not in a position to provide a conclusion to this conference. In the first place your particular conference, which is the first of the working group on the Ritual Year is obviously intended to be the inauguration of a process that is not meant to end with this conference, but rather to continue over the years.

Secondly, I do not have the academic competence to attempt to provide any kind of synthesis of the results achieved in your week of meetings, even had I had the possibility, as I would have liked, to follow your learned contributions. I cannot even express appropriately any appreciation of those who have given organisational inputs to the success of the conference, as I am sure several of you have done.

What I can express is my gratitude for the effort that the conference as a whole represents from the point of view of a Minister of the Maltese Government. I believe that your conference – because of its topic – is not of merely academic interest but has at least three more dimensions of significance.

Dimensions

First, it has a political significance. The most frequently used buzzword these days is globalisation. The ambivalence of the phenomenon is generally acknowledged. On the one hand its positive face is that a network of communication is developing to cover the entire planet. The negative aspect is that instead of a global village as was once predicted, it is a global Las Vegas that seems to be coming about. In other words, while the universality of human values is being happily asserted, the great danger is that of the uniformisation of culture.

The great merit of focusing attention on such topics such as those you have been highlighting is that they are themes expressive

of what is most universal in human nature, but the concrete realisations of which are very individual.

Secondly, your conference is of particular interest to Malta. Malta has often been compared by journalists with an anthropological penchant, to Bali, because the life of its inhabitants is as much punctuated by religious festivals albeit of a Catholic flavour, as that of the Balinese is by festivals evocative of Hinduism. An understanding of the themes of your conference – the Ritual Year – in its universal significance is bound to be of great relevance to the understanding of the Maltese individual way of living it. In the context of globalisation as it is actually occurring, perhaps there is no more important political task than ensuring the unfettered development of the particular cultural identity of each people, while at the same time making it as open and accessible as possible to all other peoples. It is recognised that awareness of a people's heritage is the most empowering factor for a people to project in a non-aggressive manner its identity. However, it is being increasingly recognised that the part of the national heritage that can more easily be made open and made available for participation by others is not that which is objectified in solid matter or souvenirs, but that which is performed collectively and acted out by a community as a whole. In other words, it is the part of the world's common heritage, which has been in its national individuated forms, the subject of your conference.

Malta has recently become a member of the European Union. Our conviction is that in so doing, we have neither wanted to submerge our identity in that of a larger entity, nor to have rallied in support of a new super power. We have rather wanted to become a node in a networking process which is aimed at giving a new and different character to globalisation than that which it has been given so far.

We can, therefore, consider even this conference as a contribution that is perfectly in line with the overall objective that we have been pursuing in international affairs. Malta, as you are certainly by now perfectly aware, is on the border between Europe and the continents of Africa and Asia. It is clearly our mission to carry out a broker's role or middleman function between the peoples of these areas in the interests of both a greater realisation of common heritage and mutual enrichment by cross cultural fertilisation.

Thirdly, your conference and the future activities of your working group have also pertinence to economic development. As is well

known, office holders in small island states have usually to wear a multiplicity of hats. I am Minister responsible for Culture; and indeed, one of the units of my ministry is responsible for the animation of festivals of our Ritual Year, such as Carnival and other national festive events such as the commemoration of the Great Siege of 1565. But I am also the Minister responsible for tourism. Tourism is considered to be the fastest growing economic sector in the world. Moreover, it is being increasingly recognised that the most important stimulus of this growth is not so much the escapism that urges people to seek sun and sea, as the desire to make acquaintance with alternative modes of life. More than ever human beings are keen to discover how other beings who appear on the surface almost alien, share at bottom the same structure of deep desires and the same understanding of the common conditions of life on our small planet.

Tourism

The civil rituals practised with such rich diversity all over the world are basically rooted in our common animality and perhaps none more so than those related to the passage of time and the circulation of our planet around the single source of energy and life available to us, the sun. Seasonality has often been associated with tourism, in particular the summer season in Malta. Our economic interests have constantly driven us to strive for tourism all year round. Hence, we have sought to enhance the attractiveness of non-summer festivities. Admittedly, there has been a counter tendency for the traditional *festas* in honour of the patron saints of our villages, marked so spectacularly with fireworks and ephemeral baroque street decorations, to be moved from their proper seasonal placing in the calendar to the summer, and less exposure to the risks of inclement weather. There was also an attempt to transpose carnival itself, from its eve-of-lent date, to the summer, but experience proved, that just as with the national feast of St Paul's Shipwreck, there is an unbreakable link between enjoyable celebration of a feast and its seasonal collocation.

