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CONTENTS

MEZCAL AND MEXICANNESS: THE SYMBOLIC AND SOCIAL CONNOTATIONS OF DRINKING IN OAXACA[1]

Toomas Gross

Abstract: This article discusses the symbolic and social connotations of mezcal and its consumption in the rural communities of Oaxaca in Southern Mexico. Mezcal, a traditional drink in this region, is a distilled alcoholic beverage made from a particular type of agave called maguey. Based on the author's intermittent fieldwork in the indigenous Zapotec villages of Oaxaca since the late 1990s, the article will scrutinise the local discourse on mezcal, the meanings attached to the drink, and the consumption of mezcal in ritual and social contexts. As the article will demonstrate, an anthropological perspective on mezcal enables us to approach the drink not simply as an alcoholic beverage among many others, but as a very specific cultural construct that is part of a distinct drinking culture. Consuming mezcal in rural Oaxaca is a social act: the collective drinking of mezcal contributes to a sense of community and belonging. Mezcal also serves as a summarising symbol, to use Ortner's term, which metaphorically captures the character and essence of being a *serrano* (highlander). On the other hand, drinking mezcal can also serve as a marker of social divisions and group boundaries. Consumption and non-consumption of mezcal largely coincides with the boundaries between social groups based either on gender or on religion. The article will close with a brief glimpse at recent state level endeavours to construct mezcal as Mexico's national drink, often building on its local meanings.

Keywords: community, drinking, mezcal, Mexico, Oaxaca, symbol

INTRODUCTION

This article discusses the meanings of mezcal and its consumption in southern Mexico, with particular ethnographic attention on the indigenous Zapotec communities in the state of Oaxaca. In these communities, mezcal – a distilled alcoholic beverage made from a particular type of agave called maguey – is a traditional drink consumed widely on both mundane and ritual occasions. The article builds on the author's extended fieldwork in the region called the Sierra Juárez since the late 1990s, most recently in 2012.[2]

The main aim of the article is to demonstrate that an anthropological perspective on mezcal enables us to approach the drink not simply as an

alcoholic beverage among many others, but as a very specific cultural and social construct. I will particularly focus on the symbolic and social dimensions of mezcal. As I demonstrate, in many respects the drink functions as a metaphor. Mezcal is generally talked about with pride; it is personified and endowed with nearly magical powers. The drink is considered to capture the essence of the local population and as such it constitutes what Sherry Ortner (1973) has called a 'summarising symbol'. But consuming mezcal is also a social act. As anthropologists have eloquently demonstrated in multiple contexts, there is much more to consuming food and drink than the mere physiological satisfaction of hunger and thirst.[3] The mainly collective drinking of mezcal in rural Oaxaca has implications for social solidarity – its consumption often creates a strong sense of community. On the other hand, drinking mezcal can also serve as a marker of social divisions and group boundaries. Consumption and non-consumption of mezcal in Oaxacan villages largely coincides with the boundaries between social groups based either on gender (men vs. women) or religion (Catholics vs. Protestants). Thus the fact of consuming (or not consuming) mezcal can function as a shortcut to demarcating and reinforcing the boundaries between these groups.

In the discussion that follows I will put these two main analytical concerns – the symbolic and social connotations of mezcal – into a somewhat broader anthropological and national context. After a brief presentation of the anthropology of drinking cultures as a rather recent subfield within the discipline, I will introduce mezcal as a drink in the context of the drinking culture of Mexico in general. Mezcal belongs to a family of three endemic Mexican alcoholic beverages, and its cultural and social meanings that I will discuss thereafter should be understood in this framework. The article will close with a brief glimpse at recent state level endeavours to construct mezcal as Mexico's national drink. The state-sponsored promotion of mezcal's wider appeal builds on the local metaphorical discourse on the drink, central to which are the notions of *authenticity*, *essence*, *character*, and *Mexicanness*.

THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF DRINKING CULTURES

The study of food and eating has a long history in anthropology, going back at least to the work of Garrick Mallery (1888) and William Robertson Smith (1889), although it is in the past few decades that the anthropology of food has gained true momentum as a sub-discipline (Mintz & Du Bois 2002). Theoretically solid and ethnographically informed anthropological interest in drinking (with a particular focus on alcohol) is much more recent, however. This may

sound surprising since alcohol production has a long history and is an essential part of culturally constituted social relations. Yet it is only since the 1960s that anthropological perspectives have been more prominently represented in the growing field of alcohol studies and that ethnographic descriptions of drinking patterns among various world populations have proliferated (Heath 1987: 101; Dietler 2006: 230).[4]

The growing interest in alcohol and drinking has been fuelled by anthropologists' realisation that consuming alcohol correlates with cultural, religious, and social identities, as well as with ethnicity, gender, and class. A myriad of studies have by now addressed the great variation of beliefs, practices, and attitudes towards drinking across and within cultures (e.g. Marshall 1979; Barrows & Room 1991; Pittman & Raskin White 1991; Gefou-Madianou 1992; Heath 1995, 2000; Garine & Garine 2001). In most of these accounts, the social construction of drinking provides anthropologists with an analytical tool with which to approach different socio-cultural groups and to compare them. The culturally constructed nature of drinking behaviour is implicit in such by now commonly used notions as *drinking cultures* (Wilson 2005), *drinking patterns* (Pittman & Raskin White 1991; Grant & Litvak 1997), and *drinking styles* (Heath 2000).

The anthropological perspective on drinking is rather distinct. In most other disciplines that focus on alcohol and drinking, the main aspect of study tends to be alcoholism – in other words, the abuse of drink. Anthropologists, on the other hand, generally focus on those individuals who drink moderately (Heath 1987: 105). As paradoxical as it may sound, anthropology often emphasises the 'benefits' of drinking and mainly focuses on how drinking is 'positively' embedded in everyday ways of life (ibid.: 115). Heath (2000), for example, describes a variety of 'normal' drinking occasions that exist around the world and the many ways that people think about or use alcohol as an integral and 'beneficial' part of their culture. The tendency to focus on the 'benefits' of drinking in anthropology is, of course, not exclusive of other approaches, especially in the field of medical anthropology. But a prevailing emphasis has nevertheless been on 'constructive drinking', to use Mary Douglas's (1987) term, rather than on the harmful and destructive effects of alcohol abuse. Not everyone applauds such approaches in anthropology. In a well-known critique of anthropological perspectives on alcohol, Room (1984) accuses anthropologists of 'problem deflation' when overlooking or diminishing the alcohol abuse and its implications (see also Marshall 1990). In the discussion that follows, my attention will mainly be on the symbolically and socially 'constructive' aspects of consuming mezcal, but I am aware of the problems embedded in such one-sided analytical perspective. As I will demonstrate, the 'constructive approach' to drinking

mezcal is not shared by all villagers, and some social groups – Protestants in particular – very explicitly highlight the harmful effects of consuming alcohol.

THE DRINKING CULTURE OF MEXICO

The case of Mexico is somewhat distinct when it comes to the anthropology of drinking and alcohol. Not surprisingly, the body of anthropological studies of Mexican food is ample and their common analytical denominator tends to be linking cuisine strongly to Mexican national or regional identities. Elvridge-Thomas (2009: 59) even claims that "we, in Mexico, feel emotionally more connected with our country while tasting a taco or eating quesadillas with salsa picante, than when singing the national anthem". But unlike in many other ethnographic contexts, in Mexico drinking and alcohol have also received considerable social scientific attention. The interest dates back at least to the 1930s and the early studies were dominated by the focus on alcohol abuse and its destructive effects on the country's indigenous population (e.g. Mendieta y Núñez 1939; Bunzel 1940; Rojas Gonzalez 1942).[5] Consumption of pulque[6] in particular was accused of contributing to widespread alcoholism in indigenous Mexico. In post-WWII era, anthropological studies of alcohol and drinking in Mexico – in both pre-colonial (e.g. Bruman 2000), colonial (e.g. Taylor 1979; Scardaville 1980), and contemporary contexts (e.g. Kearney 1970, 1971; Dennis 1975; DeWalt 1979; Menéndez 1991; Eber 1995; Avila Palafox 2001) – have proliferated rapidly. In a recent account entitled *Intoxicated Identities*, Mitchell (2004) even seeks to demonstrate, provocatively, that Mexican culture reinforces heavy drinking. Such essentialist argument is, of course, highly problematic, but finds resonance with the Protestants' critique of Catholicism and Catholics in rural Oaxaca. As I will argue below, Protestants often claim that Catholic fiestas and the festive veneration of saints reinforce drinking.

Three 'archetypal' drinks are endemic to the Mexican drinking culture. All of them – tequila, pulque, and mezcal – are made from the agave plant locally known as maguey. The maguey is considered to have been one of the most sacred plants in pre-Hispanic Mexico; it had a privileged position in various religious rituals, mythology, and economy (Blomberg 2000: 17). From an anthropological perspective all three drinks have a significant symbolic dimension, and have been tightly linked to national and regional collective identities. Tequila, internationally the best known of the three beverages and made exclusively from the so-called blue agave, became a veritable national symbol of Mexico abroad in the second half of the twentieth century.[7] This was so partly because tequila fit the image of *modern* Mexico better than pulque and mezcal

(Gaytán 2007: 18). Pulque was 'too Indian' and associated too closely with the urban poor. Mezcal, although consumed by creoles and mestizos during the early colonial period, also became marked mainly as an Indian product, since its production is concentrated in Oaxaca, the most indigenous state of Mexico. Produced predominantly in the relatively well-off state of Jalisco, tequila, in contrast, was the least associated with Indians and the lower classes, and thus embodied – much more conveniently than pulque or mezcal – the virtues of the 20th century national discourse of modernity, growth, unity, and Mexicanness (Gaytán 2007: 18–19).

Despite that, many scholars still refer to pulque, a beverage made by fermenting the sap of certain types of maguey, as the true *bebida nacional* ('national drink') in the 20th-century Mexico. It has often been considered to be more 'quintessentially Mexican' than tequila (e.g. Díaz Montes 1982; Guerrero Guerrero 1985).[8] Unlike tequila, pulque's history extends far back into the pre-colonial era, when it was considered sacred and consumed only by certain classes of people (mainly priests, nobles, and the elderly). After the Spanish Conquest, the drink became secular and its consumption increased rapidly and widely (Taylor 1979: 35). Nevertheless, drinking pulque remained an exclusively Indian enterprise and, for Spaniards, a sign of Indians' backwardness (Gaytán 2007: 3–4).[9] Anthropologically, the most interesting era in the history of pulque was the first half of the 20th century, immediately after the Mexican Revolution, when in some social circles attempts were made to consciously modify the drink's national image and symbolic connotations. This, as I will demonstrate below, bears certain similarity with contemporary state-driven attempts to promote and internationalise mezcal. As Wright (2009) argues, during Mexico's nation-building period in 1920–46, pulque's image was purposefully re-invented in order to facilitate its recognition – both home and abroad – as the country's national drink. Owing both to its pre-colonial Aztec roots and its quotidian consumption by plebeian communities, pulque constituted for many an appropriate metaphor for *la Mexicanidad* ('Mexicanness') and for the participatory and inclusive Mexican national identity (Wright 2009: 3). Its promotion as a national symbol was strongly backed by some prominent figures in the Mexican cultural elite.[10] Borrowing from Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983), Wright (2009: 4) argues that in reality such essentialised constructions constituted an 'invention of tradition'. Since the middle of the 20th century, however, the popularity of pulque has steadily declined (Ramírez et al. 2004).[11]

Mezcal could be considered the 'minor brother' in the family of Mexican agave drinks. For most of the 20th century, mezcal did not possess the metaphorical power and nationwide symbolic appeal of tequila and pulque. On the contrary, until recent years, mezcal as a drink has been internationally relatively un-

known and its consumption has been far more endemic to Southern Mexico. Its mainly local appeal does not mean, however, that mezcal lacks potent symbolic and social connotations in the regional context, as I will demonstrate in the next two sections.

Mezcal production originated in colonial times. Although some scholars (e.g. Serra & Carlos 2010) situate its origin in the pre-colonial era, a more common view is that mezcal is essentially a Spanish invention (Gaytán 2007: 1). The word 'mezcal' itself most probably comes from the Nahuatl word *mexcalli*, which is a combination of the words *metl* and *ixcalli*, and literally means 'oven cooked agave' (Montero 2011: 106). Mezcal is traditionally made from the cooked heart of certain agave plants, mainly of *Agave espadin*.[12] While tequila is generally produced in factories, most if not all good mezcals are handmade by small-scale producers in the so-called *fábricas* or *palenques*, often using methods and techniques that have been practiced for centuries (Bautista & Terán Melchor 2008: 118).[13] To be truly considered mezcal, the liquor must come from certain areas, be produced from certain types of maguey, and by using only certain acknowledged production techniques (Montero 2011: 106).[14]

MEZCAL AS A SUMMARISING SYMBOL

I will now turn to scrutinising the symbolic and social connotations attached to mezcal in the Zapotec villages of Oaxaca. A brief overview of the broader ethnographic context is first in order, however, as it enables the reader to better capture the cultural idiosyncrasies of rural Oaxaca and the region of the Sierra Juárez, where I have done intermittent fieldwork since 1998, altogether for approximately 21 months (see endnote 2).

Oaxaca, the 'home of mezcal', is ethnically the most diverse of Mexico's 31 states. Its indigenous population, constituting nearly half of the state's total and belonging to sixteen different linguistic groups, amounts to approximately 18 percent of the total indigenous population of Mexico. Geographically, the state of Oaxaca is divided into eight regions. One of these, the northern mountainous region of the Sierra Norte, comprises an area called the Sierra Juárez. The population of the Sierra Juárez is mainly Zapotec, but Chinantec villages are also numerous in the north-western part of the region. It must be noted, however, that although most *serranos*, as they are sometimes called, consider themselves Zapotec (or Chinantec), the indigenous languages are no longer spoken in many villages. Some villages of the region are relatively affluent, including Capulálpam, my research base, but most communities suffer from extreme poverty and the lack of most basic infrastructure, and have in

recent decades faced various socio-economic challenges, such as the decline of traditional subsistence activities, the increase of inequality, unemployment, violence, and out-migration. Because of the latter, some communities have become veritable ghost villages (*pueblos fantasmas*), as they are sometimes called, surviving only on the remittances sent by men who have migrated to bigger cities and to the United States.

The cultural and socio-political organisation of the indigenous villages of the Sierra Juárez is based on customary norms and traditions. In the local discourse, the phrase *usos y costumbres* ('habits and customs') is generally used as a cover term to denote various civil (e.g. the hierarchical system of *cargos* or positions in the organisational structure of the villages that all men have to periodically hold, local forms of decision making, customary norms, collective communal work) and religious practices (e.g. Catholic fiestas and other rituals, as well as *cargos* with the Catholic Church). *Usos y costumbres* are considered 'autochthonous' by most villagers and as such they constitute a strong basis for collective identity and solidarity. Their legitimacy stems from the perception that *usos y costumbres* embrace *native* practices and values inherited from the past generations. "Here custom is law (*Aquí la costumbre es la ley*)," I was often told by my informants.

In reality, however, customary norms and social organisation of the villages can be quite contested. The rules pertaining to the realm of customary law are perceived differently by different people and social groups. Protestants, for example, often vocally criticise the obligatory nature of participating in collective communal and especially Catholic practices. Women often lament their lack of access to decision-making processes. Many others regard the social organisation based on customary norms as repressive and undemocratic rather than 'social glue', which ties villagers together. A common saying in the Sierra Juárez – *Pueblo pequeño, infierno grande* ('Small village, big hell') – neatly captures the tensions embedded in such communal way of living.

Despite the contested nature of *usos y costumbres*, it could nevertheless be argued that *la comunidad* ('community') constitutes a fundamental political and social unit in the Sierra Juárez. Strong communal affiliation constitutes the main basis for collective identity in most villages. Various studies have eloquently demonstrated that people strongly identify themselves with the community as a place and as a corporate social entity in the Sierra Juárez (e.g. Kearney 1971; De la Fuente 1977; Alatorre Frenk 1998) as well as elsewhere in Oaxaca (Barabas 1998; Mendoza Zuany 2008). Nader (1990: 3) in her well-known account of Zapotec dispute settlements in the village of Talea similarly suggests that the ideologies of harmony and solidarity are deeply embedded in the social organisation and mentality of contemporary Zapotec villages.

One important and from the point of view of this paper relevant outcome of such strong identification with the community as a collective whole is the fact that the political and cultural calendar of most villages in the Sierra Juárez is full of social events that engage large groups of people on a regular basis. Consuming alcohol, especially mezcal, is part and parcel of these events. But it is not the act of drinking as such, but rather how mezcal is locally perceived and talked about, and what role it is endowed with in personal and collective well-being, that constitute anthropologically the most interesting aspects of the drink. In a classic article entitled *On Key Symbols*, Sherry Ortner (1973: 1339) distinguishes between two types of key symbols: summarising and elaborating ones. The former "are those symbols which are seen as summing up, expressing, representing for the participants in an emotionally powerful and relatively undifferentiated way, what the system means to them" (Ortner 1973: 1339). The latter "work in the opposite direction, providing vehicles for sorting out complex and undifferentiated feelings and ideas, making them comprehensible to oneself, communicable to others, and translatable into orderly action" (ibid.: 1340).

