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Ancia Zarichanska in der Volkskunde Transkarpatiens: Zur Frage kultureller Parallelen

**Ancia Zarichanska and Folk Belief in Transcarpathia:
A Comparative Perspective**

Abstract

This study focuses on the historical figure of Ancia Zarichanska (Anna Poidyn), a spiritual mediator and charismatic healer from the Transcarpathian village of Zarichchia. Based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork (2018–2019) and qualitative interviews with local informants, the article examines the narrative construction of this woman in collective memory, as well as her magical abilities, ritual practices, and ascetic lifestyle. Her unusual behavior – including voluntary seclusion, visionary experiences, fasting, and selective social interaction – is interpreted as an expression of religious asceticism, deviant piety, and spiritual authority.

Central elements such as near-death experience, rebirth motifs, and prophetic healing are analyzed in comparison with European folk healers, visionary figures, and shamanic initiation processes. Zarichanska's case demonstrates how spiritual legitimacy can be established outside institutional religion. Particular attention is paid to the cultural logic underlying the attribution of mystical authority, the emergence of local rituals such as "Hercna Wednesday," and the ritual veneration of her grave as a site of popular devotion.

This study contributes to the ethnology of folk belief by showing how collective memory, oral tradition, demonological narratives, and religious-magical practices interweave to shape local forms of "folk sainthood." The figure of Zarichanska is presented as a paradigmatic example of trans-cultural patterns of non-institutional spirituality, which fulfill identity-forming functions, especially in times of social transformation.

Keywords: Transcarpathia, demonology, folk belief, collective memory, ritual practice



Einleitung

Die Figur von Ancia Zarichanska (ukr. Анця Зарічанська, geb. Anna Pojdyn (Анна Пойдин)) – eine Frau, die in der lokalen Erinnerung als Heilerin, Seherin und spirituelle Vermittlerin zwischen den Welten verehrt wurde – wurde in verschiedenen wissenschaftlichen und lokalhistorischen Arbeiten bereits am Rande thematisiert. Einer der frühesten Hinweise stammt von Ivan Pankevych, der zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts im Rahmen seiner umfassenden Dialektforschung „Ukrainische Dialekte der subkarpatischen Rus und angrenzender Regionen“ eine Erzählung über Ancia Zarichanska von Danylo Buleza aufzeichnete, der im Jahr 1879 geboren wurde.¹

Im Jahr 1998 veröffentlichte Mychajlo Zan eine kurze ethnografische Notiz in der Zeitschrift „Unser Heimatland“, basierend auf eigenen Feldmaterialien aus den Dörfern Velyki Komiaty und Zarichchia.² Spätere lokalhistorische Zusammenstellungen von A. Kobal und I. Fehyr zitieren weitere Geschichten über sie in ihrer Monografie „Zarichchia: Historischer und lokaler Geschichtsaufsatz“ (2004).³ Trotz dieser punktuellen Erwähnungen fehlt bislang eine systematische wissenschaftliche Untersuchung ihrer Rolle im lokalen Glaubenssystem.

Menschen mit sogenannten metaphysischen Fähigkeiten traten innerhalb der traditionellen dörflichen Gesellschaft selten durch äußere Merkmale hervor. Vielmehr wurden sie durch ihre besondere Lebensweise, ihre rituellen Praktiken sowie durch als außergewöhnlich empfundene Fähigkeiten wahrgenommen. Die überlieferten Erzählungen über Ancia Zarichanska zeichnen ein lebendiges Bild einer Frau, die als Heilerin, Ratgeberin und Trägerin besonderer Gaben zwischen Diesseits und Jenseits vermittelt haben soll.

Der geografische Fokus dieser Untersuchung liegt auf ausgewählten Ortschaften der heutigen ukrainischen Region Transkarpatien, insbesondere auf den Dörfern Zarichchia (Bezirk Khust) sowie Velyki Komiaty, Onok, Bukove, Borzhavske, Shyroke und der Stadt Vynohradiv im Bezirk Berehove. Der zeitliche Rahmen der Studie reicht vom späten 19. Jahrhundert bis in die frühen 2020er Jahre. Er ist einerseits bestimmt durch die frühesten archivalischen und mündlichen Hinweise auf Ancia Zarichanska sowie durch den Zeitraum, in dem sich volkstümliche Vorstellungen über ihre Person und Fähigkeiten im kollektiven Gedächtnis erhalten haben.

¹ Pankevych 1938: 465.

² Zan 1998: 28.

³ Koba–Fehyr 2004: 69–71.

Die empirische Grundlage der Studie bilden qualitative Interviews mit Dorfbewohner:innen aus den oben genannten Gemeinden, die im Rahmen mehrerer ethnografischer Feldaufenthalte in den Jahren 2018–2019 durchgeführt wurden. Ziel der Untersuchung ist es, die Struktur und Bedeutung lokaler dämonologischer Vorstellungen sowie die Mechanismen spiritueller Autoritätszuschreibung im ländlichen Raum Transkarpatiens herauszuarbeiten und in ihrer kulturellen Logik zu deuten.

Die Feldmaterialien wurden im Rahmen gezielter Interviews auf karpato-russinischer Sprache erhoben; teilnehmende Beobachtung fand in diesem Projekt nicht statt. Die Überlieferungen der Gesprächspartner:innen stammen von deren Vorfahren, die in direktem Kontakt mit Ancia Zarichanska oder ihrer Umgebung standen.

Im Zentrum der Untersuchung stehen traditionelle Glaubensvorstellungen, Rituale und magische Praktiken, die sich um Personen mit metaphysischen Fähigkeiten gruppieren. Die Fallanalyse von Ancia Zarichanska dient dabei als exemplarischer Zugang zur Frage, wie solche Figuren innerhalb des dörflichen Sozialgefüges verankert und gedeutet werden. Dabei werden insbesondere ihre Merkmale, Funktionen, soziale Stellung sowie ihre rituelle und alltags-praktische Wirksamkeit analysiert. Zugleich wird versucht, diese Figur in eine vergleichende Perspektive zu stellen, die Parallelen zu ähnlichen Erscheinungen in anderen europäischen Kontexten berücksichtigt. Dämonologische Vorstellungen werden als wichtiger Bestandteil der volkstümlichen Weltanschauung charakterisiert.

Uns ist bewusst, dass im Rahmen einer Feldforschung eine Reibung zwischen Objektivität und Solidarität unvermeidlich entsteht – genau jenes „performative paradox“, dass die Anthropologie grundlegend prägt. Um diesem Spannungsfeld gerecht zu werden, legen wir besonderen Wert auf die möglichst direkte Wiedergabe der überlieferten Erzählungen.⁴ Die aufgezeichneten Überlieferungen sind stark durch den jeweiligen Erzählanlass und den situativen Ablauf geprägt, wodurch ein einzigartiger Kontext und eine spezifische Atmosphäre der Folklore entsteht.⁵

⁴ Hastrup 1995: 18.

⁵ Lehmann 2007: 67–69.

Die Figur von Anna in den Legenden der Anwohner

Die Befragten nannten Anna Poidyn (1818? (1820)–1890) meist: *Ancia Zarichanska*,⁶ *Anc'ka Zarichanska* (Анцька Зарічанська),⁷ *Ancia Zaricka* (Анця Заріцька),⁸ *Prophetin* (пророчиця),⁹ *Seherin* (провидиця),¹⁰ *Heilige* (свята),¹¹ *Wahrsagerin* (гадалка),¹² *Weissagerin* (ворожка),¹³ *Heilerin* (пілителька),¹⁴ *Hellseherin* (ясновидіння).¹⁵

Die Mehrheit der Befragten verortet ihre Lebenszeit im 19. Jahrhundert:

*„Das war sehr lange her. Damals lebte noch mein Ururgroßvater – er war bei ihr, als er noch ein Kind war. Ich weiß nicht mehr, in welchem Jahr das war – achtzehnhundertigendwas, irgendwo am Anfang des Jahrhunderts.“*¹⁶

Dennoch werden die Erzählung von *Ancia Zarichanska* recht häufig mit *Terka Komiatska* vermischt, die im benachbarten Dorf *Velyki Komjaty* in der Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts lebte und aus dem Psalter weissagte:

*„Sie [Ancia Zarichanska – V.K., O.K.] öffnete den Psalter. Sie hatte so einen Psalter, und man ging zu ihr, und sagte: Ich habe ein Unglück – ich kann meine Tochter nicht verheiraten, ich kann meinen Sohn nicht verheiraten, mein Mann schlägt mich, er hat mich verprügelt.‘ Und sie ging und öffnete den Psalter – und erzählte die ganze Wahrheit, was das ist. Sie erzählte alles – warum es so geschehen war.“*¹⁷

Dem Thema der besonderen Fähigkeit einzelner Personen, durch das gelegentliche Öffnen des Psalters die Zukunft vorherzusagen, ist eine

⁶ Interview am 09.07.2018, Frau A. P. A. (geb. 1937, Dorf *Velyki Komjaty*); Interview am 11.09.2019, Herr A. I. K. (geb. 1928, Dorf *Zarichchia*).

⁷ Interview am 09.07.2018, Frau A. P. A. (geb. 1937, Dorf *Velyki Komjaty*).

⁸ Interview am 05.07.2018, Frau M. I. K. (geb. 1924, Dorf *Onok*).

⁹ Interview am 04.07.2018, Herr J. V. K. (geb. 1937, Dorf *Onok*); Interview am 09.07.2018, Frau A. P. A. (geb. 1937, Dorf *Velyki Komjaty*); Interview am 05.07.2018, Frau M. I. R. (geb. 1951, Dorf *Onok*); Interview am 11.09.2019, Herr M. V. M. (geb. 1951, Dorf *Zarichchia*).

¹⁰ Interview am 03.07.2018, Frau M. M. M. (geb. 1959, Dorf *Onok*).

¹¹ Interview am 05.07.2018, Frau S. M. O. (geb. 1942, Dorf *Borzhavskie*).

¹² Interview am 04.07.2018, Herr J. I. T. (geb. 1937, Dorf *Onok*).

¹³ Interview am 05.07.2018, Frau M. M. M. (geb. 1944, Dorf *Borzhavskie*).

¹⁴ Interview am 05.07.2018, Herr J. I. D. (geb. 1951, Dorf *Onok*).

¹⁵ Interview am 03.07.2018, Frau M. M. M. (geb. 1959, Dorf *Onok*).

¹⁶ Interview am 05.07.2018, Frau M. I. R. (geb. 1951, Dorf *Onok*).

¹⁷ Interview am 08.07.2018, Frau J. I. K. (geb. 1948, Dorf *Velyki Komjaty*).

eigenständige Studie von Nadia Varkhol gewidmet – über Mykhailo Siryi, den „Psalteröffner“ aus der Region Preshov.¹⁸

Nicht selten vermischen sich Erzählungen über Ancia Zarichanska mit Geschichten über umherziehende bettelnde Seher, denen ebenfalls die Fähigkeit zugeschrieben wurde, die Zukunft vorherzusagen:

„Es gab noch so einen Petro, der konnte im Voraus erzählen. Er war nicht aus Vynohradiv. Er kam so zu den Leuten, ging herum und predigte. Wenn er hier war, dann übernachtete er bei der Lipcheika. Und sie ließ nie einen armen Mann hungrig oder schmutzig aus dem Haus gehen.“¹⁹

Annas Gabe

Die übernatürlichen Fähigkeiten von Anna Poidyn wurden als eine Art angeborene Gabe erklärt: „*So ist sie geboren worden. Gott hat ihr gegeben, dass sie eine Prophetin sei. Sie sagte, dass nach ihr keine Frauen mehr Prophetinnen sein werden.*“²⁰ Auch ihre ungewöhnlichen Fähigkeiten wurden mit einem Nahtoderlebnis und der darauffolgenden „Wiederbelebung“ erklärt:

„Sie wusste alles. Weil sie gestorben war und dann wieder lebendig wurde.“²¹

„Man erzählte so, als sie ein Mädchen war und dann wie gestorben ist. Sie ging Gras mähen für ihr Vieh, das am Sonntag krank geworden war. Und der Bruder mit der Schwester oder Schwägerin waren auf dem Markt und befahlen ihr, sie solle mähen gehen. Und als sie gemäht hatte, fand man sie tot. Aber in einem solchen Zustand – sie war nicht tot und nicht lebendig. Sie funktionierte schon nicht mehr wie vorher. Man hat sie nicht beerdigt, sondern sie war in einem Zustand, in dem sie zu sprechen begann, als wäre sie eine Prophetin gewesen.“²²

„Sehen Sie, sie war von Gott gegeben – an einem Sonntag. Denn die Schwägerin und der Bruder gingen am Sonntag in die Kirche, und sie hatten Ochsen, und da sagt er zur Schwester: „Anc'ka, wir gehen in die Kirche, und du geh in den Garten.“ Das war nicht recht den Leuten gegenüber, weil es eben Sonntag war. Und sie sagt: „Geh und mäh Gras für die Ochsen.“ Und sie nahm die Sense, ging und mähte. Irgendwas war da bei ihnen im Garten. Sie gab den Ochsen zu fressen. Als der Bruder und die Schwägerin aus der Kirche zurückkamen – Anc'ka war tot, und der Ochse war

¹⁸ Varkhol 2011: 42–44.

¹⁹ Interview am 06.08.2019, Frau K. I. K. (geb. 1956, Dorf *Velyki Komjaty*).

²⁰ Interview am 04.07.2018, Herr J. V. K. (geb. 1937, Dorf *Onok*).

²¹ Interview am 04.07.2018, Frau A. I. T. (geb. 1931, Dorf *Onok*).

²² Interview am 05.07.2018, Frau M. I. R. (geb. 1951, Dorf *Onok*).

*verendet. Der Ochse war verendet, und Anc`ka war tot. Und dann kam sie ein wenig wieder zu sich. Aber sie funktionierte nicht mehr richtig.*²³

Arnold van Gennep sieht die Idee von rituellem Tod und Wiedergeburt als tief verankert sowohl in sogenannten primitiven Gesellschaften als auch in den großen Religionen. Er weist Deutungen zurück, die solche Übergangsriten als bloße neurologische Phänomene verstehen, und betont stattdessen, dass es sich um symbolische Handlungen handelt, die mit den Zyklen von Natur, Kosmos und sozialem Leben in enger Verbindung stehen.²⁴

In diesem Fall kann der Tod („Einfrieren“) als euphemistischer Ausdruck mit charakteristischen Motiven interpretiert werden, die die Volksphilosophie des Todes als Bewegung nach oben zum Himmel, zu Heiligen, zu Gott offenbaren.²⁵

Die Folgen eines solchen Übergangs ins Jenseits sind sowohl für den Einzelnen als auch für die Gemeinschaft als Ganzes von großer Bedeutung. Einerseits vermittelt eine solche Reise ein gewisses Wissen über die andere Welt und verändert oder bestätigt in gewissem Maße die Regeln der Beziehungen zu ihr. Andererseits verändert der Glaube an die Erlebnisse und das Bewusstsein ihrer Bedeutung das Leben des Teilnehmers an einem solch ungewöhnlichen Ereignis erheblich (er bleibt unverheiratet, lebt fast ausschließlich auf dem Dachboden ...). Eine solche Reise ins Jenseits ging oft mit dem Erwerb geheimer Kenntnisse und Fähigkeiten einher. Ähnliche Analogien finden sich in den überlieferten Glaubensvorstellungen der Bulgaren:

„Einmal war ein alter Mann ‚am Sterben‘ und behandelte seitdem. „[...] „Einmal schließt sie ein und sah im Traum eine hohe Leiter. Sie begann, sie hinaufzusteigen. Und auf beiden Seiten der Leiter herrschte völlige Dunkelheit. Als die Frau ganz oben war, erschien plötzlich ein helles Licht und der Heilige vor ihr. Der Erlöser befahl ihr, wieder herunterzukommen, denn von diesem Tag an würde er ihr ‚Kraft‘ geben und sie würde Menschen heilen können.“²⁶

Unter den Mazedoniern findet sich die Vorstellung von einer geheimnisvollen Krankheit oder todesähnlichen Zuständen, die dadurch entstehen, dass eine Samovila²⁷ eine Person zur Initiation als Heiler:in auswählt. Die ausgewählte Person muss der Initiation zustimmen – entweder um selbst zu genesen oder um den Tod nahestehender Menschen abzuwenden. Eine

²³ Interview am 04.07.2018, Frau A. I. T. (geb. 1931, Dorf *Onok*).

²⁴ van Gennep 1960: 183–184.

²⁵ Tolstaya 2012: 59.

²⁶ Todorova-Pirgova 1999: 25.

²⁷ Samovila oder Samodiva – in der Folklore der südslawischen Völker sind dies weibliche Naturgeister von Flüssen, Wäldern und Bergen.

Ablehnung würde unweigerlich zum Tod dieser Menschen führen. Diese Erfahrung ist mit einer Reise ins Jenseits verbunden.²⁸

Eine ähnliche Variante war auch unter den Bulgaren verbreitet: die Volksheilige Prepodobna Stoyna (1883–1933) aus dem Dorf *Zlatolist*, die infolge einer Krankheit erblindete. Der Überlieferung zufolge erschien ihr in Visionen der heilige Georg (Св. Георги), der zu ihrem geistigen Lehrer wurde. In der Folge erhielt sie die Gabe der Prophetie und der Heilung.²⁹ Michalska beschreibt ebenfalls das Phänomen des „vorübergehenden Todes“, das mit der Prepodobna verbunden ist, wenn sie mehrere Tage hintereinander in einem Zustand war, den man als „beinahe tot“ bezeichnete.³⁰

Typisch für schamanische Praktiken sind Erzählungen und Narrative über die sogenannte „schamanische Krankheit“ (shamanic sickness), einen langen Schlaf oder ekstatische Erfahrungen der „Zerlegung“ (dismemberment) der vom Geist ausgewählten Person – ein Symbol für rituellen Tod und Wiedergeburt in der Rolle des Schamanen. Éva Pócs und Vilmos Diószegi beschreiben den Initiationsprozess ungarischer Schamanen (táltos) folgendermaßen:

„Wenn dieser Typ von Táltos von zu Hause verschwindet, wird er zunächst krank. Er wird leblos irgendwo auf dem Feld liegen, als wäre er tot ... Bis er wieder erwacht, ist er bereits ein wahrer Táltos geworden. Es bleibt ihm nur noch, eine hohe Leiter hinaufzusteigen – dort wird er sich von all dem ausruhen.“³¹

Mircea Eliade beschreibt detaillierte Berichte von Initiationsträumen, Reisen in die obere Welt sowie von der „Zerlegung“ der Neophyten durch Geister – ein Motiv, das in nahezu allen traditionellen Gesellschaften der Welt zu finden ist.³²

Ungewöhnliches Verhalten von Anna

Anna Poidyn wurde eine ausgeprägte Frömmigkeit, Askese und ein für die Allgemeinheit ungewöhnliches, oft unverständliches Verhalten zugeschrieben, das sie deutlich von gewöhnlichen Menschen abhob.

²⁸ Petreska 2008: 31.

²⁹ Michalska 2020: 170.

³⁰ Michalska 2020: 175.

³¹ Pócs 2023: 158.

³² Eliade 1964: 36.

Nach der Überlieferung lebte Anna fast ausschließlich auf dem Dachboden:

„Sie lebte auf dem Dachboden, sie schlief dort unter dem Dach.“³³

„Von Ancia Zarichanska hat mir meine Mutter erzählt, dass sie auf einem Stein schlafen konnte – sie brauchte keine Decke. Sie war sehr fromm und konnte Dinge im Voraus sagen.“³⁴

„Sie war schon auf dem Dachboden. Sowohl im Sommer als auch im Winter war sie dort, dort hatte man sie eingeschlossen. Und wer zu ihr kam, der sprach nur... Es gab so etwas wie eine Leiter zum Dachboden, aber niemand ging zu ihr hinauf. Sie hörte Stimmen [von Besuchern – V.K., O.K.], und man konnte auch ihre Stimme hören... Und sie stieg niemals hinunter, sie sprach nur.“³⁵

„Sie lebte auf dem Dachboden. Und wenn man zu ihr kam, stieg sie überhaupt nicht herunter.“³⁶

„Man erzählte, dass sie auf dem Dachboden lebte. Und im Winter und während der Fastenzeit schlief sie die ganze Zeit.“³⁷

„Ancia Zaric'ka – sie schlief auf einem Stein auf dem Dachboden.“³⁸

Anna akzeptierte keine Menschen, die sie für sündig hielten oder die etwas Schlechtes tun wollten, und sprach nicht einmal mit ihnen:

„Ein Mann kam, und man sagte, mit einem Mädchen. Das Mädchen ließ sie herein, aber ihn nicht – weil er in der Schenke einen Deziliter Wodka getrunken hatte. Deshalb nahm sie ihn nicht an. Sie sagte: „Ihr sollt ihn nicht hereinlassen.“³⁹

„Wenn jemand unterwegs war, sagte sie schon von oben herab: „Sagt ihm, er soll nicht kommen, denn ich werde das nicht tun“ – weil er nicht mit guten Absichten kam.“⁴⁰

„Sie nahm nicht alle an. Man kam zu ihr und sagte: „Da ist ein Mann zu dir gekommen.“ Und sie sagte: „Den sollt ihr gar nicht hereinlassen, ich werde ihn nicht empfangen. Er soll gar

³³ Interview am 04.07.2018, Herr J. V. K. (geb. 1937, Dorf *Onok*).

³⁴ Interview am 18.07.2018, Frau K. J. K. (geb. 1950, Stadt *Vynohradiv*).

³⁵ Interview am 04.07.2018, Frau A. I. T. (geb. 1931, Dorf *Onok*).

³⁶ Interview am 05.07.2018, Herr J. I. D. (geb. 1951, Dorf *Onok*).

³⁷ Interview am 10.07.2018, Frau J. V. Z. (geb. 1936, Dorf *Velyki Komjaty*).

³⁸ Interview am 05.07.2018, Frau M. I. K. (geb. 1924, Dorf *Onok*).

³⁹ Interview am 04.07.2018, Herr J. V. K. (geb. 1937, Dorf *Onok*).

⁴⁰ Interview am 12.07.2018, Frau A. V. H. (geb. 1945, Dorf *Onok*).

nicht erst bitten, denn ich nehme ihn nicht an. ‘Sie spürte den Menschen schon von Weitem. Wenn jemand mit schlechten Absichten kam, ließ sie ihn überhaupt nicht zu sich.’⁴¹

„Wenn jemand ein Unglück hatte, gingen alle zu Anc’ka. Aber sie sprach nur, wenn sie es wollte. Und wenn sie nicht wollte – da war ihre Schwägerin bei ihr – dann sagte sie: „Sie kommen, aber ich werde nicht sprechen. Sagt ihnen, dass Anc’ka nicht spricht, Anc’ka schläft.“⁴²

Ähnlich wie bei Anna finden wir auch Berichte darüber, dass die Prepodobna Stoyna gereizt auf Besucher reagierte, die sie als „unwürdig“ empfand.⁴³

„Sie [Ancia Zarichanska – V.K, O.K.] heiratete nicht.“⁴⁴ Dass Anna Poidyn unverheiratet blieb, ist auch im Sterberegister des Dorfes *Zarichchia* vermerkt, wo in der Rubrik zum Familienstand eingetragen ist, dass sie unverheiratet gestorben ist.⁴⁵

Man kann vermuten, dass eine ausgeprägte Frömmigkeit, asketische Lebensweise und oft unverständliches oder sogar offen deviantes Verhalten bei solchen Persönlichkeiten Parallelen zu den im Christentum bekannten Phänomenen des *Jurodstwo*⁴⁶ hervorriefen – was in der Gemeinschaft zugleich Ehrfurcht wie auch Angst auslösen konnte. Dies konnte wiederum zur Entstehung des Bildes von Volksheiligen beitragen. Am Beispiel der Prepodobna Stoyna möchten wir darauf hinweisen, dass die volkstümliche Verehrung ähnlicher Gestalten durchaus eine ablehnende Reaktion seitens der Kirche hervorrufen kann – was jedoch die Popularität dieser Personen im Volk in der Regel nicht beeinträchtigt.⁴⁷

Anna in der Rolle der Hellseherin und Wahrsagerin

Zu den zentralen Funktionen, die die Befragten Ancia Zarichanska zuschrieben, gehörten die Hellsicht, die Fähigkeit zur Heilung sowie das Geben von Ratschlägen an Menschen in schwierigen Lebenslagen. Diese ermöglichen

⁴¹ Interview am 03.07.2018, Frau M. M. M. (geb. 1959, Dorf *Onok*).

⁴² Interview am 04.07.2018, Frau A. I. T. (geb. 1931, Dorf *Onok*).

⁴³ Michalska 2020: 175.

⁴⁴ Interview am 05.07.2018, Herr J. V. H. (geb. 1940, Dorf *Onok*).

⁴⁵ DAZO Blatt 413.

⁴⁶ Der *Jurodivyj* (der „Narr in Christo“) ist im religiösen Kontext eine Person, die Wahnsinn vortäuscht, um sich bewusst vom weltlichen Leben abzugrenzen. Dieses Phänomen ist vor allem in der ostkirchlichen (orthodoxen) Tradition verbreitet, obwohl auch einige katholische Heilige ein ähnliches Verhalten gezeigt haben.

⁴⁷ Michalska 2020: 172.

es in gewissem Maße, das Verhältnis zwischen dem Menschen einerseits und der unverständlichen jenseitigen Welt andererseits zu regulieren.

Beispiele für solche Hellsichtigkeit wurden von Gesprächspartner:innen wie folgt beschrieben:

„Sie wusste im Voraus, was gewesen war, und was kommen wird.“⁴⁸

„Dem Bruder wurde ein Kalb gestohlen und irgendwo ins Dickicht geführt. Und sie haben es lebendig getötet, das Kalb. Und da hieß es: Wird Ancia das wohl wissen? Und wie man sagt – einer der Diebe kam zurück, hatte kaum den Hügel erreicht, da sage sie [Ancia Zarichanska – V.K., O.K.]: ,Wenn ihr es wenigstens schnell getötet hättest oder ihm irgendwie das Leid erspart hättest, dann wäre euch die Sünde vielleicht vergeben worden. Aber so wird euch die Sünde nur dann vergeben, wenn ihr Wasser in den Mund nehmst dort, wo die Sonne aufgeht, und auf den Knien tragt dorthin, wo sie untergeht – dann wird euch die Sünde vergeben. ‘So wurde erzählt.“⁴⁹

„Bei ihrem Bruder wurde die Kuh gestohlen, und der Bruder schrie sie an: ,Anna, warum hast du mir nicht gesagt, dass man mir die Kuh stehlen wird? Ich hätte sie bewacht!‘ Und sie sagte: ,Weil man dich dann getötet hätte – deshalb habe ich es dir nicht gesagt. Ich habe es so für mich entschieden: Sollen sie die Kuh mitnehmen, aber du bleibst am Leben. ‘Und so war es auch – die Kuh wurde gestohlen und nie gefunden.“⁵⁰

„Wenn jemand zu ihr kam, dann hatte sie das alles schon im Traum gesehen – wenn sie in Trance ging, nahm sie die Person nur bei der Hand, oder setzte sich – und konnte der Person alles sagen. Und sie war sehr fromm, sagte man, sie betete sehr viel.“⁵¹

In einer anderen Überlieferung geht es um einen tragischen Unfall:

„Sie gingen Heu holen, und das Kind schlief, und die Frau wollte nicht, weil es ein heiliger Tag war, so zu arbeiten. Die Frau sagte, dass das Kind schlafe und man es lassen solle – aber er [der Mann – V.K., O.K.] sagte: ,Annichka soll ruhig schlafen, wir bringen das Heu.‘ Sie brachten das Heu, und das Kind stand auf, kletterte auf den Heustock, und sie warfen das Heu vom Wagen oben drauf – da schlief sie ein und erstickte dort. Dann gingen sie zu Anc’ka und sagten, dass sie das Kind nicht finden könnten, und sie sagte ihnen: ,Euer Mann hat gesagt, dass Annichka schlafen soll – und sie schläft im Heustock unter dem Heu.‘ Und genau dort fanden sie das Kind.“⁵²

⁴⁸ Interview am 05.07.2018, Frau M. I. H. (geb. 1935, Dorf *Boržbarske*).