For all these reasons, I am grateful to your Society for having chosen Malta as the site of this meeting occurring just before one of the most important periods of ritual celebration of the year. I

am sure that Malta has acquired as large and effective a complement of cultural ambassadors as the entire Diplomatic Service of our country. I thank you very much and offer our country as location for any of your future activities where our modest help may be useful.

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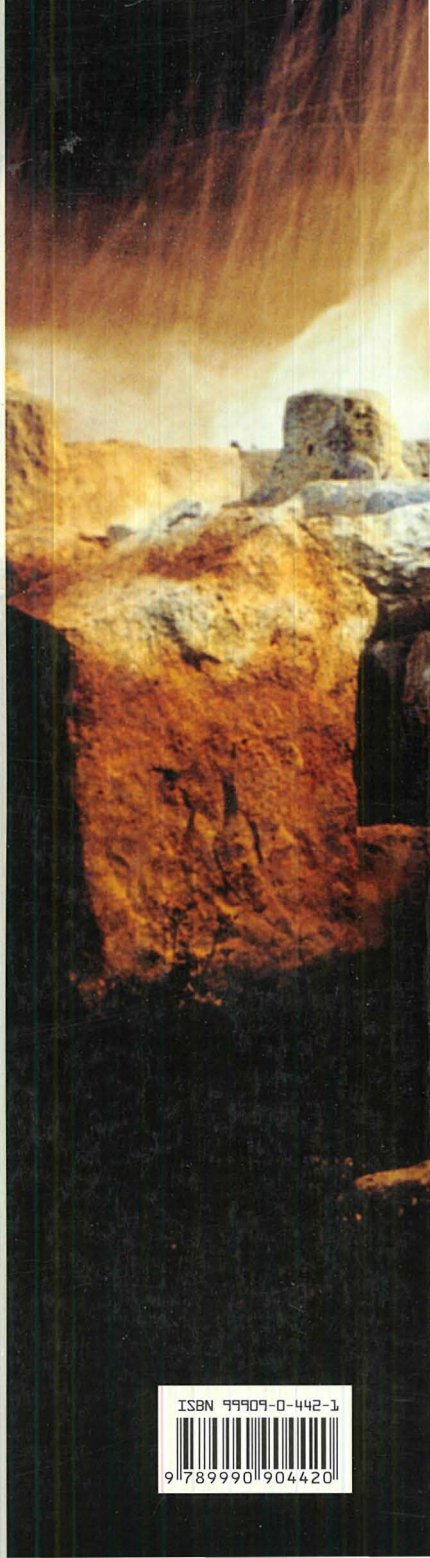
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This publication brings together many ritual specialists, including folklorists, ethnologists, musicologists, archaeologists, social anthropologists, historians, and scholars involved in rituals – a new area of study. This scientific anthology is the fruit of the First Ritual Year International Conference on ethnology and folklore held in Malta in 2005 by the *SIEF* Working Group on the Ritual Year.

The volume is divided into two: 'Rituals in Malta' and 'Rituals in Europe and Beyond'. One finds various issues, styles and degrees of religiosity, genres of ritual practice, as well as fluidity, vitality and rationality. Local perspectives and complexities, reflecting the time and place in which they have come into existence, become inextricably locked within their cultural particularity and immediate world, and/or adapt themselves to the needs, self-expression, ideals, and innovations of the community/ies in question.

As already remarked during the conference, very broadly five explanatory frameworks for Ritual appear to emerge – descriptive or archival studies, including musicology; the religious significance of Ritual, or on the socially effective power of the 'sacred'; rituals in terms of the internal logic of their symbols and myths; relation of Ritual to 'political economy', broadly conceived; and the relation of Ritual to social structure and changes in structure, including those which focus on seasonal economical cycles, and those which analyze Ritual in terms of gender difference. Many of the papers in the last group explore what was clearly a key theme of the Conference – the conceptualization of the Ritual Year.



ISBN 9909-0-442-1



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