When carefully scrutinising the local discourse on mezcal, Ortner's concept of a summarising symbol appears to be highly fitting and appropriate. According to my experience in the Sierra Juárez, the word 'mezcal' is locally often used as a metaphor, rather than a simple signifier, standing for the alleged essence of the indigenous population or a person. It is not uncommon to talk of somebody being 'as strong as mezcal' or having 'mezcal's character'. Mezcal is talked about and treated with reverence, it is often personified, and endowed with a particular 'personality' that is somewhat congruent with that of the rural population. Mezcal's smoky flavour and its acutely strong taste, for example, are considered to stand for the toughness, sturdiness, and resilience of the people living in harsh mountain conditions. As one of my informants – Javier, a middle-aged peasant – eloquently claimed:

> *We, the Zapotecs of the Sierra, are strong and tough like mezcal. We do not get sick, we do not give up because we have mezcal. It is like the blood in our veins.*

Mezcal is also endowed with nearly miraculous curative powers. A common saying attributed to this drink in all of Oaxaca – *Para todo mal, mezcal, y para todo bien también* ('for everything bad, mezcal, and for everything good, too') – neatly summarises the perceived 'multifunctionality' of the beverage. Mezcal is widely considered to be an appropriate cure in almost any circumstances. It is believed to help control various illnesses, such as hypertension and diabetes, and it is even considered an aphrodisiac. Traditional *curanderas* ('healers')

often use mezcal to cure folk illnesses, such as *susto* (fright sickness), *empacho* (digestive disorders of various kinds), and *mal de ojo* (evil eye). Even when catching a common cold or a fever, local people would in the first instance rely on a shot of mezcal mixed with salt and lemon, rather than on Western medicine. To sum up, mezcal thus expresses and represents "in an emotionally powerful and relatively undifferentiated way", to reiterate Ortner's words, the social and physical reality of the Sierra Juárez and that of the *serranos*.

DRINKING MEZCAL AS A 'SOCIAL GLUE'

Offering mezcal during religious and other festivities constitutes the prime indication of hospitality and almost a moral responsibility. Mezcal is strongly associated with the obligation to share but also to receive: accepting the drink is as strong a moral obligation as offering it. During popular rituals, for example, when religious processions pass the 'sponsoring' households of a particular fiesta, the hosts would offer mezcal in small plastic cups on trays to hundreds or even more participants.[15] On less formal occasions, the drinkers (mainly men) would gather around the bottle and consume mezcal together in rounds of shots. On such occasions, it is seldom appropriate to accept one shot only. A common saying in Mexico, "*Uno, no es ninguno; dos es la mitad de uno; y tres es apenas uno*" ('one is nothing, two is half of one, and three is barely one'), is widely cited when one tries to reject yet another shot. Nor is it considered appropriate to drop out of the circle of collective drinking before others. "*El último es cuando te vas al panteón*" ('the last one is when you go to the cemetery') is another common pun often used if one wants to quit the group of drinkers. The drinking of mezcal often also involves various small rituals such as spilling some drops from the glass onto the ground as an offering to the fertility of the earth. Before drinking the first shot, one commonly says, "*Arriba, abajo, al centro y pa´dentro*" ('up, down, centre and in'). Mezcal-filled cups are commonly put on home altars during the Day of the Dead, as well as on tombs of the deceased relatives.

The nearly ritualised drinking of mezcal functions as a social glue, primarily among men. In anthropological research on food, scholars have extensively studied eating in ritual contexts and demonstrated how it can reaffirm social relationships (e.g. Munn 1986; Buitelaar 1993; Feeley-Harnik 1995; Brown 1995). For example, rituals and beliefs surrounding food have been shown to reinforce religious and ethnic boundaries, (e.g. Bahloul 1989; Fabre-Vassas 1997). As Mintz and Du Bois (2002: 109) argue, like all culturally defined material substances used in the creation and maintenance of social relationships, food serves both to solidify group membership and to set groups apart. All this can

also be argued about alcohol, maybe even more convincingly so. The sharing of drinks can be a valuable way to build up social credit (e.g. Barlett 1980; Collmann 1979; Spradley 1970), or to institutionalise patron-client relationships (e.g. Jennings 2004). The drink that constitutes a potent cultural symbol does not necessarily need to be alcoholic, of course. For example, Pohjola (2008) shows in her study of symbolic and social dimensions of drinking mate in Argentina that this drink is associated with strong moral responsibility to share, and constitutes a key symbol of 'Argentinianness' in much the same way as mezcal in rural Oaxaca. Mate symbolises above all sociality, solidarity, equality, friendship, and communality. A comparable example would be the Japanese tea-ceremony (*chadō*). Furthermore, alcohol is obviously not the only psychoactive substance, the sharing of which has solidarity-enhancing effects. Allen (1988), for example, has demonstrated how the collective chewing of coca-leaves in the Peruvian Andes contributes to increasing and maintaining group solidarity. The collective use of various drugs in the West has also been analysed as a social ritual (e.g. Grund 1993).

From an anthropological perspective, the positive impact of consuming mezcal on group solidarity in rural Oaxaca is most apparent when scrutinising men's behaviour in nearly 'institutionalised' drinking settings. One among such in the Oaxacan villages is the collective drinking after *asamblea comunal* (communal assemblies), periodically organised meetings of all (male) members of the community. All decisions concerning the community as a corporate entity in the Sierra Juárez are ideally made during these meetings, because they have maximal power in communal life (Durand Alcántara 1998: 273). One can regard communal assemblies not just as mechanisms that create communal unity by producing collective decisions, but also as the moments of 'social catharsis' akin to Gluckman's (1963) 'rituals of rebellion'. Direct and explicit criticism in face-to-face communities can be dysfunctional. Communal assembly, however, is the legitimate context for expressing discontent and challenging the village authorities, because in this framework criticism serves communal well-being and loses much of its personal nature. Communal assembly is an example of Turner's (1974 [1969]) *communitas* – ideally everybody present has the right to speak, criticise, and express their opinion, everybody's voice has equal weight, and the hierarchy of the *cargo* system is forgotten. Often resulting in heated arguments and confrontations, the aim is generally to resolve these among the villagers themselves, within the temporal and spatial confines of the assembly. As one of my informants explained, "Although we fight, we fight amongst ourselves and amongst ourselves it stays."

In reality, however, tensions surfacing during the assemblies do not remain confined to the assembly hall. To alleviate the resentment and negativity that

accumulates during these encounters, most men, after the end of the assembly, tend to go to *cantinas* (bars) to wind down and drink mezcal. It is this collective drinking rather than the communal assembly that has a truly cathartic impact on social relations. Going to a *cantina* or accepting others' invitation is a strong moral obligation. "This is the only entertainment we have here to alleviate stress and tensions, and to resolve conflicts," as Pedro, a middle-aged informant, rather bluntly put it.

This is not to say, however, that all men in the villages of the Sierra Juárez drink mezcal or alcohol more generally. To return to the idea by Mintz and Du Bois (2002: 109) cited above, culturally defined substances not only solidify group membership, but they can also set groups apart. Consuming alcohol and rejecting it largely coincides with the religious divide between Catholics and Protestants in the villages. Like most of Latin America, Mexico, especially its rural areas, has in recent decades experienced an unprecedented rise of Protestant churches. One of the important social features of Protestant converts, alongside with the break with local customs, is their absolutist abstention from alcohol. In fact, consumption of alcohol becomes for Protestants a major defining feature of Catholics as a group, a characteristic as important as the Catholics' veneration of saints and images. "The Catholics like *drinking*, we like *God*," as María, a young Pentecostal woman, summarised what, according to her, was the main difference between her faith and that of Catholics. The fact that alcohol can serve as highly charged focus of symbolic contestation in identity struggles between Protestants and Catholics has also been demonstrated in other ethnographic contexts (e.g. Luning 2002). Protestants would often group the drinking of mezcal together with various other sins that Catholics are held responsible for, and the consumption of alcohol is talked about exclusively in terms of alcohol abuse. Fabio, a Jehovah's Witness, put it accordingly:

> *Here people are very Catholic and that is why many dirty things exist – fornication, adultery, drunkenness. Thirty percent of the population here are alcoholics, both men and women.*

An obvious conclusion to be drawn from the existence of such a religious divide in attitudes towards alcohol is that the symbolic and social meanings of mezcal described above are not shared by everyone. For Protestant converts, mezcal has become a negative symbol of sorts. As Dietler (2006: 241) also argues when analysing the links between alcohol and religion, abstention from drinking can, for some religions, become one of the most important defining symbols of piety and group membership. It would perhaps be an exaggeration to claim that abstinence stands for a summarising symbol for Protestants in the Sierra

Juárez, but it has clearly become an integral part of Protestant identity in a Catholic village.

There is additional important dimension to Protestants' critique of drinking that is related to the converts' particular life-histories. Many Protestant converts are in fact former alcoholics for whom conversion to Protestantism has constituted a means for quitting the vice. Dennis (1975) and Kearney (1991) have also demonstrated that religious conversion can be consciously and purposefully used as an escape strategy from the almost 'institutionalised' obligation to drink in the Oaxacan villages. For example, in Ixtepeji, a village characterised by a 'culture of alcoholism' according to Kearney (1991: 349), most male Adventists had been heavy drinkers before converting. Hence the Protestants' critique of consuming alcohol is not only a religious discourse, but often also stems from a personal struggle of breaking with one's past behaviour.

FROM THE LOCAL TO THE NATIONAL:
FINDING MEXICANNESS IN MEZCAL

Much like pulque's image immediately after the Mexican revolution, the image of mezcal as a drink and as a symbol is currently undergoing significant changes. Recent state and national level efforts to commercialise the production of mezcal, turn it into a touristic curiosity[16], and market the drink aggressively, both in Mexico and abroad, have facilitated its slow transformation from a beverage with a predominantly local appeal into a 'national drink', which is being produced increasingly for export and for tourists (see, e.g., De Barrios 2002 [1971]).

Owing to these efforts, the mezcal industry in Mexico and especially in Oaxaca has evolved into an economic sector of its own, which according to some estimates (DGAPEAS 2011: 3) generates at least 29,000 jobs. Morales Carillo, Escobar Moreno, and Paredes Hernández (2007: 9–14) divide mezcal producers in contemporary Mexico into three groups: small producers still using traditional technology and methods, family-run *palenques* with traditional methods but more modern technology, and big factories with large productive capacity. The second group is by far the most numerous, but also the most vulnerable to the potential adverse effects of aggressive commercialisation. Most notably, the success of the mezcal industry has also led to increased control mechanisms and standardisation. As the production of mezcal for export has grown – the produced volume grew by 300 percent in 2005–2009, amounting to 1.8 million litres (DGAPEAS 2011: 3) – so have the regulations on production become more severe. The Regulating Mexican Council of the Quality of the Mezcal (*COMERCAM*) is a special institution that now certifies mezcal

brands and monitors their compliance with the standard called NOM-070-SCFI-1994 (Bautista & Terán Melchor 2008). Such rigorous standardisation is understandable but can have repercussions, especially for small producers, who often lack the economic resources and also the knowledge to comply with the regulations (Morales Carillo & Escobar Moreno & Paredes Hernández 2007). Also, the fact that mezcal production is now increasingly controlled by middlemen, including governmental bodies, means that it can be affected by political factors and local power structures (Bautista et al. 2007; Bautista & Terán Melchor 2008). Another challenging and controversial issue is taxation. In recent years, the sector has suffered from increasing taxation burden that can amount to 69 percent (Proceso 2002; Zavala 2013). Again, this has hit the small producers particularly hard.

Despite these challenging developments, the mezcal industry has been a blessing for Oaxaca. The state produces more than half of Mexican mezcal and there are at least 500 small producers in Oaxaca alone (Mendoza Escamilla 2012). The production of the drink has turned into a much-needed source of employment for the otherwise marginalised regions and families, and the mezcal industry now constitutes one of the biggest sources of income in Oaxaca alongside tourism. According to DGAPEAS (2011: 3), in 2009 mezcal industry generated 6.5 percent of the total income of Oaxaca, only slightly less than produced by beer (8.7%) and tequila (7.1%).

The skilful blending of mezcal and tourism – Oaxaca's main sector of income – is particularly interesting. The increasingly popular 'mezcal tours' organised by many travel agencies and the yearly held International Mezcal Festival (*Feria Internacional del Mezcal*) in Oaxaca City are indications of this. The latter event is sponsored by the state government of Oaxaca and was begun in 1997, not coincidentally to accompany the Guelaguetza festival, which is the biggest state-sponsored cultural event in Oaxaca held yearly in the last two weeks of July. Besides conventional mezcal tasting and the promotion of different brands, the festival events also include the coronation of the Queen of Mezcal, traditional dances, and folkloric events aiming to associate mezcal closely with Oaxacan folk culture. The Mexican Ministry of Tourism and Economic Development is currently making plans to launch in Oaxaca the so-called mezcal-route, building on the Ministry's previous experience of the hugely popular 'tequila route' in Jalisco (Enfoque Oaxaca 2011). Mezcal-related literature for the local readership as well as for tourists is also proliferating rapidly (e.g. Arellanes Meixuiero 1997; Torrentera 2001, 2004, 2009; De Gortari & Escamilla 2009).

Torrentera (2001) uses the term 'mezcalaria' to denote this recent zeal to promote and reinvent the image of mezcal as a drink of great appeal and 'profound character'. Interestingly, although not surprisingly, some aspects of the local

level metaphorical discourse of mezcal discussed above are being reproduced at the state and national level. The familiar notions of *character*, *magic*, and *authenticity*, as well as the references to mezcal's curative qualities are very much present in the current official discourse on mezcal. To bring just a few examples from the 'mezcal-literature', De Gortari and Escamilla (2009) call mezcal 'our essence' and try to delineate the putative 'magic world of mezcal'. Arellanes Meixuiero (1997) suggests that mezcal is the 'elixir of long life' and Blomberg (2000) considers mezcal (together with tequila and pulque) as the metaphor of *lo auténtico mexicano* ('Mexican authenticity').

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has scrutinised mezcal and its consumption from the 'constructive' perspective. I have studied mezcal as a cultural category and endeavoured to demonstrate that this drink constitutes a symbolically potent metaphor in the rural areas of Oaxaca. It could be concluded that the symbolic discourse about mezcal in indigenous Oaxacan communities is essentially a cultural discourse about 'the self'. I have also argued that offering, sharing, and accepting mezcal has moral connotations, and that its consumption has an important social dimension – collective drinking occasions unite men. But consuming mezcal also marks a boundary between different social groups: women, although this is no longer always the case, as well as Protestants generally abstain from drinking mezcal. Such symbolic and social dimensions of mezcal are not necessarily manifest for an outsider, but here lies the contribution of anthropological analysis. Putting emphasis on emic perspectives and taking the native's point of view, anthropology enables us to uncover these implicit meanings.

In other words, from the anthropologist's perspective, drinking mezcal in an Oaxacan village constitutes an act that is culturally much more complex and meaningful than a 'simple' practice of consuming alcohol. Drinking mezcal is, among other things, a symbolic act. Naturally, making a symbolic statement does not need to (although it may) be a conscious intention from the part of the drinker. And yet, the act of such drinking inevitably signals to the rest of the community the drinker's belonging or not belonging to a certain social circle or a (sub)cultural group. It redraws a moral boundary between different individuals, or, possibly, undraws the previously existing one. For example, one can conclude with considerable certainty that the person drinking mezcal is not a Protestant. Yet it is not so much the association of mezcal with alcoholism that leads to Protestants' abstentionism but rather linking it to fiestas and saints – hence to religious idolatry. Similarly, the fact that one can now

witness considerably more women sipping mezcal during various social occasions, can be explained by the symbolic connotations of the drink rather than by women's emancipation in the villages traditionally characterised by rather patriarchal social and value structures. Consuming mezcal, the autochonous and nearly sacred beverage, is less frowned at by men than women drinking other alcoholic drinks, including beer. Moreover, drinking mezcal has become for many – men and women alike – a way of emphasising one's indigenousness, which in turn increases the drink's exotic appeal for tourists.

The idea that there is a connection between collective identities, food, and drinks, is anthropologically not novel of course. Nor is it surprising that certain cultural categories or images can acquire the role of what Ortner (1973) calls the 'key symbols'. In the case of Mexico and Mexicanness in particular, anthropologists have for long undertaken such symbolic analysis. Already more than half a century ago Eric Wolf (1958) described the Virgin of Guadalupe as Mexico's 'master symbol', which captures the mesticised essence of Mexicans and the Mexican culture. What makes the case of mezcal as a symbol particularly interesting, however, is the fact that one can literally observe its symbolic transformation at this very moment. Although mezcal has always been in the shadow of tequila and pulque, this to date mainly locally produced and consumed beverage is now being constructed as a national drink. Mezcal's novel and culturally constituted relationship with Mexicanness builds on its local symbolic and social connotations that I have outlined in this article.