⁴⁹ Interview am 10.07.2018, Frau J. V. Z. (geb. 1936, Dorf *Velyki Komjaty*).

⁵⁰ Interview am 03.07.2018, Frau J. V. P. (geb. 1926, Dorf *Onok*).

⁵¹ Interview am 13.07.2018, Frau M. J. B. (geb. 1943, Dorf *Bukove*).

⁵² Interview am 05.07.2018, Herr J. J. M. (geb. 1930, Dorf *Boržbarske*).

Es gibt eine interessante Überlieferung, in der Ancia Zarichanska das Verenden des Viehs als ein Opfer anstelle des Todes der Hausbewohner erklärt:

„Als sie [Ancia Zarichanska – V.K., O.K.] noch lebte, war mein Urgroßvater bei ihr, denn bei ihm war ein großes Unglück passiert – das Vieh begann zu verenden. Sie hatten Pferde – die Pferde starben, dann die Kühe, die Schweine. Da sagte seine Frau: „Hör zu, geh nach Zarichchia, geh zu Anc’ka, damit sie dir sagt, was da los ist, was wir falsch gemacht haben.“ Nur die Gänse waren noch übrig – das hat mein Vater erzählt! Also ging der Großvater dorthin. Und Anc’ka empfing ihn – und das, obwohl sie nicht jeden empfing. Man sagte, sie war so eine mächtige Prophetin, dass sie wusste, ob ein Mensch, der zu ihr kam, gläubig war oder nicht. Denn selbst damals gab es Leute, die nicht an Gott glaubten, sondern nur ein gutes Leben wollten. Und auch heute gibt es solche – Hauptsache ein Haus mit drei bis fünf Stockwerken, und was mit dem Nachbarn ist, das ist ihnen egal, der kann meinetwegen im Elend leben. Und sie ließ ihn herein. Großvater stieg zum Dachboden hinauf und erzählte die ganze Geschichte – dass das Vieh starb und die Kinder krank wurden. Und sie hörte sich alles an und sagte zu ihm: „Geh heim, bete zu Gott, glaube an Gott“ – sie wusste, dass er sehr gläubig war – und sie sagte: „Geh heim. Es wird noch weiteren Schaden geben, aber das geschieht euch, weil –“ sie sagte: „eigentlich hätte aus eurer Familie eine Person sterben sollen. Aber stattdessen hat Gott euer Vieh genommen, damit ihr das durchleidet.““⁵³

In der volkstümlichen Vorstellung konnte Anna bevorstehende Besuche sowie deren Anliegen im Voraus wahrnehmen:

„Wenn man am Sonntag Wasser ins Haus gebracht hat und es dann für etwas verwendet hat – dann muss man es am nächsten Morgen ausgießen. Die alten Leute rieten davon ab, dieses Wasser zu benutzen. Aber meine Großmutter achtete immer darauf – doch dann vergaß sie es und ging weg, sie war beunruhigt. Und sie knetete am Montagmorgen Brot mit genau diesem Wasser, weil sie es vergessen hatte. Im Teig war Blut. Alle erschraken sehr – was war da nur passiert? So etwas hatten sie noch nie gesehen. Also gingen sie zu Anka Zarichanska, sie waren noch an der Türschwelle, und sie sagte sofort – Gott verzeih’s: „Martochka, siehst du, du hast mit Sonntagswasser geknetet.“ Die Großmutter stand noch an der Tür, und sie sagte es direkt – das heißt, sie wusste es bereits. Man sage sie habe ihre Familie bis ins siebte Glied mit dem Wasser getränkt.⁵⁴ Sie riet zu beten – und sagte, dass man Sonntagswasser nicht verwenden dürfe.“⁵⁵

In einer lokalen Legende erscheint der Sonntag (Свята Неділя) in anthropomorpher Gestalt. Die Heilige selbst tritt verwundet, mit Schnittwunden

⁵³ Interview am 09.07.2018, Frau A. P. A. (geb. 1937, Dorf *Velyki Komjaty*).

⁵⁴ Dieser Tabubruch ist eine schwere Sünde im Volksglauben. Dieser Ausdruck bedeutet, dass diese Sünde von ihren Nachfahren bis ins siebte Glied gesühnt werden sollte.

⁵⁵ Interview am 05.07.2018, Frau A. I. B. (geb. 1938, Dorf *Borzharske*).

und Blutergüssen, als geisterhafte Frau⁵⁶ den Männern entgegen, die nach der Sonntagsmesse gegen religiöse Vorschrift Holzarbeiten im Wald verrichten wollen. Sie erklärt, dass ihr die Menschen selbst diese Leiden zufügten, indem sie den heiligen Tag entweihen – ein symbolischer Ausdruck für die Folgen von Tabubrüchen. Nach diesem unheimlichen Erlebnis kehren die Männer um und es heißt, dass seitdem im Dorf sonntags nicht mehr gearbeitet wurde. Die Erzählung spiegelt eine tief verwurzelte Vorstellung vom Sonntag als heiliger Zeit wider, deren Übertretung als reale spirituelle Gefahr wahrgenommen wird.⁵⁷

Die geschilderten Episoden lassen sich im Sinne von Jan Kajfosz als Ausdruck magischen Denkens verstehen, das auf der Kategorisierung von Erfahrung beruht. Unerklärliche Ereignisse – wie das Blut im Brotteig oder das Verenden von Vieh – werden nicht als Zufall gedeutet, sondern in symbolische Ordnungen eingeordnet, die Handlungsanweisungen und moralische Orientierung bieten. Das Tabu des „Sonntagswassers“ oder das Verbot körperlicher Arbeit am Sonntag verwandeln alltägliche Handlungen in Grenzmarker zwischen Heil und Unheil. Solche Kategorien sind weniger individuelle Erfindungen als vielmehr kollektive Muster, die das Chaos der Wirklichkeit reduzieren und die Welt in eine verständliche und verlässliche Ordnung – ein „Kosmos“ – überführen.⁵⁸

Einfluss auf die Entstehung lokaler Ritualformen und Verehrung

Ein bemerkenswert einzigartiges Beispiel für den Einfluss von Anna auf den kalendarischen Brauch ist durch ein entstandenes dämonologisches Narrativ überliefert:

„In unserem Dorf halten wir das ein – in keinem anderen Dorf wird das mehr gehalten, nur bei uns gibt es den ‚Hervna-Mittwoch‘. Drei Wochen vor der Osterfastenzeit. Bei uns geht durch alle Straßen die Psalterprozession – ein Bittgebet für das Vieh. Damals starb im Dorf sehr viel Vieh. Es verendete einfach, und die Leute wussten nicht, was sie tun sollten. Also gingen sie zu Ancia Zarichanska. Und sie erzählte, dass ein Mann gestorben war, der das Vieh [durch

⁵⁶ Im Ukrainischen ist das Wort Sonntag grammatisch Femininum. Diese Form begünstigt in der Volksvorstellung eine Personifikation als weibliche Figuren.

⁵⁷ Aufzeichnung von Ivan Hotra, 1995, nach Erzähler J. L. (geb. 1905, Dorf *Majurky*, Bezirk *Uschhorod*, Transkarpatien).

⁵⁸ Kajfosz 2021: 83.

übernatürliche Kräfte – V.K., O.K.] beeinflusst habe [Dwoduschnyk⁵⁹ – V.K., O.K.]. Und sie nannte sogar seinen Nachnamen. Sie sagte: „Gebt und grabt diesen Mann aus, und dreht ihn mit den Füßen dorthin, wo vorher der Kopf war.“ So gingen die Leute von ihr fort, zum Friedhof, und sie gruben das Grab tatsächlich auf. Das war ein gewisser Babynets’ – ich kenne den Nachnamen. Und die Leute gruben das Grab aus und drehten ihn mit den Füßen um. Und sie sagte: „Lest den Psalter jedes Jahr an diesem Mittwoch – er heißt ‚Hercna-Mittwoch‘. Lest im ganzen Dorf den Psalter für das Vieh.“ Und so ist es bis zum heutigen Tag – bei uns wird der Psalter immer mittwochs gelesen.“⁶⁰

Anna Poidyn verstarb im Alter von siebzig Jahren – am 2. Februar 1890⁶¹ – und wurde im Kirchhof beigesetzt. Wie im Kirchenbuch des Dorfes Zarichchia vermerkt, war die Todesursache eine Erkältungskrankheit (eine Grippeinfektion).⁶² Im Jahr 1936 wurde ihr Grab – wie sie es selbst zu Lebzeiten angeordnet hatte – geöffnet. Wie sich A. Kobal', der bei diesem Ereignis anwesend war, erinnert:

„Man hat sie nicht in jenem Jahr ausgegraben, sondern damals war eine recht angesehene Kommission beteiligt – nicht nur aus unserem Dorf, sondern aus verschiedenen Orten. Als sie das Grab öffneten, war dort nichts mehr – nur die Knochen waren übrig. Diese wurden in eine Grabkammer gelegt und erneut beigesetzt. Dort, wo sie begraben liegt – neben der Kirche – befindet sich heute eine Kapelle.“⁶³

„Das Grab selbst wurde von Frauen sorgfältig gepflegt. Es befand sich an einem gut sichtbaren Ort auf dem Kirchengelände. Im Sommer 1936 wurde das Grab geöffnet. Zuvor hatte man mit den Spenden der Gläubigen eine Kapelle mit Krypta errichtet. In Anwesenheit eines Arztes, der Gemeindeverwaltung und zahlreicher Gläubiger wurde das Skelett in einen Zinksarg umgebettet und nach der Begräbniszeremonie in die Zementkrypta auf der linken Seite des Eingangs hinabgelassen.“⁶⁴

Ende der 1950er Jahre wurde neben der alten eine größere Kapelle errichtet, in die die Gebeine von Poidyn Anna überführt wurden. Wie sich der Kirchensänger von Zarichchia, M. Molnar, erinnert:

⁵⁹ Dwo(je)duschnyk – Gestalten der ukrainischen Mythologie. Der Legende nach werden sie mit zwei Seelen geboren: einer menschlichen und einer dämonischen, und besitzen besondere Kräfte.

⁶⁰ Interview am 06.07.2018, Frau M. P. C. (geb. 1941, Dorf Shyroke).

⁶¹ DAZO Blatt 413.

⁶² DAZO Blatt 413.

⁶³ Interview am 11.09.2019, Herr A. I. K. (geb. 1928, Dorf Zarichchia).

⁶⁴ Kobal 2004: 70.

„Mein Vater war der Bauleiter, und ich war damals noch ein kleiner Junge – das war Ende der 1950er Jahre, etwa 1957 oder 1958. Seine Brigade hat dort eine etwas größere Kapelle gebaut, und dann haben sie das kleine Grab von Anc’ka dorthin übertragen.“⁶⁵

Annas Anweisungen zu ihrer eigenen Exhumierung

Ebenfalls bemerkenswert ist das Vermächtnis von Anna, in dem sie ihre eigene Exhumierung, die Vorhersage ihrer Wiederauferstehung und ihren zukünftigen Dienst an der Gemeinschaft nach dem Tod ankündigte. Der Zeitraum, nach dem das Grab von Ancia Zarichanska geöffnet werden sollte und in dem sie erneut als Prophetin wirken würde, wird von den befragten Personen sehr unterschiedlich angegeben – er reicht von 40 Tagen bis zu 100 Jahren.

Nach 40 Tagen:

„Sie sagte: „Wenn ich sterbe, dann – wenn vierzig Tage vergangen sind und man mich beerdigt hat – dann werde ich wieder sprechen, so wie ich jetzt spreche.“ Aber man vergaß es. Am nächsten Tag sagten sie: „Du, Vorsteher [der Gemeinde – V.K., O.K.] – wir hätten gestern Anc’ka ausgraben sollen.“ Sie hatten sie beerdigt, und dann war es schon zu spät.“⁶⁶

„Nach vierzig Tagen. Aber sie haben sie nicht ausgegraben. Sie haben sie erst am nächsten Tag ausgegraben – und sie war noch wie lebendig.“⁶⁷

Nach einem Jahr:

„Und sie sagte vor ihrem Tod, man solle sie nach einem Jahr ausgraben. Aber sie haben es nicht getan, weil sie sich das genaue Datum nicht aufgeschrieben hatten. Sie haben sie einen Tag zu spät ausgegraben ... sie waren zu spät. Man sagte, dass sie im Holzsarg ganz normal dalag, wie lebendig nur umgedreht.“⁶⁸

Nach neun Jahren oder neun Tagen:

„Sie sagte, man solle sie entweder nach neun Jahren oder neun Tagen ausgraben – und dann werde sie auferstehen. Aber die Leute vergaßen es und gruben sie nicht aus.“⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Interview am 11.09.2019, Herr M. V. M. (geb. 1951, Dorf *Zarichchia*)

⁶⁶ Interview am 04.07.2018, Frau J. A. H. (geb. 1931, Dorf *Onok*)

⁶⁷ Interview am 26.07.2019, Frau V. I. B. (geb. 1950, Dorf *Velyki Komjaty*)

⁶⁸ Interview am 05.07.2018, Herr J. V. H. (geb. 1940, Dorf *Onok*).

⁶⁹ Interview am 02.08.2019, Herr M. A.M. (geb. 1954, Dorf *Velyki Komjaty*).

Nach 30 Jahren:

„Sie hatte es gesagt. Erst nach dreißig Jahren sollte man sie ausgraben – dann würde sie wieder lebendig. Aber sie vergaßen es, und als sie sie dann ausgruben, war es schon zu spät. Sie hatten es vergessen.“⁷⁰

Nach 33 Jahren:

„Damals sagte sie, man solle sie nach dreiunddreißig Jahren ausgraben – aber man vergaß sie. Denn so hätte es, wie es hieß, sein sollen.“⁷¹

Nach 33 Jahren, drei Monaten und drei Tagen:

„Als sie im Sterben lag, sagte sie, dass man sie nach dreiunddreißig Jahren, drei Monaten und drei Tagen ausgraben solle – und dann werde sie wieder lebendig sein. Aber wenn man auch nur einen einzigen Tag zu spät sei, dann werde sie nicht mehr lebendig sein. Wissen Sie, das war damals, und die Leute haben dem nicht so große Bedeutung beigemessen, um den Zeitpunkt genau festzuhalten. Und als es später jemandem wieder einfiel – was sie damals gesagt hatte – da rechnete man es nach ... und sie hatten sich um einen Tag verspätet. Sie gingen und öffneten das Grab, und der Körper war wie ein gewöhnlicher Körper, aber noch warm. An dieser Stelle wurde dann eine kleine Kapelle errichtet.“⁷²

Nach 40 Jahren:

„Als Anc'ka im Sterben lag, sagte sie, man solle sie nach vierzig Jahren ausgraben – dann werde sie den Menschen wieder helfen.“⁷³

Nach 100 Jahren:

„Anc'ka bestimmte vor ihrem Tod selbst das Datum – genau hundert Jahre nach ihrem Tod sollte man sie ausgraben. Denn sie sei eine große Prophetin, sagte sie – man solle sie ausgraben. Aber damals herrschten bei uns schon die Kommunisten, und bei uns zu Hause versteckten sich Priester ... Und auch in Zarichchia gab es solche wie uns – so erzählten es die Leute aus Zarichchia. Sie sagten, sie hätten sich versammelt, gingen zur Dorfverwaltung und teilten dem zuständigen Beamten mit, dass sie das Grab ausgraben wollten – sie hatten bereits ein Datum festgelegt, an dem genau hundert Jahre vergangen wären. Aber die Kommunisten ließen es nicht zu. Und sie hatte gesagt: Genau nach hundert Jahren soll man mich ausgraben. Und man sagte, dass sie dann weiter prophezeien würde. Sie werde wieder ein Prophet sein.“⁷⁴

„Man sagte, sie solle nach hundert Jahren ausgegraben werden.“⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Interview am 04.07.2018, Herr J. V. K. (geb. 1937, Dorf *Onok*).

⁷¹ Interview am 04.07.2018, Frau A. D. Z. (geb. 1938, Dorf *Onok*).

⁷² Interview am 03.07.2018, Frau M. M. M. (geb. 1959, Dorf *Onok*).

⁷³ Zan 1998: 28.

⁷⁴ Interview am 09.07.2018, Frau A. P. A. (geb. 1937, Dorf *Velyki Komjaty*).

⁷⁵ Interview am 05.07.2018, Frau S. M. A. (geb. 1973, Dorf *Onok*).

„Man begrub sie damals irgendwo bei der Kirche. Und sie sagte einmal: Wenn man sie genau nach hundert Jahren ausgräbt – was dann geschehen werde, sagte sie nicht ... Man erzählt, dass sie tatsächlich ausgegraben wurde, viele Leute kamen zusammen – aber es blieb nichts übrig, nur die Knochen.“⁷⁶

Die unterschiedlichen Erzählungen über eine Exhumierung nach festgelegten Zeitabständen zeigen, dass Zeit im kollektiven Bewusstsein der Gemeinde nicht linear, sondern mythisch-zyklisch verstanden wurde. Die Intervalle werden durch symbolisch aufgeladene Zahlen wie drei, neun, vierzig oder hundert markiert. Jan Kajfusz deutet solche Muster als Transformation der Zeitwahrnehmung im Rahmen des kollektiven Bewusstseins, in dem Narrative magische Kategorien und symbolische Ordnungen stabilisieren.⁷⁷

Beispiele für ähnliche Legenden sind eher selten, und in diesen geht es in der Regel nicht darum, dass der exhumierte Körper noch lebendig ist oder aufersteht. Stattdessen wird meist die Umbettung von Überresten betont – häufig von mumifizierten Körpern –, was als ein Hinweis darauf verstanden wird, dass die betreffende Person zu Lebzeiten außergewöhnliche Fähigkeiten besaß oder innerhalb ihrer kulturellen Tradition sogar als Heilige galt. So sagte der rumänische Priester Ilie Lăcătușu voraus, dass seine Ehefrau 15 Jahre nach seinem Tod sterben und in seiner Grabstätte beigesetzt werden solle.⁷⁸ Bei der Exhumierung wurde ebenfalls festgestellt, dass eine Selbstmumifizierung des Körpers stattgefunden hatte.⁷⁹ Nach lokalen Überlieferungen verfügte der burjatische Khambo-Lama Dashi-Dorzho Itigelov, dass man sich sein beerdigtes Körper nach 30 Jahren ansehen solle – und dass er nach 75 Jahren zurückkehren werde. Nach 27 Jahren, also in den Jahren 1955 und 1973, wurde sein Körper von Vertretern der buddhistischen Gemeinde überprüft. Im Jahr 2002 fand mit Zustimmung der Gemeinde eine vollständige Exhumierung statt, bei der festgestellt wurde, dass sein Körper sich selbst mumifiziert hatte.⁸⁰

Die Geschichten über Exhumierungen lassen sich auch als eine Ausprägung des von Mircea Eliade beschriebenen Mythos der ewigen Wiederkehr verstehen.⁸¹ Sie zeigen, wie die Gemeinde versuchte, den durch den Tod einer bedeutenden Figur entstandenen Bruch symbolisch zu überwinden. Solche Überlieferungen erfüllen die Funktion, das durch den Verlust ausgelöste Chaos zu ordnen, indem sie es in magische Kategorien – etwa die „Lebendigkeit“ des

⁷⁶ Interview am 10.07.2018, Frau J. V. Z. (geb. 1936, Dorf *Velyki Komjaty*).

⁷⁷ Kajfusz 2021: 85.

⁷⁸ Voicilă 2011: 20.

⁷⁹ Voicilă 2011: 24.

⁸⁰ Ershova 2009: 4–5.

⁸¹ Eliade 1954: 46–47, 62.

exhumierten Körpers – und symbolische Zeitstrukturen einbetten. Auf diese Weise wird die verstorbene Person in den mythischen Kosmos versetzt und die ursprüngliche Vollständigkeit der Welt in erzählerischer Form wiederhergestellt.⁸²

Schlussfolgerungen

Die Überzeugungen, nach denen solchen Personen mystische Fähigkeiten zugeschrieben wurden, sind einerseits durch eine symbolische Überschreitung zweier Lebensgrenzen bedingt, die als rituelle „Todeserfahrung“ und „Wiedergeburt“ gedeutet werden können. Parallelen zu diesem Phänomen finden wir auch in anderen europäischen Volksglauben, insbesondere bei Volksheilern:innen und volkstümlich verehrten Heiligen, ebenso wie in schamanischen Praktiken traditioneller Kulturen weltweit. In diesem Sinn ordnete Arnold van Gennep solche Erfahrungen den universalen Übergangsriten zu, die in unterschiedlichen Kulturen den symbolischen Wechsel zwischen Leben und Tod, Diesseits und Jenseits markieren.⁸³

Ein solches „Sterben“ (Erstarren, Nahtoderlebnis) konnte sowohl familiäre Beziehungen als auch den sozialen Status der betreffenden Person verändern und ihr im lokalen Kontext eine Art Heiligenstatus verleihen. Andererseits verlieh das der Allgemeinheit ungewöhnlich erscheinende oder teilweise als deviant empfundene Verhalten der Person eine besondere Aura des Geheimnisses, verbunden mit speziellem Wissen und rätselhaften Fähigkeiten. Frömmigkeit und strenge Fastenpraxis kompensierten dabei die als abweichend empfundenen Verhaltensweisen und trugen zur Legitimation bei.

Die Überlieferungen über Ancia Zarichanska veranschaulichen zugleich, dass komplexe oder chaotische Ereignisse, wie zum Beispiel der Tod, in diesen Erzählungen in klare symbolische Muster des magischen Denkens überführt, mythisch „normalisiert“ und dadurch über Generationen hinweg tradierbar gemacht werden. Folklore erscheint hier als kollektive Narration, die sowohl von individueller Kreativität als auch von der Erzähltradition geprägt ist: Aus einem Memorare, also der persönlichen Erinnerung an eine außergewöhnliche Begebenheit, wird durch gemeinschaftliche Verarbeitung ein Fabulat, das seine individuelle Herkunft überschreitet.⁸⁴ Somit niederschlägt sich die Erinnerungskultur um Ancia nicht nur in den Metaphern der erzählten Geschichten,

⁸² Kajfosz 2021: 125–126.

⁸³ van Gennep 1960: 183–184.

⁸⁴ Kajfosz 2021: 89–90.

sondern auch im sakralen Ort ihres Grabes und in lokalen Traditionen. Die gesammelten Feldmaterialien zeigen, wie sich kommunikatives Gedächtnis – die Weitergabe von Erinnerungen über drei bis vier Generationen – allmählich in das kulturelle Gedächtnis im Sinne von Jan Assmann verwandelt.⁸⁵

Das Bild von Ancia Zarichanska beruht weniger auf überprüfbarer biografischen Fakten als vielmehr auf kollektiven Narrativen, die über Generationen weitergegeben und in der Gegenwart neu gedeutet werden. Solche Erzählungen sind daher nicht bloß historische Daten, sondern kulturelle Deutungsmuster – ein Beispiel für das, was Hastrup als „anthropological imagination“ bezeichnet.⁸⁶

Um die Forschung weiterer Parallelen in Transkarpatien und naheliegender Regionen, bedarf es darüber hinaus einer eigenständigen Untersuchung der traditionellen Glaubensvorstellungen rund um Mariya Kosychkania, Terka Komjatska, sowie weiterer Volksheiliger und bettelnder Seher, die ebenfalls mit mystischen Fähigkeiten ausgestattet galten, in der vorliegenden Arbeit jedoch nur am Rande behandelt werden konnten.

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⁸⁵ Assman 1997: 56.

⁸⁶ Hastrup 1995: 61–62.

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Abb. Nr. 1. Kapelle mit dem Krypt von Ancia Zarichanska.
Foto: Valyl Korol, 10.09.2019, Dorf Zarichchia.



Abb. Nr. 2. Gedenkstein von Ancia Zarichanska.
Foto: Valyl Korol, 10.09.2019, Dorf Zarichchia.



Abb. Nr. 3. *Innenbereich der Kapelle.*
Foto: Valyl Korol, 10.09.2019, Dorf Zarichchia.

Rodna Velichkovska

Review on the Macedonian Wedding Singing

Abstract

The wedding as a rite of passage in Macedonia is a living tradition that preserves numerous and various evidence either on the social relations of the traditional community or the changes of this complex family-customs and ritual cycle. The characteristic of this complex is that it abounds with many ritual-magical actions, the basis of which is the apotropaic character.

The most significant signs, according to which it is possible to determine the boundaries of the local singing style, include: the constancy of the traditional wedding scenario, the commonality of the wedding repertoire and the types of musical-poetic structures.

Remains of the former characteristics of social life are deposited in the entire wedding complex: the former rights and duties of the woman and her position in the village community, as well as the old beliefs of magical and religious character.

The main characters in the wedding ceremony, apart from the bride and the groom, are: the father-in-law, the mother-in-law, the best man, the groomsman, the bride's brother, the brother-in-law and other participants, who are called wedding guests or in-laws. For them, during the entire wedding ritual, songs are sung, related to the entire ritual process and have a precisely determined ritual place and performance time. Their performance is related to four time-space segments of the wedding.

Keywords: Macedonia, village wedding, rites of passage, wedding repertoire, wedding singing

The wedding, which is included in the rites of the life cycle, is not only an exceptional rite, but also the most complex in its structure. The wedding is considered to be one of the so-called rites of passage¹, because it ensures the transition of the groom and the bride into another age group, establishing their social roles in the family. It also enables the two families to be brought together and become related. It has an initiation, social and communicative function.

¹ The transition of an individual from one gender-age group to another, from one social status to another, like any other transition, is dangerous and uncertain. Елијаље 1986: 153.



The initiation function of the wedding, for the young couple getting married, is connected to the beginning of a new stage of life, which means entering into adulthood. The initiation moment, in the highest degree, is connected to the bride, because according to the popular understanding of morality, her transition to the status of a woman was possible only after the wedding, even in the case when the two young people already had sexual relations before the marriage. Checking the honour of the young woman even at the beginning of the 20th century was obligatory in many villages.²

The social function of the wedding was and continues to be very important. Only family members were recognized as valued members of society: men had the right to participate in the village assembly, where they had the right to vote, while women were obliged to take care of the household. The family was considered by the community as the economic and moral basis for the proper way of life, while the unmarried way of life was considered as violation of the norms, which means deviation.³

The initiation and social function of the wedding coincide in many ways in relation to the wedding dramaturgy, which is outlined in the course of certain stages of the rites:

- a phase of separation of the group of unmarried from their family;
- a stage representing entrance – leaving the parental home and the previous status and passing through a series of magical rituals to enter a new status or a liminal phase;
- unification phase – joining the group of legitimate members of the community, uniting with the new family and establishing the new status.⁴

The communicative function of the wedding allows to choose actions of verbal and musical texts from the point of agreement and approchement between two families - the community of the groom and the community of the bride. Bayburin and Lewington determined that „the basic antithesis in the wedding is the opposition of parties of the groom and parties of the bride that are realized in determining the spatial and temporal boundaries between the „own” and „other’s” worlds and overcoming these boundaries during the wedding as rites of passage.”⁵

From a practical point of view, the wedding also performs the following functions: *magical, aesthetic, educational and entertaining*.

² Байбурин 1993: 62.

³ Громыко 1991: 74.

⁴ Сысоева 2011: 46.

⁵ Байбурин–Левинтон 1978: 89–105.

The wedding as a rite of passage in Macedonia⁶ is a living tradition that preserves numerous and various evidence either on the social relations of the traditional community or the changes of this complex family-customs and ritual cycle. The characteristic of this complex is that it abounds with a large number of ritual-magical actions, the basis of which is the apotropaic character.⁷

The most significant signs, according to which it is possible to determine the boundaries of the local singing style, include: the constancy of the traditional wedding scenario, the commonality of the wedding repertoire and the types of musical-poetic structures.

During the actual act of the wedding, the newlyweds were taken care not to fall under the influence of „evil eyes” and various spells with negative consequences. It functions as a complex system of signs in which they complement each other and thus form its semantics.⁸

Remains of the former characteristics of social life are deposited in the entire wedding complex: the former rights and duties of the woman and her position in the village community, as well as the old beliefs of magical and religious character.

The main characters in the wedding ceremony, apart from the bride and the groom, are: the father-in-law, the mother-in-law, the best man, the groomsman, the bride's brother, the brother-in-law and other participants, who are called wedding guests or in-laws. For them, during the entire wedding ritual, songs are sung, related to the entire ritual process and have a precisely determined ritual place and performance time.

Their performance is related to four time-space segments of the wedding.

1. in the house of the groom and the bride:

– *when the ritual bread is kneaded*.

On Thursday, women and girls gather; a ritual bread - a round unleavened loaf of bread with sugar (called „pogacha“ or „svakja“) is kneaded by a girl who has living parents, as in the song:

Брашно се сејт, ој мило мале,
Сваќа се месит јунакова куќа.
Месит је, месит јунакова друшка,
јунакова друшка таткова -
мајкина

The flour is sown, oh dear mother,
bread is kneaded in the young man's house.
The bread is kneaded by the young man's
friend
who has a father and a mother.

⁶ For more details about the wedding and the wedding rites of passage of the Brsjatsi, look at Петреска 2002.

⁷ Величковска 2008: 55.

⁸ Иванова 1998, <http://www.rastko.rs/rastko-bg/folklor/index.php>

and that ritual bread is eaten by the girls who weave the wreaths - one for the bride and the other to decorate the door of the house. (See example number 1.)

- when the wreaths are woven.

It was sung on Thursday when the wreath was woven:

Плела мома три зелени венца,
први венец од ран бел босилок,
втори венец од бела пченѝца,
трети венец од винова лоза.

The girl is knitting three green wreaths
the first wreath of early white basil
second wreath of white wheat
the third wreath of vines

(Sung by Rusa Boshkova from the village of Gorobinci, Sveti Nikole)

or the song: „A maid wove three green wreaths”. (See example number 2.)

2. in the groom's house:

- while the groom is being shaved.

Ritual shaving is done on Saturday night or early on Sunday morning. The shaving is done by the brothers of the groom, the best man or the groomsman; during that time the girls sing: „The young groom is being shaved”. (See example number 3.)

- on Saturday evening when the groom's family go to the bride's home to take her.

The song is sung: „Hey, mother-in-law, you white dove”. (See example number 4.)

3. in the bride's house:

- when the in-laws arrive at the bride's house.

On that occasion, the song „Welcome decorated wedding guests” is sung. (See example number 5.)

- when they bring out the bride to the brother-in-law.

The song is sung: „The Morning Star has risen” (See example number 6.)

Јогреја свезда Деница,
та не је свезда Деница,
туку је мома токмёна,
токмёна мома дадёна.

The Morning Star has risen“,
she is not a star Denica,
but she is a ready girl,
ready to get married.

- when the bride is brought out to the wedding guests to kiss their hand and when the bride gifts them.

The song is sung: „Bring out the young bride”. (See example number 7.)

4. in the groom's house:

- at the moment when the bride enters the groom's courtyard etc.

They welcome their family, relatives, neighbors and friends with the greeting song: „Welcome, decorated wedding guests!/One hundred you came, one hundred and one you leave” (See example number 8).

The arrival of the bride in the new home represents the perfection and climax of the wedding ceremony. At that moment, the groom's mother plays a major role in the rites. The meeting of the bride with her mother-in-law is followed by numerous customs and ritual actions, which are in function of her future happy life, as well as the birth of a healthy generation.

In addition to ritual singing, women in modern conditions also add a dose of humor, in order to draw the attention of some participants in the wedding ceremony, who can be carriers of negative energy, which means, to neutralize their possibly harmful influence on the newlyweds. Such songs are sung when the wedding guests arrive at the bride's home and are intended for the brother-in-law, mother-in-law and father-in-law, etc., and use melodies borrowed from the old ritual singing. Moreover, the songs related to the rites performed on the second day of the wedding are also important, such as: the ritual awakening of the bride, the ritual going to fetch water, and other obligatory songs during the wedding, which are sung on Monday, for example, the song „Bride, oh bride, you were brought last night” (See example number 9.).

Today's village wedding in Macedonia, at first sight, has a different physiognomy. Basically, its form has been preserved almost to the smallest detail. The economic development of the whole society has led to changes that are easily noticeable. For example, today the bride is not picked up by horses, but by private cars or a car is rented for the young couple, and only the oldest and the youngest participants in the wedding ceremony can dress up in traditional costumes. Many rites, such as: the gathering of the wedding guests, going to take the bride, kneading the ritual bread, etc., are still performed in the traditional order.

As far as the ritual singing is concerned, formally and functionally it still keeps its place in the wedding ritual and if it was maintained, it would represent the continuity of the traditional musical culture of Macedonia, and the new forms of traditional singing expression, which is built on the basis of a very old genetic core, pave the way for changes in terms of enriching the musical material.

From this, as well as from the other moments mentioned earlier, the role of the woman in the traditional wedding singing is of great importance because the woman, with her own memory and the skill of transmitting the songs from generation to generation, established her status as the main guardian, participant and transmitter of tradition. Her exceptional ability to memorize and interpret the contents of folk singing allowed her to leave a large part of that

tradition as a heritage for the following generations. As the bearer of the singing tradition, the woman, through her interpretation, simultaneously recreates, and through this complex process extends the life of the songs.⁹

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⁹ Величковска 2008: 57.

Songs and poetry texts

1. Bring sieve and fine colander

c. Гајранци, Пробиштипско



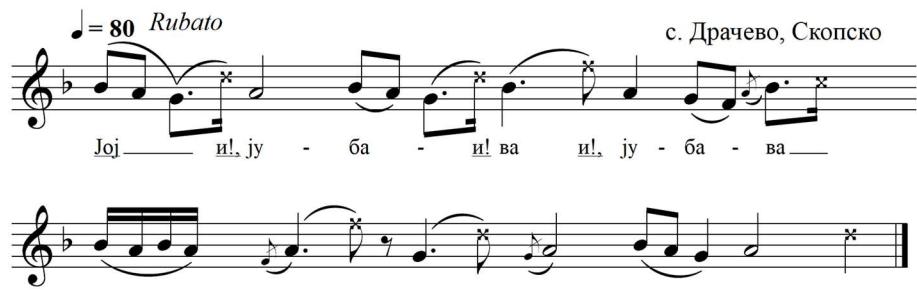
Е, дајте сито и ситно реше и! то,
дајте ситој, и! и ситно реше и! то, и!

Да пресéеме јунáково брашно,
да најдеме јунáкови прстен,
да фрлиме јунáково поле,
за да поле биде бериkéтно.

AIF (Archive of the Institute of Folklore), tape nr 1012, village Gajranci, Probishtip region. Recorded in 1969. Singer: Stojna Michkova, Stanka Ristova and Zaga Mishova from the village Gajranci, Probishtip region. Recorded by Pero Anastasov. Transcription and musical notation by Rodna Velichkovska. It is sung on Thursday, when the ritual bread is kneaded („on zamesok”).¹⁰

¹⁰ Computer music notation made by Prof. Dr. Gorancho Angelov.

2. A maid wove three green wreaths



с. Драчево, Скопско

Joj и! ју - ба - и! ва и! ју - ба - ва ___.
де - вој и! (ој) и! - ко, jo, __ jo, jo.
Јој и! убанива, и!, убава девој и!
(ој)- ко, и!- ко, јо, јо, јо!

Вила мома три зелени венца.
Први венац од винена лоза,
други венац од ситен босилок,
трети венац од бела пченица.
Први венец од винена лоза,
врлете го у винена лоза,
Втори венац од ситен босилок,
врлете го у бача-градина.
Трети венац од бела пченица,
врлете го у бела пченица.

AIF, cassette nr 4030, village Stajkovci, Skopje region. Recorded in 2004.
Singer: Mitra Sokolovska sings, born in 1926, in the village Drachevo Skopje
region. Recorded, transcription and musical notation by Rodna Velichkovska.
It is sung on Thursday, when the wreath is woven.

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3. The young groom is being shaved

$\text{♩} = 116$ *Rubato*

с. Шупљи Камен, Кумановско



Oj у - ба - ва _____ jу - ба - ва де - вој - ко _____

oj у - ба - ва jу - ба - ва де - вој - ко.

*Oj, убава, јубава девојко,
oj, убава, јубава девојко!*

Бричи ми се млади младожења,
Први бричи, други пребричује,
Ја треки му перчин поткинује.
Три му сестре марамицу држив,
Да не падне од тој руса коса,
Да не украдне прва читаница,
ќе гу врљи дек' се вода врти,
Да се врти оно око њума.

AIF, tape nr 2126, village Stracin Kratovo region. Recorded in 1973. Singer Dobrila Josifovska from the village Shuplji Kamen, Kumanovo region. Recorded and transcription by Dushko Dimitrovski. Musical notation by Rodna Velichkovska. It is sung on Saturday night or Sunday morning when, the groom is being shaved.

4. Hey, mother-in-law, you white dove



Еј, свекрво бела голубицо,
Еј, сбекрво, и!, бела голубицо, и!

Што си дошла ју туѓ град на пазар.
Дал си дошла свила да купуеш,
дал си дошол снаа да си гледаш!
- Девојчиња, снаини другачки,
не сам дошла свила да купувам,
ја сам дошла снаа да си гледам!

AIF, tape nr 1012, village Gajranci, Probishtip region. Recorded in 1969.
Singer: Stojna Michkova, Stanka Ristova and Zaga Mishova from the village
Gajranci, Probishtip region. Recorded and transcription by Pero Anastasov.
Musical notation by Rodna Velichkovska. It is sung on Saturday evening when
the bride is taken.

5. Welcome decorated wedding guests

с. Годивје, Охридско

(и) Доб - ре дош - ле, ој — и!

(и) кн - те ни сва - то ој, — и!

(о) - и доб - ре дош — и!

До каде е зора јодзорила,
до каде је сонце јогрејало,
до каде је постар девер пошло.
Постар девер калеш бел трендафиљ,
до каде је полмад девер пошло,
помлад девер калешпо џунџуле,
зетепине китка босилкова.

AIF, tape nr 2020, village Vrbjani, Ohrid region. Recorded in 1969. Singer: Gjurdja Veljanoska at 62 years old, Krstanka Despotoska at 60 years old. and Pera Nikoloska at 50 years old. (Both born in the village of Godivje, Ohrid. region.) Recorded by Naum Tselakoski. Transcription and musical notation by Rodna Velichkovska.

6. The Morning Star (Denica) has risen

c. Дедино, Радовишко

J = 96 Rubato

Јогреја свезда Деница,
Та не је свезда Деница, и!

Туку је мома токмёна,
токмёна мома дадёна.

AIF, tape nr 2706, village Dedino, Radovish region. Recorded in 1979. Singer: a female singing group. Recorded by Gjorgji Gjorgiev. Transcription and musical notation by Rodna Velichkovska. It is sung when the bride presented in front of the brother-in-law.

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7. Bring out the young bride

♩ = 100 Rubato

с. Цера, Кочанско

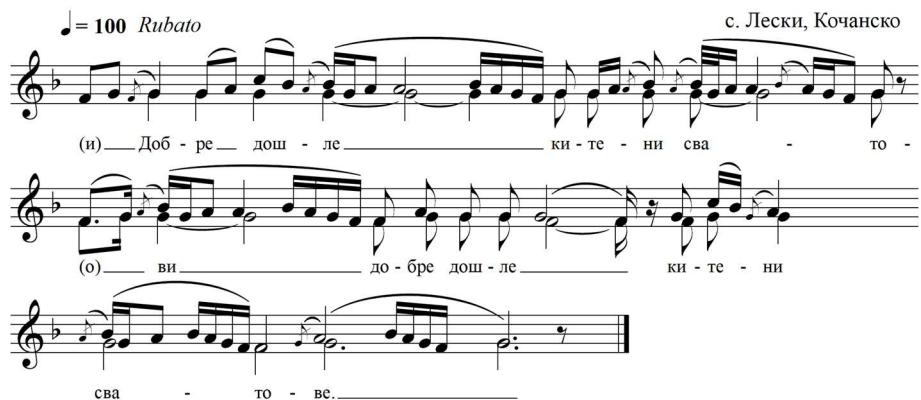
Из - ве - де - те мла - да - та - не
вс - (б) - ста,
из - ве - де - те мла - да - та - не
вс - та..

Изведете младата невеста,
изведете младата невеста.

Да палива рака по трнеза,
- Редом гледај ти млада невесто,
Редом гледај по старите луѓе,
немој некој снао да одминеш,
гревота је снао стамоте је!

AIF, cassette nr 3918, village Kamenica, Pijanec region. Recorded in 2002.
Singer: Cvetanka Hristova, Stojka Atanasovska and Lefa Simonovska. Recorded,
transcription and musical notation by Rodna Velichkovska.

8. Welcome decorated wedding guests



с. Лески, Кочанско

(и) — Доб - ре — дош - ле — ки - те - ни сва - то -

(о) — ви — до - бре дош - ле — ки - те - ни

сва - то - ве.

(и) Добродошли китени свато (о) ви,
Добродошли китени сватове.

Сто дојдовте, сто еден ојдовте.
- Слегни Маро од враната коња!
Ја другарки велат и говорат:
- Не слегнùвај, Маро, не слегнùвај,
додека ти свекоро не такса,
свекор такса крава со телéнце.

AIF, cassette nr 3329, village Vinica, Kochani region. Recorded in 1988.
Singer: Lozena Eftimova (42), Elena Mitevska (44) and Mira Simeonova from
Leski, Kochansko. Recorded by Trpko Bicevski, transcription and musical
notation by Rodna Velichkovska.

9. Bride, oh bride, you were brought last night

$\text{♩} = 72$



М. Каменица, Виничко

Не - вес - то не - вес - то ле, снош - чи си до - ве - де - на ле,
снош - чи си до - ве - де - на.

Невéсто, невéсто ле, снiшчи си доведена, ле,
снiшчи си доведена!

од утре станувац, презимйња тураш:
гиди на свекоро, гиди кожувáру,
гиди на свекрва, гиди караснáја.
гиди на золвйтe, гиди маалцики.
гиди на јатрва, гиди кавгацíко,
гиди на девéро, гиди визитáро.
гиди на момчéто, гиди тропни копот.

AIF, cassette nr 3918, village M. Kamenica, Vinica region. Recorded in 2002. Singer: Stojka Milchevska was born in the village of Cera, Kochansko, Tanaska Ilcova, born in the village Cera, Kochansko and Cvetanka Hristova, born in the village of Sasa, Pijanechko. Recorded, transcription and musical notation by Rodna Velichkovska. Dancing song.

Illustrations



Pic. Nr. 1. *Kneading the ritual bread - „svakja“*. v. Galichnik, Gostivarsko. AIF Inv. №. 339. 1948.



Pic. Nr. 2. *A ritual bread „svakja“*. v. Galichnik, Gostivarsko. AIF Inv. №. 3336. 1980.

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Pic. Nr. 3. *Groom's Shaving*. v. Galichnik, Gostivarsko.
AIF Inv. №. 339. 1948.



Pic. Nr. 4. *Wedding: „Breaking” the ritual cake.*
V. Rilevo, Prilep. AIF Inv. №. 821, August 1972.



Pic. Nr. 5. *Wedding: the bride approaches her mother-in-law to bow to her.*
V. Rilevo, Prilep region. AIF Inv. №. 822. August 1972.



Pic. Nr. 6. „*Prriche*” - 40 days after the wedding.
(*The first visit of the young people to the house of the bride's parents*).
V. Gorobinci, Ovche Pole region. 1941.

Gyula Balogh

The Character of the Wayfarer in Gyula Krúdy's Novel The Travelling Companion

Abstract

In Gyula Krúdy's texts, the author's alter ego figures and mediator types can be given a new meaning with the help of the results of folklore research. The writer got to know the archetypal features of these figures very early on, as even when reading the writings of his youth, it is striking that Krúdy not only wrote the plot and atmosphere of the mostly family-based fairy tales and ghost stories into his texts, but also used the storytelling techniques that create the folklore treasure.

The study will discuss Krúdy's short novel *The Travelling Companion*, the division of the main character's identity, the wide range of reading possibilities offered by the story's sacred character and mystical atmosphere. The present interpretation undertakes to reveal the complex personality of the travelling companion, to examine those scenes abounding in sacred elements, through a detailed analysis of which the common features of the Krúdy hero and certain figures of the folk religious world become visible.

It can be assumed that Krúdy knew and used in his works certain features of the accompanying, helping spirit, the so-called soul guide, psychopompos, which term denotes Hermes, the god of travel. However, the term psychopompos is not only known in cultures based on Greek myths, it also applies to the accompanying spirits of ancient shamanism. We find the remains of this belief in shamans in the case of the so-called wayfarers, who, together with other strange people, are considered late descendants of shamans.

Keywords: Krúdy Gyula, The Travelling Companion, saman, psychopompos, wayfarer, alter ego, Doppelgänger, St. Agnes

„My beautiful, sad travelling companion, sleepless sorrow has caught up
with me one night”¹
(Gyula Krúdy)

¹ Krúdy 2016: 99.



An outstanding piece of modern Hungarian literature is Gyula Krúdy's short story *The Travelling Companion* (*Az útitárs*).² The 1918 text is one of the fundamental works of Hungarian literary modernity, which has already attracted the attention of many. But it was not typical for interpreters to often use the results of religious history and ethnography (in addition to stylistic or ethical perspectives when examining the religious motifs appearing in Krúdy's work.) However the religious history and ethnography can help expand the themes of the reception, which consider the characteristics of Gyula Krúdy's oeuvre. In the following, I will perform a religious historical and ethnographic evaluation of the religious origin of the dimension changes characteristic of the short novel *The Traveling Companion*, as well as the identity changes following these sacred moments. The text passages featuring religious phenomena are not in the author's prose world as a simple reference to reality or to create an atmosphere, but also have a poetic function. This circumstance is suitable for examining the folk roots and archetype of a traveling figure similar to Sindbád, who exists independently of time and space, while at the same time it also provides an opportunity to examine the effects of the so-called wayfarer on his oeuvre, which is also known in Europe.

The plot of *The Travelling Companion* (*Az útitárs*) can actually be summed up quite simply: the reader learns the details of a tragic love affair between two unknown travellers, the protagonists of which are the eccentric adventurer Pál Pálfi, and the last innocent daughter of the town of X, Eszténa. Apart from them, the only other characters who play a more prominent role in their short story are the mother, who is jealous of her daughter's virtues, and Pálfi's landlord, the rightly-named pimp Hartvigné. Instead, I am specifically concerned with the exploration of the personality structure of the travel companion's title and position, and more specifically with the problematization of those scenes rich in sacral elements, through which the similarities between Krúdy's hero and certain soul-guiding figures of the folk faith can be made visible.

Peter the rooster

The figure of Pál Pálfi, like Krúdy's other travellers, eternally wandering, flying from dimension to dimension, is often on the agenda of literary scholars

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who place identification techniques in the forefront. For the travelling companion, whose story, presented in the first person singular during the train journey, is revealed to the reader through the seemingly ignored (announcing) speech of a fellow interlocutor, is an elusive entity, moving unhindered between dream and reality, or even between life and death,³ whose personality can hardly be defined linguistically through the confusion of narrative utterances.

„The identity of the character in the story is called into question, the figure, which is assumed to be unified, is scattered in several directions at once, and this scattering is of such a magnitude that it almost threatens the idea of the figure as a unified character.”

— says József Keserű, who points out that the companion can perhaps only be fully identified by one name, „Pál Pálfi”, if we disregard the confusing Peter (the rooster) of the encounter with Genovéva.⁴

The first horizon of meaning offered by the analysis of the story is formed by biographical aspects, since it is not incidental that Krúdy divorces his first wife and marries his second wife in the same year. The period of his recovery from a twenty-year affair with Bella Spiegler and the new life he began with Zsuzsanna Rózsa certainly forced him to do some serious introspection. The state of mind that resulted from all this is, according to many, reflected in the pages of *The Travelling Companion* (*Az útitárs*).

„The short novel, which the author put down on paper during a long and care-free holiday in a press house by Lake Balaton [in the company of a large barrel of wine, according to Ede Szabó’s legendary statement],⁵ is a subtle, metaphorical interpretation of an emotional crisis waiting to be resolved, a passion that can no longer be concealed, the love of a forty-year-old man demanding fulfilment, wrapped in a story with grotesque charm.”⁶

Like Anna Fábri, István Fried also draws attention to the confessional layer of meaning:

³ „The heroes of the short story [...] are enthroned by death.” Fried 2006: 196.

⁴ „[Genovéva] »spoke of her wedding shirt, her husband who died five years ago, her big black cock, which she will henceforth call Péter (my first name)« (p. 248). Péter? Isn’t the character called Paul? Is it a misnomer or a mistake? Or is the companion introducing himself under a pseudonym, Genovéva? [...] The text does not support either interpretation. It is as if the statement had never been made, but it is there and it is confusing.” Comp. Keserű 2008: 39–40.

⁵ Szabó 1970: 168.

⁶ Fábri 1975: 1289.

„In the decades of Sigmund Freud, one could even consider this continuous, but (possibly) imaginary, utterance to a partner who is actually or (possibly) imagined to be present, as a (self-) therapeutic practice, which considers a story to be told exclusively in a little fixed situation of being, an »archetypal« situation, if you like.”⁷

According to this reading, the inclusion of the companion as narrator is merely a gesture of removal, an attempt by the author, who is traversing psychological depths and introspecting, to extinguish the excessive intimacy of the text.⁸

„In *The Travelling Companion* (Az útitárs) the author-narrator begins the story-telling by quoting the unknown »companion«, by referring to his narrative. Soon the narrative changes perspective, because the authorial narrator retreats into the background, relinquishes his role of »quoter«, the narrator function is taken over by a fictional figure belonging to the story being told, the protagonist himself, and the story unfolds as his narrative, his own story. The »companion« becomes the communicator, the speaker; the partner - the authorial »I« - is relegated to the position of passive listener, and often it does not even appear.”⁹

István Fried adds to this statement by László Fülöp by pointing out the modality and situational similarities between the speech of the communicator and that of the companion.¹⁰ He asks the question:

„can the travelling companion be separated from the traveller, the narrator from the listener, the memorializer from the communicator? If the tone of their utterances, their sentence structure, their »thoughtfulness« can be copied, is not the speech of a single person(s) fragmented by external signs?”¹¹

So the question, which has been restated so many times by the reception, is who is speaking? For the lifeless dialogue that is spoken is indeed more like the imaginative inner dialogue of an introspective, struggling figure in a far-off

⁷ Fried 2006: 191.

⁸ Here it is worth noting that István Fried, in his study *The Narrator as Companion*, draws attention to the fact that the voice of the narrator, who very quickly moves into the background and then completely out of the narrative, does not change what he is listening to, and in fact, after the events have temporarily come to a close, he does not even round off the narrative or add any comments. Comp. Fried 2006: 190.

⁹ Fülöp 1986: 265–266.

¹⁰ Comp. Fried 2006: 207–208.

¹¹ Fried 2006: 213.

landscape, independent of time and space.¹² But even if this is the case, the almost mystical voice of this inner speaker, „the sad words of the companion sounding around my head, as if death were reading the Bible”,¹³ may even suggest a more distant narrative position.

Several features of Krúdy's work suggest that the writer was well acquainted with the so-called haunting spirit, and that he probably used these patterns to create the ghostly alter-ego type of his narrative.¹⁴ It will be worth returning to this possibility after having scanned the most significant sacral moment of the text.

“...even your mother dreamed of St George's horse”

Many, following Imre Bori, highlight the interweaving of religious phenomena and the erotic images associated with them as one of the defining features of the work. The Novi Sad scholar, referring to the climactic candle-lighting in the proceedings, says that the scene „is the most complete combination of medieval religiosity and modern love passion.”¹⁵ Gábor Kemény also mentions this characteristic of *The Travelling Companion* as an example when analysing Krúdy's imaging procedures.¹⁶ However, at several points it can be seen that the motifs of a text laden with religious phenomena are not merely intended to function as an end in themselves, as elements of mischief, perversity or horror, nor are they only intended to float the ecclesiastical aesthetic on the periphery of thought: the need to accumulate sacral elements is, moreover, to stimulate interest in the structures of meaning to be found in the deeper structures of the novel. For example, the ruptures and dimensional transitions that occur in the fabric of space and time, which line the main nodes of the narrative and constitute the main motivations of the characters.

In the most influential and striking images, such as the passage quoted by Imre Bori: „[t]he burning Easter candle – decorated with golden dragons –

¹² „Fülöp argues that, together with the N. N., it is mainly in these writings that the »first-person novel model« [Fülöp 1986: 266] is realized, according to which the first-person narrator creates character and determines the narrative style.” Vigh 2014.

¹³ Krúdy 2008a: 203.

¹⁴ Later we will talk about the chapter of Krúdy's *Book of Dreams* entitled „Wayfarers”, from which I would like to quote just one thought for now: „These unfortunate people were called wayfarers because no one sees them resting, they are always going from village to village, and according to superstition, where they rest, someone dies.” Krúdy 2008b: 263.

¹⁵ Bori 1978: 154.