NOTES

[1] This research was supported by the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund (Center of Excellence CECT), and the Estonian Science Foundation (grant ETF8335).

[2] I first arrived in Oaxaca in August 1998, as a visiting doctoral researcher at the Centre of Advanced Study and Research in Social Anthropology (*Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social* or *CIESAS*). Eighteen months of continuous fieldwork in the Zapotec region called the Sierra Juárez produced empirical data gathered from altogether 39 communities. During this and later stretches of fieldwork, the village of Capulálpam de Méndez has served as the base of my research, from where I have made countless visits to other villages. After my doctoral fieldwork, I returned to Oaxaca and the Sierra Juárez on four occasions, most recently in 2012. These fieldwork periods lasted from three to four weeks. Naturally, over the period of more than a decade, my research themes have been multiple. Symbolic and social connotations of mezcal is but one of the numerous topics I have scrutinised in the Sierra Juárez, and my other foci of interest have ranged from Protestant conversion and religious conflicts to anthropology of tourism and customary law. The data gathered over the period of 15 years includes notes based on participant observation in daily

communal life and many ritual and festive occasions, transcripts of innumerable informal conversations, more than 150 unstructured and narrative interviews with individuals from various villages, three statistical surveys, archival materials in the State Archive of Oaxaca and the General Archive of the Nation in Mexico City, content analysis of the articles on various topics in the 1988–2010 issues of *Noticias* (a major Oaxacan newspaper), and Mexican CENSUS data. The discussion in this paper is based on empirical data from all fieldwork stages, as well as 12 more targeted interviews during my last fieldwork in Oaxaca in 2012.

[3] Extensive overviews of anthropological perspectives on alcohol can be found in Heath (1987) and Dietler (2006).

[4] In 1965, Mandelbaum published a path-breaking article, in which he summarised some of the key issues for anthropologists in the study of alcohol. In another early study, MacAndrew and Edgerton (1969) combined ethnographic and ethno-historical evidence to demonstrate that drunken behaviour, although undoubtedly affected by biochemical and neuropharmacological factors, is also a product of culture-specific expectations and values.

[5] Mendieta y Núñez (1939) even estimated that, in the 1930s, up to 60 percent of the indigenous population in Mexico was drunk daily. In a more recent account on alcohol abuse in Mexico, Borges et al. (2007) suggest that alcohol consumption alone accounts for nine percent of the total burden of illness in Mexico. The proportion of alcohol-attributable deaths in Mexico is among the highest in the Americas (Rehm et al. 2006).

[6] Pulque is one of the 'archetypal' drinks of Mexico, which will be discussed in more detail below.

[7] The beverage was allegedly first produced in the 16th century near the city of Tequila, which gave it its name. Mexico has claimed exclusive rights to the production of tequila, and its production is limited to the state of Jalisco and selected regions in Guanajuato, Michoacán, Nayarit, and Tamaulipas (e.g. Blomberg 2000).

[8] The original name of the drink in Nahuatl was *iztac octli* ('white wine'). The term pulque was probably mistakenly derived by the Spanish from the *octli poliuhqui* meaning 'spoiled wine' (Gaytán 2007: 3).

[9] In colonial villages, pulque was particularly associated with two prominent Mexican festivals: the Day of the Dead and the fiesta for the Virgin of Guadalupe (Taylor 1979: 58).

[10] Pulque was, for example, Frida Kahlo's favourite drink. For her it epitomised the sense of Mexican national identity fostered in the post-revolutionary period (Wright 2009). Kahlo's husband, the muralist Diego Rivera, often depicted pulque and pulquerías in his paintings to symbolically incorporate workers and indigenous communities – two groups mainly associated with pulque production and consumption – within the discourse of Mexicanness (Wright 2009: 3). On the depictions of pulque in Mexican fine arts and literature, see also Ramírez Rodríguez (2007) and Olea Franco (2010).

[11] Pulque is nowadays mostly consumed in the central highlands. Not surprisingly, its consumption is mainly associated with poverty.

[12] There are two basic types of mezcal: one is made of 100 percent maguey and the other is a mix of different ingredients, with at least 60 percent maguey. But the actual sub-types can be highly varied, depending on the subspecies of agave used, and the fruits and herbs added during the fermentation and distillation processes. Some mezcals, usually from the state of Oaxaca, are famously sold *con gusano* ('with a worm'). This worm, added during the bottling process, is the larval form of the moth *Hypopta agavis* that lives on the agave plant (see, e.g., Torrentera 2009).

[13] In the production process, the extracted *piñas*, or hearts of the harvested plants, are cooked for a number of days in pit ovens, then crushed and mashed, and left to ferment. The resulting liquid is distilled and left to age for between one month and four years, sometimes even longer. Mezcal can reach an alcohol content of 55 percent. An interested reader may consult Torrentera (2001, 2004, 2009) for more detailed descriptions of the production of mezcal.

[14] The overwhelming majority of Mexican mezcal production is concentrated in Oaxaca, although some well-known mezcals also come from other states, such as Guerrero. Oaxaca, the acknowledged mezcal region, comprises seven districts in the Central Valley, covering altogether about one million hectares (Bautista and Terán Melchor 2008: 113).

[15] The most populous processions of such kind take place in indigenous villages of Oaxaca during Easter and the fiesta of the village patron saint.

[16] Mezcal's exotic appeal is often cultivated with rather explicit means. Although the worm (*gusano*) put in the bottle of some mezcals is considered to add flavour to the drink and serve as a proof that mezcal is fit to drink, many claim that it is merely a marketing ploy (e.g. Asimov 2010). To catch even further attention, some producers, like *Caballeros*, have introduced what they call 'Scorpion mezcal', with an intact scorpion added to the drink.

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FATE WRITTEN ON THE FOREHEAD IN SERBIAN ORAL NARRATIVES

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Abstract: This paper examines narratives about fate from the Serbian corpus, as well as beliefs related to them. A characteristic motif is that the demons of fate write fate on people's forehead. Such motifs and beliefs are also encountered elsewhere on the Balkans, especially in the areas that were under Turkish influence (Greece, Albania, Bulgaria), so it is undoubtedly a Balkanism. The presence of the motif among Turks and Arabs indicates oriental roots. However, the bottom source seems to be India where the oldest examples have been recorded. Classical Sanskrit literature (including tales collections, such as *Hitopadeśa*, *Pañcatantra*, *Vikramacarita*, *Vetalapañcaviṃśati*) provides numerous examples of this motif. This is certainly not a source but only a testimony of the presence of the motif. The contemporary rituals and views of modern popular Hinduism testify to its connection to belief. It seems that beliefs and narratives migrated via Muslim culture to the Balkans. Methodologically speaking, this is not a matter of going back to Benfey or Cosquin, but an example of the importance of regions and cultural contacts. The motif and belief seem to be close to the phraseologism "written on the forehead", but the conclusion is that they have different origins; while the idiom that is present in many languages comes from the idea of "reading", discerning one's nature, the narrative motif clearly has a specifically Oriental origin and is linked to living belief.

Keywords: Balkans, belief, fate, India, Islam, migrations, narratives, phraseologisms, regions

In oral tradition about fate (ATU 930, 931, 934) spoken in the southern Slavic and Balkan regions, the motif of written fate can often be found. This motif emerges in two ways. In one group it concerns an unspecified writing of fate or the fate that is written in books. In the second group, the forehead is the place where fate is written. For instance, in type ATU 930 it is written on a child's forehead that the child will eat a wealthy man's property (Šaulić 1931, no. 98). In type ATU 934 death by a turtle is written on the forehead (Đorđević 1988, no. 120). In the latter example, a man is trying to escape from a personified plague. When she catches him, she looks at his forehead and says: "It is not fated that I should kill you. You were running from me in vain and I was chasing you in vain. You'll be killed by a turtle". Later, as he mows a field, his scythe strikes

a turtle, ricochets off its shell and wounds his own leg. As a result, he dies of blood poisoning. In yet another example (Javor 1882) belief is blurred: three babies are born, and the first one has it written on his forehead that he will earn a certain amount of money.

This motif is not a stable part of any particular type of tale (as Uriah's letter is a stable part of AT 930). It can rather be found in the few types mentioned above, so it is mentioned only as a variant of a fate determination (in most cases the Fates speak). Also, the motif does not belong to the fictional aspect of oral narratives, but originates from beliefs. Moreover, this separation exists in the belief itself. The motif of a book of fate, i.e., writing fate in different books, will be left aside here. I can only note that it is very common, and it can be found as highly elaborated (the Fates do not have only one book, but a home full of books or notebooks) (Cepenkov 1972a, no. 112), and the writing of fate in books, tablets, or leaves occurred in old Rome, Babylon, and in Turkish and Finno-Ugric cultures. As for Indo-Europeans, to whom writing itself was yet unknown (West 2007: 386), the motif probably came from the same source as literacy, from the Near East.

The occasional mention of calendars or views about literacy in folk prose in general signals the penetration of contemporaneity and the spread of literacy and schools (Röhrich 1964 [1956]: 191–193), and should be differentiated from the aforementioned examples. However, the motif of written fate has nothing to do with that. It has a different, more ancient origin. The difference can be easily seen if we compare Croatian and Macedonian folktales. The former lack representations of the motif of writing on the forehead, although literacy is quite often present in them. The same is true of the folktales of Serbs from Croatia. Signs of literacy, which are more frequent in them than in Serbian folktales from the areas that were under Turkish influence, are connected to everyday life. In Macedonian folktales, although real signs of literacy can be found (e.g., mentions of school), the specific motif of writing fate is also present. The context itself, which is connected to pagan, mythological beliefs, indicates its different origin.

Similar to this motif are tales and lore about a skull with an inscription on the forehead, which are related to Emperor Constantine and the origin of Constantinople, and have also been identified in the book *Tales of a Parrot (Tuti-name)* (night 25) (Nahshabi 1979: 177). A man finds a skull with an inscription saying (Veljić 1900, no.7) (or it speaks itself) that it has killed many people; he burns the skull, but his daughter finds it, miraculously conceives and gives birth to a boy who, after several adventures, becomes emperor and establishes Constantinople. In the southern Slavic region this plot also occurs in a form of epic poems (Milošević-Đorđević 1971: 112–127).

However, these will also be taken out of consideration here because a similarity in motif still does not classify this group as a whole in tales about fate. The story parallels another one in Livy (1:55), favouring its categorisation with the narratives with traditions about the origin of a place. In Livy's narrative, while digging the foundations of a temple, an un-decomposed human head was found – a sign that Rome would be head of the world. The orientation in both stories is more cultural and historical, related to traditions about the origin of a place (and thereby to a collective fate and conception of history), as well as to the miraculous origin of the hero, the exceptional historical figure.

Regionally considered, neither the motif nor the belief is evenly distributed. They are quite common in the south of Serbia, and in the sources of Kosovo, Montenegro, and also Macedonia. An ethnological atlas[1] also records data from central Serbia, but considerably more come from the south; in Kosovo the motif occurs both in Serb and Albanian sources, while data from northern Serbia are rare, as are also those in the sources of Croatians and Serbs from Croatia (Nožinić 1998: 72). In Macedonia, it has been recorded that some informers believe that fate is written in a notebook, but others hold that supernatural beings write on the head. The one who does not believe should dig a head from a grave and he will see the fate inscribed on it. Hence comes a proverb: "What is written on the head will happen over the head" (Cepenkov1972c: 45). There is even a ritual of leaving the writing tools near the baby when welcoming the Fates (Penushliski 1968: 303–309; Filipović 1939: 413–415). In neighbouring Bulgarians, where the idea of written fate is quite common (Sedakova 2007: 210) – which once again confirms its regional character – it is also believed that fate can be read after death: during the ritual washing of bones[2], individuals with supernatural gifts can see the writing on the skull (Sedakova 1994: 55–56; Miceva 1994: 10). Hence the sayings: "What is written on the head does not go on the stone" (Daskalova-Perkovska et al. 1994: 346)[3]; "That was written and destined for him (on the head)" (Sedakova 2007: 194). In fact, cranial bone joints are treated as a script (Sedakova 2007: 213).[4] In Romania, this belief is not known, according to available data, but there is a saying that is obviously related to that idea: "Ce ți-e scris în frunte ți-e pus" (what is written for you, was put on your forehead).[5] Likewise, it was believed in Serbia (Gornja Pčinja) that if a pigmentation or a freckle occurred on the nose on a newborn child on the third night after being born (when it is believed that the Fates come and their welcoming ritual occurs), it was proof of their arrival (Filipović & Tomić 1955: 72). Similar to this is a belief from Leskovac, southern Serbia, that bloody scratches appear on a child's nose as a sign of their visit (Ethnological atlas, no. 2636). Bulgarians have the same belief in the signs on the nose, between the eyebrows (i.e., on the forehead), or on the chin. If a change in pigmentation

occurs around the mouth, such as a rash or redness, or if moles appear on the skin, it is proof that the *Orisnice* (Bulg. the Fates) have 'spat upon', 'burned' or 'scalded' the child (Sedakova 2007: 212–213). These beliefs also exist in other nations of the Balkans. In Albania, the decision of fate is written on the forehead (Brednich 1964: 166). In Greece it is believed that the Fates, or *mojre* (Greek: *Moirai*, Roman: *Parcae*) write their decision on the forehead or the nose. If pigmentation appears on a child's skin, it is explained as *mojra*'s writing (black pigmentation means bad luck, and white indicates good luck) (Brednich 1964: 162). Women take care not to wash off those stains or freckles on a child (Schmidt 1871: 212–213), and moles are called 'the writing of fate' (Lawson 1910: 126). A modification of the belief can be attributed to cultural and historical tradition: it was recorded that the Montenegrin duke Marko Miljanov had a white mark the size of a coin on his forehead, which was interpreted as a sign of greatness (Vukčević 1967: 17).

Geographically speaking it is clear that these beliefs and narrative motifs are more common in the south of Serbia, but that they are as common among Macedonians, Bulgarians, and Greeks, as they are rare among Croatians and Slovenians. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that the occurrence is a Balkanism. Culturally and historically, this is the area of the Balkans which has been under strong Turkish and Muslim influence (Turkey conquered the Balkan states in the Middle Ages and remained there until the early 20th century, finally retreating in 1912. Thus the empire's influence on the material and spiritual culture, let alone on the lexicon, was hardly small). The idea that the motif of the writing of fate is "a late Balkanism formed on the basis of archaic concepts within Balkan linguistic alliance" (Dukova 1997: 79–80; Sedakova 2007: 211)[6] is acceptable, but with the modification that will be shown in the following examples.