¹⁶ Kemény 2010: 347–357.

would have fit between the two knees”,¹⁷ the sacred is intertwined with the erotic in a way that combines in a very graphic way the most important ceremonial occasions that construct the narrative: the various initiation rites. By invoking the Easter candle, Krúdy associates the meaning of the sacrament of baptism, which connotes birth and death, with sexuality from the very beginning of the narrative; these initiatory life events are also traditionally accompanied by candle-lighting. But it is also this set of associations that is mobilised by the crypt inscription that is the setting for one of the central scenes in the narrative. This detail, which alludes to the imagery of the underworld and juxtaposes the rites of baptism with death, marriage and the bones of a child, foreshadows the story’s conclusion, which is built on the same motifs.

“Steps led down into the dry cellar, and the two stone coffins that stood against the wall did not take up enough space to prevent a small feast. There were kneelers at the end of the crypt, candle remnants at the foot of the iron crucifix, dried flowers that rattled like a child’s skeleton...”¹⁸

At the same time, the images in the narrative, which are steeped in erotic and sacred elements, are repetitive, indicating the deformities in the fabric of time, the fractures and ruptures into which the events of the generations essentially run back again and again in a cyclical manner. The notion of a steady flow of time is often suspended by images overflowing in sacrality, which, as if pausing time, create new meaning by pointing to the cyclical (repeated) repetition of events. Such is the case of the daydreams of the young girls sitting in the church and the big, muscular horse of the dragon-slaying St George:

„Neither brings a thought to the church that has not already had a counterpart. They almost shudder at the huge, dragon-slaying muscles of St. George’s horse, because they had a dream last week about a similar big horse.”¹⁹

This fantasy, and the sense of shame that follows, is meant to poeticise the constant repetition of the mother-daughter figure pair. „Do not tremble, your mother has dreamed of St. George’s horse, yet she has become a beautiful old woman.”²⁰

The fact of the inevitable repetition is already recorded in the name of the

¹⁷ Krúdy 2008a: 210.

¹⁸ Krúdy 2008a: 245.

¹⁹ Krúdy 2008a: 227.

²⁰ Krúdy 2008a: 227.

protagonist. Pál Pálfi, Pál, son of Pál. The traveller in transit, who, as an adventurer, with all his mischievousness, can easily be assumed to be a copy of the Casanova archetype without moral scruples, is this time destined to set Eszténa's fate on the same course as his mother's. And whose name, in the crypt scene just quoted, appears in a tomb, makes the problem of repetition, of being exaggerated as a double, tangible, and sharpens the problem of the repetition. „Eszténa crouched down on one of the coffins. With her fingers she inscribed the inscription on the stone. 'Pál Pálfi... As if you were lying here, sir.'”²¹

Together with the discovery of Pál Pálfi's namesake, the book actually articulates the complex personality problem of turn-of-the-century modernity, which is no stranger to the knowledge of psychoanalysis. As is clear from the list of Romantic literature and spirit, and of superstitions and beliefs, folk beliefs cannot be alienated from Krúdy's writing. For all this, the episode of the underworld, even if through such a complex network of connections, evokes the visionary, otherworldly world of certain mediators of folk beliefs.

The day of St Agnes (*Szent Ágnes napja*)

Keeping the constant repetitiveness of fates afloat is one of the most fundamental questions of history. The tragedy itself is precisely the result of the mother's attempt to prevent her daughter from replicating her youthful mistake and atoning for her life as a fallen woman on the social margins. „I have never seen a sadder face. The motherly pain of a hundred years and a hundred years was engraved on that face.”²² But what is important for the later is that all these events: the preparation for the act, then its failure, and the time of Eszténa's suicide, are accompanied by circumstances of carnival chaos, such as the miraculous appearance of the mother,²³ or the uproar of the inhabitants of the town:

²¹ Krúdy 2008a: 246.

²² Krúdy 2008a: 256.

²³ „There was an unforgettable old woman standing on the window ledge, where she had obviously climbed up a ladder. I have never seen a sadder face. A hundred and hundreds of years of motherly pain were etched on that face. [...] There stood the old woman in her variegated dress, with her arms spread like a scarecrow's, between heaven and earth, as if despair had given her tired old limbs the strength to rise to such a height of majesty. It was as if she had crawled up the rain gutter, as if witches had aided her slippers feet, and angels were guarding her right and left. [...] Eszténa was making the sign of the cross and leaping to the window. She stood there in a shirt, barefoot, like a dream that will never be gone for the rest of my life. She had a radiant, forgiving, almost otherworldly smile on her face, like the smile of the saved. She looked back at me lovingly, happily, unforgettably.” Krúdy 2008a: 256–257.

“This must have been the atmosphere in the town when martyrs were set on the stake two hundred years ago. Everyone seemed to be going mad. [...] The air smelled of sulphur. There are clowns going somewhere with their colourful bells, their roaring singing. [...] Finally, around the corner, the Turkish man with the pipe came down from the tin bar of the tobacconist’s and humbly greeted me.”²⁴

All this happens because, instead of fulfilling the task that was necessarily imposed on her, she has made a decision that is not in harmony with the usual rules, thus interrupting the continuity of events in the profane world and enforcing a different temporary order. As a result, the entire community of the town fell into carnival consciousness and took to the streets. „It was as if a spell had been cast over the town, and everyone moved in the silent streets...”²⁵ In fact, the scene that closes the tragedy reveals that the world had turned so far out of its corners that even the hitherto reluctant Hartvigné began to obey Pál Pálfi as a devoted lover.

Given the narrative’s strong sacral motif system based on initiation rites, it can be seen that Eszténa’s death, which at first sight seems surprising, was very legitimate, which, in addition to the evocation of medieval fanaticism, could be indicated by such signs as the evocation of the Christian tradition of St. Agnes and the religious reading of the water metaphor, which plays a prominent role in the narrative.

The first and most important sacrament of initiation in Christianity is baptism, traditionally accompanied by immersion in water or an act symbolic of immersion, which frees the catechumen from death, dies to sin and is born again. The death of Eszténa, however, despite the seemingly blatant parallel, can be read as an act of baptism not only because of the presence of water, but also because of the rite of initiation of the sacrament of baptism. In all cases, rites of initiation contain both symbolic forms of death and resurrection, signifying both the destruction of the previous life stage and the subsequent birth of a new one. This is one of the reasons why it is significant that the companion sees the smile of the saved on the face of the girl who is fleeing.²⁶ Parallel to this, the first love union is also a ritualistic behaviour: „my mother wants me to be a nun before she dies anyway - before I am the bride of Christ, I want to be the sweetheart of an earthly man.”²⁷ This intention, however, is replaced by

²⁴ Krúdy 2008a: 258.

²⁵ Krúdy 2008a: 258.

²⁶ Eszténa then runs to the river and drowns herself in the gaping hole. She had „[t]he kind of indulgent, forgiving, almost otherworldly smile” on her face that you see on the saved. Krúdy 2008a: 257.

²⁷ Krúdy 2008a: 247.

the mother's intervention with the other rite, immersion in water that ends in actual death.

But all this is far from without precedent. For Eszténa has chosen the feast day of a virgin martyr for her act. As if the already strikingly conscious woman ("she undressed without prompting, as if she were carrying out a long-planned plan."²⁸ "Yesterday my poor mother scolded me for waiting for you at the window, even at night, she began very simply, as if she had already decided to tell me what had happened yesterday"²⁹), as if by way of a vicarious blood sacrifice, she had already planned in advance to choose the alternative route to death. Her suicide, as we learn in the crypt conversation, takes place on St. Agnes' day:

"Not today, sir, for I have neither confessed nor been blessed... who knows if I may die afterwards? Do not wish me to take such a step without the holy body of the Lord. [...] – I confess to the friar on Anthony the Hermit's day.³⁰ I fast on Friday and bless on Sunday. On Saint Agnes' day³¹ I will be yours."³²

It is somewhat disconcerting that the elements of faith associated with the figures of Saint Anthony the Hermit and Saint Anthony of Padua, the latter of which is traditionally represented by the lily, the symbol of innocence, are confused in the promise of Eszténa;³³ but the author's intention is of course understandable, since the invocation of the name of Saint Anthony further intensifies the expectation of infinite purity associated with the figure of Agnes.

The martyrdom of Saint Agnes, however, is the subject of many legends, her name being mentioned as early as the last third of the 4th century. It is not known whether she was a real person, but the stories about her are similar. According to one version, the Roman girl refused to give in to her pagan suitor, saying that she was already the bride of Christ and that she did not even want to sacrifice to the Roman gods, so she was

„stripped naked and taken to a brothel in broad daylight. But Agnes was miraculously hidden from prying eyes by her suddenly growing head of hair, and in

²⁸ Krúdy 2008a: 256.

²⁹ Krúdy 2008a: 237.

³⁰ Holiday January 17.

³¹ Holiday January 21.

³² Krúdy 2008a: 247–248.

³³ The story is about the feast of Saint Anthony the Hermit, but the beliefs associated with him and the figure of Saint Anthony of Padua have become confused over time. „Saint Anthony the Hermit was venerated as the patron saint of domestic animals. The beliefs and customs associated with him waned during the period of the Reformation and were revived in connection with the figure of St Anthony of Padua.” Bálint 1977: 145–155.

the brothel an angel even dressed her in light. But her former captor, who had followed her here to rape her, was struck dead by a demon. Then the girl was to be burned as a witch, but the flames roasted the executioners. Finally she was beheaded in the »agon« (circus) of Domitianus.”³⁴

In another version, Agnes, accused of heresy, was offered freedom if she would marry one of the Roman soldiers present, but she refused and replied: „I want to be with the one who chose me first: God!”³⁵

The psychopomp

„The belief is that when someone dies, their soul must be taken to the afterlife, and no one else can do this but the shaman.”³⁶
(Mihály Hoppál)

After a review of the rites, background and sacral aspects of Eszténa’s journey to the afterlife, it is time to talk about the actual helper, the travelling companion. The ghostly figure of the companion in the context of the initiation rites allows us to approach a very ancient concept, that of the psychopomp and, more generally, the concept of the haunting spirits derived from shamanic religions. It is important, however, to come to the connection between Pál Pálfi’s namesake in the crypt and one of the main characteristics of shamanism, the ability to tempt the other world, from a distance. Therefore, it is first worth clarifying in what sense and with what traditions we can speak of Krúdy’s Doppelgänger.

Katalin Fleisz, examining the mythical characteristics built into Krúdy’s texts, when clarifying the phenomenon of Krúdy’s sub-ego, the doubled self, observes that „it is closely related to mythical thinking and worldview that figures are formed as variations of a particular archetype,”³⁷ and emphasises that „[t]he cyclical worldview in Krúdy’s work also belongs to the mythical language.”³⁸ In this world, the boundaries of things are necessarily dissolved, which in turn allows for the emergence of a wide range of variations. Psychoanalysis offers an appropriate interpretative framework for the study of the self-

³⁴ Jankovics 1997: 43–44.

³⁵ Diós 2009.

³⁶ Hoppál 2013: 119.

³⁷ Fleisz 2013: 161.

³⁸ Fleisz 2013: 161.

duplications thus formed, the personality contours thus dissolved and then dispersed into a multiplicity of variations.³⁹ Since primitive patterns of thought, mythical roots, can make connections between the most diverse phenomena of culture, and can easily reproduce themselves when embedded in a given context (such as the literary types posited as exemplary, eternal characters, the Don Juans and Hamlets), it is worth considering myths in the wider context.

Fleisz and many others see this context in Krúdy's case as the tradition of Romanticism, which is characterised by the fact that he very often brings into play various Doppelgänger figures. However, he also warns that the visual inspection of wandering symbols „can only yield partial results in the case of Krúdy's texts.”⁴⁰ Such an examination of the oeuvre, he argues, could narrow the interpretation to a one-sided influence-reception relationship, whereas the principle of doubling or multiplying texts could lead to the most fundamental questions of Krúdy's prose. As he writes:

„[r]esearch in recent years has shown that Krúdy's prose does not create its characters on the model of a coherent, self-identical personality. Rather, the figures have a malleable, shifting identity, in which the process of identification rather than an end point is depicted.”⁴¹

In addition to this, he adds that the relationship of Krúdy's texts to myths and archetypes involves not only identifying but also alienating processes: „[t]he process of becoming a double and identifying with a double is thus a continuous movement that has neither a beginning nor an end.”⁴²

With reference to this briefly quoted line of thought, it is important to return to the question of the contextualization of the myth-making processes mentioned above, since, for example, the idea of the Doppelgänger has certain roots in popular cultures beyond Romanticism, and ethnography and religious history deal with the general features of these ideas.

It can be rightly assumed, and I have already mentioned it earlier, that Krúdy knew and used in his works certain features of the accompanying, helping spirit, the so-called soul guide, psychopomp, which term (Greek: ψυχοπομπός psychopompos) refers to Hermes, the last travelling companion,⁴³ the god of travel.⁴⁴ However, the characteristics of the god who crossed the

³⁹ Fleisz 2013: 162.

⁴⁰ Fleisz 2013: 163.

⁴¹ Fleisz 2013: 163.

⁴² Fleisz 2013: 164.

⁴³ Kerényi 1984.

⁴⁴ Tózsa 2020: 257.

river Styx can also be found in the Christian archangel St Michael, who was believed to stand over the sick person's bed and, at the hour of death, to be the one who takes the soul out of the body and leads it to heaven or hell, i.e. the psychopomp, the guide of the souls of the dead.⁴⁵

But the term psychopomp is not unique to cultures based on Greek mythology; it also applies to the companion spirits of ancient shamanism. As Mircea Eliade points out, one of the important social functions of the shaman is that of the psychopomp, i.e. one of his tasks is to guide the souls of the dead (those who have undergone certain initiation rites, those who have been redeemed from their previous lives) to the afterlife.⁴⁶ The spirits who appear as helpers on such occasions are a reflection of the shaman's psyche, and can be thought of as the shaman's inner alter-ego.⁴⁷

The remnants of this belief in shamans can be found in the case of the so-called wayfarers, who, along with other strange people, are considered the late descendants of shamans,⁴⁸ and who are described in more detail in Krúdy's *Book of Dreams* (*Álmoskönyv*), written shortly after *The Travelling Companion* (*Az útitárs*).

Of course, it is true that the story of the companion has explicitly nothing to do with shamanistic cultures (no descriptions of superfluous bones, no mention of the character as a healer or as a mediator communicating with the afterlife, etc.), but it is indisputable that the investigation of the common thought-origin of the image of the Hungarian world of beliefs as alter-ego and doppelgänger, homo duplex, Doppelgänger as a doubled identity, even if we have to unravel these contents from a complex web of motifs, can lead us back to the world of archaic shamanic cultures.⁴⁹ In what follows, I will therefore discuss in more detail the supposed shamanic and/or psychopompic roots of the story of the companion and the protagonist.

⁴⁵ Comp. Czövek 2006: 447–450.

⁴⁶ Comp. Eliade 2002a: 201.

⁴⁷ Comp. Schmidt 1997.

⁴⁸ Szendrey 1938: 262.

⁴⁹ A surprising episode of contemporary Krúdy-philosophy, in which the writer was referred to as a shaman. „His language is also the language of the shaman and - soft, warm, sad language, the embodiment of refined taste, pure beauty, noble simplicity and mystical sadness” says, for example, the author's first wife, Bella Bogdán. Bogdán 1900: 7.

„How could Gyula Krúdy have known about the similar structure of the incantations representing the shaman's delirium? I think it unlikely that it was from literature.” Simonics 2013: 56.

Underworld walk – Initiation rites and dimension shift

The main motivation of the travelling companion is the need to cross the boundaries between dimensions, the rites of initiation. These events are moved out of context by unexpected, („isolated in the narrative”),⁵⁰ but distinctly shaped images built from sacral and erotic elements.

The two most important moments in terms of dimension crossing are undoubtedly the underworld passages. During the courtship of the Crypt, the discovery of the sarcophagus inscribed with the inscription Pál Pálfi, the spirit of the ancestor involved in the underworld passage becomes explicitly present. In the other event, the drowning through the gaping hole in the river represents the gateway to the underworld, where the strange, witch-like ghostly figure of the mother symbolises the ascendant who is the soul guide.⁵¹

Both events begin with Eszténa's sexual advances, aimed at bringing her into adulthood, and in both cases Pál Pálfi is a partner.⁵² In the crypt scene, Eszténa verbally refuses: „the girl defended herself gently and firmly – not today”;⁵³ while in the brothel situation, the only way out was to rush to her death. In both cases, the stakes were high for Eszténa, since, having lost her virginity, her journey from the crypt would surely have led to the underworld, while her innocence would have allowed her to aim for heaven.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Fleisz 2013: 165.

⁵¹ „The gap is also a window, the window of the river, through which the incessantly flowing water, the eternal locomotive, peeps out into the daylight, as it travels under the vault of ice, in the gloom. The fish wonder at the shadow of the tower that casts its shadow on the gap at noon in winter. On the bridge, the frozen floor crunches beneath men and carts: otherworldly figures do their otherworldly work as they travel on in the darkness of the water to other cities, other lakes.” Krúdy 2008a: 236.

⁵² József Keserű, in his already cited essay *Narrative and Ethics in the Context of Gyula Krúdy's novel The Travelling Companion*, draws attention to how often the character identifies with the figure of the ghost and the devil as a role in which the companion knows himself. Keserű 2008: 38. „How much easier my work would be if I could stand up in the pulpit with bare forehead and bare face to speak to my female listeners about the infertility of fornication! But now I am a devil.” Krúdy 2008a: 252.

If Pál Pálfi, the seducer, is able to identify himself as the devil, it also supports the role of his helping spirit, because, as Éva Pócs points out, in a Christian context certain folk beliefs are often associated or replaced by figures known to Christianity, such as the devil. And this „applies to both death-demon and werewolf witchcraft, as well as to the helper-spirit and nightmare-like creatures.” Pócs 1992: 63.

⁵³ Krúdy 2008a: 247.

⁵⁴ At the hour of death, he takes the soul out of the body. He is the „Psychopomp”, the leader of the souls of the dead, and also the judge of those who go to the afterlife: he keeps the balance, weighs the sins, the good and evil deeds of men. He takes the good to heaven, and they are seated before the Virgin Mary, and from there they are brought before the Lord.

This is supported by one of the recurring motifs of the underworld, the encounter with a dead ancestor,⁵⁵ a pre-condition, which is fulfilled by the sarcophagus with the inscription Pálfi Pál discovered in the crypt. And in the final scene, the face of Eszténa's mother, furrowed with the mother's lividity of a hundred and hundreds of years, contains the obligatory element of ancestors, which, moreover, is in keeping with the expectations of ancient beliefs, since the spiritual teacher in shamanic visions is often a grandparent, or grandmother in the case of women, or ancestral mother, who performs soul-searching for the purpose of healing or to accompany the soul of the dead person to the afterlife.

The encounter with the ancestors is a characteristic motif of initiatory trance states all over the world, which means that in a certain semi-awake, semi-dreamlike state of consciousness one can observe oneself with a kind of disembodied gaze.⁵⁶ This condition, firstly with Pálfi contemplating his own name on the sarcophagus, and secondly with the archetype of the respective mothers being revealed in Eszténa's mother, is fulfilled without remainder. While the dreamlike, delirious moments of the confused ending convey precisely the aforementioned trance state. Not to mention the fact that during the closing sequence of events,⁵⁷ certain attribute animals, traditionally reinforcing the presence of the helping spirit, appear one after the other,⁵⁸ which play an emphatically important role in „the prelude to the shamanic ceremony, i.e. the preparation of the ecstatic sky-reading or underworld-going.”⁵⁹ Such animals include the frog, („like frogs leaping like bullfrogs”),⁶⁰ the dog, („old men ran with their little dogs”)⁶¹ and the rooster⁶², „the cross disappeared from the hill of the tower of St. John. A cock

Michael is also one of the „advocatus” who descends to hell with Mary („Advocata Nostra”) and together they „intercede” for the guilty soul (the journey to Inferno is preserved in another genre, the „sacred letter”, which reflects early Christian literary traditions). Comp. Czövek 2006: 447.

⁵⁵ „The ghost is the soul guide; this theme, by its very structure, excludes »possession«. It seems very much that the main role of the dead when endowed with shamanic powers is not so much to »possess« the subject, but rather to help him become »dead« in short, to help him become a »spirit« as well.” Eliade 2002b: 91.

⁵⁶ Comp. Hoppál 1997: 35.

⁵⁷ „The direction of »soul searching« is no coincidence. On their journeys to the underworld, where they could reach via tunnels, earth hatches, gullies, etc., they met their animal helpers.” Schmidt 1997.

⁵⁸ The alleged witch was often accompanied by a so-called companion spirit, e.g. a black cat or a snake, frog, crow, mouse, bee, ant, but there were also legless spaniels. S. N. 2000: 66.

⁵⁹ Eliade 2002a: 97.

⁶⁰ Krúdy 2008a: 258.

⁶¹ Krúdy 2008a: 258.

⁶² „Midnight has passed, and down below the rooster crows, the grim stranger, freezing in the snowfall, banging his bony legs together, knocking on the locked gate.” Krúdy 2013: 322.

crows up there, as in the centuries when people and churches changed their religion.”⁶³

In addition to the above, the figure of the travelling companion has a number of characteristics that can easily be paralleled with that of the shamanic traveller, who is believed to exist independently of time and space, driven by the need to travel, even in „X city”⁶⁴ at an unspecified time and period.⁶⁵ He is a sickly, reclusive type, not to mention the ominous quality that his mere company can be deadly, and as the *Book of Dreams* (*Álmoskönyv*) emphasizes, „sometimes he carries a girl’s heart in his purse.”⁶⁶ It is believed to be the first of the undead to emerge from the grave, and to have a predilection for spending the night in crypts.

„Strange people include, finally, the wayfarers, the dead who have come back to life while still in bed or in the coffin. A wayfarer, for such a one never rests, he is always coming and going, but no one dares to give him a place, for the house would soon be deserted. The one he looks at falls into jaundice, – the one he touches withers, the one he kisses dies. They also often think of the thin, pale, sickly-looking wanderers and beggars as wayfarers, and believe that such people, hiding away from home, live in crypts at night.”⁶⁷

Summary

The figure of the traveler, Pál Pálfi, when compared with the figure of the folk belief world called the wayfarer, which Krúdy also writes about in the *Book of Dreams* (*Álmoskönyv*), shows several fundamental similarities. And with the help of the comparison, it is possible to discover in both figures the characteristics of an ancient role, the characteristics of the role of the shaman, the soul companion. Someone who helps a person get through the initiation rites, someone who helps them change dimensions. The moments of dimensional shifts in Krúdy’s work are densely filled with sacred motifs; these junctions give space to identity changes, which the author also emphasizes in the text using narratological tools. I am convinced that the applied textual, folklore-based analysis method in the thesis can also be applied to other pieces of his oeuvre and brings us closer to understanding Krúdy’s innovative modernity.

⁶³ Krúdy 2008a: 258.

⁶⁴ Krúdy 2008a: 204.

⁶⁵ Fried 2006: 193.

⁶⁶ Krúdy 2008b: 264.

⁶⁷ Szendrey 1938: 262.

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Each lazarka offers a willow stalk on the chapel door. Source: Meryem Madili 2024.

Jose Antonio Lorenzo Tamayo – Meryem Madili

The *Lazarki* Procession in Inyevo, Radoviš: Ritual and Tradition in North Macedonia

Abstract

Lazarus Day is an important springtime tradition among Orthodox Christians in the Balkans. In the Republic of North Macedonia, many villages observe the occasion with a ritual performed by female performers, known as *lazarki*. Traditionally, the *lazarki* visit each home in the village to bless family members by singing unique songs. This ethnographic work intends to explore the tradition in Inyevo, a lowland and upland community in the Municipality of Radoviš. Compared to other villages in Macedonia, the *lazarki* in Inyevo perform two connected rituals conducted eight days before Palm Sunday. On Saturday, the *lazarki* perform the willow picking and offering in the monasteries, while the traditional home visitations take place on Sunday. A short fieldwork was conducted from 27 to 28 April 2024, coinciding with the performance of the related rituals in the village. Interviews with performers, a local family, and other villagers, along with direct observation of the *Lazarki* rituals and detailed fieldnotes, were utilized in the study. The *Lazarki* in Inyevo exhibits a cultural tradition that undergoes continuous negotiation and adaptation to contemporary times.

Keywords: Lazarus Day, *Lazarki*, Orthodox Christianity, Inyevo, Republic of North Macedonia

Introduction

The Republic of North Macedonia is one of the countries in the Balkans with Skopje as its capital. As a landlocked country, it is bordered by several countries: Kosovo and Serbia (North), Bulgaria (East), Greece (South), and Albania (West).¹ Historically, it used to be one of the constituents of the former Yugoslavia and gained its independence in 1991. North Macedonia has a multiethnic population comprised of Slavic Macedonians, Albanians, Turkish, Roma, Bosniaks, and other ethnic groups.² As of the census conducted in 2021, the

¹ Encyclopædia Britannica 2024.

² Congressional Research Service Report 2020.



total population is around 1.8 million with the majority practicing Orthodox Christianity (46.1%), Islam (32.2%), Christians without denomination (13.2%), and the rest unknown (7.2%). The country also has a Jewish population of 200 individuals; however, in the recent census, only 66 people identified themselves as having Jewish roots. Those practicing Orthodox Christianity mainly reside in central and southeastern parts of the country, while Muslims are in the northern and western regions. Moreover, ethnicity and religious affiliation correlate, given that most ethnic Macedonians, Serbs, and Vlachs practice Orthodox Christianity. On the one hand, ethnic Albanians, Roma, Turks, and Bosniaks are mostly practicing Muslims.³

For Macedonian Orthodox Christians, Lazarus Day is one of the most important springtime religious celebrations connected to Easter. The highlight of this celebration is a ritual procession performed by female participants, known as *lazarki* (the singular form is *lazarka*). The *lazarki* visit houses on Lazarus Day and sing songs of blessings to family members. Moreover, the ritual procession is rich in layers of archaic practices that can be traced back to pre-Christian Balkan society. While the ritual procession is commonly practiced in the Balkans as part of the Orthodox Christian tradition, data presented in this study is derived from a short fieldwork conducted from 27 to 28 April 2024 in the farming village of Inyevo located in the Municipality of Radovis, which is on the northwestern side of Strumica-Radovis valley and 126 km away from



Pic. Nr. 1. Modern bungalows, duplex residences, and farmlands inhabit Inyevo's lowland area.

Source: Jose Antonio Lorenzo Tamayo 2024.

³ U.S. Department of State 2023.

Skopje.⁴ Inyevo occupies an area of 21.80 km² and has a population of 1,139, based on the 2021 census. Gender has an almost equal distribution in the village population, with 575 males and 564 females. Moreover, many of the villagers fall within the 50-59 age bracket. The recent census also revealed that 1,087 individuals are ethnic Macedonians.⁵ Topographically, Inyevo has both upland and lowland areas. The upland area features dirt roads, sparsely populated tree habitat, several monasteries, and smaller residences. In contrast, the lowland area features several streets lined with modern bungalows and duplex residences, paved roads, and extensive farmlands that produce tobacco, fruits, grains, and industrial crops.