It is clear that there is a more general belief in written fate and another, a somewhat more specific one, related to writing fate on the forehead (or skull). The regional presence of this motif suggests looking for parallels primarily in Middle Eastern traditions. In the index of the Archive of Turkish Oral Narrative (Uysal-Walker)[7] there is also a motif of fate written on the forehead. (The Eberhart-Boratav index does not mention it; however, this is not surprising since we are discussing a motif, not a tale type.) It is known in the Arabian tradition: in *1001 Nights* it is mentioned several times (El-Shamy 2006: 187; Marzolph & Van Leeuwen 2004: 111).[8] In other Arabian tales it is identified as motif number A189.7 (the Deity ascertains the destiny of a newborn baby and inscribes it upon his forehead). Related motifs are found in A604§, A604.1§, A604.2§, A604.3§ (the determination of fate; tablets of fate; a quill records fate on a tablet of fate; 'it is written', i.e., fate, kismet) (El-Shamy 1995). This

image exists in the beliefs and customs of Arabs; in addition, in keeping with the belief that a quill writes fate on heaven's tablet, it is believed that fate is written on everyone's forehead (proverb: 'What is written on the forehead will inevitably be witnessed by the eye', i.e., it will be recognised) (El-Shamy 2008: 25). El-Shamy states that the oldest mention of written fate occurs in ancient Egyptian literature (Maspero 2002: xl)[9] and although this also depends on the given translation from Egyptian, it is not related to writing on the forehead. However, it does appear among Moroccan Jews.[10] And in Persian the word meaning 'forehead' (*pišāni*) also, although more rarely, means 'fate', 'luck', or 'fortune'; hence the saying: *pišāni dāštan* (have luck, be successful); *pišāniboland* means 'with a high forehead' and 'successful', 'lucky'. The word *sarnevešt* – fate, predestination – literally means 'written on the head' (PRS 1983 [1970]).[11] In Persian folktales, however, the motif does not have a prominent position.[12] On the other hand, it occurs in Persian classics: in Nizami's *Iskandar namah* (II: 24), as well as in Omar Khayyám's *Rubaiyat* (*to be sar-e man nebešte-i, man che konam* ('you / the God / wrote on my forehead, what can I do?')) (Khayyam 2004: 120–121).[13] But in these it may have been borrowed from the Arabic culture. The image also appears in the pre-Islamic civilisations of Iran: in the 5th century, Armenian Christian writer Yeznik polemicised against the fatalism of the Zoroastrian doctrine (it seems that the fatalism of the Zoroastrian doctrine was developed especially in the Pehlevi period) and mentioned the idea of fate written on the forehead (Dhalla 1938: 338). Also, in Armenian, the expression *tsakatagir* carries the same meaning. Outside this range, I am familiar only with the Latvian belief that if a woman has wrinkles on her forehead it means that she will become a widow (Šmits 1940: 1439).[14]

All this suggests the Eastern origin of the motif. However, it seems that its ultimate source does not belong to the Islamic cultural region. Its roots are older and are related to the oldest testimonies found in ancient Indian tales. In *Pañcatantra* and *Hitopadeśa* it is repeated a number of times:

> *likhitam api lalāṭe projjhitum kaḥ samarthaḥ*
> Who can delete what is written on the forehead
> (Hitopadeśa 1957: 1, 19)

> *vidhātrā racitā yā sā lalāṭe'kṣaramālikā*
> *na tāṃ mārjayituṃ śaktāḥ svaśaktyāpy atipaṇḍitāḥ*
> Letters on the forehead written by fate cannot be erased by all the sages with their (magical) force
> (Pañcatantra 1991: 2, 180)

> *yat yasya likhitam dhātrā lalāṭakṣarapaṅktiṣu*
> *tat avaśyam asaṃbhāvyam api taysa upatiṣṭhate*
> What is written for someone in lines of letters on the forehead by the god
> of fate will inevitably happen to him
> (Somadeva 1970: 12, 19, 156)

> *hariṇā 'pi hareṇā 'pi brahmaṇā 'api surāir api*
> *lalāṭalikhitā rekhā parimārṣṭum na śakyate*
> Not Hari (Vishnu/Narayana) nor Hara (Shiva) nor Brahmā nor gods
> can erase what is written on the forehead
> (Vikramacarita 1926: 22, 4)[15]

It is said in one aphorism (Subhāṣita) in a humorous tone:

> itaratāpaśatāni yadṛcchayā
> *vitara tāni sahe caturānana*
> *arasikeṣu rasatvanivedanam*
> *śirasi mā likha mā likha mā likha*
> O Brahma! Assign me hundreds of other miseries, as you wish. That
> I might tolerate. But please do not write on my forehead that I will have
> to read poetry to those who cannot appreciate it
> (Das 2004: 81)

Poet Bhartṛhari says:

> *Yad dhātrā nijabhālapaṭṭalikhitam stokam mahad vā dhanam*
> *Tat prāpnoti marusthale 'pi nitarām merau ca nāto 'dhikam*
> Whatever wealth, vast or scant, is traced
> On a man's brow by Disposer Brahma
> Will he win though he dwells on a barren desert
> But no more on the golden mountain Meru
> (Bhartṛhari 1967: 44–45)

In Kṛṣṇamiśra's drama *Prabodhacandrodaya*, a similar imagery appears:

> *mṛtyur nṛtyati mūrdhni*
> Death is dancing on your forehead

A servant replies to a given command:

> *mūrdhni niveśitah sarvā evājnah*
> All your commands are inscribed upon my forehead
> (Kṛṣṇamiśra 1974: 260)

The expression *brahmarekha* is also recorded in Sanskrit. It is defined by the well known Monier-Williams dictionary as "Brahma's line; the lines of a man's destiny supposed to be written by Brahma on the forehead of a child on the sixth day after its birth". A later Muslim influence can be excluded since the tales are firmly rooted in Hinduist culture and a major part of these examples are older than the arrival of Islam in India (*Pañcatantra* 3rd–6th century; *Hitopadeśa* 9th–14th century; Bhartṛhari supposedly 7th century). Examples from artistic literature should not be taken as a source, but rather as a testimony of the existence of the motif. A collection of tales such as *Pañcatantra*, although written in Sanskrit and in the high culture, derives from oral tradition.[16] This is confirmed by later records of Indian folktales. In the *Motif Index of Folk Literature* Stith Thompson includes the Indian variants for the motifs: "Man's fate written on his skull" (M.302.2), "Fate written on the head" (M.302.2.1), "Personification of Good Luck lives in man's forehead" (N.113.2). In the review of Indian folktales, which Thompson wrote with Jonas Balys, he enlists motifs of fate written on the forehead or skull (Thompson & Balys 1958). As here he addresses the modern Indian folklore that originates with modern Indian languages, we can identify a continuity in oral tradition as well as a continuity of beliefs in that area (Day 1912: 9; Narayan 1997: 144; Roy 2001 [1985]: 290–291). In modern folklore, the motif can be fitted into different narratives (the goddess of fate, Shashthi, writes on the prince's forehead on the sixth day after his birth that he will subsist on hunting. A minister hears about this and tries to prevent that. Or, Brahman writes on the prince's forehead that he will get married when he is twelve years old and later die from a thunder bolt (Cosquin 1922: 136–137).

In India this motif is also often related to folk beliefs. It was recorded by early ethnographers in the 19th century (Dubois 2007: 614–615; Bacheler 1856: 108) as well as by contemporary field researchers (Basu & Bose 2005: 194; Wadley 1994: 119, 122). The belief that the Creator writes fate on the forehead (Monier-Williams 1891: 370) is generally accepted. Although Monier-Williams (ibid.) states that there is no knowledge about these rituals, they do exist, and are recorded in modern India. In Bengal and Maharashtra the sixth day after birth is considered especially critical and is devoted to Goddess Shashthi. The ritual that is preformed is not of orthodox Hindu origin, but is obviously folk-magical, with the aim of protecting the child and ensuring him or her a long life. The goddess herself is of folk origin, incorporated into Hinduism, and is primarily the protector of birth and children. In the evening, an inkwell with red ink and a quill are placed in the child's crib, so that the god of fate, Vidhata Purusha, may write faith on the child's forehead. Women stay awake with a burning lamp all night (Gangulova 1969: 272). These beliefs and rituals are also present in

Tamil (Jackson 2005: xxii) and have been incorporated into Sikhism (in the holy scripture *Granth Sahib*) (Rahi 1999: 50–59).

Recent research confirms the presence in non-Indo-European as well as in Indo-European cultures, in the folktales, beliefs and phraseology of Indian languages (apart from Sanskrit, also in the Hindu, Tamil, Marathi and Kannada languages) (Kent 2009). For this reason, in Oriental studies, it is accepted that the Arabic belief about fate on the forehead is of Indian origin (Cohen-Mor 2001: 7–8). Based on this data, the source of the motif can be determined, as well as the ways of its transmission to Balkan cultures.

We cannot but wonder why precisely the forehead. The forehead is a significant part of the body in other folk prose genres as well. In fairytales, a wonderful beauty or her children have a star on the forehead. In some cases, the outer soul of an opponent hidden in an egg can be destroyed only if an egg is broken on the opponent's forehead. Another 'simple form' (in Jolles' sense) has to be taken into consideration, a saying which in the Serbian language goes: 'it is (not) written on his forehead' (meaning: it is not written on one's forehead what is in them). This expression, which from a folkloristic perspective is defined as a <u>saying,</u> would be defined as a phraseologism from a linguistic point of view. In contemporary speech, the phraseologism is not used to represent fate, but rather to express other ideas: 'It is not written on his forehead what he is like; it is not written on his forehead whether he has money'. Examples from speech praxis show the possibility of using these words in the most different of contexts. This expression also exists in German (es steht ihm auf der Stirn geschrieben), in Latvian, and also in the Latin language (fronti nulla fides[17]; ex fronte perspicere). Cicero, talking to his opponents, suggests in his famous speech against Catiline: "[---] sit denique inscriptum in fronte unius cuiusque, quid de re publica sentiat" ('Lastly, let it be inscribed on the forehead of each one what he thinks about the state') (Cicero I: 32). In English the closest expression is 'written all over the face', meaning: 'obvious from someone's expression or countenance', used for guilt, greed, joy, etc. (Wilkinson 1992: 406).

What is the connection between this phrase and the belief/motif of fate on the forehead? The origin of the phrase has not been conclusively established. For example, it is assumed that the Russian expression "na lbu napisano" ('written on the forehead') originates from the penal custom of branding offenders (first on the cheek, and from 1746 on the forehead). The mark sometimes had the form of a letter and powder was rubbed on it to make it more visible (Birikh & Mokienko & Stepanova 1998: 344–345). The opposite phrase 'na lbu ne napisano' ('it is not written on the forehead') is used in a comic sense according to the same interpretation. Similar to this is the custom of cattle branding, i.e., marking property, placing a mark. The word 'mark' (*beleg*) and the idea of marking are

used in southern Slavic folk culture for people who are branded in some way: a group of southern Slavic proverbs and expressions, the metaphoric expression of storytelling, is dedicated to those who are 'marked', i.e., to people 'marked' with a sign (Sedakova 2007: 72–73; 82).[18] Negative stereotypes are applied to the marked ones in traditional culture, e.g., men without a beard and moustache,[19] or sick people and other misfortunates who are considered to be marked by God and who should be avoided. (There is data about Balkan Christians who sometimes tattooed a cross on their children's foreheads to prevent them from being recruited for the Janissaries). This interpretation also has biblical parallels: Yahweh puts a mark (*ot*) on Cain so that he would not be killed (Genesis 4: 15), although it is not specified what kind of sign it was or where it was placed. In Ezekiel (9: 4) a sign on the forehead is written by Yahweh's envoys. In the Book of Revelation (17: 5) the sinful woman is described in this way: "On her forehead was written a secret name: BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND DETESTABLE THINGS OF THE EARTH"; it also says (13: 16): "The second beast forces all people – important and unimportant, rich and poor, free and slaves – to be marked on their right hands or on their foreheads".[20] These examples are clearly not related to fate. In the Jewish and Christian tradition they fit into a religious context, in which instead of fate God acts, or the Antichrist, as his earthly imitator. However, it is not certain that the idea of fate written on the forehead lies in direct connection with this version of the phraseologism, and therefore with the idea of placing a mark. Although it is possible that the saying can be related to this mark – because phraseologisms keep long gone customs (Permyakov 1970: 49)[21] – the phraseological idea itself can be older and independent of an actual punishing ritual: it can be a simple observation of the expression of feelings (this is very evident in the English expressions relating to the face, and Cicero's example can be interpreted as a mark as well as an observation of what people think).

One facet that these expressions have in common is a relationship between the outer and the inner, concerned with man's virtues, and especially character. The negative side, which is more common, actually denies the primary belief in the possibility of reading from the forehead. One's character remains concealed, and the expression is based on a certain degree of rationalism. In the background of the 'positive' form of the phrase lies the folk idea that one's character can be seen from the outside. This is especially evident in fairy tales, in which good heroines are beautiful and the evil are ugly (Lüthi 1990: 41–42).[22] The pictorial way of thinking is denied in the modern phrase ('it does not say so on the forehead'). Character will be replaced by other elements in contemporary speech, which shows a surprising agility and ability to fit this statement into the contemporary period and contemporary speech. Although the idea about

fate written on the forehead is in some way connected to this folksy way of thinking, it obviously has another history: it is constrained, specialised, and connected to belief, indicating that it is different than the general idea about anything on the forehead. Its connection to fate and faith probably derives from India and from there it spread through the Muslim Orient and into the part of the Balkans which was under Muslim influence. Belief is inserted as a motif into tales and traditions about fate.

In the end, we will mention that reading of the future from signs on the body in European learned magic is still present, with palmistry as the best known example. There are others, such as metoposcopy – predicting a person's destiny by reading the lines on the forehead. Lines are, according to the principle of analogy[23], related to different planets, and with a correct reading the future can be told, as well as one's character. In 1648, Philippo Finella published a book about metoposcopy (De Metroposcopia); in 1637 Ciro Spontini (Seligman s.a.: 301–306) published a book on the same subject. Reading the character from the face – which later on evolved into physiognomy (J. C. Lavater being the best known example)[24] – brings these examples of learned magic close to the folk belief and contemporary phraseologisms, but it is still to be determined whether there is a direct link/relationship, or whether the folk idea has entered into the learned magic, or again, whether the popular editions of these books influenced the strengthening of the existing idea, and even a diffusion. Metoposcopy was also known in Jewish circles that practiced Lurianic Kabbalah (Fine 1986). As there is certainly a similarity to chiromancy (reading a person's character or future from the lines on the palm), maybe there is some connection between the visual aspect of the phrase and the belief about fate lying in the lines on the forehead. Like the Rorschach test, they may provoke the idea, or, in other words, attract an already existing idea. A similar mechanism operates within etiological and historical legends, in which an object with its shape or oddness (a rock or a turtle) provokes narration, after which the object itself is presented as proof of the truthfulness of the narration. In general, chiromancy is very rare as a narrative motif, although there is the following example from Macedonian literature: Christ tells the teacher to look at the palms of the children, for their fate can be seen there (Cepenkov 1972b, no. 208).

It is reasonable to ask whether this kind of research – leaving aside the Balkanological and Slavic aspects – might be charged with old-fashionedness, i.e., are old Benfey's and Cosquin's methods being renewed? Certainly, in terms of methodology it does not aim to revive the 19th-century theories. It seems – if this kind of work can derive some more general conclusions – that the following can be observed. Philological research is far from being exhausted, so the study of folklore still has its place in literary and linguistic studies. This can be noted

in the justification of the use of old written testimonies, i.e., literature of the ancient cultures, taking them as a testimony, not as a source. Migrations and the contacts that they brought about – which have never been contradicted although they have not been the methodological focus for decades – can be seen in a different light (which the old migrationism underestimated): the interactions between cultural zones and the consequent discerning of cultural regions may be investigated. It is necessary to emphasise the link between motif and belief, because, although it has migrated, the motif was accepted in some areas and it has continued to live for centuries, obviously because it is connected with belief and fulfils a more significant function than purely narrative. A comparison of the different simple forms, such as sayings and tales, in this case fully reveals the phenomenology of both only in terms of its philological and ethnological cultural background.

NOTES

[1] Unfinished project; data are kept in the archive of the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade.

[2] A ritual that is characteristic of Slavic culture but is not present in other Indo-European people.

[3] Comment for type 934B.

[4] We could ask whether this simple empirical observation is the origin of the motif itself or its subsequent acknowledgement.

[5] Annemarie Sorescu-Marinković (Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts) has kindly assisted with Romanian beliefs.

[6] This could be applied to the writing on the forehead, not to writing in books; but it seems that writing on the forehead also originates in the Orient.

[7] http://aton.ttu.edu, last accessed on September 9, 2014.

[8] Cf. the motif of magical writing on the forehead (ibid.: 212).

[9] I am grateful to Professor El-Shamy for sharing his thoughts with me and for providing literature that is not easily available.

[10] Motif 302.2.2 in AaTh 934F (a daughter is born with three stars on the forehead, which indicates that she will be a thief, beggar and prostitute) (Palacin de Arcadio 1952–1953).

[11] Persidsko-russkii slovar' (Persian-Russian Dictionary) I–II. There is an interesting comparison for the observations about the mark on the forehead: *u mesle gave-pišāni sefid ast* ('he is like a cow with a white mark on the forehead', i.e., he is known to everyone).

[12] According to Professor Marzolph of the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* in Göttingen, Germany, to whom I am grateful for help.

[13] In Saadi's *Golestan* (1st chapter, 5th tale) a courtier is mentioned who has had signs of greatness on the forehead since his childhood.

[14] I am grateful to Sandis Laime from the Archives of Latvian Folklore, Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, of the University of Latvia, for the data.

[15] Southern recension.

[16] More about that in Grintser 1963.

[17] Cf. Iuvenalis, Saturae II: 8.

[18] In Serbian and Bulgarian there are phraseologisms 'roll over the head' – 'to get around'; 'swoop down on the head' – 'to put all the blame on someone'; 'it came on his head' – 'he had to do something for someone'; 'to put a head in a bag' – 'to risk one's neck', which Sedakova connects with this idea, i.e., with the connection of the forehead/head with written fate. This is a much wider idea in which the head is considered to be the focus of one's life, i.e., metonymically as Man himself ('how many heads' = 'how many people'; 'man's head' = man, 'woman's head' = woman), so it probably has nothing to do with the writing on the forehead.

[19] There are a number of tales about Cosa (the Beardless One), who is either a villain or a victim of a prank in the folklore of Balkan people; according to older assumptions it derives from stereotypes of eunuchs, who were influential and detested in Byzantium and Turkey, but it has more to do with hostility to someone with the "mark", i.e., someone who stands out from the image of the ideal man.

[20] In a religious context, the Jewish custom of placing the scrolls of parchment on the forehead (tefillin) can be mentioned, or the Athonite custom of writing a name on the skull of a dead monk. Akin is the Jewish tradition about the golem, who becomes alive when a magical inscription is put on his forehead.

[21] A reminder: writing on the forehead belongs to living beliefs.

[22] For older scholars like Karl Spiess, this was proof that fairytales originate from un-developed culture (Spiess 1924: 17, 103).

[23] The principle of analogy is one of the key principles of esoteric thinking, as defined by Antoine Faivre.

[24] According to the data that were kindly given to me by Sang Hun Kim (University of Seoul), in South Korea physiognomics is still active. There is no belief about fate on the forehead, but there is one about fate in the lines of the face.