Despite the passing of time and sociopolitical changes, the village has preserved its cultural traditions. Many locals who work abroad also return during festivities to witness or participate in various rituals.

Ritualization and thick description

In her book “Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice,” Catherine Bell criticizes earlier ritual theories developed by Durkheim, Turner, and Geertz, whose theories often offer Western assumptions about religion, hierarchy, and function. These scholars also associate ritual with something stable and that contains a formalized structure with inherent meaning.⁶ In contrast, Bell’s work developed “ritualization,” a way of doing that marks certain actions as special, authoritative, or transformative.⁷ More than a tradition or a mere act of repetition, ritualization is also context-dependent and highly tied to power relations.⁸ Bell furthers that rituals can be considered as strategies for constructing power, paving the way for legitimizing authority, shaping social norms, and defining who can control meaning.⁹ Rituals are also seen as embodied and negotiate social order in the community. While these are learned through bodily habits, spatial arrangement, and repetition, rituals can generate and uphold categories (i.e., sacred or profane, insiders or outsiders) that are continuously negotiated through the act of ritualizing.¹⁰

⁴ Regional Business Center n.d.

⁵ City Population 2023.

⁶ Bell 1992: 94–116.

⁷ Bell 1992: 98–117.

⁸ Bell 1992: 197–223.

⁹ Bell 1992: 200–218.

¹⁰ Bell 1992: 108–145, 220–243.

Clifford Geertz introduced a foundational idea in interpretive anthropology known as “thick description.” Compared to a thin description that merely states a factual account of behavior, a thick description aims to interpret the context and meaning behind the behavior.¹¹ Geertz proposes several notions that necessitate thick description. Since culture is a system of symbols that people interpret, an anthropologist needs to read these symbols to understand their meaning. To understand the meaning, context is essential in interpretive anthropology, given that actions cannot be understood in isolation. Their meanings then may depend on several factors (i.e., cultural background, social relations, history).¹² On the part of the anthropologist, the conduct of ethnography is necessary as it is an inscription that consists of observing actions, interpreting their meanings, and writing (inscribing) them.¹³

Drawing from Catherine Bell’s ritual theory, this study focuses on ritualization, embodiment, transformation, and power relations. The authors examine the bodily practices, symbolic gestures, and objects that the performers and the community use, as well as the spatial arrangements that contribute to the ritualized quality of the *Lazarki*. As an embodied practice, the performers’ process of learning and transmitting the dance ritual is explored. Rituals are not static and are constantly produced and reproduced through repetition; therefore, it is important to determine how the community in Inyevo negotiates continuity and innovation in the face of modernization. As a practice of power relations, the study also delves into how the *Lazarki* maintain gender, generational, and community hierarchies. These four areas are revealed in the following narratives: the willow picking and offering in the monasteries, the *Lazarki* procession in Inyevo, and the challenges that the *Lazarki* tradition currently faces. Geertz’s thick description is employed in reporting these narratives, which are reliant on the authors’ perspectives and interpretations.

The fieldwork process

The fieldwork in Inyevo under the Municipality of Radoviš in the Republic of North Macedonia was carefully planned for several months. The fieldwork team included the authors, who are doctoral students in cultural anthropology and ethnology, and several professors from Hungarian and Slovakian higher educational institutions. Overall, the team comprised seven individuals. On 26

¹¹ Geertz 1973: 6.

¹² Geertz 1973: 9–27.

¹³ Geertz 1973: 9.

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April 2024, the team left Budapest, Hungary, in the late morning and arrived in Radoviš, North Macedonia, in the late evening of the same day. Before the field-work started the following day, a lecture on Macedonian culture with an emphasis on the traditions aligned with Lazarus Day was conducted in the morning by Prof. Rodna Velichkovska, a Macedonian ethnomusicologist from the Goce Delčev University of Štip.

By late afternoon, the team traveled to Inyevo and proceeded to a small monastery dedicated to the Virgin Mary, where the willow picking and offering rituals began. The team followed the *lazarki* performers in all the monasteries they visited until sunset. The majority of these monasteries are in the upland area of Inyevo. In the evening, the team proceeded to the lowland area of Inyevo to visit the family residence of Valentina Filipovska. Her family has participated in the village's performative traditions for generations. Members of this family (i.e., grandfather, mother, son, daughter) generously answered the team's queries regarding the Lazarus Day celebration.

On 28 April 2024, Lazarus Day, the team returned to the house of the host family and joined a group of *lazarki* by midmorning as they visited houses to sing songs of blessings. The home visitations of the *lazarki* briefly ended before lunch. During this time, the team returned to their accommodation to rest and decided to return to the village by late afternoon. The same local family hosted an informal gathering at their residence, during which the research team clarified their questions and observations, and asked for additional details about the Lazarki procession that took place earlier that day.

Methodology

The team employed qualitative research methods throughout the fieldwork, including interviews, observations, and fieldnotes. Brief interviews with monastery caretakers were conducted in the uplands after each willow offering rite. In the lowlands, most interviews were done at the host family's residence. Interviews with the latter were audio-recorded. In both interview settings, each team member had the opportunity to ask questions, as their research agendas differed. Valentina Filipovska, a former *lazarka* in Inyevo, and Rodna Velichkovska provided the English translations of various interviews. As Anna Mária Bólya is proficient in the Macedonian language, she assisted with translations, particularly in sections that previous interpreters were unable to explain. They also explained the aspects of the rituals throughout the two-day

fieldwork and helped translate what the locals in the village narrated. On Lazarus Day, as some villagers are fluent in English, the authors also conducted short, informal interviews with children and their parents.

Observation of the rituals in both upland and lowland areas was also carried out. Fieldnotes were taken throughout the observation periods to document key moments and insights. In addition, each team member used their own electronic devices (e.g., smartphones, a camcorder) to record the rituals in video and photographic formats. While team members captured individual recordings, these materials were made accessible among team members by uploading them to an online group chat and Google Drive. Following the fieldwork, the authors held regular Zoom meetings to organize the collected data and structure the writing process. The authors also contacted Filipovska online to clarify specific details, particularly regarding the songs performed by the *lazarki*. She also provided the lyrics of these songs, which will appear later in the study.

Origins of the Lazarki procession

The origins of the *Lazarki* procession in the Balkans are complicated to unravel, given the lack of surviving accounts. According to available literature, the tradition already existed in the year 601 in the Municipality of Bidjevo when Orthodox Christianity transformed many pagan practices to suit its religious context. This was a period when many Slavs populated the Balkans and converted to Christianity.¹⁴ Theologically, the commemoration identifies with Lazarus, a Biblical character from Bethany, whom Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead. Orthodox Christianity believes Bethany is “the symbol of the whole world as a home of man.”¹⁵ In other words, men are created to become a friend of God; however, this Divine friendship is destroyed by death, a power that God did not create. While Jesus Christ wept at the grave of Lazarus as a form of love for his friend, the latter’s resurrection is interpreted this way: “not a Divine ‘power in itself,’ but power of love, or rather love as power.”¹⁶ Rev. Alexander Schmemann, professor of liturgical theology at St. Vladimir’s Seminary, adds that the commemoration of Lazarus Day signifies the Cross depicting the Supreme sacrifice of love and the Resurrection signifying the ultimate

¹⁴ Domazetovski 1974.

¹⁵ Schmemann n.d.

¹⁶ Schmemann n.d.

triumph of love.¹⁷ Liturgically speaking, Lazarus Day, also known as the Saturday of Lazarus among Orthodox Christians, is celebrated as a “pre-feast” before Palm Sunday. Both of them share the themes of triumph and victory. While the Cross points to death as the enemy, the Resurrection presents the triumph and victory of the Kingdom of God.¹⁸

At its surface, many people from the Balkans assume that the *Lazarki* procession during Lazarus Day solely connotes a Christian character. On the contrary, there are suppositions that the *Lazarki* procession originated from the Roman festival called *Rosalia*, a rose festival first recorded during the time of Emperor Domitian, wherein family members commemorated the dead (*dies rosationis*) by offering roses to the grave of the departed.¹⁹ Juan Antonio Álvarez-Pedrosa and Enrique Santos Marinas, authors of the book *Rituals in Slavic Pre-Christian Religion*, mention that the festival is known as *Semik* or *Rusal'naia nedelia* among East Slavs and is commonly referred to as *Rusalii* among Balkan Slavs, which was first recorded between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.²⁰ It was also considered an archaic fertility festival conducted in June relating to the cult of the dead and the springtime agricultural rituals.²¹ Despite the suppositions that connect the *Lazarki* procession to the *Rusalii*, Álvarez-Pedrosa and Marinas note that the *Rusalii* became synonymous with the Christian celebration of the Pentecost, especially between the end of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth century.²² In a short exchange on ResearchGate, Prof. Juan Antonio Álvarez-Pedrosa from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid expressed that there is a possibility for the *Rusalii* to be related to the *Lazarki* procession; however, further research needs to be conducted to confirm this existing belief in the Balkans.

Other scholars specializing in Balkan rituals weigh the connection between pagan and Christian elements in the *Lazarki* procession. Anna Mária Bólya, a Hungarian dance anthropologist specializing in Macedonian dances, describes Lazarus Day in the Macedonian tradition as an “opening feast of Holy Week” celebrated eight days ahead and closely linked with the commemoration of Palm Sunday. It also relates to a procession wherein the singing and dancing of female performers called the “Lazarus Daughters” or *lazarki* are central to the feast and exude magical manifestations. In addition, singing, dancing, and

¹⁷ Schemann n.d.

¹⁸ Schemann n.d.

¹⁹ Oxford Classical Dictionary 2016.

²⁰ Álvarez-Pedrosa–Marinas 2023.

²¹ Álvarez-Pedrosa–Marinas 2023.

²² Álvarez-Pedrosa–Marinas 2023.

the text uttered by the *lazarki* ensure protection for the people in the community and all living creatures. Bólya adds that the *Lazarki* tradition is closely linked to spring agrarian rituals with pagan elements. An example is the singing of the *lazarki* in front of a willow tree and picking some of its branches, which alludes to the spirit of vegetation, fertility, and abundance. The Christian meaning behind the tradition enters the picture through “spring greening” related to the celebration of Flower Sunday (Palm Sunday), which denotes the theme of the blossoming of life and is infused with Christian meanings associating spring with the resurrection of Jesus Christ.²³ In contrast, the study of Macedonian dance anthropologist Filip Petkovski states that there were no extant records of the *Lazarki* procession before the Christianization of the Balkans. He postulates that the ritual may have had a different role in the past. The Christian character of the procession is connected to a narrative in St. John’s gospel describing how Martha and Mary, Lazarus’ sisters, visited houses in their village to spread the latter’s resurrection. For Petkovski, this narrative created a perception that binds the gospel story and the procession today.²⁴

Willow picking and offering in the monasteries

Lazarus Day in the village of Inyevo follows two important occasions in which the *lazarki* participate. On Saturday, they select a willow tree from which they will obtain branches that will be offered to several monasteries. This act serves as a prayer to bless individuals and families living in the village. By Sunday, the *lazarki* visit the houses in the uplands and lowlands to sing their blessings to each family member. These two occasions are movable feasts depending on the liturgical calendar of Orthodox Christians, which follows the Julian calendar to determine religious feasts such as Easter. This year, the Saturday event happened on April 27, while the one on Sunday was held on April 28. The *lazarki* consists of twelve female performers whose ages range between 15 and 19 years old. As a rule, the chosen *lazarka* performs from age 15 until she gets married. During the Saturday event, the twelve *lazarki* perform collectively as a group; on Sunday, they are divided into two groups with six members performing in the lowlands and the other six in the uplands. The six *lazarki* are further split into two smaller groups of three members. The smaller groups are called a *veset*, and each is assigned neighborhoods to visit throughout the day.²⁵ Valentina Filipovska shared that

²³ Bólya 2021.

²⁴ Petkovski 2018.

²⁵ Bólya 2021.

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the *lazarki* in Inyevo were selected in the past based on the quality of their voices. Today, the group welcomes anyone who volunteers to perform the rituals. These female performers are not professional singers. They are, however, trained by the oldest *lazarka* in the group. Since the *lazarki* are divided into two groups during their Sunday performance, they practice separately. One of the performers shared that she only learned the songs two months ago. On the one hand, the rest had been performing for at least two years.

When the fieldwork team visited the village late afternoon on Saturday, April 27, the team met with Filipovska, who led the way towards the first monastery dedicated to the Virgin Mary where the willow picking and willow offering commenced. The monastery was in the lowlands outside the village on a football field littered with grasses and various willow trees serving as a backdrop. Like other monasteries the team visited that day, the first monastery was easily noticeable by the dome and the cross protruding above it. The domes were either quadrilateral or octagonal and adorned with plain or stained-glass window panels at each side, which provided natural lighting inside the monasteries. The monasteries had varying shapes and sizes but were usually rectangular and approximately 50 to



Pic. Nr. 2. *The willow picking and offering ceremony starts at the monastery of the Virgin Mary located on the lowland side of Inyevo.*

Source: Jose Antonio Lorenzo Tamayo 2024.

100 square meters. Moreover, the smaller monasteries could accommodate a congregation of at least 30 individuals, while the bigger ones could easily fit 50 to 100.

The exterior of these monasteries was painted white, brickwork framed window panels, and clay tiles were used as roofing. While most monasteries were made from concrete, the main monastery dedicated to St. Spas in the uplands, which was also the biggest by floor size, was predominantly erected using stone. In contrast, the interior of these monasteries was mostly painted white, featuring an *iconostasis* (i.e., carved wooden screen containing icons of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, the apostles, Biblical scenes, and the Royal Doors that hid the altar from the congregation), and had a stand at the middle where an icon of the monastery's patron saint could be venerated and kissed by pilgrims. Oil lamps and candles illuminated the interior of these monasteries, aside from electrical lighting. The smell of incense also wafted in the air. Aside from the chapel complex, the monasteries also incorporate a separate building where the caretaker resides. Compared to traditional monasteries managed by monks and the religious, Filipovska remarks that monasteries in Inyevo are commissioned by private individuals and often run by caretakers. She adds that the motivations for erecting such monasteries vary. Some individuals or families built them as a form of thanksgiving, while it was also possible for someone to have dreamt of something religiously significant and decided to establish a monastery upon waking up.



Pic. Nr. 3. The lazarki comprise twelve female performers wearing traditional Macedonian costumes called nosija. Source: Jose Antonio Lorenzo Tamayo 2024.

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The fieldwork team arrived first in the monastery, followed by two *lazarki*. Interestingly, the remaining performers came to the monastery riding a simple wooden carriage attached to a farm tractor. As the remaining *lazarki* drew nearer, the team could hear them singing. The performers wore traditional costumes called *nosija* made of linen or wool.



Pic. Nr. 4. *The lazarki sing as they pick enough willow stalks to be offered to several monasteries.* Source: Jose Antonio Lorenzo Tamayo 2024.

The costumes were composed of an inner white garment with embroidered details at the hem, sleeves and collar, an intricately woven apron-like outer garment with a black base complete with geometric flora and fauna motifs mostly in red, white and blue, a narrow vest with embroidery or appliques, thick socks usually in black or red with a hint of embroidery at the middle part, and a pair of *opanki* (i.e., traditional Balkan shoes made of leather with straps to secure the foot and ankle). The female performers had their hair neatly braided into two lengths and a red rose fastened above their right ear, and they also wore an assortment of colorful necklaces. One of the *lazarki* showed the team a unique necklace of intricate beadwork that resembled a snake. According to the host family, the matriarch of each family in yesteryears would commission a costume that would be passed on from one generation to the next. Making traditional costumes today, however, is complicated given the scarcity and costs of materials. Furthermore, the embroidery details in the costume depict the marital status of the *lazarka*, although this rule is not imposed anymore.

When the *lazarki* were finally completed, they led a short procession on a dirt road beside the building adjacent to the monastery. The procession ended briefly when the congregation arrived at a spot where several trees stood. The authors observed that the performers were having a short conversation. Filipovska explained that the *lazarki* were deciding on the tree from which they would obtain the branches. This tree should come from the willow family, as it is the first tree species to bloom in spring. As such, picking branches from a willow symbolizes new life and growth. It is imperative for the *lazarki* to collect only the living branches of the willow and enough for all the monasteries they visit. Once the *lazarki* decided on the willow, they approached the tree and sang as they picked some branches.

The *lazarki* sang this hymn to the willow tree as they gathered some of its stalks:

(Macedonian)	(English)
Ја преведи се, мила врбo	Turn to me, my sweet willow
Нешто да ти кажам, мила врбo	To tell you something, my sweet willow
Терзија ти носам, мила врбo	I'll get you a tailor
Елек да ти кројам	I'll put an obligation on you
Елек да ти кројам, мила врбo	I'll make you an apron, my sweet willow
Елек за лазара. ²⁶	An apron for the feast.

²⁶ Bólya 2021: 176.

After collecting enough branches, they formed a single file near the tree and sang another song as they held the willow stalks. This song was accompanied by slightly leaning the body back and forth. Subsequently, the congregation led by the *lazarki* had a short procession going back to the monastery. The *lazarki* started singing a hymn once they entered the monastery gates. At the main portal of the chapel, each *lazarka* attached a willow stalk to the door as they finished singing the hymn. When the authors inquired why the *lazarki* made such a gesture, Filipovska emphasized that the custom was never recorded in the village, and nobody knew its context. They just followed what the elders did in the past. The performers then moved to the lawn after attaching the willow stalks to the door. Here, they formed a semicircular formation divided into four *vet*. They repeated this formation inside the chapels they visited that afternoon. The *lazarki* then sang another hymn in an antiphonal style described as “small in pitch, in two lines, with an exclamation at the end of the lines and sometimes with a glissando starting from the bottom at the beginning of the lines.”²⁷ Furthermore, the songs are usually monophonic, emphasizing harmonization and drone, and the rhythmic organization is either 2/4 or 7/8 meter.²⁸ This antiphonal style is observable in both Saturday and Sunday rituals.

After the singing, an old woman who was the caretaker appeared, and she opened the door of the monastery. The *lazarki* led the congregation inside the chapel, replicated the same formation mentioned earlier, and started singing a hymn. Filipovska notes that the songs used by the *lazarki* in the monasteries are the same when they visit houses the following day. When the hymn ended, each *lazarka* approached the stand where the icon of the monastery’s patron saint was enthroned, and they offered a willow stalk to the icon.

This part of the ritual also signaled the end of the willow offering. When the congregation finally settled outside the chapel, the caretaker approached the *lazarki* and handed them money. Filipovska shares that the *lazarki* collect the money given to them, place it on a traditional bread called *pogača* the following day, and divide it among themselves after the home visitations. Given the conclusion of the ritual in the first monastery, the fieldwork team followed the *lazarki* in the uplands and accompanied them during the willow offering ritual in several monasteries, including that of St. Michael the Archangel, St. Spas, and St. Demeter. The same ritual process they performed in the monastery of the Virgin Mary in the lowlands was accorded to the remaining monasteries. In the upland mo-

²⁷ Bólya 2021.

²⁸ Matijashevik 1989 (see Petkovski 2014: 121); Petkovski 2014.

nasteries, the authors observed that the caretakers would sometimes offer refreshments to the *lazarki* aside from monetary donations. As a rule, the *lazarki* were to complete the monastery visitations before sunset.



Pic. Nr. 5. *After chanting a hymn, each lazarka offers a willow stalk to the monastery's patron saint, signaling the end of the willow offering ritual.* Source: Jose Antonio Lorenzo Tamayo 2024.

Visiting houses and blessing family members

Midmorning on Sunday, 28 April, the fieldwork team headed directly to the residence of their host family. From there, the team awaited the arrival of the *lazarki*, who were performing the ritual blessing for each family member next door. Compared to the previous event, the *lazarki* performing on Sunday were in smaller groups. The one assigned to the neighborhood where the host family resided was composed of a *cset*. During their performance, the *srednik* (middle performer) would sing the melody while the two remaining *lazarki*, known as *krajnici*, sang the held note.²⁹ When the ritual blessing finished at the neighboring house, the *lazarki* had a little procession toward the host family's residence. The authors noticed that the performers were not wearing traditional socks and *opanki*; instead, they wore rubber shoes. Valentina Filipovska, the team's guide, explained that this had become an exception in modern times since the *lazarki* needed to be comfortable as they would walk all day. The number of houses the *lazarki* visit also expanded through the years – another reason comfort and practicality are prioritized these days. As they walked solemnly from one home to the next, the *lazarki* locked each other's arms.

When they arrived at the host family's residence, the matriarch was already outside the door waiting for them. She was also holding a *pogača* she baked the previous day. Traditionally, the matriarch bakes the bread, but some families buy it from the local bakery these days for practical reasons. This bread is circular, made of wheat flour, resembles and tastes like dinner rolls, and usually contains rose jams. Accordingly, all ingredients of this bread should be “vegan” as it is still Lenten season. It is also interesting that some families show creativity when presenting the *pogača*. There were breads topped with edible gold dust, and some even included colorful sugar flowers.

The bread has religious connotations and relates to the body of Jesus Christ. Meanwhile, the *lazarki* announced their arrival by singing this hymn:

(Macedonian)
Чиј са вија дворовинии
На босилок меришаат.

(English)
Whose yards are they?
They smell of basil.

²⁹ Bólya 2021.



Pic. Nr. 6. A bread called pogacă is usually baked by the family's matriarch and given to the lažarki to be distributed to the crowd after each home visitation.

Source: Jose Antonio Lorenzo Tamayo 2024.

After the preliminary hymn, the matriarch announced each family member's name. Each family member has a unique song and as the matriarch mentioned each name, the *lažarki* began singing.



Pic. Nr. 7. Holding the pogăča, the matriarch recites each family member's name as the lazarki sing a corresponding song. Source: Jose Antonio Lorenzo Tamayo 2024.

Facing the matriarch, they remained clasping each other's arms and swayed their bodies gently forward and backward as they sang. Bólya mentions that there are more than 50 songs that the *lazarki* can perform.³⁰ This means that all family members are guaranteed to be blessed during the home visitations. Filipovska is kind enough to share some songs with the authors written in Macedonian. These are loosely translated using Google Translate. The songs do not only relate to gender or hierarchy within the family, but they could also mean certain social situations that family members encounter at the time of the *lazarki* visit.

³⁰ Bólya 2021.

Song for a male named Stoian

(Macedonian)

Седел Стојан во кафана, вино
пиеј, се фалел што имал

(English)

Stoian was sitting in the tavern,
drinking wine, boasting about
what he had.

Song for the elderly hostess

(Macedonian)

Стара домаќинка, ја поканилае
кума да биде, дете да крсти.

(English)

The old hostess was invited to be a
godmother, to baptize the child.

Song for a girl enduring unrequited love

(Macedonian)

Тешко, горчливо е за оние што
љубат, за оние што љубат, три
девојки, три пријателки.

(English)

It's hard, it's bitter for those who
love, for those who love, three
girls, three friends.

Song for a little boy named Todor

(Macedonian)

Тодор се ниша, малечкиот се
ниша, Тодор се ниша.

(English)

Todor is swinging, the little one is
swinging, Todor is swinging.

Once the *lazarki* finished singing, the matriarch handed them *pogača* and money, which was also practiced by all families in the village. If not money, some families give them gifts or small tokens like hairpins, accessories, or socks. However, this is only done if the family has a newborn child, or someone is engaged or recently married. These gifts, like monetary donations, are collected and divided equally among the performers later. This gesture also signals the end of the blessing ritual. Every time the ritual blessing ends, the *lazarki* divide the *pogača* equally, and each *lazarka* approaches the gathered crowd outside the house to distribute the bread. It is improper to refuse the *pogača* offered by the *lazarki*. Some people eat it immediately, and others collect it in a plastic bag. As soon as the bread was distributed, the *lazarki* proceeded to the next home and repeated the same sequence. The authors observed that it was customary for the family matriarch or a family's female member to greet the *lazarki* and recite the names of family members. Moreover, the husband and other family members usually observe the ritual in the foreground. The entire proceeding per household spans five to ten minutes.



Pic. Nr. 8. Each *lazarka* carries the infant while the rest of the group sings the blessing.
Source: Jose Antonio Lorenzo Tamayo 2024.

In one of the homes visited by the *lazarki*, a baby who also participated in another ritual was present, aside from the typical blessing. If the household has a baby, six *lazarki* (two *cset*) conduct a related ritual. The first *lazarka* in the semi-circle formation carries the baby and passes it alternately to the third and then to the fifth *lazarka*. As this happens, the others in the formation sing. They also put a thin white veil on the baby's head. This is repeated starting from the second *lazarka*, the fourth, and finally the sixth before returning the baby to its mother.

In another residence, the family was in a mourning period as a family member died. Filipovska explains that when a family member dies, especially if it is a young person, the *lazarki* do not perform the blessing. Instead, the *pogača* is directly handed by the matriarch to the *lazarki* for distribution. She furthered

that it is up to the family when the mourning period ends. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the *lazarki* ritual blessing was temporarily halted, although there were reports that some families conducted it privately.

Contemporary issues in the Lazarki

Assessing the current situation of the *Lazarki* in Inyevo, the authors were able to distinguish two issues that the tradition faces in the contemporary period. The first was the lack of proper documentation. Given that the tradition primarily relies on oral and visual transmission, certain aspects of the rituals are not holistically understood and recorded. A concrete example of this problem happens in the willow offering ceremony. Nobody knows why the *lazarki* attach a willow branch to the chapel door. When asked about it, the locals explain that they observed their ancestors performing the same actions in the past and simply followed them. Presumably, there was an intended meaning for this gesture in the past, or it would not be part of the ritual.

The most significant issue, however, lies with the preservation and sustainability of the tradition. Valentina Filipovska admits that recruiting teenage girls to train as *lazarka* is difficult today. Several factors contribute to this predicament. It is not solely attributed to the changing values in the village, but it is also affected by migration patterns. Based on the interviews with the community, many families are migrating overseas, with the majority doing it for a better life. These families return to the village only during holidays and major religious festivals, leaving the older generation behind for the rest of the year. Such reality paves the way for certain processes in the selection of the *lazarka* to change. In the past, voice quality was the primary consideration in selecting a *lazarka*, given the large number of possible participants in the village. The criterion today is oversimplified: whoever volunteers can be trained.

Ritualizing the Lazarki

This ethnographic study employed Catherine Bell's ritual theory to analyze four domains of the *Lazarki* tradition: ritualization, embodiment, transformation, and power relations. In the domain of ritualization, the structuring of space, time, and action is evident in the *Lazarki*. The sacredness of the space is ritually marked and differentiated through certain actions (i.e., entry, offering, formation). In the ritual, the monasteries, willow groves, streets, and family

homes serve as ritual zones where songs, offerings, and gestures are repeated in patterned actions. The processional movement of the *Lazarki* – from the willow grove to the chapel or from one home to another – imbues everyday spaces with sacred meaning. Spatial boundaries also reinforce ritual order and community structure. These are observed in the contrasting actions performed between the uplands and lowlands and in the division of the performers into groups (*cset*). Time in the *Lazarki* ritual is also structured in multiple dimensions: liturgical time (alignment with the Orthodox calendar), seasonal time (willow tree being the first tree species to bloom in spring), and biographical time (the performers' participation being limited by age and marital status).

In her work, Bell notes:

“Essential to ritualization is the circular production of a ritualized body which in turn produces ritualized practices. Ritualization is embedded within the dynamics of the body defined within a symbolically structured environment.”³¹

In the *Lazarki*, the body becomes a vessel of tradition, memory, and authority. There are bodily techniques that differentiate the ritual from ordinary actions, such as arm-linking, semicircular formations, and grouped singing. Hallmarks of ritualization are also observed in the singing of hymns using the antiphonal style, the performers' order of movement, and shared choreography that is learned, repeated, and regulated. Some gestures convey authority through repetition rather than explanation. This is seen, for example, in the willow offering on the chapel doors. The performers conduct the gesture even without knowing the reason behind it. There is no explanation needed, but it is done eventually because this is how they observed it in the past.

The notion of embodiment can be understood through Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, a concept that Bell also highlighted in her work.³² Bourdieu states, “the *habitus*, the product of history, produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemas engendered by history.”³³ In the *Lazarki*, the ritual is embodied and rooted in the community's collective practices. The performers learn the songs, movements, postures, and routine through an elder *lazarka* by mimetic learning and bodily imitation. The ritual is also tied to social roles and life stages. The performers start dancing by the age of 15, which corresponds to a symbolic marker of liminality. Victor

³¹ Bell 1992: 93.

³² Bell 1992: 86.

³³ Bourdieu 1977: 82.

Turner identifies liminality as a “threshold” in which participants enter a transitional state characterized by ambiguity, transformation, and potential.³⁴ Here, the *lazarka* enters a period where she can bear the responsibility of performing the ritual. The imposition of this period is accentuated by the traditional dress she wears and the gestures she enacts, which Bell calls “ritualized body,” where cultural structures are internalized through disciplined bodily movement.³⁵

Several transformations are observed in the *Lazarki* ritual. For one, the use of rubber shoes instead of the traditional *opanki* during the performers’ house visitations connotes practical adaptations. Another is the changing criterion when selecting a possible *lazarka*. In the past, voice quality was the sole criterion when selecting performers. Today, the selection criterion has become more relaxed, shifting from an emphasis on voice quality to a focus on the prospective performers’ willingness to participate. Another observation deals with the distribution of *pogača*. According to the matriarch of the host family, *pogača* was traditionally baked by the matriarch of every family in the village. Over time, a preference for store-bought *pogača* became popular. Some meanings are also lost in certain elements of the rituals, like the significance of attaching willow stalks to the chapel doors. For ordinary spectators and outsiders, these transformations may be seen as a decline in the ritual tradition. However, these are not necessarily forms of decline but negotiated acts of ritual production. These transformations highlight the ritual logic of tradition and adaptations serving as strategic responses to modernity. Bourdieu calls this “practical sense,” wherein both the performers and community members do what is “sensible” or “informed by common sense.”³⁶

Power relations can be understood in the *Lazarki* through the existing hierarchies in the ritual. Gender and generational power are important elements in the ritual. As the ritual can only be performed by unmarried girls in the village, their bodies become sites of symbolic fertility and purity. Generational power can be observed through the significance of the matriarch in the ritual, as she is the only authorized individual in the family to name each family member during the *lazarki* visitation. The matriarch is also responsible for baking or providing bread during the ritual. Power relations in the *Lazarki* also instill the idea of social cohesion and moral obligation. This is reflected in how each household participates in the ritual – even if a family is in the period of mourning – and the donations given to the *lazarki* (e.g., socks, money, bread) as a form of gratuity.

³⁴ Turner 1969: 94–95.

³⁵ Bell 1992: 93.

³⁶ Bourdieu 1990: 69.

Conclusion

The *Lazarki* in Inyevo is a unique springtime ritual in the Municipality of Radoviš, North Macedonia, distinguished by its two coordinated events held on the weekend before Palm Sunday – unlike most villages in the Balkans, where the ritual procession occurs on a single day. Highlights of the two-day ritual include willow picking and willow offerings in monasteries and the home visitations of the *lazarki* to bless each family member, a more traditional practice in the Balkans. While previous studies detailed the *Lazarki*'s associations with the *Rusalii*, agrarian fertility cult, and Orthodox Christianity,³⁷ this study provided a thick description of the *Lazarki* ritual in Inyevo. Grounded in Catherine Bell's ritual theory, this study examines how ritualization, embodiment, transformation, and power relations shape the performance and meaning of the *Lazarki* ritual in the contemporary period. Although the *Lazarki* contains elements that can be traced back several centuries, the ritual is a dynamic practice that is continuously negotiated and adapted to changing times.

Reflecting on the fieldwork and writing process, the authors determined limitations that can be addressed in future studies aligned with the *Lazarki*. The authors' limited knowledge of the Macedonian language made them highly reliant on interpreters. This may have influenced how they collected the information provided by their respondents. The limited availability of literature on the *Lazarki* tradition by Macedonian scholars, particularly in online databases, posed a challenge for the authors in reviewing relevant sources, ultimately leading them to rely on a small number of references written mostly by scholars outside Macedonia. In future studies, the authors recommend that prospective scholars concentrate on the rich material culture present in the *Lazarki*. While this study briefly addressed the material elements of the ritual, comprehensive documentation of these aspects is necessary and beneficial for a deeper understanding of the *Lazarki*'s ritualization process.³⁸

³⁷ Domazetovski 1974; Álvarez-Pedrosa–Marinas 2023; Bólya 2021; Petkovski 2014.

³⁸ The authors extend their gratitude to the following individuals who contributed to the accomplishment of the fieldwork: Anna Mária Bólya, Elek Bartha, László Koppány Csáji, and Rodna Velichkovska. We also extend our gratitude to Valentina Filipovska and her family for their hospitality.

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A cset performs the ritual singing in one of the lowland houses. Source: Meryem Madili 2024.

Jose Antonio Lorenzo Tamayo – Meryem Madili



Willow branches are handpicked by the lazarki and offered to several chapels. Source: Meryem Madili 2024.

Anssi Halmesvirta

The Traditional Way of Thinking of Small Farmer Housewives in Finland

Abstract

The aim of this article is to throw light on the historical experiences and their memories of a housewife from a small farm in Upper Savo (*Yläsavo*) in Finland. Its motivation emanates from the fact that neither local, commissioned histories nor ethnographical studies have touched the orbit of their lives and their traditional, three-dimensional way of thought. The theoretical vantage-point applied here was put forward by Paul Ricoeur and further developed by Frank Ankersmit: memories of witnesses of historical experiences can tell more intimate and accurate narratives than documentary histories. As evidence, culled from interviews and diverse biographical and autobiographical material, they can complement the work of ethnographers who operate on the same field by recording past as lived life.

Keywords: small farming in Finland, housewife, memory, remembrance, historical experience, traditional way of thinking

Introduction

It is remarkable that commissioned histories of localities barely mention the social class of Finnish small farmers of the 1960s and 1970s, let alone the life-style and way of thought of housewives in such small farm families there. This article purports to correct this omission by analyzing the world of thought of one representative of the class. It is based on memories in narrative form collected in notebooks, diaries, letters, miscellaneous papers and interviews in as much as they count as evidence of historical experiences. The author's own impressionistic, autobiographical reminiscences intimately related to them as well as his reflections in the written material (notebooks) complement the lot.¹

¹ The housewife featuring in this article was its author's grandmother. They lived in the same house since 1956 after the author's mother and father divorced and moved away. The third person in the household was author's grandfather who died in 1960.



All the material is deposited in the author's un-catalogized archive collection in the archives of University of Jyväskylä, Finland.²

It has become almost a fashion among oral historians to analyze memory narratives born of historical experiences and even some philosophers are fascinated by their capacity of informing of past human experiences. For instance, French philosopher Paul Ricoeur emphasizes the role of an eyewitness or eavesdropper who can say emphatically: I was there.³ Nobody can refute such an experience which someone remembers so very well. There he/she has certain information about what happened or what was said and thought in the past which cannot be erased from his/her memory. Therefore, there is no reason to disparage – some scholarly circles still seem to do so – the significance of memories and remembrance as evidence based on personal historical experiences. It is fair to say that memories form narratives verified by autobiography, to the birth of which scholarly histories may stand as obstacles and hinder the accumulation of collective memory. Besides, when we remember something which has deeply touched us, we may have experienced the so called sublime historical experience or what Nietzsche called *Rausch*.⁴ Direct contact with the past opens a way to its own world and is one variation of ecstasy in experiencing the truth which is given to a man. Philosopher of history, Frank Ankersmit has couched this experience in this way:

“We stand face to face with [memorized] reality itself in an encounter with reality that is direct and immediate since it is no longer mediated by the categories we normally rely on for making sense of the world.”⁵

Thus, scholarly history is not self-satisfied or self-contained – it must trust memories and remembrance in general, be faithful and thankful to them. The source material of historical studies can support narratives based on memories but cannot very often oppose, nor refute it. Memories carrying historical experiences and traditional ways of thinking are quite resistant to any sudden changes in scholarly written historical narratives.

Leaning on these rather inchoate reflections, let us tackle the topic and concentrate on telling of one small farmer family from Upper Savo in Finland and

² The material was donated to the archives by the author in autumn 2020 under the auspices of the University Science Museum (Dir. Pirjo Vuorinen).

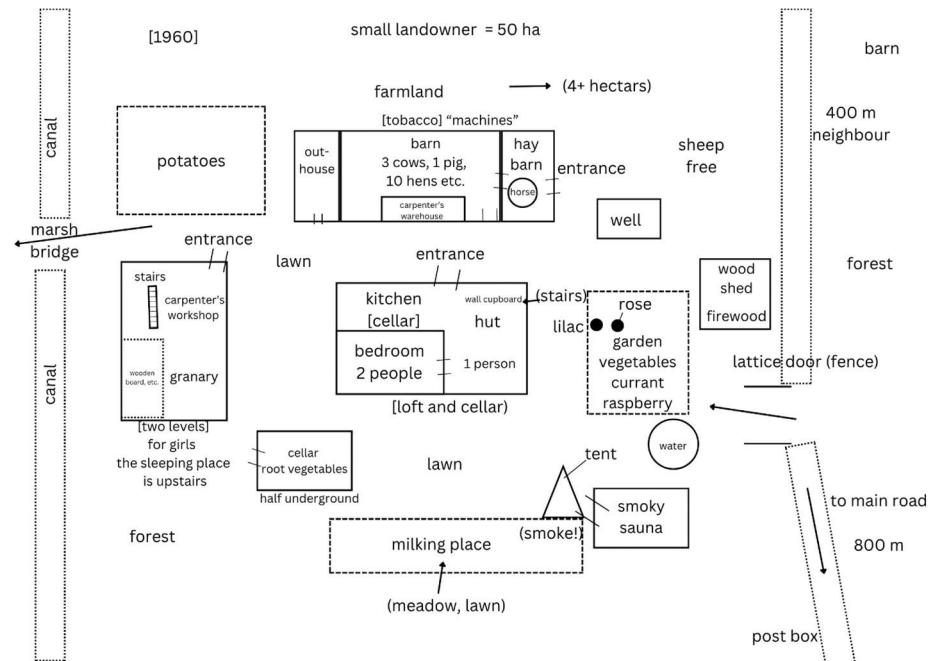
³ Ricoeur 2004: 163. Cf. Nora 1996: *passim*.

⁴ Halmesvirta 2019: *passim*. “Subliimi historiallinen kokemus”. Luentosarja Jyväskylän yliopiston historian ja etnologian laitoksella syksyllä 2019 (= lecture series on historical experience for postgraduate students).

⁵ Ankersmit 2005: q. p. 285; Hunyady 2014: 9.

The Traditional Way of Thinking of Small Farmer Housewives in Finland

the way of thinking of the housewife. The family can be regarded as quite representative in the district since quite a few such small farms were established there in the early 1920s and women lived in rather similar circumstances, milieu and mental atmosphere.⁶ The master of the house is a minor character here because the role of the housewife was quite prominent because she was very talkative, informative and more present mentally and physically in the house. This was the situation also because her husband was traumatized; he had suffered tuberculosis in the 1930s, served as a B-class man during the wars, not capable of fighting on the front but was commanded to make coffins for the killed soldiers. His wife called him “wretched” (*vairainen*) because he could not perform heavy work (e.g. forest work) in the late 1950s anymore and occasionally needed help from neighbours and friends.⁷



Pic. Nr. 1. Map of a small farm (based on the author's drawing).

As background information it should be mentioned that the farm was one of the about 160.000 small farms established by the so-called Lex Kallio in the

⁶ For the sake of comparison, I have interviewed a person (X1) from another such family.

⁷ Interview tape no. II.

beginning of the 1920s.⁸ Its total area was about 50 hectares, out of which forest and swamp c. 45 hectares and arable land about five (mostly rye, oats, potatoes and hay). In the fifties it had, due to a drastic structural change in Finnish agriculture, become unviable, unsustainable like many other farms in the district and when the house master died in 1960 in the smoke sauna under the eyes of the author of this representation, the housewife was left alone to take care of the farm. She managed a few years but had to sell the farm to the state because no one of the male children who had fled from the poor countryside to Helsinki wanted to continue farming in such a desperate situation. The bitterest pill to swallow for her was to give up the three milking cows and other house animals she loved.⁹ In these experiences she was not alone. The commissioned history of the parish laconically sums up the change of the times: “There was no returning to the past world [...] the agriculture based on small farming had reached its end”.¹⁰ This history has nothing to say about the small people who had to face the predicament.

Consequently, the housewife had to go on living irrespective of the dramatic structural change – she had to move to the center of the parish, and she became a servant to an orthodox vicar. What comes to her view of the world in the situation, it had in no way been affected by the messages of female agricultural consultants who had been propagating equality among women working in agriculture, nor had the social reforms directed to agricultural working classes touched her orbit. What was left was a silent, somewhat engulfed bitterness about lost countryside life – a peculiar form of freedom to mind one’s own household in itself – and suspicion of all such ‘higher forces’ which could not care less of small farmers’ fate.¹¹ This had not necessarily meant poverty and if there had been hard times during the wars and after in small farm households, it was not readily shown or confessed to outsiders.¹²

⁸ The locality is the parish of Kiuruvesi, Upper Savo, which had considerable small farmer population. In general, small farming was widely dispersed all over Savo, Karjala and Kainuu on the Eastern side of the cultural border of Finland. See e.g. Ojala–Nummela 2018: 17 and Figure 3.1.

⁹ Interview tape no. I.

¹⁰ Pohjonen 2020: 15.

¹¹ Interview tape II; Markkola 2019: *passim*.

¹² *Helsingin Sanomat* 6.5.2021.

Three dimensional world of belief

For the sake of clarity, the world of thought of the housewife has been divided in three dimensions. She cherished religious beliefs, inspired by a close society of believers called Laestadians, a sect of a very strict interpretation of the Bible's message but among small farmers softened by everyday common sense.¹³ In contradiction to sect's articles, she was also superstitious in certain matters. And finally – and this was something peculiar to the Upper Savo district small farmers – she was a so-called 'backwoods communist', not in any ideological or professed sense but in matters of local social ranking and economic scale.¹⁴ She knew very well some local big farmers who in certain ways still exploited the smaller ones. Her husband had been a 'comrade' watched by the local police and occasionally manhandled by the extreme right local Civil Guards. Siding with him, the housewife called big, well-to-do farmers "thick necks" (*harjasniska*), referring derogatively to their fat necks. In her eyes they looked like overfed pigs. They were so "rich" that they had modern machinery (tractors, harvesting equipment etc.) and even such luxury items as TV (year 1963).¹⁵ One cannot say that she hated them or was overly quarrelsome, but indignation and anger broke out in certain situations, for instance when she had to take part in potato planting on a large farm close by – a long-lived tradition in the village – and received only three liters of milk as a pay for the day's work. It was usual that all such 'communal' work was paid in kind only.¹⁶

On the other hand, there was a very vibrant tradition of neighborhood help (*talkoot*) which to a certain extent balanced the situation of services. Planting and harvesting were usually done in company, and the author of this article remembers especially one case when a neighbour's cowhouse was burning down there was a line of people carrying water from a fountain to save the animals.¹⁷

Housewife's suspicion and avoidance of contact and confrontation with the village 'officials' (*herrat*) was also conspicuous. The word 'official' itself also contained negative connotations – they were somehow despised because of their attitude of superiority and officiousness, but when the housewife had to go to the center of the village to take care of some official family matter, she had to lighten her attitude, humble herself somewhat. Because small farmers were always short of income and cash they had to apply for compensation for forest improvement, digging the ditches in the swamps and clearing the fields from the

¹³ On the sect's doctrines and influence, see Talonen 1997: *passim*.

¹⁴ Interview tapes III–IV.

¹⁵ Interview tape IV.

¹⁶ Notebooks from the years 1982–1983.

¹⁷ Notebook from the year 1983.

village council. Sometimes the ‘official’ paid, but more usually taxed extra income. There was this quite traditional attitude towards village and state authorities: it was useless to expect that they had some special social sense. Nevertheless, it was traditional that the big farmers helped the smaller ones in times of crisis – they did not want to see them disappear altogether. This was a well-known existential fact for the housewife, too.¹⁸

In national and municipal elections small farmers voted the far left, The Democratic League of Finnish People (DLFP) from the 1950s to the 1970s. It was thought that it was the party that could introduce such social and agricultural reforms which might help their lot. The reigning party in the village, the agrarian Centre Party was in trouble with the rising support ratings of it, but it ruined its support base in a scandal in which the parliamentary representative of DLFP spoiled his reputation. Consequently, no help from the ‘high politics’ to localities either and small farmers, including the ones in consideration here, were deeply disappointed. The housewife lost trust also in leftist politics.¹⁹

The religious sect in which the housewife was involved, ‘Old Laestadians’, was deep-rooted among small farmers’ world and the housewives of small farmers were traditionally the most fervent believers in its doctrines. For instance, among the ten commandments, the most dictating were these: ‘Do not steal.’ and ‘Do not lie.’. And the negative attitude towards superiors could be detected in the manner the village evangelical clergymen and vicar were counted in the same class as other ‘officials’ who were socially higher in the hierarchy, and their sermons were regarded as too high-flying and not as freely flowing as the ones of layman preachers who preached in tightly knit, separate congregations. Speaking in the language of commoners was essential in such situations. The service drastically differentiated from the ‘normal’ church service: the atmosphere was high-spirited. The climax was often ecstatic, and people were in trance for a moment, kneeling or lying down in front of the preacher and confessing their sinful deeds aloud. The preacher soon declared all sins pardoned, laying his hands on the foreheads of the sinners who were then relieved. When the ‘purifying’ catharsis process was over, the sisters in faith went for a cup of coffee to somebody’s house.²⁰ Happy end. These devotional gatherings are still held in the village.

Spirituality was kept up at home by 8 o’clock evening prayers heard from the radio. The ten minutes broadcast ended with an evangelic hymn. The radio was high on the wall next to the print showing Jesus holding a lamb in his lap.

¹⁸ Interview tape no. V.

¹⁹ Interview tape no. VI.

²⁰ Notebooks from the years 1974–1975.

If Hungarians used to have a picture of Petőfi in their family albums reminding them of revolutionary spirit and victimhood, our housewife had this human Jesus reminding her of kindness needful in normal relations with other people and animals. When the housewife went to bed, she and the author of this article sang together a song ending with a prayer asking that if “we won’t wake up in the morning, please, take us to the Heaven”.²¹

What we call superstition was connected in the village to a famous folk healer and clairvoyant Anna-Mari. Our housewife visited her cottage at least twice, once buying extract from the berries of bird berry tree for her tormenting headache.²² The second visit was prompted by a dramatic incident home: her two sons were on a summer holiday and having had some drinks they started a fight, and the other son (my uncle) drew a pistol from his pocket. The housewife grabbed it and hurried with it to the forest and hid it under a tree-stump. Ten years later, when she had to start removal to the village center, for some reason she wanted to find it. She could not remember where she had hidden it, and she consulted Anna-Mari who gave instructions where it was. After some searching, the pistol was not found but it was not Anna-Mari’s fault, housewife thought she had not followed the instructions properly.²³

The workload of the small farm housewives was quite formidable. She had to do all the kitchen and other household work plus minding the animals (three milking cows, calves, one pig, cowhouse cat, rabbits, sheep in the summertime) and belongings in the cowhouse. In between of cooking, baking, cleaning, washing, spinning and knitting she also had to take part in seasonal harvesting, potato planting and picking and haymaking, in particular. Then there was the kitchen garden, flowers (roses and lilac in particular) and all sorts of vegetables. As one historian of the Finnish welfare-state concludes, women’s agricultural work was a benchmark of their strength, although the masters of the house did not always recognize it.²⁴ In order to acquire something extra to the table, our housewife set illegal traps in the forest to catch birds and hares – once her jealous neighbour broke the traps and she took revenge: when the neighbour’s pig wandered to her plot, she hit it in the head with an axe.²⁵

It is difficult to tell what kind of sense of humour our housewife had. One could not hear jokes and laughing loud was a rare expression of moods. Joy and occasional laughing could burst out, for instance, when a child did something funny or asked funny questions. The same might happen if some visiting

²¹ Interview tape no. VI; the wording from the notebook of the year 1975.

²² In a chemical test at the Kuopio University hospital it was analyzed poisonous.

²³ Interview tape no. VII.

²⁴ Markkola 2019: 180.

²⁵ Interview tape no. VIII.

neighbour made an especially entertaining comment on some odd phenomenon or ridiculous way of behaving or thinking. Our housewife could shortly join a hilarious company enjoying malicious pleasures.²⁶ The Laestadians thought that in front of God's eyes one should not be overjoyed but there were situations in which self-control could fail.

Her husband, who had built the house in the early 1920s with some friends and neighbours, minded the needs of the horse, ploughed, sowed and harvested, hauled hay and corn to sheds, felled, chopped and transported firewood, kept the house and other buildings in good condition, and made all the furniture also for sale – he was a joiner by profession. This all he could do when he still was in healthy condition. And of course, he was responsible of most of the official matters concerning the house economy in general – he was an atheist and hardline communist but did not mind his wife's religious beliefs and opinions. In the 1950s he had become quite a solitary person mainly because of his dismal historical experiences. One can retrospectively say that the relations between the housewife and her husband was most of the time unproblematic, sympathetic, occasionally caring (they had five children) so long as the husband could perform his part in the housekeeping.²⁷

One could enumerate many other tasks husband and wife performed but, most of the people from the countryside know most of them by heart already. What comes to working morality, it was uncompromising based on perseverance, and the result of work was mostly of good quality and durable – waste was an unknown thing. The small farmer mentality did not allow laziness, carelessness and negligence and the property in the house was well-kept, housewife was frugal, honest and modest and she was proud and had self-respect – she did not want outsiders to intervene into her daily routines. There were a couple of less self-disciplined households in the village, in one of them the master of the house was squandering money to alcohol and playing cards, and it harmed the house economy, family relations and caused some concern in the village in general.²⁸

What were the fearful things in the housewife's life? The worst was not the fear of losing livelihood, although it was always a lurking behind the corner (e.g. if the animals became ill), but fear of any accident which might happen to herself or to the members of the family. It would cause grief and harmfully stop the normal running of the household. The so called 'guardian angel' for children was needful at least as a symbolic care. Once, during a solar eclipse when birds stopped chirping, the housewife was a bit worried but knew that it

²⁶ Interview tape no. IX.

²⁷ Notebooks from the years 1981–1982.

²⁸ Interview tapes VIII-IX; Notebooks from the years 1983–1984.

would not last long. She had bad memories from the wartime (esp. the Continuation War 1941–1944) when the Soviet air-raid bombed the Iisalmi railway station (c. 30 kms away from the house) causing great damage and loss of seven family members who had worked at the railways. Even in the early sixties the housewife pulled the wartime ‘darkening curtains’ down every evening. If this ‘tradition’ showed a symptom of trauma or was just a habit, the notebooks of the author do not tell.²⁹

The housewife’s concept of nature was, naturally, connected to the lesson of her faith concerning creation. She regarded all living beings as created by God (“*Jumalan luomia kaikki*”), and she thought that creation had had a good purpose which human beings must realize and exercise. This meant that she treated all animals with tenderness and care, and she became angry if somebody spanked children or was violent in other ways – one could threat rascals with harsh disciplinary measures but not put them into action as men sometimes used to do. What came to adult people, her attitude depended on their behaviour. She could easily reprimand people who did something wrong under her eyes and thank people who did a good service and said a nice word.³⁰

For her children housewife had envisioned two alternative careers in life: either one should go to school, study and try to rise above the previous generation, for instance to become a teacher, or go to work as soon as possible (her daughter was fifteen when she left to become a shop assistant) and earn a living.³¹ As is quite well-known, the tradition that children are encouraged, even pressed to leave home as early as possible to pursue independent living is still living in Finland. Note: In the 1960s and 1970s the problems of youth alienation and dropping out were quite unknown.³²

For the author of this representation housewife had chosen the first alternative. She had a box in the attic which contained the Bible, *Everyman’s History of the World* (*Jokamiehen maailmanhistoria*, 1948) and a compendium of knowledge (*Pikkujätiläinen*, 1945). With the aid of these books and the local newspaper, she taught the author to read before he had to go to school in the center of the village in 1963. As a result of reading the Bible together with her the author became somehow religious, but he cannot remember in what sense. It was as if some inexplicable, momentary miracle had happened.³³

²⁹ Notebooks from the years 1960–1963.

³⁰ Notebook from the year 1975.

³¹ Interview tapes VIII–IX; Notes of XI’s interview.

³² XI’s conversations with teachers involved with youth education. Notes of XI’s interview.

³³ Notebook from the year 1985.

Let us return to moral issues: the so-called small virtues were being practiced: friendliness, gentleness, helpfulness, humility and human understanding in general were as if inborn moral qualities. It deserves mentioning that the housewife's gentleness was directed also towards the wandering *roma* (*mustalaiset*) people. When they arrived at the door, she was ready to barter with them. The *roma* asked bread and offered beautiful scarves and necklaces in exchange. This happened usually just before Christmas.³⁴

One prominent obligation was modesty which could be seen from the outside: showiness was naturally excluded but it was also improper in a household which had to make ends meet. All representation was shunned, even criticized and disapproved, and if someone tried to be better or superior to the others in some special, extraordinary way, he/she made him/herself a laughingstock. Contention with little was deep-rooted, they would manifest as everyday simpliciness in attire, food and almost everything. The days of feast Christmas, Mid-summer, harvest time) and visits to relatives were exceptions to this rule. Then everyone had to put on his or her best, the so-called Sunday clothes (*pyhävaatteet*). Our housewife changed her cowhouse scarf from a colourful one to a black one when she went to the church, to the funeral or the Laestadian congregation's devotional meetings.³⁵

Finally, one intriguing detail which highlighted the housewife's modesty should be picked up. It also testifies to the firmness of her identity and steadfastness. From a photograph, taken on the Mid-Summer Night's eve, in which one can see her sitting outdoors with her husband, she has cut her head off with scissors. Obviously, the occasion was repulsive to her from the outset. She considered herself as an outsider, underprivileged, a position she seemingly exaggerated. And anyway, she did not like being gaped at even in photographs. This attitude she took with her to the grave.³⁶

The housewife was born in 1909, and she died in 1990. Quite a few traditions died out with her. Until then quite a few small farms had disappeared from the Upper Savo's map which meant considerable loss to local collective memory, too. It remains to the ethnologists and historians to dig up clues and traces of it.