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MATCHMAKING AND MARRIAGE NARRATIVES OF ISRAELIS OF CARPATHO-RUSYN ORIGIN

Ilana Rosen

Abstract: The Jews of Carpatho-Rus', presently the western part of Ukraine, were largely decimated in the Holocaust as part of Hungarian Jewry. Until then and more specifically in the interwar period, in which the region was ceded to Czechoslovakia, Carpatho-Rusyn Jews were a community of about 113,000 souls, living in an area of around 100,000 square kilometres. Most of them were Orthodox, often Hasidic, a few thousand were Zionist, and even fewer turned to communism; many of them were farmers or handymen or small industry workers. After the Holocaust, the survivors rebuilt their lives in Israel and the West, though some returned to Carpatho-Rus'. Throughout the 1990s, Israeli and American organisations of former Carpatho-Rusyn Jews joined forces to facilitate the study of their interwar culture and Holocaust history and experiences by Israeli universities. These efforts yielded two research projects in which I took part and recorded around five hundred narratives belonging to various genres, mainly legend and personal narrative, as well as a few dozen full life histories. The six matchmaking and marriage narratives (plus two adjacent glosses) presented and analysed in this article deal with the following phenomena and issues: tradition vs. modernity, romantic fulfilment vs. tragic separation in the shadow of the war and the Holocaust, and families established on the route to British Mandate ruled Israel/Palestine (I/P), or the State of Israel as of 1948.

Keywords: Carpatho-Rus', Central Europe, family narrative, Holocaust, Hungary, immigration, interwar, Jewish studies, marriage, matchmaking, personal narrative

INTRODUCTION: JEWS FROM CARPATHO-RUS' WITHIN THE ISRAELI MULTICULTURE

The Jews of Carpatho-Rus', presently the western part of Ukraine, were largely decimated in the Holocaust together with most of Hungarian Jewry (Segal 2013). Until the Holocaust, and more specifically in the interwar period, they were a community of about 113,000 souls living in an area of around 100,000 square kilometres, which was divided into the four historical Austro-Hungarian counties of Marmaros, Ung, Ugocsa, and Bereg, at the time under Czechoslovak rule. They lived in dozens of communities varying from large towns like

Munkács/Mukačevo, Ungvár/Užhorod, and Beregszász/Berehovo to small towns and villages. Most Carpatho-Rusyn Jews were Orthodox, generally Hasidic, though there were also followers of the more westerly oriented Rabbi Moshe Sofer (Hatam Sofer) dynasty. A few thousand were Zionist; even fewer turned to communism. A relatively high percentage of this Jewry were farmers and workers, much like their non-Jewish neighbours, and in conspicuous contrast to the typical image of more easterly *shtetl* (Yid. 'small town') Jews (Magocsi 1974; Rothkirchen 1977; Jelinek 2007). The Jews of Carpatho-Rus' lived in relative peace and mutual respect with their mostly rural, Orthodox Catholic host society, which itself was divided into several Rusyn/Ruthenian communities, as well as with Ukrainians, Hungarians, Romanians, and Germans living in the region (Hann 2006; Orla-Bukowska 2004; Rusinko 2003).

Figure 1. Map of Carpatho-Rus' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carpathian_Ruthenia).

After the Holocaust, the few thousand Carpatho-Rusyn Jewish survivors rebuilt their lives mainly in Israel and in the West, although some returned to or remained in the region. During many decades afterward, the survivors and others who had left early on were busy creating their new lives, families, and homes. As they matured, though, they realised that, like other Israeli groups (Hebrew: *edot*), they had their own history, identity, experiences, narratives, and folklore (Rosen 2009: 107–108). To this we may add their drive to perpetuate and literally salvage their past lives, families, and entire communities that were destroyed in the Holocaust. In light of all this, throughout the 1990s and 2000s, Israeli and American organisations of former Carpatho-Rusyn Jews joined forces to facilitate the study of their history and culture by Israeli universities. These efforts yielded two research projects. One was carried out at the Diaspora Research Institute (presently The Goldstein-Goren Center) at Tel Aviv University, and included Yeshayahu Jelinek's historical study and my own folkloristic study of interwar Carpatho-Rusyn Jewish communities (Jelinek 2007 (Heb. 2003); Rosen 1999). The second project, mine only, was already a result of the awareness created by the first, and it was carried out at the Institute of Contemporary Jewry of the Hebrew University at Jerusalem. In this project I offered a close reading of the entire life histories of fourteen Israeli Holocaust survivors from Carpatho-Rus' (Rosen 2004). The declared objective of both my projects was – following the wish or urge of the studied community – to recapture, as lively and authentically as possible, the actual experiences of these tradition-observant Jews, their daily routines, life cycle or year cycle highlights, occupations, formal and informal ethos, relationships, figures, and memories, as well as the informants' retrospective views on all these. For this purpose, I devised a detailed questionnaire to be used in the interview and storytelling meetings, including those carried out by a few volunteering ad-hoc research assistants of the community, like Zipora Nemesh and Sara Udi in this article (Rosen 1999: 184–185).

In the interview-meetings with individuals and at times small groups of informant-narrators, we usually spoke Hebrew, but occasionally the interviewees lapsed into Hungarian, Yiddish, or Carpatho-Ruthenian dialects, especially when talking about terms, proverbs, sayings, punch lines and other phraseological or formulaic speech. All in all, my fieldwork with Israelis of Carpatho-Rusyn origin yielded a collection of around 500 narratives belonging to various genres, mainly legend and personal narrative, as well as a few dozen full life histories, and dealing with many themes related to the narrators' interwar life in the region. This entire corpus was recorded throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s all over Israel, in the homes of the narrators, in cafés, or in a nearby university, from some 65 community elders, 40 men and 25 women. This entire collection

Figure 2. *Zipora Nemesh. Photograph by Ilana Rosen 1995.*

Figure 3. *Sara Udi. Photograph by Ilana Rosen 1995.*

is presently stored at the Tel Aviv University Diaspora Research Center as well as at IFA, the Dov Noy Israel Folktale Archives at Haifa University. A selection including 180 of these narratives appears in my book, titled *Ma'ase she-haya…* (Once There Was…) (1999), under the following thematic headings: Jewish life in Carpatho-Rus', livelihood and Torah learning, Hasidism vs. Zionism (see also Rosen 2008), generations or the life cycle, man and woman, wonder tales, Jews and gentiles, and the Holocaust.

JEWISH MATCHMAKING AND MARRIAGE AS ETHOS AND NARRATIVE TRADITION

The topics of courtship, matchmaking, marriage, marital life and – more generally – gender relations naturally came up often in the interview meetings, whether when discussing one's own family or when telling about interesting, extraordinary events in the environment of the narrators. In Jewish societies, marriage and the procedures leading up to it were and still are key rituals that

perpetuate the continuity of Jewish life from the era of the Biblical patriarchs and matriarchs, prophets and kings, throughout the various exiles, culminating in present-day diasporas or Jewish centres and the State of Israel. Therefore it is no surprise that marriage in Judaism was and still is a vital and innovative field of research. In recent decades, the study of Jewish marriage has become interdisciplinary as well as opened up to the experiences of Others, e.g., women, queer people (Ochs 2011), and individuals with physical and mental handicaps, both within Orthodoxy and in other streams. Historical studies point to continuity in the laws, rules and customs of Jewish marriage, together with changes caused by the proximity and influence of surrounding societies (Berger 2005). For example, Steven Lowenstein points to the impact of Central European Protestant society on the rise in the age of marriage among the Jews that lived within these societies in early modern times (Lowenstein 1994); and Marsha L. Rozenblit focuses on the courting stage in Viennese Jewish society during the 1920s (Rozenblit 2011), whereas David Biale surveys in more general terms the modernisation processes undergone by Jewish societies in the last few hundred years, with a focus on the practice of marriage (Biale 1983). An in-depth historical view of the practice of marriage in Judaism reveals that it was and still is viewed as an overt economic contract or business deal (Novak 2005; Grossbard 2007; Jackson 2011), as reflected also in quite a few of the narratives in this article. In addition to the examination of the practical, pragmatic sides of Jewish marriage, scholars have also studied it as a mental, psychological process, and as one of the rites of passage in the Jewish life cycle (Bulka 1989). Finally, contemporary Jewish gender studies have explored and emphasised women's experiences and perspectives regarding matchmaking and marriage (Broyde & Ausubel 2005; Baskin 2010; Kaplan & Dash Moore 2011).

Since couple relationships are the foundation for all societal existence and cultural continuity, they are viewed in probably most if not all civilisations as key issues of the community, and people deal with them intensively. Almost all collections of folk literature, of any society, have stories dealing with male-female relationships, whether from the male or female perspective. In most traditional collections, gender and couple relationships are addressed in the genre of fairytale, which is romantic and fantastic by nature, as well as in gnomic or minor genres such as proverbs, riddles, or jokes, all of which express and reflect traditional in-group as well as universal folk wisdom accumulated over many years and ever renewing (Shenhar 1983; Greenbaum Ucko 1990). The topic of matchmaking and marriage, which was touched upon in 10–12 of the 500 narratives I recorded in my Carpatho-Rusyn research projects, presents a crossroads of intertwining themes in the lives and lore of this group, and is thus proven to be, or to have been, a significant part of their milieu. Moreover,

this selection of personal narratives shows that, with regard to a community telling about its past life that was destroyed long ago, even a romantic subject receives significant expression in realistic, historical terms and genres, which historians call oral and bottom-up history (Rosen 2009: 110–112). These narratives demonstrate that people remember and narrate the ways that their parents met, they recall marriages of individuals with physical and mental handicaps (though I do not deal with this subject here due to space constraints), they tell stories about couples whose relationships developed in the shadow of World War II and the Holocaust, and about those who never consummated their love because of these events.

Considering the issue of family storytelling that seems to be lurking behind the present chain of narratives and their analytic discussion, it should be clarified that though it might seem as if these matchmaking and marriage narratives were grounded in habitual family storytelling events (as studied, e.g., by Brandes 1975, Dégh 1976, Langllier & Peterson 2004, Oring 1984, Stone 1988, Yocom 1982, and Zeitlin & Kotkin & Baker 1982), in fact they were not because, as said, the narrating community went through extreme processes of persecution, immigration, and re-integration in a newly founded state and society. These processes turned them into a community whose bygone Diaspora experience was irrelevant to their offspring, though amongst themselves they did habitually reminisce their shared past. Therefore, for this specific Jewish-Israeli group, family narratives and narrations are hardly part of their everyday experiences, but rather one of the topics they could discuss thanks to the opportunity afforded to them in recent decades by research projects of Israeli universities; hence the atmosphere and sense of salvaging, commemoration, and poignancy expressed in some of their narratives.

The six narratives chosen for this article (and two adjacent ones inserted to elucidate them) are, first and foremost, fragments of personal and family memories. However, they are also a reflection of the cultural milieu of these narrators and a historical testimony to the most horrific years for the Jewish people in the tumultuous 20th century. In light of this realisation, my literary-cultural analysis of the six narratives, focusing on the moments or moves of finding and/or losing one's mate rather than demonstrating comprehensive narrative examinations, is carried out on three levels: one, the poetic and structural elements of the narratives; two, the cultural elements (customs, norms, and taboos) of the narrating communities and, by extension, of Central and Eastern European Jewry in the first half of the 20th century; and three, the act of telling these narratives in the historical context of a bygone community whose few survivors strive to perpetuate their past lives through memories and stories.

NARRATIVES ABOUT MATCHMAKING AND MARRIAGE BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY

Peretz Litman of Haifa (b. in Munkács/Mukačevo, in the western part of Carpatho-Rus', in 1926, and emigrated to Israel in 1950) describes in his interview-conversation with Zipora Nemesh his parents' marriage as a hybrid between an arranged match and a personal or familial acquaintance.

Peretz Litman: *The Arranged Marriage of Father and Mother*

My father and mother married through a matchmaker. So did my grandfathers and grandmothers. My aunt, Mother's sister, once saw [my future] Father on the train. He used to travel all week long due to his business. And she asked [around], "Who is this good-looking fellow?" They told her, "He is a single fellow from Munkács." So she said, "Maybe he'll suit my sister who is still unmarried." So they went to Munkács. You have to ask around, you know. So they asked, "What are these Litmans like?" They were told, "They are a very good family, [there is] only one problem, they are of Polish descent." But my mother was wise. She said, "I don't care about his origin, the important thing is that he is a good fellow." They brought him over to see [him/her]. They found favour in each other's eyes and married in 1924. He received the dowry in korunas [Czech currency], and put it in the bank. I only remember that in my childhood, when they used to argue, he would tell her, "You can go back to your village, take your money, it's still there in the bank. Take the money and go home." (The interviewer and the interviewee laugh together.)[1]

Eliezer Friedman of Haifa (b. in Munkács in 1914 and emigrated to I/P in 1939) also points to cultural gaps between his parents, yet in contrast to the Litmans' case, this gap is not economic or "ethno-regional", but concerns the religiosity difference and mental gap between the spouses in an era of accelerated modernisation.

Eliezer Friedman: *A Kiss? Only after the Wedding*

Mother used to tell about Father, how she fell in love with him. She used to say, "*Er is geven a moderner yunger man*" (Yid. 'He was a modern/secular young man'). In other words, in that Orthodox atmosphere, the story of my parents – [though] I repeatedly heard it as a boy – was not so simple, I didn't really understand it then. My mother told us that on their wedding day they went to register in the municipality. It was on the second floor, you [addressing interviewer Zipora Nemesh] remember our municipal council building, right? So after they registered and after they

went down the staircase, this wide staircase, you remember? So Father approached her and wanted to give her a kiss. And she said, "No, not yet, only after the wedding." (The interviewer and the interviewee laugh.) That was exactly my mother's fate, caught between the conservative orthodoxy of her parents and Father's modernity and progress.[2]

Both of these two narratives dealing with the tension between tradition and modernity also have an equivalent version in documentary writings published in recent decades by the same narrators or by their family members. In his printed autobiography, Peretz Litman devotes much attention to descriptions of his town of Munkács, the various Jewish groups that lived there, and the Polish origin of his family (Litman 1996). Eliezer Friedman's younger sister, Rachel Bernheim-Friedman, emphasises in her Holocaust memoir the religiosity and mentality gap between their parents. The parents married just before World War I, and the gulf between them grew after the father's military service during the war, when he was exposed to Jewish nationalism (Zionism), secularism, and the impact of generally more modern Central and Eastern European people and tendencies (Bernheim-Friedman 2005).

In Peretz Litman's oral narrative about his parents' match, the mother's married sister "once saw [my future] Father on the train. He used to travel all week long due to his business". The enterprising sister takes the initiative to look into the background and identity of "this good-looking fellow", in contradistinction to traditional norms and genres that attribute the discerning eye to the groom or his emissaries and beauty to the bride. The sister/aunt's inquiries reveal that there is "one problem": the fellow is of Polish(-Jewish) descent, which for Austro-Hungarians, including Jews, means inferiority despite the fact that Carpatho-Rus' itself was viewed by central-state Hungarians as a far-flung, God-forsaken region. Given this "problem", the bride/wife/mother is characterised by her son as "wise", because she is willing to consider the issue and the "fellow" despite the "problem" of his seemingly inferior provenance, as long as he is a "good fellow". At this point, the potential couple is allowed to meet: "They brought him over to see." Interestingly, Peretz uses the transitive verb "see" [Heb. *lirot*] without specifying the object "her", which enables an egalitarian reading of the act as a mutual "seeing" and scrutiny of the two.

Their son Peretz, who of course was not present during the matchmaking and marriage of his parents, clearly remembers things his parents said a few years later about their earlier period together, especially regarding the dowry that his mother brought into the marriage. It turns out that his father succeeded in his "business" and, as a result, never needed his wife's dowry, which he had deposited "there in the bank". Years later, during arguments between Peretz's parents, the father tells the mother that she can withdraw her money from

Figure 4. *Munkács/Mukačevo City Hall today (http://www.panoramio.com/photo/1256365).*

the bank and "go back to [her] village", though this can likewise be the father's response to the mother's threat of taking her money and leaving. Thus, the later exchange of words becomes an echo of the "transaction" at the foundation of the marriage (Chiswick & Lecker & Kahana 2007). However, over the years the relative positions of the husband and wife have changed: while the groom's status was viewed as inferior in the matchmaking stage due to his foreign background and harder economic circumstances, now the relative superiority of the bride/wife no longer threatens the industrious groom/husband, who wisely built himself up economically and socially as a respectable Munkácser, which is another issue that Peretz emphasises throughout his book.

In Eliezer Friedman's narrative, the Jews of the town, as all other residents, had to register for civil marriage and declare their change in marital status to the municipality, in addition to the religious ceremony conducted close to the time of the civil registration. Apparently, the registration preceded the religious ceremony, which explains why the bride refused to be kissed once out of the

municipality building. According to her belief and perspective, only the Jewish religious ceremony could transform her into a married woman and allow her to be touched by her husband. In effect, Eliezer's narrative demonstrates that although he announced in the beginning that it was a story about "how she [Mother] fell in love with him [Father]", it is really the story of their walk down the municipal building staircase after their civil marriage registration, and of his mother's refusal to see herself as married to his father so long as they were not married according to Jewish religious law.