By way of conclusion, one may say that this article was rather impressionistic – quite in the sense hinted at by Ankersmit, since it was not a representation of documentary history.³⁷ Memories stood on the top of the other,

³⁴ Notebook from the year 1985.

³⁵ Interview tapes no. VI–VII; Notebooks from the years 1975–1977.

³⁶ Notebooks from the years 1975–1977.

³⁷ Cf. Ankersmit 2001: 71.

completed each other and overlapped. The entire remembrance vision was neither harmonic, clear-cut nor nearly complete. In such memory-studies complemented with autobiographical reflections there lurks the danger of either idealization or rationalization of memories. In this case ‘the being there’, i.e. being a witness of the historical experiences and an eavesdropper of past expressions of thoughts safeguards against them to a great extent, although misinterpretation cannot be entirely excluded.

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István Csont

The Definition of the Museum at the Intersection of Tradition and the Digital World

Abstract

This study explores the evolving definition and role of museums in the digital age, focusing on the intersection of tradition and technological innovation. It illustrates the challenges of reaching a universally accepted concept by highlighting the historical development of the International Council of Museums' (ICOM) definitions. The paper emphasizes that museums have always played a central role in preserving cultural heritage and facilitating education, but their tasks and methods have changed significantly over time. The 21st century has brought new expectations, including digital accessibility, audience engagement, and lifelong learning. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital transformation, prompting museums to expand their online presence and educational offerings. The research discusses how virtual exhibitions, digital databases, and interactive technologies can enhance the relevance and outreach of museums. It also outlines the importance of international and national strategies in supporting digitisation efforts and cultural inclusion. Today, museums must adapt to societal needs while maintaining their core functions of preservation, education, and authenticity. The paper concludes that redefining museums requires balancing traditional knowledge mediation with modern, interactive approaches. Ultimately, museums are cultural hubs whose sustainability depends on their ability to innovate and connect with diverse audiences.

Keywords: museum definition; digital transformation; digitisation of cultural heritage; digital museum strategies

If we were to search for the precise definition of a museum, we would find, after much research, that there is no universally accepted, well-defined concept,¹ therefore, to understand what museums can offer, it is necessary to examine their precise role and purpose, focusing on their basic tasks and functions in the light

¹ Soares 2020a: 16–32.



of the impacts created by a constantly evolving world.² According to the current (2022) definition of the *International Council of Museums (ICOM)*,

“[a] museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing.”³

The very first definition drawn up by *ICOM* was created in 1946, with the aim of identifying the experts who could become members of the international museum organisation. This definition has been amended substantially on two occasions (1951, 1961) and a version closest to the current definition was adopted at the 1974 Copenhagen Assembly - and has assumed its current form after four minor amendments (1989, 1995, 2001, 2007).⁴ In 2017, *ICOM* set up a committee (*Museum Definition, Prospects and Potentials, MDPP*) to keep the concept under constant review, which put to a vote at the 2019 *Kyoto* conference the new draft definitions that were discussed in a series of conferences around the world between 2017 and 2019, co-organised by the *International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM)*.⁵ The difficulty of defining the concept of a museum is illustrated by the fact that the agenda for conceptualisation contained no fewer than 269 definitions.⁶ Presumably, this was one of the reasons why no decision was reached, but more importantly, the presented draft was considered too ideological, abstract and unacceptable to the members. The vision-based definition draft proposed by the committee led by *Jette Sandhal* failed to achieve consensus and was therefore not adopted.⁷

It is noticeable that between 1946 and 2007, the concept of a museum was modified eight times, and even through a committee established in 2017 and numerous professional discussions at conferences around the world, it was not possible to renew the concept in 2019. It seemed that continuous social influences and changing demands no longer allowed for the definition to evolve

² Pop–Borza 2016: 398–405.

³ [Museum Definition] 2022; Sári 2022.

⁴ Mairesse 2019: 152–159.

⁵ Soares 2020b.

⁶ Mairesse 2020: 33–40.

⁷ Sári 2023.

further,⁸ and so the creation of a new museum definition was postponed.⁹ However, in 2022, at the *ICOM General Assembly in Prague*, the current definition was adopted, which has come a long way since the unsuccessful *Kyoto Assembly*.¹⁰

Museums in the cultural system

According to the current law on museums, a museum is an institution that cares for, collects, registers, preserves, restores, processes, exhibits and otherwise displays scientifically organised collections of cultural property.¹¹ It promotes research and the understanding of natural, societal, artistic, cultural and scientific contexts. The name “museum” may only be used by a museological institution that has a legal authorisation to operate as a museum,¹² however, in practice, there are also voluntarily established or alternative institutions.¹³ The notions of museum and exhibition are often confused, even though the exhibition is essentially the museum’s function as a transmitter of knowledge. “Museum exhibitions present a group of artefacts and the objects that represent them as the primary means of communication and transmission of information.”¹⁴ Museums have been of particular importance in addressing the social, cultural and moral problems of society since the beginning of the 19th century. Their functions have changed in different historical periods, but museums are in one sense constant: they represent an unquestionable value. They represent, preserve and create value.

The development of European museum collections has historically developed in a variety of patterns. At the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, it was common for them to be created at the initiative of rulers or the state, or through private donations. At the same time, in the second half of the 19th century, museums were also founded by scientific associations, civic societies or local communities, especially in the Central European region.¹⁵

⁸ Salguero 2020.

⁹ Berényi 2020: 11–31.

¹⁰ ICOM Define 2022.

¹¹ [1997. évi CXL. törvény] 1997.

¹² Kálnoki-Gyöngyössy 2020.

¹³ Gréczi (eds.) 2024.

¹⁴ Vasáros 2010.

¹⁵ Bodó 2016.

“The national and cultural self-representation mediated by museums was of particular importance in the 19th century in all regions where national identity and state control were problematic in some way.”¹⁶

In Hungary, this meant resistance against the Habsburgs on the one hand, and against the awakening of the ethnic consciousness of the different groups on the other, emphasising the role and importance of Hungarian culture.¹⁷ Their earliest and primary task was the collection and preservation of objects of value. The requirement for museums to be open to the public and the recognition of their educational function emerged from the Age of Enlightenment. This put an end to the representative character of the “private collections” of the Middle Ages, which were intended to indicate the greatness and influence of the owner. In the 19th century, the museum was intended both to raise the cultural standards of the working class and contribute to the social inclusion of women, because participation in cafés, academies and societies was at the time the privilege of men only.¹⁸

The world’s museums play an important educational and training role for children, school groups, adults and the elderly alike. They provide learning opportunities, encourage participation and promote non-verbal and informal learning. They provide active recreation while offering entertainment. Today’s modern museums, recognising the importance of active participation, not only encourage visitors to view the collection, but increasingly organise activities to involve visitors in the exhibition.¹⁹

“Until museums are set in stone, they must undergo some changes. Each generation will give them new tasks.”²⁰ as quoted by *Zsuzsa Koltai*. Indeed, the role of museums has changed considerably over time. In the literature, museums are referred to as the custodians and enhancers of collections, whose role is to protect, scientifically process and publish the collections. Its obligation is to make the collection accessible through permanent and temporary exhibitions. Its tasks include the provision of cultural and educational programmes and publications, the digitisation of cultural assets and the support of research activities.²¹

¹⁶ Koltai 2011: 16.

¹⁷ Koltai 2011: 16–17.

¹⁸ Koltai 2011: 19.

¹⁹ Simon 2003: 11–18.

²⁰ Koltai 2011: 41.

²¹ Benedek 2002: 374.

The Definition of the Museum at the Intersection of Tradition...

In the 20th century, they had already become a centre for exhibitions and entered the cultural market as well. Nowadays, collections must be made understandable and accessible to all. Display cases are no longer enough, we need to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the digital world to bring the world of museums closer to younger generations.²² By the 21st century, new functions have been added to the role of museums. Besides collecting and conserving, transmission has become a priority.

“In today’s globalising world, museums play a role in building and animating local communities, preserving local traditions and strengthening local identity. There is a tendency for museums to redefine their role and take an active part in the organisation of local communities.”²³

Museums also have a social function, for example their role in lifelong learning is a strategic element of cultural policy. If museums want to be involved in the lifelong learning process, they have to find ways to connect to the *World Wide Web*, make their exhibitions attractive through virtual programmes, and, in essence, museums needed to rethink the function and possibilities of museum education.²⁴

However, it is important to stress that the social role of the museum is not limited to supporting lifelong learning. Museums also play a key role in shaping social memory and in responding to historical traumas such as wars, repression or ethnic persecution. In addition, there is a growing focus on micro-historical approaches that allow the representation of minorities, as well as marginalised or individual life stories. Museums can also support outreach to disadvantaged groups through their various programmes. All these features are not only offered in digital spaces, but also available within the physical exhibition spaces, community events and live guided tours.²⁵

The situation, operation and relationships of museums are constantly changing. It is in the interest of the administration to ensure the survival of the organisation by making museums attractive to everyone, from young children to school age groups and the elderly, through a managerial approach, using the opportunities offered by the digital world, with interactive methods and the help of museum professionals.²⁶ Museum funding is becoming more and more difficult, while the number of visitors is decreasing due to changes in cultural patterns of

²² Bertacchini–Morando 2011: 2–14.

²³ Koltai 2011: 25.

²⁴ Fejős 2003: 24–25.

²⁵ Frazon 2018.

²⁶ Benedek 2002: 374.

consumption and the way people spend their leisure time. It is its interest and task to address all age groups, as it is a place and workshop for lifelong education, training and self-education.²⁷ The aim of this paradigm shift is to make museums more active in the life of the audience, making formal and informal learning an integral part of both community development and self-cultivation.²⁸

Cultural promotion activities of museums

The role of museums as cultural mediators has changed significantly in recent decades. One only has to think of the emergence of museum andragogy and museum gerontology, which is a clear opening towards adults and the elderly. The informal learning of adults in museums, however, requires a combination of entertainment and education. Another big change is digitalisation. In fact, the virtual museum service provides a more effective, user-friendly visit for the interested public. And the digitisation of collections that were hitherto inaccessible to the general public has opened up new opportunities for cultural outreach.

“Museum collections, whether physical or virtual, build on the knowledge of museum professionals, partly with the involvement of partner institutions, to ensure the fulfilment of the mission of cultural promotion by presenting the values of cultural heritage recognised and accepted by society.”²⁹

The current question of cultural mediation in museums is whether to maintain the classical communication of knowledge or to encourage interaction and the acquisition of new knowledge. But to be successful in the cultural market, institutions need to adapt to the needs of visitors and become more open. In her study, *Zsuzsa Koltai* suggests taking into account the types of learners in the case of an exhibition or museum andragogy programme. Active learners do not respond well to frontal presentation and long scientific explanations, therefore, it is important for them that information is delivered in a variety of forms, and that it is short and to the point. Reflective learners base their acquisition of knowledge on independent exploration, and sensory mediation methods are particularly effective in their case. The theoretical type of museum-goers are attracted by theoretical models and contexts, they are the ones who are keenly

²⁷ Gombos 2011.

²⁸ Arinze 1999.

²⁹ Szabó 2019.

interested in longer lectures by experts, while the pragmatic type are looking for practical knowledge, and prefer guided tours.³⁰

In conclusion, it can be said that museums are a fundamental institution of culture, an indispensable element of the cultural process, and their basic task is to coordinate the processes related to information (production, processing, retrieval, reproduction). Its historical evolution is an integral part of human activity, social movement and progress, going back as far as the emergence of the information society.

Museums in the world of zeros and ones

Protecting the cultural values of our world, irrespective of nationality, race or religion, is a fundamental task for all societies across the ages.³¹ The institutionalisation of collecting, processing, organising and publishing these heritages dates back to antiquity. As the various forms of writing developed, humanity began to record its knowledge, which, either consciously or unconsciously, it organised and preserved. The ancient *Museion of Alexandria* was a scientific workshop created exclusively for the practice of scientific, intellectual work and the transmission of intellectual values. The period was characterised by a scarcity of written information, which was constantly copied, analysed and translated. Although the *Museion*'s collections were intended to be exhaustive, this was not possible because the development of the period did not yet allow it to overcome neither space nor time.³²

With the eventual demise of the *Museion*, the ideals of the universal cultural collection also vanished³³ and it took almost 1300 years for a revolutionary technology be able to overcome time in the pursuit of creating cultural value. Writing was replaced by printing, the time to spread and produce information was shortened, books could be produced quickly and cheaply. *The Gutenberg Galaxy* brought humanity closer to beating time, book production took less time, the multiplication process was accelerated, and knowledge now reached a wider range of society.³⁴

Then it took nearly 500 years to go beyond time to conquer space as well. With the advent of the digital revolution, personal computers and the internet, every physical object can now be described by a series of zeros and ones. Our

³⁰ Kolai 2011: 67.

³¹ [Magyarország Alaptörvénye – Nemzeti hitvallás] 2021.

³² Philips 2010: 1–40.

³³ Watts 2008: 150.

³⁴ Géza 2005: 5–11.

information and cultural assets are stored using cloud-based technology, accessible anywhere and anytime at the touch of a button, and can be modified and edited in real time by multiple users. The rapid production and sharing of content without boundaries has led to an exponential growth of information on a daily basis, which, even today, urges us to solve the problem of authentication.³⁵ It is clear that collecting and organising our cultural heritage has been an institutionalised core task of humanity since antiquity, but the means by which we do this has varied from era to era. Now, in an institutionalised form, museums and libraries have the opportunity to adapt cultural transmission – as a cross-generational responsibility – to the digital age, with the help of which they can realise the vision of the *Museion*, i.e. the systematic collection and authentic transmission of the world's cultural treasures.

However, the question arises as to where museums fit into this process and how quickly are they expected to respond to technological developments. With the rise of the internet, almost all information – the world's accumulated knowledge and cultural values – has become available and digestible to anyone, leading to the emergence of the so-called knowledge society. However, there is an inverse relationship between the degree of publicity of the process and the credibility of the knowledge available,³⁶ which can only be managed in an institutionalised way, and this is where a competition between society, cultural institutions and economic enterprises has now clearly emerged. Museums were not the ones who took the first steps, and they are not the fastest on this path. Social collaboration services such as *Wikipedia* or large companies such as *Google* have seized this opportunity. The former endeavours to build a universal repository of knowledge,³⁷ while the latter – without exaggeration – is working relentlessly to digitise the intellectual³⁸ and physical cultural treasures³⁹ of the world. However, given its institutionalised form and its core tasks, it is crucial that museums, as sources of authenticity, remain in competition and be active players in the digitisation of culture.

What tools do museums have to achieve this? If we look at museum tasks in the traditional sense, such as collecting, processing, disseminating or transmitting, we now need to adapt them to the possibilities of the digital world. The process of collecting, for example, is no longer necessarily something we have to imagine through personal research and outreach. Through the *World Wide Web*, the museum can actively search and bid for cultural treasures from

³⁵ Clark 2012: 79–98.

³⁶ Langenderfer-Kopp 2004: 17–30.

³⁷ Woss 2005: 1–12.

³⁸ [Google books] n.d.

³⁹ [Google Arts&Culture] n.d.

all over the world, according to the scope of its collections. In terms of preservation, it not only creates digital inventories of its cultural treasures, but also makes them searchable online, together with their related information, in databases in order to maintain the continuity of cultural transmission. To support scientific research, its physical objects are reconstructed in digitised form, reproduced and then, in collaboration with other museums, made available in a standardised format. In order to perform its scientific communication and pedagogical tasks, it can create virtual exhibitions in which objects will be at the centre, but they will no longer be trapped in the physical rules of our world. By making information available in an easy and systematic way, we increase the commitment of potential users to the institution by attracting the interest of the virtual visitor, so that they might later become personally involved with the museum.⁴⁰

The use of digital tools in museums was particularly emphasised during the *COVID-19* pandemic. During the period of the pandemic, museums all over the world, including Hungary, were forced to close for long months, and had to move their activities to the virtual space instead of their physical presence. This has given a significant role to digital content development, in the form of online exhibitions, virtual tours and educational programmes. The pandemic created not only an exigency, but also an opportunity for museums to rethink their audience engagement strategy and to strengthen their presence in the field of digital culture distribution. A good example of this is *Marianna Berényi*'s book entitled *Falak nélküli maradt múzeum* [Museum Without Walls], which discusses in detail the lessons of the *COVID* period.⁴¹

Environment for digital strategies

It is evident that museums have an enormous role and responsibility in making our cultural heritage widely accessible to all in an authentic form. With the spread and continuous development of digital technologies, and with the help of the internet, it can perform these core tasks in a new format. However, for this to be effective, it needs to be managed in a coherent way along pre-defined strategies at both national and international level. These principles lay down the processes to ensure, among other things, the protection of cultural objects that exist physically, as in the case of digitally processed objects, the

⁴⁰ Poole 2013: 13–15.

⁴¹ Berényi 2025.

originals can be locked away for permanent preservation. The recommendations also cover the storage and dissemination of digital content, which can be organised and linked into an online database so that digitised contents can be accessed anywhere, anytime, and by anyone. The information published can be edited and possibly modified for users who have difficulties in processing the various types of information.⁴²

NEMO (Network of European Museum Organisations) also plays a key role in coordinating international strategies and digitisation programmes. The organisation addresses the issue of digital transformation in a dedicated working group, publishes recommendations and supports museums in adapting digital tools in order to promote visitor access, inclusivity and innovation.⁴³

Regarding cultural institutions, a number of international recommendations have been drafted that aim to facilitate the coordination of digitisation programmes. On 4 April 2001 in Sweden, the representatives of the Member States of the European Union defined the *Lund Principles*, in which the basic concepts were declared that would allow the various digitisation programmes to be easily and uniformly adapted. The *Lund Principles* state that the cultural treasures of Europe represent unique and important public assets that must be digitised for global accessibility, education and transmission. The underlying principle is that digitisation programmes should target cultural treasures such as museum artefacts, archaeological finds, historical documents, maps or audiovisual material. To ensure the systemic functioning of these processes, recommendations have been made to establish a common forum within the framework of which a continuous exchange of experience could take place. They are urging the creation of common databases through which digital content can be accessed by the public in a standardised format. The *Lund Action Plan*, based on the principles, defined the cooperation of the *European Commission* with the Member States, within which the EC has the declared task of monitoring the work processes and collecting data on an ongoing basis in order to review and refine the principles set out.⁴⁴ To implement the principles, a committee called the *National Representative Group (NRG)* was set up, in which experts from the Member States reviewed the effective functioning of the programme on a six-monthly cycle. Hungary joined the work of the Committee in 2003.⁴⁵

In 2002, the *Minerva Project (Ministerial Network for Valorising Activities in Digitisation)* was launched under the leadership of Italy, initially involving seven

⁴² Csont 2018: 56–74.

⁴³ Website of [NEMO Working Group Digital Transformation] n.d.

⁴⁴ Ross 2004: 88–98.

⁴⁵ [5th meeting of the National Representatives Group (NRG)] 2003.

Member States.⁴⁶ In order to extend the programme to the newly acceded Member States, the *Minerva Plus* programme was established in 2004, in which Hungary is represented by the *National Széchényi Library*. The main objective of the *Minerva Project* is to coordinate the different workflows associated with the digitisation of cultural assets and to ensure that they are implemented coherently at European level. In order to continuously monitor the digitisation workflow and to exchange experiences between Member States, various working groups have been set up.⁴⁷

In 2008, the *Europeana (European Digital Library)* project was launched, the main aim of which is to digitally collect and publish the cultural treasures of the European Union's Member States. It is maintained by the *European Digital Library Foundation*, an umbrella organisation that brings together the main European cultural associations, libraries, archives and museums. It currently makes available more than 58 million pieces of digital content, including books, maps, photographs and paintings.⁴⁸

The *Digital Agenda for Europe* was launched in 2010 and it is one of the seven flagship initiatives of the *Europe 2020* strategy adopted by the *European Commission*. It aims to create a unified digital market based on the coordinated operation of different ICT tools and the widespread availability of high-speed internet, which will create sustainable social and economic benefits.⁴⁹ A key element of the *Digital Agenda* is the digitisation of European cultural assets, and the storage and distribution of digitised content. According to its definition, cultural assets include printed material, maps, sound recordings, monuments and archaeological sites. The main strategic issues addressed in its recommendations include the mission of *Europeana*, the digitisation of copyrighted objects, and the preservation of digitised content.⁵⁰

The strategic environment for digitisation processes has not only been developed at international level, but sectoral recommendations have also been established at national level. The *National Information Communication Strategy of Hungary* has been developed along the lines of the actions set out in the *Digital Agenda for Europe*.⁵¹ The strategy declares that the digital state is responsible for providing e-services that improve the quality of life of society as a whole. And

⁴⁶ [Minerva Project] 2011.

⁴⁷ Szalóki 2005: 6–11.

⁴⁸ [The Europeana platform] 2023.

⁴⁹ Európai digitális menetrend / Európai Bizottság 2010.

⁵⁰ [A Bizottság ajánlása...] 2011: 283/39–45.

⁵¹ [Nemzeti Infokommunikációs Stratégia 2014–2020.]

to ensure the accessibility of digital services, it will create a broad-based education and acquisition of digital competences.⁵²

Various digital collection portals are important elements of the domestic digital public collection environment, which ensure the wide dissemination of digitised content of Hungarian museums and collections. The *MuseuMap*⁵³ website plays a prominent role in this, serving as a common search interface for Hungarian museum databases, as does the *Hunaricana*,⁵⁴ which makes digitised documents of public collections (archives, libraries, museums) available to anyone. These portals contribute to the democratisation of cultural heritage and support the social and educational use of the contents of public collections.

The *Digital Success Programme* was launched at the end of 2015, with the main mission statement being that every citizen in Hungary should be a beneficiary of digitalisation. For example, the *Digital Education Strategy of Hungary*⁵⁵ was developed within the framework of the programme, which was also designed along the European digitalisation guidelines. One of the priorities of the programme, which has already been implemented, was the reduction of VAT on internet usage from 27% to 5%, in order to promote the widespread use of the internet. After making the internet widely available, the programme was expanded in 2017 to help new areas adapt to the digital economy. Within the framework of the *Digital Success Programme 2.0*, additional programmes to support digitisation processes have been more broadly conceived. One element of the extended programme is the digitisation of public collections and the use of digitised content for educational purposes.

Recommendations for the digitisation of public collections are set out in the *Digitisation Strategy of Public Collections*, which has the primary objective of maximising the use of public collections by society and the economy, which must be implemented not as individual developments but as part of an integrated institutional framework. The strategy identifies as a key priority that our systematically collected digitised national cultural treasures should be integrated into the international cultural circulation through the provision of data to *Europeana*.⁵⁶

With the *Digitisation Strategy of Public Collections*, a comprehensive national document has been created, which, alongside existing national and international digitisation efforts, simultaneously analyses and evaluates digital services. The strategy provides a detailed description of digitisation programmes in

⁵² [Magyarország Digitális Oktatási Stratégiája] 2016.

⁵³ Official website of [MuseuMap] n.d.

⁵⁴ Official website of [Hunaricana] n.d.

⁵⁵ [Magyarország Digitális Oktatási Stratégiája] 2016.

⁵⁶ [A Digitális Jólét Program 2.0] 2017.

Hungary, their legislative background and, after analyses, sets out comprehensive recommendations. Its overarching objective is to provide broad accessibility to public collections, openly publish credible knowledge and also to channel it into educational processes, in order to improve the quality of digital literacy across the whole of society.⁵⁷

The practical implementation and methodological support of museum digitisation efforts at the national level is carried out by the *Museum Education and Methodology Centre (MOKK) of the Hungarian Open Air Museum*,⁵⁸ which assists museum professionals in the application of digital content for educational and public education purposes through training courses, publications and case studies. Several of their publications illustrate well the potential of digital tools for teaching and interpretation in Hungarian museum practice.⁵⁹

In addition, the *National Museum Methodology and Information Centre (OMMIK)* plays a prominent role in the coordination of museum IT and content development, supporting the digital transformation of public collections with professional guidelines, infrastructure development and the dissemination of best practices at national level.⁶⁰

Conclusion

Museums curate and exhibit scientifically organised collections of cultural heritage and support a wide range of research into cultural and scientific interconnections. In recent decades, the role of museums as cultural mediators has undergone significant changes. Digitisation has brought about a sea of change, digital content-enabled services provide a user-friendly experience and the digitisation of previously inaccessible collections opens up new opportunities for cultural outreach. The spread of the Internet has made the cultural heritage of the world accessible to all, but public access and the authenticity of the knowledge available require a careful balance, meaning that museums must remain competitive and actively involved in the transmission of culture through new media. The current question is therefore whether the cultural mediation of museums should remain within the classical communication of knowledge, or whether it should encourage interaction with visitors in a new medium and through new channels, adapting to their needs.

⁵⁷ [Közgyűjteményi Digitalizálási Stratégia (2017–2025)] n.d.

⁵⁸ Official website of [MOKK] n.d.

⁵⁹ Ruttkay–German (eds.) 2017; Pacsika (ed.) 2020.

⁶⁰ Official website of the [OMMIK] n.d.

It is evident that the definition of museums is a challenging task for the sector. As we can see, the concept cannot be created without an understanding of the responsibilities of museums and the ever-changing technological possibilities and needs of society. Perhaps it is this changing environment that does not allow for a precise definition.

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Utilizing ArchivesSpace for Data Archiving

A Case Study of the Digital Archive for Ethnological and Anthropological Resources at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present and promote the positive experiences of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology in utilizing *ArchivesSpace* – an open-source web-based database management application that facilitates access, description, and arrangement of processed materials, including analog, hybrid, and newly created digital content. These materials are effectively represented through a public user interface and can be used across the domains of library, archival, and museum work. By focusing on the implementation and use of *ArchivesSpace* within the institute, this study underscores its potential as a sustainable solution for heritage institutions that seek to manage, preserve, and present their cultural resources in an efficient and accessible manner. The paper highlights the software's advantages, such as its open-source nature, adaptability, and capacity to handle various forms of materials, emphasizing its contribution to enhancing the visibility of cultural heritage and improving its accessibility for diverse audiences. Furthermore, this research reflects on the benefits of using *ArchivesSpace* in contexts that face financial and infrastructural limitations, illustrating how it can empower institutions with limited resources to digitize and preserve their collections while ensuring they remain publicly accessible. The paper concludes by encouraging other institutions, especially those in countries with emerging digital preservation strategies, to explore the potential of *ArchivesSpace* to support their archival and cultural heritage management needs.