Eliezer's sister Rachel, of Kibbutz Yakum (b. in Munkács in 1922 and emigrated to P/I in 1947), who published her memories as a Munkács native and Holocaust survivor in two different books (Bernheim-Friedman 1999; 2005), chose to focus on the story of the parents' earlier acquaintance, and that too only from the point of view of her future father:

> My mother and father both came from very religious families. The "institution" of the *shadkhan / shadkhen* (Heb./Yid. 'matchmaker') was accepted at the time, and the only way that young women and men met one another before marriage was through the *shadkhan*. When Father reached the age of eighteen, the age deemed ready for the *huppa* (Heb. 'wedding canopy' and – by metonymic extension – 'ceremony'), the matchmakers started frequenting their home with good recommendations for a *shiddukh* (Heb. 'match'). Father rejected the pious, righteous potential brides offered to him, as well as the wealthy daughters of privileged families, and sent them [the matchmakers] directly to Mother's home. [That was because] he remembered her after he had seen her once, by chance, near a store. Her image was reflected in the store window and Father distanced himself a bit, then turned on his heels to look at her again. After a few days he returned to that same place, and he saw her again. He gazed at her and was certain that she would be the one he would lead to the *huppa*. That's why he sent the matchmakers to her house when they came to his parents' home. After a very short time, they were wed according to [Jewish] religion and law. It was love at first sight (Bernheim-Friedman 2005: 18).

In Rachel's over(t)ly romantic version, the initiative and the discerning eyes are attributed to the future groom, in contrast to the gaze of the intended bride's sister in Peretz Litman's narrative, while the intended or future bride never gets to function in the semantic role of an "agent", but only in that of a "recipient" (Bouchard 1995; Berk 1999). In this sense she is even less active than in Eliezer's narrative, in which she at least has a say about being kissed after the civil marriage and before the religious ceremony. Thus the two siblings, Rachel

Figure 5. *Rachel Bernheim-Friedman (http://www.mynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3640241,00.html).*

and Eliezer, traverse in their narratives the continuum between tradition and modernity, romantic and realistic modes, and the hypothesised points of view of their father and mother, almost a hundred years after the event.

NARRATIVES ABOUT MATCHMAKING AND MARRIAGE IN THE SHADOW OF THE HOLOCAUST

In the narrative of Haya Adler of Kfar Sava (b. in Huszt/Chust, in the central-south of the region, in 1926, and emigrated to Israel in 1949), she describes the hardships endured by her older, idolised brother in his attempts to oppose the norm of arranged marriage for the sake of marrying a young woman that he met on his own. The tone of Haya's narrative is elegiac and lamenting, as it expresses her grief over the later loss of her beloved brother in the war, evidently in the Hungarian army labour battalions or "service" (Rosen 2012), before he was able to marry his sweetheart.

Haya Adler: *An Arranged Marriage vs. Courtship*

When they made a *shiddukh*, they were very careful that the families would suit one another; this was of great importance. My brother – the brother I spoke about earlier, the one whom the Rabbi wanted to take with him to *Eretz* ('Land of') Israel – he fell in love with a girl. He came home from *yeshiva* [institution for the study of Jewish holy scriptures] and went to drink something [in a coffeehouse]. It was customary for the young fellows to go to that place. And in that place, the [owner's or the manager's] daughter used to come in a lot, so he began to court her. At first it was all hush-hush, it took years, and it was not so simple. And then

my parents found out and they got very angry. [They said:] "What kind of business is this, for a *yeshiva bahur* (Yid. *yeshiva* 'disciple/student'; Heb. *bahur yeshiva),* this is terribly inappropriate!" And the girl's family was not what my parents looked for, for him, because he was a very talented, special son. Out of the nine children, two were very talented, my oldest sister who was married, and he. Parents sense this kind of thing, when [a child is] very talented. Children are not all the same. And he [Father] said, "Especially for you, we will make a great *shiddukh*." They [the girl's family] were a *beseder* (Heb. 'okay') family, *be'alei batim* (Heb./Yid. 'house owners, economically secure'), but they were of Polish origin, so they used to say [condescendingly]: *a poylishe* (Yid. 'a girl from Poland'). It wasn't exactly what they wanted because they didn't know who their [the girl's family] ancestors were, didn't know their lineage, because they came from far away. In addition, my father opposed the match because it was based on courtship. That is not our style. And my brother suffered from this a lot, it took years. He went to the army, came back from the army, he was already twenty-plus years old and he courted her very seriously, he wanted very much to marry her. It was terrible at home, a real *tisha b'av* (atmosphere of sorrow and mourning as on the Ninth of Av, the date on which, according to tradition, both Temples were destroyed). He fought for it. And I, as a child, I fought on his side. My brother suffered terribly for this. Then the parents relented, they saw how much he suffered and they agreed to the match, and really went through with the match. But unfortunately they never made it to a wedding, because of what came along [the Holocaust].[3]

Another, adjacent narrative told by Haya, about an earlier stage in her brother's life, works to intensify the tragedy of his later death:

Haya Adler: In [our town of] Huszt there was a *yeshiva gedolla* (Heb. 'a higher-learning yeshiva') of Rabbi [Yosef Zvi] Dushinsky, and my brother studied there, [the brother] who disappeared in Russia later on. He was still a very young fellow then. Rabbi Dushinsky left for *Eretz* Israel in 1933 or 1934, I don't remember exactly. My brother was a very good student, keen and sharp-minded. He [the Rabbi] really loved him and invited Father over, [to ask him for permission] to take my brother with him to *Eretz* Israel. He [the Rabbi] says, "He is something, if he's near me, he will warm my heart." My Father went there and returned from the Rabbi, crying. He said, "What, should I send my child and never see him again in my life?" He did not agree. He did not allow him to go. But in the end, he [my brother] died in the war. It could be that if he had come here [to Israel], he would have remained alive.[4]

***Figure 6.** Haya and Shlomo Adler. Photograph by Sara Udi 1995.*

According to this narrative, the brother had been a beloved disciple of Rabbi Yosef Zvi Dushinsky (1867–1948), Huszt's charismatic Rabbi, who left for *Eretz* Israel in 1933 (Rosen 1999: 38–43). Before his departure, the Rabbi asked the father of his outstanding and beloved student for permission to take his son along, but the father refused to part from his son and ultimately the son died in the Holocaust.

In the main narrative, the talented brother later met a girl from a "Polish background", a disparaging label as in Peretz Litman's narrative, and "he courted her very seriously, he wanted to marry her very much". Haya details the negotiation or struggle between her brother, with whom she identified in her childhood ("and I, as a child, I fought on his side"), and their parents. The parents resolutely opposed the match for three reasons: first, the girl was supposedly foreign and of inferior origin; second, the fact that the two met each other directly and not through a matchmaker; and, third, the parents' desire to execute the best possible economic and social "transaction" for this "very talented, special son" ("Especially for you, we will make a great *shiddukh*"). Haya emphasises the prolongation of the feud between the son and his parents:

"It took years. He went to the army, came back from the army, he was already twenty-plus years old," and the gravity of the dispute: "It was terrible at home, a real *tisha b'av*." She also highlights the tenacity and suffering of the idolised brother: "My brother suffered terribly for this […] He fought for it." Ultimately, after years, "the parents relented", meaning that they adjusted their values and expectations to the reality that their son set before them. But to Haya's great sorrow, as expressed in the repetition of the word "very" throughout both her narratives, the parental agreement arrived too late and the son/brother never enjoyed "life with the wife [he] loved" (Ecclesiastes 9:9).

The narrative of Oli (Olga) Klein, presently of Budapest, Hungary, and originally from Beregszász/Berehovo, in the western part of Carpatho-Rus', also revolves around a match that was unusual for its time and place and was never consummated because of the Holocaust.

Oli (Olga) Klein: *Engaged to a Non-Jewish Fellow*

It is quite hard for me to talk about it. At the age of seventeen I met a young fellow, not Jewish. After four years of great love, they took me to Auschwitz. He wanted to hide me, but I refused. [He] helped me in that he took my dowry [for safekeeping] – because it was fashionable at the time for young women, brides, to have dowries – and afterward, I received the dowry back.[5]

Oli never emigrated to Israel, and I made her acquaintance while she was visiting Israel and stayed with friends whom I interviewed as a group of formerly Carpatho-Rusyn Jews from Beregszász. She took part in the interview event, but I did not have the opportunity to learn more about her or record her full life history, as I did with others in that project (Rosen 1999: 79–86; 2004: 133–138); that is why Oli's short narrative remains unclear and enigmatic. Therefore, it is not clear whether Oli ever married her non-Jewish boyfriend, or why she did not accept his offer to hide and protect her from deportation to Auschwitz. Between the lines we can glean that after her return from the camps, the distance between Oli and her Christian boyfriend grew and they could not continue the "great love" they had had before the Holocaust (for a novelised depiction of the gap between a camp survivor and his wife see: Duras 1994 [1985]). It is also reasonable that she enlarges on the custom of the dowry to compensate for her inability to talk more about her first fiancé and their relations.

NARRATIVES ABOUT MATCHMAKING AND MARRIAGE
ON THE WAY TO I/P

In contrast to the narratives of Haya Adler and Oli Klein, the narrative of Shoshana Meron of Ra'anana (b. in Brod/Brid, in the centre of the region, in 1928, and emigrated to Israel in 1948) ends on an optimistic note: the match at the heart of the narrative turns out to be successful and the couple is spared the fate of most of the Jews in their region during the Holocaust.

Shoshana Meron: ***A Bridegroom from Eretz Israel***

There was a family without the father [who had died]. There was [only] the mother. There were some six daughters. You know, a widow, to support six daughters, to marry them off, it was impossible, really. An uncle of theirs lived here [in *Eretz* Israel]. So he sent bridegrooms for the daughters, fellows from Israel. The last one that came, it was during the period when the Hungarians were in charge [ruled over Carpatho-Rus' in 1939–1945]. And this Yemenite [-Jewish] fellow showed up. How did I, we, even know that he was Yemenite? We didn't know anything about Yemenites. He arrived. He was small, dark, like a gypsy. But he didn't speak [Yiddish], only Hebrew. So the family came to ask [my] Father to come and talk to him, translate him. He [Father] knew Hebrew but spoke it with an *ashkenazi* [European Jewish] accent. Father was the only liaison to connect this man, this fellow, to that family. He was a Yemenite, she was scrawny, transparent as cellophane, nothing but skin and bones, with blue eyes. He wasn't so excited about her. He wanted the *shikses* [Yid. colloq., derog. 'non-Jewish women'], the strong, healthy gentile women. And he did start to fool around after some time, to make contacts with everyone. Meanwhile he learned Yiddish, he knew a little Russian. And he did not want to get married. Ah, no, *she* did not want to marry *him*. That didn't bother him, but he couldn't return [to I/P] because they closed the borders. So they went anyway… Wait, no, that was when they were still under Czech rule [in the interwar period]. He travelled to Prague and tried to get a certificate from the British embassy [to enter I/P]. They didn't give it to him. So he came back and said, now that I [know that I] am not returning [to I/P], I do want to marry her. And they got married. And they actually went back to Prague and went on *aliya* [Heb. 'emigration'] to *Eretz* Israel. She survived and [they] live to this very day. I even visited them in Zichron Yaakov [south of Haifa]. They are alive and well to this very day.[6]

In Shoshana's narrative the contrast between different identity groups is even more prominent than in the others, as it features the following contrasts: *Eretz* Israeli Jews vs. Central and Eastern European Jews; Yemenite Jews vs. Austro-Hungarian Jews; and "scrawny", "transparent" Jewish girls vs. "strong", "healthy" Christian girls. At first the intended bride and groom view one another with disfavour ("And he did not want to get married. Ah, no, *she* did not want to marry *him*. That didn't bother him"). Afterwards, the fellow wants to go back to *Eretz* Israel but he is blocked by the British Mandate authorities that rule the country. Now he does want to marry his "skin and bones" match, and she wants him, and the two ultimately succeed in making their way to *Eretz* Israel.

Among the hundreds of narratives I recorded for my two Carpatho-Rusyn research projects, there is a long, complicated narrative by a woman who managed to leave the region by means of a fictitious marriage, but later faced difficulties in releasing herself from the marriage bonds.[7] Both that narrative and this one demonstrate that married couples, real or fictitious, had fewer difficulties making their way to I/P than did single individuals, because Jewish organisations mediating between the emigrants and British Mandate authorities preferred to grant the coveted immigration license or "certificate" to couples over singles. Thus it is likely that the two agreed to marry, following their initial reluctance, because around 1939 they realised that marriage was their only way to leave for *Eretz* Israel. Yet their union, which was originally based on the desire to flee Europe rather than for each other, withstood the test of time, and the two remained a couple long after, "to this very day", in Shoshana's fairytale-like wording.

Like Shoshana Meron's narrative, the narrative of Zipora Nemesh (b. in Munkács in 1919 and emigrated to Israel in 1956) also carries an anticlimactic undertone as it features an unromantic relationship based on practical circumstances rather than on mutual attraction.

Zipora Nemesh: **How I Met My Husband**

In 1946 I married my husband, Moshe Géza Nemesh, who had a doctorate in chemistry. We lived together for forty-eight years. Eight months ago he passed away. After the war I worked with children. In 1946 they decided that I would make *aliya* with a group of orphaned children. We travelled to Budapest with this group and there my future husband – I didn't know him then – entered the same railway carriage [as the children and I]. He always wanted to help me and take care of the children, until the children asked, "Where is your fellow?" and I reciprocated, "What fellow?" And they said, "Géza". I didn't know that he was my "fellow". Afterwards, he

helped me so much with taking care of the children until we really became a couple and we returned to Hungary because he wanted to introduce me to my parents, sorry, his parents. And we wed in 1946.[8]

In Zipora's case the anticlimatic tone may derive also from her being a newly bereaved widow at the time of the interview, in which she seemed unable or unwilling to delve into emotional issues and, instead, summarised her forty-eight years of marriage in three sentences. She then proceeds and turns the clock back fifty years, to the period when she met her future husband during her work as counsellor of orphaned Holocaust survivor Jewish children on their way to *Eretz* Israel (on the reconstruction of families and educational frames by Jewish displaced persons (DPs) following World War II see: Baumel 1997). Here, too, the narrative is not romantic: while she is aware of Dr. Moshe-Géza's presence and assistance in taking care of the children, Zipora does not view him as a potential beau or candidate for marriage. The ones to make the connection or "match" between Zipora and her future husband are the children in her care: "The children asked, 'Where is your fellow?', and I reciprocated, 'What fellow?' And they said, 'Géza'. I didn't know that he was my "fellow"."

In the early post-Holocaust period, following the total destruction of Jewish families and their traditional frames and authorities, the orphaned children act as matchmakers for this couple that actually holds a parental role in their lives. Soon afterwards, after "[they] really became a couple", the two travel to the husband's parents in Hungary to officially introduce the bride. This act symbolically returns the functions of matchmaking and marrying off children to the hands of the older generation. But Zipora's slip of the tongue, "to introduce me to my parents, sorry, his parents", serves as inadvertent testimony to the rupture remaining in her consciousness despite the ostensibly happy ending, since Zipora's parents and most of her family and community were lost in the Holocaust. Furthermore, the children that she nurtured and educated throughout her life, from Munkács in her youth to Haifa in her middle and old age, remained the only children that she ever had, as she and Moshe-Géza never had any children of their own.

CONCLUSION: NARRATIVE AS COMMEMORATION OF A LOST COMMUNITY

In summary, in this article I have examined a group of narratives dealing with matchmaking and marriage among the Jews of Carpatho-Rus' between the two world wars, as narrated and documented in Israel around the end of the 20th century. The narratives about the marriages of the parents of the interviewee-narrators testify to the tension between tradition and modernity, or devoutness and secularism, as well as to the sensitivity and wariness of Carpatho-Rusyn Jews vis-à-vis other, "foreign" Jews, mainly those with more eastern Polish roots. The narratives about matchmaking and informal acquaintances in the shadow of the Holocaust carry an overtly tragic note, as they express sorrow over the loss of the life and love that existed before the Holocaust. Finally, the narratives about relationships that were formed slightly before or after the Holocaust and led the couples to Israel conclude on a positive note. However, they also contain an anti-climactic tinge as these matches and courtships emerge as "defaults", due to the atmosphere of danger and demise that hovered above their protagonists during that period, similarly to the majority of European Jewry.