Keywords: ArchivesSpace, digital cultural heritage, archiving, Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, North Macedonia

Introduction

The digitisation of cultural heritage has emerged as a transformative strategy in the fields of heritage preservation, documentation, and public engagement. As the fragility of tangible and intangible cultural resources becomes increasingly evident – due to natural degradation, political instability, climate change,



and technological obsolescence – institutions around the world are turning to digital methods to safeguard and revitalize cultural memory.¹

At its core, cultural heritage digitisation involves converting physical or analog cultural materials – such as manuscripts, artifacts, audiovisual recordings, and oral histories – into digital formats that can be stored, managed, and disseminated. This process is not purely technical; it requires the integration of strategic planning, ethical considerations, and interdisciplinary collaboration.² Key strategies focus on prioritising collections, implementing metadata standards such as CIDOC CRM, ensuring long-term digital preservation, and designing accessible platforms for education and research.³

In the contemporary digital landscape, strategies for the protection and presentation of cultural heritage must address a wide array of challenges. These include technological limitations, institutional capacity, copyright and data sovereignty issues, and the need for cultural sensitivity and community involvement.⁴ Moreover, the use of open-source software and collaborative digital infrastructures is playing a crucial role in enabling smaller institutions – especially in the Global South and post-socialist regions – to participate in global heritage dialogues.⁵

Global and European Practices in Heritage Digitization: The Role of Digital Heritage in Contemporary Preservation Efforts

In recent decades, the concept of heritage preservation has expanded to include not only traditional forms – such as movable, immovable, and intangible heritage – but also digital heritage. This shift has become particularly important with the proliferation of digital technologies and their widespread application in preserving and sharing cultural and scientific knowledge. Digital heritage encompasses a wide array of human expression and knowledge, including texts, databases, images, audio, and more, whether created digitally or converted from existing analog resources. According to the Charter on the Preservation of Digital Heritage, digital heritage has been recognized as a form of common heritage of humankind, with profound implications for cultural identity, scientific research, and societal development.⁶

¹ Wagner 2023: 1915–1923; Khan et al. 2018: 3; Evens–Hauttekeete 2011: 158.

² Gervasi et al. 2022: 402; Bruseker 2017: 95.

³ Jansen 2023: 2183; Cohen–Rosenzweig 2005: 24; Portalés et al. 2018: 60.

⁴ Klinowski–Szafarowicz 2023.

⁵ Pandey–Kumar 2020: 71.

⁶ UNESCO 2003: Article 1; Adane 2019: 1; Arora 2009: 83.

Digital heritage, as defined in Article 1 of the Charter, is comprised of resources such as cultural, educational, scientific, and administrative materials, as well as legal, medical, and other forms of information created or converted into digital form. In particular, “born-digital” materials – those created in digital formats from the outset – are central to the discussion of digital heritage. These materials, which can include websites, digital archives, software, and multimedia content, are often ephemeral and thus require careful preservation efforts. The Charter underscores the importance of maintaining such resources for both current and future generations, as they contain enduring value and significance across various domains of human knowledge and expression.⁷

One of the key challenges highlighted by the Charter is the preservation of digital heritage in the face of rapid technological obsolescence. With the constant evolution of hardware, software, and digital formats, there is a significant risk of losing access to valuable digital materials if not properly managed.⁸ This issue underscores the need for systematic preservation strategies and policies, as outlined in Article 5, which stresses the importance of designing reliable systems to produce stable and authentic digital objects. To address these challenges, the Charter calls for the development of legal, technical, and organizational frameworks at the national and international levels to safeguard digital heritage against potential threats, including unauthorized alterations and data loss.⁹

Furthermore, the preservation of digital heritage is recognized as a global effort, requiring collaboration between governments, international organizations, and other stakeholders. Article 10 of the Charter assigns roles and responsibilities to various actors, calling for cooperation among developers, creators, and heritage institutions to ensure the long-term sustainability of digital heritage. This includes fostering partnerships, training programs, and research initiatives that can enhance the collective capacity for digital preservation.¹⁰

The European Union has been at the forefront of digitization initiatives, particularly in the field of cultural heritage. The EU's efforts have been shaped by various policy documents, including the eEurope action plan and the Lund Principles, both of which emphasize the role of digitization in enhancing access to Europe's cultural heritage and promoting cultural diversity.¹¹ The Lund Principles, established in 2001, advocated for coordinated national efforts to digitize cultural and scientific heritage, highlighting the

⁷ UNESCO 2003.

⁸ UNESCO 2003: Article 3.

⁹ UNESCO 2003: Articles 6–8.

¹⁰ UNESCO 2003: Article 10.

¹¹ European Commission 2001.

potential for digital technologies to facilitate broad dissemination of heritage materials.¹² These principles underscored the importance of ensuring long-term access to digital documents and materials, a goal that would later be formalized in the EU's MINERVA and MINERVA Plus projects.¹³

Since then, the European Commission has continued to prioritize digital heritage preservation, with significant efforts culminating in the creation of EUROPEANA, the European digital library, archive, and museum. Launched in 2008, EUROPEANA provides access to millions of digital objects from European institutions, enabling users to explore a diverse array of cultural heritage materials online.¹⁴ EUROPEANA serves as a key example of the EU's commitment to optimizing the cultural and economic potential of Europe's heritage, promoting not only access but also the preservation of invaluable cultural assets.¹⁵

Despite these advancements, the EU's efforts to digitize and preserve cultural heritage have faced challenges related to consistency and coordination across member states. In 2006, the European Commission issued a recommendation calling on member states to optimize the online accessibility of Europe's cultural heritage, recognizing the potential for digital technologies to support education, research, and the creative industries.¹⁶ However, the Commission's assessment in 2010 revealed that the implementation of digitization strategies varied significantly across countries, with some member states making considerable progress while others lagged behind.

In response to these challenges, the Commission has advocated for increased cooperation at the European and national levels to maximize the effectiveness of digitization efforts. The MINERVA and MINERVA Plus projects have been central to these efforts, helping to establish a unified network for digitization and ensuring that heritage materials are digitized efficiently and made accessible online to users worldwide. By preventing the unnecessary duplication of digitization efforts, these initiatives have saved resources and increased the accessibility of digital heritage materials across Europe.

The growing emphasis on digital heritage preservation is not confined to Europe alone. Globally, institutions and governments have recognized the need for robust strategies to safeguard digital materials, especially given the increasing volume of digital content created daily. For example, UNESCO's commitment to preserving digital heritage extends beyond policy frameworks

¹² The Lund Principles 2001.

¹³ European Commission 2011.

¹⁴ European Commission 2011.

¹⁵ <https://www.europeana.eu/> – 17. 01. 2025.

¹⁶ European Commission 2006.

to include active engagement with international organizations, educational institutions, and the private sector.¹⁷ This broad, collaborative approach is essential for addressing the challenges posed by the rapid evolution of digital technologies and ensuring the longevity and accessibility of digital heritage for future generations.

North Macedonia and the Digitalization of Cultural Heritage

The established European strategy has contributed to the swift implementation of procedures by member states, not only in the creation of national policies but also in the practical approaches to their cultural heritage. Thus, the extent to which digitalization and the publication of heritage collections online are implemented „can be seen as a primary indicator of an organization's ability to innovate in creating new information services for heritage, expand public reach, or add new value to the collections.”¹⁸

As a candidate country for the European Union since 2005, North Macedonia continues to regulate its cultural policies according to the Law on Culture, passed in 1998, which has undergone 16 amendments and supplements over the years. In the consolidated, unofficial, revised version published on the Ministry of Culture's website (<https://kultura.gov.mk/zakoni/>), the term „digitalization” is mentioned only once. In Article 61, regarding the adoption of the annual plan for achieving the national interest in culture, paragraph 3 specifies „*the digitalization of cultural heritage and contemporary artistic creation*” as one of the general guidelines.¹⁹ Similarly, the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage, which was enacted in 2004 and has undergone 16 amendments until 2023, also mentions digitalization only once. In Article 49, which concerns the National Strategy, paragraph 3 defines „*the goals and basic principles of protection and strategic decisions*,” where, alongside other issues, „*digitalization of cultural heritage*” is mentioned.²⁰ Despite this, North Macedonia still lacks a national strategy for the protection and utilization of cultural heritage, and the procedure for its adoption is ongoing.

The draft National Strategy for the Protection and Utilization of Cultural Heritage (2021–2025), which has yet to be adopted as of March 2023, outlines the results of analyses conducted in recent years, highlighting significant weaknesses in the protection and digitalization of cultural heritage. It particularly

¹⁷ UNESCO 2003.

¹⁸ Borowiecki 2017: 228.

¹⁹ Law on Culture 1998: Article 61.

²⁰ Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage 2004: Article 49.

underscores the acute shortage of skilled personnel in the field of cultural heritage protection and outdated, inadequate technical and human resources across all national cultural institutions, hindering the application of modern technologies and the appropriate documentation and digitalization of cultural resources.²¹

As a result, North Macedonia lacks a national platform for the protection and management of cultural heritage. In institutions where attempts have been made to digitize cultural heritage, rudimentary forms of protection and management can be found, along with attempts to digitize segments of cultural heritage.

ArchivesSpace: A Software for Archiving Data – The Case of the Digital Archive for Ethnological and Anthropological Resources at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology

The Need for a Systematic Approach to Archiving and Digitization. Ethnography of Digitization

The digitization of ethnological and anthropological resources has become a central focus for cultural heritage organizations globally, but the challenges of ensuring that such collections are appropriately protected, organized, and accessible remain significant.²² Since its inception in the late 1990s, the Archive of ethnological, anthropological, and folklore materials in the Republic of North Macedonia faced the challenge of lacking a cohesive national strategy and platform for the management and digitization of archival materials. The absence of a systematic approach to archival practices, particularly in terms of the preservation and digitization of both analog and born-digital resources, hindered efforts to effectively manage these important cultural assets.²³

The lack of centralized and professional resources meant that the responsibility of digitizing these materials was placed primarily on the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology (IEA), located at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. Without substantial institutional backing, early efforts were piecemeal and largely informal, driven by resourcefulness rather than formalized, large-scale support. Early attempts at developing a database through collaborations with the Institute of Informatics, although commendable, fell short of the institutional needs for efficient data management and retrieval.

²¹ Draft National Strategy for the Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage 2022: 12–15.

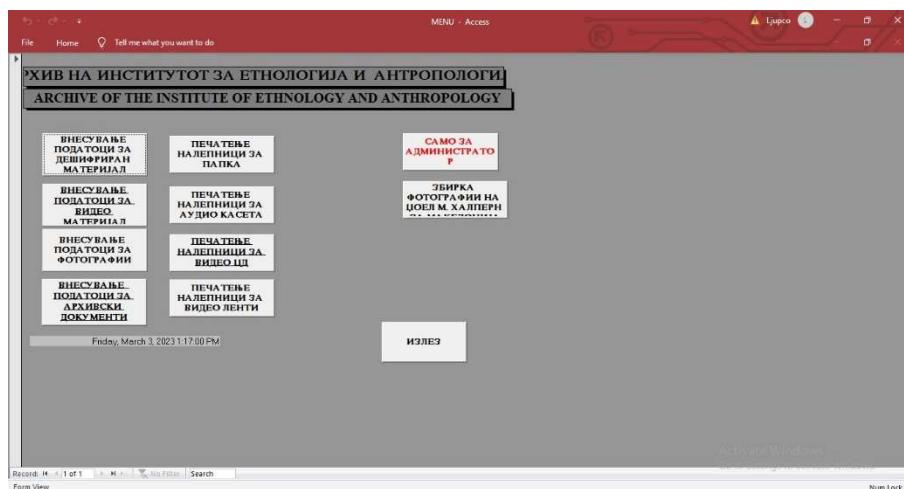
²² UNESCO 2003: n.p.

²³ Cohen 2005; Bruseker 2017: 97; de Clippele 2023: 2070.

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Early Solutions: Microsoft Access and the Limitations of Amateur Approaches

In the absence of institutional infrastructure and formalized support, the IEA turned to Microsoft Access, a database management system (DBMS) with a graphical user interface and programming tools, as a temporary solution to catalog ethnological and anthropological materials. Although Microsoft Access facilitated the entry, organization, and searchability of materials, it lacked essential features required for modern archival management, particularly in terms of web-based access.²⁴ The database management system, though functional for its time, was not designed for public access or the complex demands of modern archival systems. This limitation restricted the potential for wide dissemination of the digital archive and prevented its integration into larger, web-based platforms.



Pic. Nr. 1. Interface of the initial data entry page for the Archive of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, developed in Microsoft Access and used until 2015.

The integration of digitized resources (such as digital photographs, audio, video, and transcriptions) with data stored in Access, while feasible, was inefficient and cumbersome. Over time, as the volume of archived materials grew, it became apparent that a more sophisticated and scalable solution was required

²⁴ Becker–Antunes–Barateiro–Vieira 2011: 9.

to address the ongoing needs for digital preservation, access, and dissemination.²⁵ Consequently, efforts began to seek more appropriate, sustainable software solutions.



Pic. Nr. 2. *Interface displaying entered data for archived audiovisual (photographs and video) fieldwork material in the Archive of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, developed in Microsoft Access and used until 2015.*

The Discovery of ArchivesSpace: A Solution for Archival Management

In the search for a more suitable software system, *ArchivesSpace* emerged as a promising open-source solution. Designed as a web application for managing archival information, *ArchivesSpace* supports the core functions of archival administration, including the arrangement, description, and access to both analog and born-digital materials.²⁶ As a tool tailored for cultural heritage organizations, *ArchivesSpace* provides the necessary features for fostering access to historical records and primary sources, including robust archival processing capabilities and community support.

ArchivesSpace was born out of a collaborative effort in 2009, when major institutions such as New York University, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and the University of California San Diego joined forces with the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The aim was to integrate two pre-existing archival systems – Archivists' Toolkit and Archon – into a unified application

²⁵ Ross 2012: 110.

²⁶ ArchivesSpace 2023: n.p.

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that would optimize functionality and ensure long-term sustainability.²⁷ With funding from the Mellon Foundation, *ArchivesSpace* was developed and launched in 2013, and by 2023, it had evolved to Version 3.3.1.²⁸

One of the defining characteristics of *ArchivesSpace* is its open-source nature, which makes it freely available to any institution without financial barriers. This is particularly crucial for institutions in low-budget or underfunded contexts, where access to expensive proprietary software may be a significant limitation. *ArchivesSpace* also offers flexible membership options for institutions of varying sizes, ranging from small archives to large academic repositories. This accessibility is integral to ensuring that cultural heritage organizations across the globe can adopt and implement digital preservation practices.²⁹

Challenges and Growth: ArchivesSpace at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology

At the IEA, *ArchivesSpace* was adopted in 2014 as part of the effort to digitize and organize ethnological and anthropological materials. However, the lack of formal institutional backing and funding meant that the implementation was entirely self-supported. A private individual was contracted to provide technical support, including the installation, maintenance, and data backup services required to ensure the system's smooth operation. Despite the lack of formal membership or access to full technical documentation from the *ArchivesSpace* community, the system was operational by 2014, providing a platform for archiving and managing the institute's growing collection of digital and analog materials.

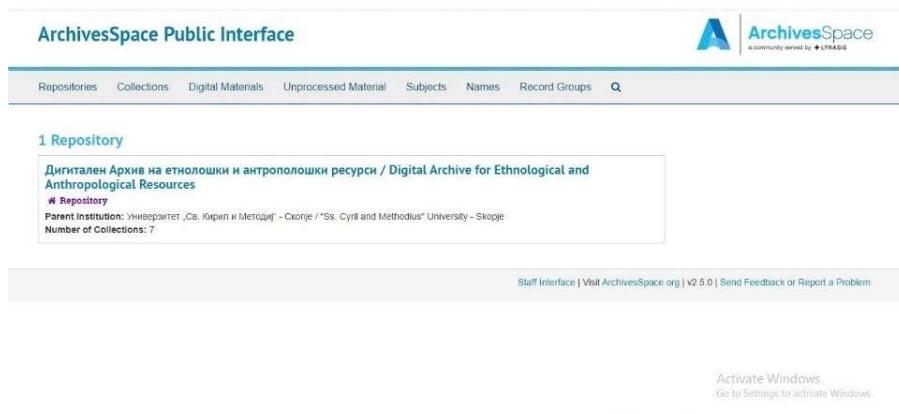
In 2015, the archive suffered a significant setback when a server and software crash rendered the system temporarily unusable, halting data entry. Although the search functionality for previously entered materials remained intact, the inability to add new materials necessitated the creation of a new version of the repository in 2016. Despite these challenges, the ongoing use of *ArchivesSpace* demonstrated the software's potential to manage archival data, although it also underscored the importance of technical support and community engagement for troubleshooting and system upgrades.³⁰

²⁷ Tallman 2019: 55.

²⁸ ArchivesSpace 2023: n.p.

²⁹ Tibbo 2017: 145.

³⁰ Mehta 2019: 119.



Pic. Nr. 3. *Public user interface of the ArchivesSpace application, based on the repository model of the Digital Archive for Ethnological and Anthropological Resources (DAEAR), in use since 2015.*

Thematic Structure and Scope of the Digital Archive of Ethnological and Anthropological Resources

The Digital Archive of Ethnological and Anthropological Resources at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology is systematically organized into several thematic collections that encompass a broad spectrum of ethnological and anthropological research conducted in North Macedonia. Each collection has been carefully curated to support scholarly inquiry, pedagogical engagement, and the long-term preservation of cultural knowledge.

- *Ethnological Collections with Material Subjects*

Comprising a total of 506 archival objects, this collection documents aspects of traditional material culture, with particular emphasis on folk costumes, tools, domestic artifacts, and agricultural implements.

- *Educative Ethnographic Collection of the IEA*

This collection includes 180 archival entries curated specifically to support educational and public outreach activities. It offers selected examples of ethnographic materials for use in academic and museum settings.

- *Ethnological Atlas of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia*

Holding 250 archival objects, this collection contributes to a visual and descriptive cartography of traditional cultural life, including religious practices, ritual customs, and social structures.

- *Manuscripts*

Comprising 258 archival units, this collection preserves original ethnographic field notes, unpublished research studies, and other textual materials produced by several Macedonian ethnologists and anthropologists over the course of long-term fieldwork.

- *Transcribed Field Materials*

With 295 archival records, this collection consists of transcriptions of oral histories, interviews, and ethnographic observations collected during field research across various regions of the country.

- *Photographs*

As the largest collection in the archive, encompassing 2,713 items, the photographic holdings document diverse aspects of both traditional and contemporary cultural life in North Macedonia. Notable sub-collections include the *Photo Collection of Prof. Joel Martin Halpern* (1954–1978) and the *Photo Collection of Prof. Krste Bogoevski*.

- *Video Materials*

This collection comprises 874 archival units and includes ethnographic recordings, interviews, and documentary or educational video materials capturing cultural practices and everyday life.

- *Printed Materials*

This segment of the archive contains digital copies of periodicals and monographs relevant to cultural history, ethnology, anthropology, and heritage studies, offering a significant textual resource for researchers.

- *Web Materials*

Archived on a weekly basis, this collection includes 15 online newspapers (daily, weekly, and monthly) published in North Macedonia, as well as the websites of cultural institutions and organizations.

Taken together, these thematic collections constitute a vital institutional repository for the preservation, documentation, and dissemination of ethnological and anthropological knowledge. The implementation of the *ArchivesSpace* software platform ensures a robust and standardized framework for archival description, discovery, and access. It supports professional archival practices, fosters transparency, and promotes the digital conservation of cultural heritage. This infrastructure significantly enhances the accessibility and scholarly value of the archive for researchers, students, and the broader public.

Fundamental Steps for Implementing the ArchivesSpace Web-Based Platform

In order to facilitate the operation of the *ArchivesSpace* web-based platform, it is essential to install the application on an appropriate server within an existing or rented hosting environment. The *ArchivesSpace* hosting service, provided by LYRASIS (<https://www.lyrasis.org/services/Pages/ArchivesSpace-Hosting.aspx>), offers a comprehensive technical and professional support system for the use of the software, with a service fee determined by the size of the repository to be managed.

The *ArchivesSpace* platform allows for the creation of multiple repositories, each of which operates independently from the others, meaning that different institutions can manage their own repositories within the same database and website. This capability provides significant flexibility, enabling multiple users to utilize a shared infrastructure while maintaining autonomy in their data management practices. The system offers two distinct user interfaces: a staff user interface, which is designed for personnel responsible for data entry, and a public user interface, which is intended for general users and is presented as a publicly accessible website.



The screenshot shows the public user interface of the ArchivesSpace application. At the top, a header bar displays the text 'Showing Collections: 1 - 7 of 7'. Below this, there is a search bar with the placeholder 'Title (ascending)' and a 'Start' button. To the right, a 'Filter Results' section includes a search input field, a 'From year' input field, a 'To year' input field, and a 'Search' button. The main content area displays a list of seven collections, each in a separate card:

- ЕЗМП_1 / ECMS Етнолошки збирки со материјални предмети / Ethnological Collection with Material Subjects**
Collection Identifier: ЕЗМП_1
Found in: Дигитален Архив на етнолоши и антрополошки ресурси / Digital Archive for Ethnological and Anthropological Resources
- Едукативна етнографска збирка на ИЕА / Educative ethnographic Collection of IEA ЕЕЗИЕА / EECIEA**
Collection Identifier: ЕЕЗИЕА
Found in: Дигитален Архив на етнолоши и антрополошки ресурси / Digital Archive for Ethnological and Anthropological Resources
- Етнолошки атлас на СР Македонија / Ethnological Atlas of SR of Macedonia**
Collection Identifier: EAM
Found in: Дигитален Архив на етнолоши и антрополошки ресурси / Digital Archive for Ethnological and Anthropological Resources
- МАН III / MAN III Ракописи / Manuscripts**
Collection Identifier: MAN-III
Found in: Дигитален Архив на етнолоши и антрополошки ресурси / Digital Archive for Ethnological and Anthropological Resources

Pic. Nr. 4. *View of the resources section in the public user interface of the ArchivesSpace application, based on the repository model of the Digital Archive for Ethnological and Anthropological Resources (DAEAR), in use since 2015.*

Data entry is typically carried out by a designated professional within the institution, whose responsibility is to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the information entered into the system. Access to the *ArchivesSpace* platform is

secured through a user authentication process, requiring a username and password to ensure that only authorized personnel can perform data entry.

The data entry process usually begins with the creation of a new accession or archival object within an existing resource. Resources, or „archives,” can be organized in a variety of ways, depending on the nature and characteristics of the material being archived. Each archival object or entry created within the system can be entirely independent, yet may also be interlinked with other objects or entries in a multitude of ways, allowing for complex relationships and multi-layered connections between different pieces of archival material. This structure provides a robust framework for the management, organization, and retrieval of archival data in a digital environment.

The Role of ArchivesSpace in the Digital Preservation Landscape

ArchivesSpace is an integral tool in the broader context of digital preservation, as it facilitates the preservation of both physical and digital cultural heritage. The global shift toward digital heritage preservation, as articulated in UNESCO's Charter on the Preservation of Digital Heritage (2003), underscores the importance of ensuring that digital content is sustainably managed and remains accessible for future generations.³¹ *ArchivesSpace* contributes to this goal by offering a platform that allows for systematic management of both analog and born-digital materials, a critical step in the preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

Given its open-source nature and robust community, *ArchivesSpace* provides an accessible and scalable solution for institutions with limited resources, particularly in regions such as the Republic of North Macedonia, where there is a lack of systemic solutions for cultural heritage management. As a tool that fosters collaboration and knowledge-sharing within the archival community, *ArchivesSpace* aligns with broader international efforts to ensure the long-term preservation and accessibility of digital heritage.³²

The use of *ArchivesSpace* at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology in North Macedonia serves as a case study in the challenges and successes of digitizing cultural heritage in a resource-constrained environment. While the journey to establish a sustainable digital archive has not been without its obstacles, the adoption of *ArchivesSpace* has enabled the institute to overcome many of

³¹ UNESCO 2003: n.p.

³² European Commission 2011: n.p.

the limitations posed by previous software solutions. The software's open-source nature, combined with its community-driven approach, has allowed the archive to continue its work despite financial and technical challenges. Moving forward, the continued development of national strategies for cultural heritage preservation and the adoption of integrated digital solutions such as *ArchivesSpace* will be essential in ensuring the long-term sustainability of heritage preservation efforts in North Macedonia and beyond.³³

Encouragement for Institutions to Use ArchivesSpace: A Call to Action



Pic. Nr. 5. *View of an archived item with defined basic contextual and content elements and a link to the digital object (photograph), based on the repository model of the Digital Archive for Ethnological and Anthropological Resources (DAEAR), in use since 2015.*

Drawing from our modest yet insightful experience with *ArchivesSpace* within the Digital Archive of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, and observing the successful outcomes of global institutions dedicated to heritage protection and presentation, we urge institutions in the Republic of North Macedonia to seriously consider incorporating this software into their archiving practices. *ArchivesSpace* offers immense potential for enhancing the management, preservation, and accessibility of both analog and digital cultural heritage, an area that is increasingly vital in today's interconnected world.³⁴

Firstly, we strongly recommend that the Ministry of Culture and the institutions directly responsible for the development and implementation of a national

³³ Lusenet 2002: 33.

³⁴ Carroll 2022: 202.

platform for the management, preservation, and presentation of heritage – whether in analog, hybrid, or digital forms – carefully examine the potential of *ArchivesSpace* as a long-term solution. This software platform not only supports the complex needs of cultural heritage institutions but also ensures that heritage materials are preserved in an organized and sustainable manner, ensuring their accessibility for future generations.³⁵

In light of the Republic of North Macedonia's ongoing digital transformation in cultural heritage management, it would be crucial to adapt *ArchivesSpace* to the national context through linguistic and technical customization. While the technical resources required to support *ArchivesSpace* can be hosted within the country, institutions may also consider leveraging the professional services offered by Lyrasis-hosted *ArchivesSpace*. This service provides a comprehensive and secure solution for hosting, maintaining, and backing up repositories.³⁶ Such an option could reduce the need for significant upfront infrastructure investments while guaranteeing high-quality, professional-grade management of digital archives.³⁷

Furthermore, we encourage the universities in the Republic of North Macedonia – especially „St. Cyril and Methodius University” in Skopje, which has historically been a leading academic institution in the region – to explore the creation of a central repository for archiving, processing, and presenting a wide range of materials. This would not only benefit the preservation of the institution's academic heritage but also promote the responsible curation and dissemination of research outputs.³⁸ Other national and local heritage institutions – whether libraries, museums, or smaller research centers – could also benefit from integrating *ArchivesSpace* into their operations. This collaboration could significantly enhance the visibility of regional heritage materials and allow for more effective preservation practices.³⁹

Adopting *ArchivesSpace* would also foster a more systematic approach to the preservation, processing, systematization, and presentation of cultural heritage. By adopting this software, heritage institutions in North Macedonia could begin to modernize their archival practices, creating a more accessible, transparent, and sustainable model for preserving cultural resources. This approach would ensure

³⁵ Tibbo 2017: 148; Tallman 2019: 60.

³⁶ Sanchez 2020: 87.

³⁷ Mehta 2019: 121.

³⁸ Lynch 2018: 98.

³⁹ Gorman 2021: 75.

that Macedonian cultural heritage is better represented in the global cultural ecosystem, allowing future generations to access and engage with materials that define national identity and cultural history.⁴⁰

In sum, *ArchivesSpace* offers an affordable and scalable solution that addresses the evolving needs of cultural heritage institutions. We believe that by adopting this software, institutions in North Macedonia can significantly enhance their capacity to preserve and present their cultural heritage while contributing to the broader effort of global heritage conservation.

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⁴⁰ Batley 2020: 134.

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