When reading these narratives of matchmaking and marriage as a whole, we learn about the Carpatho-Rusyn Jewish communities of the interwar period, which were largely lost in the Holocaust. We gain knowledge of their self-images as well as their images (or imaginings) of Others, such as Jews from near or faraway places, of different classes, complexion, religious style, as well as of non-Jews. Accordingly, we realise their readiness or reluctance to tie their lives with these Others and thus reconsider or even change their age-old persuasions, with the threat of destruction adding an extra twist or "turn of the screw" to their dilemmas. The unexpected unfolding of some of the narratives offers insights concerning the wishes, needs, and necessities of these people as anchored in their time, place, mentality, cultural setting, and specific life circumstances. Evidently, harsh life, war, and destruction may have changed their views and choices but not their preferences and tastes as preserved in their narratives even over fifty years after the event. All this points to the importance of memory, memorialisation, story, and reflection for these narrators who, in their golden years in Israel at the end of the 20th century, attempt to recreate their past vanished lives, families, communities, and entire worlds as vividly and faithfully as they can.

NOTES

[1] Peretz Litman, Haifa, Israel; interviewed in 1995 by Zipora Nemesh, transcribed by Ilana Rosen; the Dov Noy Israeli Folktale Archives (IFA) at Haifa University, IFA serial no. 23831. All Hebrew narratives for this article were translated by Sandy Bloom.

[2] Eliezer Friedman, Haifa, Israel; interviewed in 1995 by Zipora Nemesh, transcribed by Ilana Rosen, IFA 23323.

[3] Haya Adler, Kfar Sava, Israel; interviewed in 1995 by Sara Udi, transcribed by Ilana Rosen, IFA 23203.

[4] Haya Adler, Kfar Sava, Israel; interviewed in 1995 by Sara Udi, transcribed by Ilana Rosen, IFA 23201.

[5] Oli Klein, Budapest, Hungary; interviewed in 1995 (in Israel), translated from Hungarian into Hebrew and transcribed by Ilana Rosen; Archives of the Research Project of the Jews of Carpatho-Rus' and Munkács/Mukachevo, the Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center at Tel Aviv University, file Ehrlich, item no. 26.

[6] Shoshana Meron, Ra'anana, Israel; interviewed in 1995, transcribed by Ilana Rosen, IFA 23846.

[7] Tova Noyman, Netanya, Israel; interviewed in 1995, transcribed by Ilana Rosen, IFA 23645.

[8] Zipora Nemesh, Haifa, Israel; interviewed in 1995, transcribed by Ilana Rosen, IFA 23859.

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The Dov Noy Israeli Folktale Archives (IFA) at Haifa University

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COMPILATION CONTEXTS OF MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN BULGARIAN CHARMS

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Abstract: The article deals with the medieval and early modern Bulgarian verbal charms and their textual contexts. More specifically, the focus is on the manuscripts in which these charms can be found. Both the charms and the manuscripts are discussed as cultural phenomena, which were part of complex cultural contexts, including processes like compilation, usage, adaptation and transmission. The article traces the organising principles of the miscellanies containing verbal magic, and also the actors and factors that influence these manuscripts and their content. Then, the article discusses the specifics and the role of variation and practicality, and the complex interrelation between the written and the oral. Finally, the article points out some specific patterns and relations between the apotropaic and curative functions of the charms, the processes of written and oral transmission, and the broader textual content of the manuscripts. The main goal of the paper is to urge a discussion on medieval and early modern Bulgarian verbal charms in the light of their immediate textual and broader cultural environment.

Keywords: apotropaic magic, canonical and non-canonical texts, cultural context, medieval manuscripts, verbal magic, written and oral transmission, written charms

INTRODUCTION

The medieval and early modern Bulgarian verbal magic is a complex and diverse cultural phenomenon. As a central element in this sphere, the medieval and early modern Bulgarian charms share this complex nature. These charms constitute the source material for my study. More precisely, I refer to the manuscripts dating from the 14th–15th centuries (Petkanova 1982: passim; Popkonstantinov & Kronsteiner 1994: 39–40), which contain these charms. They all existed in a multifaceted and multileveled environment. The charms were part of various processes: composition, compilation, translation, transmission, usage, application, adaptation, intermingling, continuation, distortion and oblivion, to mention a few. Additionally, there is the supernatural sphere, the human sphere, the quotidian sphere, the practical sphere, the sphere of written and oral texts, etc. Therefore, we should speak not of one, but of many, multiple and various contexts, levels and processes.

The examination of the dynamics and interconnections of these contexts, processes and surrounding milieus is of primary importance for the deep understanding of charms as cultural phenomena. However, as Lotte Tarkka aptly points out:

> *The main problem with the notion of context is that context is in itself not a homogenic and unproblematic background, a given reality: it too consists of different cultural processes, different discourses, a multitude of things happening simultaneously or sequentially. Furthermore, the textualization of the culture as a whole into ethnographic accounts and descriptions of multiple contexts blurs the boundary between text, context and what could be called a meta-text: the presentation of the whole in manuscripts and secondary literature.* (Tarkka 1993: 178)

This is very much true of written verbal magic and its contexts. The surrounding milieus of charms are not only extremely complex, but also very elusive. As T.M. Smallwood points out about his Middle English textual examples: "It is often hard to 'place' a charm by its context…" (Smallwood 2004: 12). Here I would add that also it is often hard to 'place' a manuscript or amulet with charms by their context.

The extant medieval and early modern Bulgarian charms are relatively short texts, written in Old Church Slavonic language. Usually, they are to be found in Orthodox Christian religious books: priest's service books (*sluzhebnitsi*) and books of occasional prayers (*trebnitsi*). The charms can also be found in miscellanies (*sbornitsi*) and healing books (*lekovnitsi*) (Petkanova 1982: 40–44). When approaching the manuscripts (and their content of verbal magic and charms) within a particular process and context (in this article, this is the context of compilation), we face certain specific questions, which I shall address here.[1] My aim and attempt is to track the patterns of compilation that shaped these manuscripts.

The main obstacle to be kept in mind here is that we work with source material, which is more or less fragmentary. The fullness of the picture and the depth of the evidence, provided by the extant source materials, are debatable too. There can only be a hypothesis on what the actual medieval and early modern verbal magic situation was like as a whole. The answers to the specific questions about the compilation process depend primarily on these surviving sources, with all their potential and limitations. This is followed by the contextualisation and the scholarly interpretations of the data. Full and ultimate answers are not available or possible. However, it is possible and important to look at the sources from various perspectives and to explore both the evidences and the lacunae.

ORGANISATION OF COMPILATIONS

What is the organising principle of the compilations examined here? Are they arranged according to the functions of the words of power, according to their form, or according to the procedures and the paraphernalia applied? In other words, why are certain prayers or charms gathered together in a written form?

As it was said above, Bulgarian charms are usually found in Eastern Orthodox Christian religious books. On the one hand, the general content of each of these books is united under certain religious purposes, as specialised literature for priests or devotional literature for lay people. On the other hand, this content is often diverse and varied.

The first example is *Trebnik* (book of occasional prayers, dated 17th century, NBKM[2] No. 622) (Tsonev 1923: 132–138). The manuscript contains the Akathist hymn dedicated to the Mother of God; fifty-three prayers and charms that are to be read or uttered on various occasions: celebration of church feasts, birth-giving, baptism, marriage, confession, harvest, for curing different illnesses, when building and consecrating a new house, when making a new well, for purifying food vessels, for protection against different illnesses, for protection against the Devil; canonical and non-canonical formulae for exorcising the Devil; blessings for good health; commemorative lists of people. Among the prayers, we can see a number of charms, the most prominent of which are the twelve texts against the *nezhit*[3], grouped together under the title "Prayers against the Cursed Nezhit". They are preceded by another charm for an ill person and are followed by a prayer for the blessing of a new well.

The content of *Trebnik* No. 622 is very diverse and at the same time very consistent. The charms are not in the margins, but completely integrated among other texts. The twelve charms against the nezhit constitute the most remarkable part of the book. Actually, they form a peculiar section, dedicated to a specific health problem. The section starts with the following charm[4]:

> Jesus came down from the Seventh heaven, from his home, met the nezhit and asked it: "Where are you going?" And the nezhit answered: "I am going into the human head, in order to bemuse the brain, to break the teeth and the jaws, to deafen the ears, to blind the eyes, to distort the mouth, to block up the nose, so there will be headache day and night." And Jesus said to the nezhit: "Go back into the forest and enter the deer's head and the ram's head, because they can bear everything and still survive. And stay there until the end of Heaven and Earth. And be afraid of the Lord, who is sitting on the cherubim throne, until He comes to judge the entire universe and you too, rabid nezhit, who are the source of every infirmity.

> *I am conjuring you, nezhit! Go away from the God's servant [say the name]*
> *in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost."*

The other anti-nezhit texts follow similar narratives. The tenth charm represents a special case, because of its peculiar benevolent supernatural character:

> *The nezhit fell from the sky, the blind shepherds saw it. They chased it*
> *without feet, caught it without hands, tied it without a rope, burned it*
> *without fire, killed it without a knife, and ate it without mouths. From*
> *the bones, the nezhit went into the flesh, into the skin, into the hair, and*
> *melted, like salt in water. Let it disappear in the same way from the God's*
> *servant [say the name] now, and forever and always.*

And finally, the twelfth text against the nezhit played the role of an apotropaic amulet (Popkonstantinov & Konstantinova 1988):

> *Adam had a nezhit and passed it on to Eve. Eve passed the nezhit to the*
> *lead, the lead passed it to the sea, the sea passed it to the sand, the sand*
> *passed it to the beach, the beach passed it to the grass, the grass passed*
> *it to the dew, and the dew passed it to the sun. The sun came up, and*
> *the nezhit perished in the God's servant [say the name] now, and forever*
> *and always.*
> *Write this prayer on lead.*

Trebnik No. 622 is a liturgical book, a practical manual for a clergyman and a collection of verbal magic. It contains canonical and non-canonical words of power, which cover the main events and issues in and of human life. The prayers and charms form a homogenous content. In my understanding, *Trebnik* No. 622 is an exemplary case for crisis management through verbal magic. The book is practically orientated, both as a priest's professional book and as a collection of words of power. The non-canonical texts are integrated among the canonical ones, forming a syncretic whole. Its purpose is the provision of effective verbal magical instruments for coping with everyday human problems.

The second example is *Niketovo molitveniche* (Niketa's book of prayers, dated 1787, NBKM No. 646) (Tsonev 1923: 161–166). This manuscript contains a drawing of a cross; prayers against fear, sword, arrows, bewitchment; a list of the names of Virgin Mary; a list of the names of the archangels; prayers and charms against illnesses, unclean powers, the Devil, the nezhit, storm and wind, thunder, lightning; prayers and charms for good luck at the court of law and when travelling; a list of the names of God; a charm for killing the enemy; five seals to be worn as amulets against nocturnal fear, wind and witchcraft, and for good luck in travelling and when going to a superior authority; part of the apocrypha *Kamak padna*.

The content of *Niketovo molitveniche* is clearly apotropaic. The syncretic mixture of canonical and non-canonical is specifically focused on protection and aversion from evil. The *Niketovo molitveniche* is a special case, as it provides information about the owner (a certain Niketa). To some degree, the book can be seen as a personalised collection of verbal magic.

The third example is *Sbornik* (miscellany, dated 15th–16th centuries, NBKM No. 308) (Tsonev 1910: 252–254), whose content includes: orthography rules, recipes for ink, parts of the vitae of St. George and St. Alexis, prayers for birth-giving, divinatory texts (*trepetnik, gramovnik, lunnik*[5]), a charm against rabid dog bites, prayers for successful fishing, a charm for staunching blood, a charm against hard rain and against the nezhit to be written on lead. A note in the margin informs us that the book belonged (at least for some time) to a certain priest Michael.

The content of *Sbornik* No. 308 is truly miscellaneous and very practically and daily life-orientated. It shares features with the previous two examples, but it also shows some differences. *Trebnik* No. 622 is a liturgical book, containing some non-canonical texts. The *Niketovo molitveniche* is (most probably) a personal prayer-book, containing a mixture of canonical and non-canonical texts with emphasised apotropaic purpose. In comparison, *Sbornik* No. 308 is more like a manual with a variety of practical information. Still, it is in connection with the clerical milieu, as it is indicated by a note in the margin.

The forth example is *Sborniche s apokrifni molitvi* (collection of apocryhphal prayers, dated 17th century, NBKM No. 273) (Tsonev 1910: 174–175), which contains: drawings of three crosses, accompanied by the explanations of their apotropaic amuletic powers; a list of the 72 names of the Lord; lists of the names of the Mother of God, the archangels, John the Baptist and the apostles, all of them to be worn like amulets; the first chapters of the four gospels; fourteen *strashni molitvi*[6] of Archangel Michael against plague, witchcraft, storm, and wind; of St. Peter and Paul against the Devil, plague, witchcraft, storm and wind; of St. Nicholas against evil wind and witchcraft; of St. Paul against evil; of St. George for good luck at war, when travelling and when going to the court of law; five prayers when appearing in front of the king or other superior; two charms against the sword and arrow; a prayer for saying before travelling; charms against thunder; against cramps and the nezhit; prayers and charms against plague, vampires, wolves' attacks on the cattle, beasts and bandits, and for protection of vineyards, fields and barns; twelve seals of king Solomon to be worn when going into battle, for the love of God, against magic, for the court of law, against plague, bewitchment, for travelling, against the arrow and sword, for successful trade, against storm and wind, against serious illnesses, against an evil encounter, against vampires and female malice.

With its predominantly apotropaic content, the *Sborniche s apokrifni molitvi* is quite similar to the *Niketovo molitveniche*. Defence against evil and help in a variety of critical situations are the main topics in both manuscripts. However, the non-canonical charms and elements slightly predominate in the *Sborniche s apokrifni molitvi*. The manuscript is actually written down in notebooks, with a very simple writing and arrangement of the text. It is possible that the book was written (or copied, or compiled) by someone for private usage (Tsonev 1910: 175).

Clearly, all these manuscripts focus on practical purposes. The texts inside feature benedictory and apotropaic functions: to bless, to sanctify, to purify, to expel the evil, to protect, and to cure. In my opinion, function is the main organising principle of the manuscripts. These books belong to religious literature, but they are also *Fachliteratur*. The content consists of texts and words of power, which have to accomplish certain functions, mainly benedictory, supplicatory and apotropaic ones. Prayers and charms and borderline cases[7], the words and texts of power are gathered together in written form because of their effectiveness in providing supernatural help and support in an important or critical situation (Shniter 2001: passim). No matter whether the content is canonical or non-canonical, it is very difficult to separate the compilations from the functions of their content. In my understanding, the compilations exist because of these functions. These books contain, preserve and transmit the words and texts of power (canonical and non-canonical ones) as practical instruments for communicating with the supernatural.

The charms, the prayers, and the borderline cases are important instruments to cope with a crisis situation. Giving an example of a charm for curing a cow, Ulrika Wolf-Knuts points out:

> *The content of the charm was constructed in order to correspond to the needs of a certain situation in human life, and the components were taken from several spheres, culturally inherited as well as self-experienced. We must assume that charms were used in critical existentially important situations, in which the person who utilised the text referred to his or her own environment.* (Wolf-Knuts 2009: 62–70)

A crisis could put the economic wellbeing and the physical existence of a rural household at a great risk. Therefore, the inhabitants have two choices: to give in, or to counteract the difficult situation. The use of charms means "to oppose the powers that cause the crisis and try to thwart them. Saying a charm would be one of several ways of coping with the dangerous situation". As "coping is a cultural, socially anchored, repetitive activity that opens a person's eyes to

new opportunities in time of distress" (ibid.), the books with charms constitute a central element of this system of counteracting.

Therefore, the words and texts of power constitute an essential part of the crisis rites and crisis management in general. In the framework of verbal magic, the charms and prayers can be regarded as the last and the strongest defence against the disaster, illness or evil. They are the most powerful resort to cope with the critical situation; they are the culmination of all the efforts to influence and change reality. The contact with the Other World very often means a crisis. The interaction with the supernatural agents and forces is very often a battle, and very often an uneven one, especially in the case of health issues. The words of power provide the most effective possible techniques to direct this dialogue and to face such a crisis, and the strongest weapons to lead this battle. In their turn, the manuscripts and amulets appear as important manuals, preserving and providing the essential information and texts of verbal magic.

DIVERSITY AND VARIATION OF CONTENT WITHIN COMPILATION

The data from the sources show that the compilations tend to include a number of variations within a narrow range of themes. These themes are: health-related issues, protection against evil and against forces of nature, and provision of good luck and success. To the best of my knowledge, in general, the medieval and early modern Bulgarian verbal magic is predominantly apotropaic, focused on these three topics.

Within this general framework, the health-related verbal magic deals with the following issues: preservation of good health, prevention of health problems, protection against diseases, afflictions and injuries, and curative treatment and healing of illnesses, traumas, etc., such as snake bites, rabid dog or wolf bites, the nezhit, dental pains, haemorrhage, urine detention (in humans and horses), constipation, fever, cramps, spasms, swelling and festering of horse's legs, and prevention of a sudden death (especially by drowning). The preservation of health is closely connected with protection against various evil powers and agents. The list includes the Devil, various demons, personifications of different illnesses, evil and malevolent humans, and damaging forces of nature like winds, storms, heavy rain, hail, floods and fire. And finally, there is the theme of provision of good luck and success in different human activities. Here the list includes: appearance in the court of law, travelling, bee-keeping, fishing and wine-making.

While the number of topics is rather limited, the texts dedicated to certain problems can vary significantly. The charms against the nezhit stand as the most prominent example. The twelve texts, gathered together in *Trebnik* (17th century, NBKM No. 622), demonstrate a variety of charm-types and constructive elements (encounter and narrative charms, conjuration and expulsion formulae, impossibilia and origin accounts, historiolae and ratifications) which represent twelve different variants for solving the problem (Conkova 2010: 101–118). Groups of charms against the nezhit can be found also in *Sborniche s apokrifni molitvi* (17th century, NBKM No. 273, containing four texts) (Tsonev 1910: 174–175) and *Trebnik* (1839, NBKM No. 1386, containing five texts) (Hristova & Karadzhova & Vutova 1996: 73–75). Other manuscripts and amulets contain single charms against the illness (Popkonstantinov & Konstantinova 1988: 28–30). Thus, one single health problem is covered by a substantial number of texts.

The prayers and charms for protection against evil powers represent another example of variability within a narrow theme. Here the variation is expressed through different benevolent supernatural authorities, which help people and expel the evil. For example, the *Sborniche s apokrifni molitvi* provides such protection on behalf of Archangel Michael, Sts. Peter and Paul and St. Nicholas. Fevers, witches and the Devil are often expelled by St. Sisinnius. Some manuscripts, like, for example, the *Niketovo molitveniche*, put emphasis and hope in the amuletic power of the cross and the seals of king Solomon.

Another example of variation can be seen in the charms against snake-bites. Usually, they contain a long list of different names and epithets of the snake. While the historiola can vary significantly (Jatsimirskii 1913: 78–102)[8], the list of names remains relatively unchanged and fixed.[9] Thus, these charms have one of the longest and most elaborated expulsion formulae. In my opinion, the careful repetition and transmission of the complex charm structure (narrative combined with a list of names) proves the effectiveness attributed to this text.

In conclusion, the source material shows a repetition of limited themes and rich variation within each theme. If we accept that the extant source materials are representative enough, then the correlation between the small number of topics and the large number of variations could be an indication of the importance of these particular topics. It is remarkable how this particular set of themes and issues is repeated again and again in a number of manuscripts and amulets. The recurrent trio, health – protection against evil – good luck, is the basis for flourishing variation, especially among the non-canonical texts. The charms show a richness of forms and structures, while still treating the same circle of well-known problems time and again.

FACTORS AND ACTORS IN THE PROCESS OF COMPILATION

The process of compilation is interconnected with other cultural processes. The phenomenon of compilation is inseparable from the whole big complex of traditions and practices, which apply and smooth the words of power (both charms and prayers). "Tradition is seen in relation to its user, an individual and a group, and to its arena, the physical environment which moulds cultural and socioeconomic activities." (Honko 2000: 17) Here the process of regularisation via erosion and sedimentation, when a charm becomes tradition-smoothed, is always active. In a flourishing tradition, there is no decay, only natural variation; "decay, growth and constancy all take place at the same time" (Roper 1997: 98). The normative and the remarkable are constantly and dynamically defined and re-defined, resulting in adaptations and variations of the existing charms. "An adaptation of tradition occurs only when it is used for special expressive purposes in specific living situations." (Honko 1981: 32) As Lauri Honko summarises, "flexibility rather than stability seems to be the key to the continuity of tradition, to the kind of 'invariability' typical of oral tradition which prevents variation from going astray and distorting the song or story completely" (Honko 2000: 4).

This dynamic process is also relevant to verbal magic and charms. The compilations with words of power reflect both the continuity and flexibility of the tradition. The compilations also play a role in the process of transmission. "There is no single model of charm transmission or charm performance suitable as a description for the entire genre." (Roper 1997: 98) The process and nature of the charm transmission do not have clear-cut borderlines. There can be a tight transmission, which is the passing of an oral text from one charmer to another without changes; a loose transmission, which allows deletions and innovations; a forgetful transmission, when sections of the text can be partially or completely lost or affected by cross-contamination by parts of other charms (Roper 1997: 18; Vlasova 1972: 26–30). The tight transmission, however, may include auditory substitution, mishearing, misreading and miscopying.

It is difficult to determine which type of transmission was at work in the Bulgarian examples. In my understanding, this is a case of loose transmission. When compared with historical parallels, the medieval and early modern Bulgarian texts show a number of innovations and an amalgamation of constructive elements from different charm-types.

Another important term here is text fixation, which is "a process by which a multiform oral text is 'fixed' by being written down in a single variant" (Roper 1997: 19). As concerns the Bulgarian medieval and early modern material, this situation is quite peculiar. Due to the fragmentation of the data, we do not know

all the phases of the process of text fixation. Some of the extant medieval and early modern charms are single variants in the sense that they are the ones that survived. However, there are charms, variants of which can be found on amulets and in manuscripts, separated by several centuries. Judging from the extant sources, the medieval Bulgarian charms had their text fixation in two ways: on amulets (as verbal magic in action) and in manuscripts (as manuals for reference and transmission of verbal magical information). Of course, this is only a hypothetical statement, based on the surviving data.

The compilations with words of power are artefacts reflecting one aspect of a living tradition. Other aspects, however, remain elusive and obscure, and the question about the practitioners is one of them. Contemporary sources (for example sermons) contain some additional information on the charming tradition and practice. Quotations like the following shed some light on the figures of the practitioners:

> *And the priests have false writings in their Euchologia, like the bad Penitentials (Nomokanony) and the false Prayers for the Fevers. Heretics had distorted the traditions of the Holy Apostles, writing false words to deceive the vulgar; but the Council investigated them and cleansed them and cursed them.* (Mathiesen 1995: 162)[10]

And:

> *And in their Euchologia, among the Divine Writ, the stupid village priests have false writings – sown by heretics for the destruction of ignorant priests and deacons – thick village manuscripts and bad Penitentials (Nomokanony) and the false healing Prayers for the Fevers and for infections and for sicknesses. And they write fever letters on prosphorae and on apples, because of sickness. All this is done by the ignorant, and they have it from their fathers and forefathers, and they perish in this folly. Heretics had distorted the traditions of the Church and the Canons of the Holy Apostles, writing false words.* (ibid.: 162–163)[11]

Still, the data are far from complete, and the picture remains sketchy. It is uncertain who the practitioners and the users of the charms were, although some conjectures seem more probable than others. Valerie Flint writes that in the Early Middle Ages there were a large number of practitioners of magic, they were faceless and nameless, difficult to recover and to be described exactly, but "of an outstanding importance to our appreciation of the rise of magic" (Flint 1991: 59). It is difficult to apply this definition to the Bulgarian material and situation. Maybe there was such a host of practitioners of verbal magic, but we only know a few things about them. The role of the clergy appears to be

central in the process of compilation of the manuscripts that contain charms. As William Francis Ryan points out, Christianity and practices like amulets, divination, pagan and quasi-Christian charms are late importations in Russia via Bulgaria and Serbia.

> *And it seems clear that the importers were for the most part the minor clergy, who until quite recently could be practitioners in magic and divination among the East and South Slavs, both Orthodox and Catholic, as they could in the West.* (Ryan 2004: 121)

In Russia the Church, "despite its official attitudes, was certainly one route for the importation of particular kinds of charms: uncanonical prayers and practices in many cases from fairly early periods of Christianity in the late antique Mediterranean world, with apocryphal motifs and persons and intermixed with pagan elements" (ibid.).[12] In the light of such transmission process, the quotations from *On the True Books and the False* are relevant. In my opinion, they can contribute to the understanding of the Bulgarian manuscripts and their contexts.

Although the reasons for such a situation are debatable, practicality is still the most probable explanation. Kazimir Popkonstantinov connects the introduction of the charms in Christian religious books with the daily life needs and practice of the local priests (Popkonstantinov 1996: 16–18). Maria Shniter shares a similar opinion (Shniter 2001: passim, esp. 40–50). And still, who used the words of power, especially the charms? Was it the village priests? It seems very probable that they were verbal magic practitioners, as many of the manuscripts with charms are liturgical books. What about the medieval and early modern Bulgarian folk healers? There are indications that such practitioners existed, yet the information about them is fragmentary and scarce (Angusheva & Dimitrova 2002: 81–99; 2004: 273–290). This side of medieval and early modern verbal magic is still a difficult scholarly terrain.

What is the role of lay people in the making of compilations and addition of the marginal notes? In one case we know the person's name, in another case – the occupation. Niketa and his book of prayers are of special interest here. Niketa's name is mentioned many times throughout the whole manuscript of the *Niketovo molitveniche*. Most probably, he owned the manuscript, at least for some time. It is also highly probable that he used the words of power in practice. The charms seem to be too personalised. Although the book is a religious one, there are no direct indications whether Niketa was a priest or wrote the manuscript himself. *Sbornik No. 308* was owned by priest Michael. *Sborniche s apokrifni molitvi* is *de facto* a notebook, most probably somebody's personal belonging,

and as if compiled in order to provide fast reference to important apotropaic texts. Was it made and owned by another priest, whose name did not survive?

According to Honko, "while charms and rite formulae could be passed to the next generation of healers, an individually developed cognitive system could not. On the evidence of texts of charms and prayers, little can be deducted about a healer's personal beliefs and code of behaviour. It is, however, possible to identify in the texts the basic symbols of a healer's worldview. Many of these symbols will be much older than the environment in which the healer was active" (Honko 1993: 526). If this is to be related to the Bulgarian material, then we can see an interesting picture. The compilations with charms and prayers stand between the canonical and non-canonical, between the clerical and the lay, between the oral and the written. If we can identify a feature of the practitioner's view, this is the need for reliable and effective verbal magical instruments for communication with the supernatural and for protection against its menaces, as well as the tendency to preserve and transmit the words of power, regarded to be useful and efficient in coping with the quotidian issues, challenges and critical situations.

The interaction between the oral and the written shapes another cultural context. First of all, the clear-cut distinction between orality and literacy is unstable, "as there can be varying degrees of literacy in a community (total illiteracy, functional illiteracy, semi-literacy, occasional literacy, high literacy), and because 'texts' slip in an out of oral tradition, to print, to oral tradition again. Furthermore, many written texts can show signs of their traditional oral roots" (Roper 1997: 53). Charms are not only subjects of oral-written-oral-written-etc. transmission; they are *par excellence* exemplary for such a transmission. The compilations with words of power give evidence "of the interplay of the oral and the written and, within each, of casual change and careful repetition" (Smallwood 2004: 13).

The notions of oral and written should not be regarded as polarities, connected in a binary opposition. Oral and written are only two of the many possible grades on the cultural scale.

> *Folklore studies have shown us time and again that oral traditions and texts co-exist in myriad ways. The 'Ethnopoetical' theory of registers developed by Dell Hymes and his colleagues discards the crudeness of the oral versus written dichotomy in favour of realistically complex explanation in terms of language and speech act.* (qtd. in Roper 1997: 53)

On the one hand, verbal magic and charms are an oral discourse.

> *In the far wider reaches of society with no access to professional medical help, desperate recourse to charms would have been all the more likely,*

> *and all the more thoroughly oral. Given this unbounded non-literary circulation, when charms do turn up in writing we have every reason to expect corruption, incoherence, reworking and variation of all sorts. If we think of charms as texts, they are not so much* textes mouvants *as* textes courants. (Smallwood 2004: 12)

This oral way is probably the oldest method for the transmission of words of power. Oral discourse goes back to very ancient times, beyond memory and written records. If widely represented, it is also connected to the difficulties in finding the original form or the oldest possible variant of a charm. Oral discourse and the oral way of transmission lead to the actual situation, in which "there was, then, no Ur-text that one could reasonably hope to recover, however many copies one might find" (ibid.).

On the other hand, charms are subject of written transmission, which is often accompanied by respect "for particular wording, for precise reiteration" (Smallwood 2004: 12–13). This written evidence and the written way of transmission are unique and of key importance. They should not be neglected or underestimated.

> *In fact one soon realizes that the written record, far from being universally set down from memory or dictation, is at some periods and in some types of document unlikely to be anything of the sort. Altogether, if we put together these different aspects of the transmission of charms, what we have to expect in studying them is evidence of the interplay of the oral and the written and, within each, of casual change and careful repetition.* (Smallwood 2004: 13)

This quotation is repeated, because it aptly presents the most important point: the cultural contexts and processes (of compilation, adaptation, transmission, etc.) are a field of constant interaction and interplay, their core and essence. The medieval and early modern Bulgarian manuscripts with charms and prayers are *textes courants per se*, existing in a dynamic milieu. This environment can also be seen in relation to power. It is a matter of power to achieve a certain effect, power to communicate with the supernatural, power to protect from an illness or evil supernatural agent, power to oppose successfully a wide range of threats from both Our World and the Other World. Both the oral and written forms of the words of power are instruments in the service of the practitioner. The manuscripts with charms and prayers are practical manuals, providing the essential verbal magical information when needed. On the complex power relationship between the oral and the written, Owen Davies gives an example from early modern England, where "chapbooks were hardly the most impressive of literary formats, so continental cunning-folk also made written compilations

of their contents in more awe-inspiring manuscript books" (Davies 2007: 176). There were two major cultural influences on the British cunning-folk: religion and literacy.

> *For cunning-folk the possession of literacy and literature were crucial, the inference being that when it came to assessing their worth, people placed more emphasis on the acquisition of written knowledge than other sources of magical inspiration.* (ibid.: 183)

To sum up, the manuscripts with words of power "exist in two interactive domains, that of popular oral composition, in which a large number of stock elements can be arranged in a variety of traditional structures at the choice of the appellant or performer, and that of the written spell-book, in which the spell assumes a fixed form and may be transmitted, or collected, in this form" (Ryan 2004: 116). In the case of Bulgarian materials on amulets, the words of power written on an object create an amulet with all its powers. In the case of the charms in manuscripts, the written form is most probably meant to preserve important information, and also to be used as a reference and reminder device. It is also important where and how the charms are situated in the book and among other texts. As it was said above, they are often embedded or incorporated integrally in the content of the manuscript. It is difficult to determine if the charms were inserted or intruded in unexpected places.

However, there are cases when the charms seem to be added at a random place, in the margins or at the end of a book. These different categories "suggest different methods of transmission for the charm-copies concerned" (Smallwood 2004: 17). The oddly inserted and intruding charms could come from any source: from memory or from a written source (which in turn can be of various content, length, etc.). The integrated and "the 'embedded' charm-copies are of course straightforward examples of written transmission. In the British examples of T.M. Smallwood, the copies of charms found in the innumerable original 'receptaries' must again be examples of written transmission" (Smallwood 2004: 17).[13]

PATTERNS

From the above-said, several patterns can be outlined. Firstly, the process of compilation is closely connected with the functions of the texts in the manuscripts. The functional aspect is of primary importance in the shaping and existence of books with charms and prayers. The circle of themes is narrow

(health protection against evil or good luck), but within each topic the charms show variation and diversity.

Secondly, the process of compilation is closely related to the transmission of the type oral-written-oral-written-etc. The written form inside the manuscripts is only one form of existence for the charms. As the data about medieval and early modern Bulgarian charming practices are fragmentary, a comparison with later folklore material can be very instructive.

Thirdly, as they contain predominantly apotropaic verbal magic, the compilations play an important role as instruments in crisis management. The manuscripts with words of power preserve and provide verbal magical tools, which help in solving urgent quotidian challenges and problems. Thus, the books and their content are also power instruments, used in power communication and power interaction between the human and the supernatural, between Our World and the Other World.

Fourthly, the process of compilation transforms the books as objects. The transformation can reach different depths. It can work by means of a simple addition of notes and marginalia. For example, manuscripts like *Chasoslov s posledovaniia* (Book of hours with the Daily Office, 1744, NBKM No. 1391) (Hristova & Karadzhova & Vutova 1996: 87–89) and *Sluzhebnik s trebnik* (Service book with a book of occasional prayers, 16th century, NBKM No. 257) (Tsonev 1910: 165–166) have otherwise canonical content, but their marginalia contain charms: in the first case this is a variant of the charm against the nezhit (*Adam had a nezhit, gave it to Eve...*); in the second case, these are charms to cure humans and horses. Or, the transformation can go deeper, like in most of the above-quoted manuscripts, in which the charms and borderline cases are included among the canonical prayers as organic parts of the book.

The above-written paragraphs illustrate how specific and yet interwoven and interrelated the different cultural contexts are. The notion of natural selection in folkloric terms is a good summary for this stage of the discussion:

> *Absence of performance arenas, invalidation of past mythologies, low memorability and other factors acting on a population of charms eliminates those examples less well adapted to their environment. The examples surviving to be passed on would tend to have characteristics with survival value to their offspring and in time the composition of the population would change in adaptation to a changing environment. The characteristics with survival value for verbal charms include memorability and perceived effectivity.* (Roper 1997: 41)

More significantly, "charms can undergo transmissible changes in the period between initial reception and eventual transmission onward. Such changes

may just be random mutation, but may also be deliberate on the part of the charmer, and the next recipient of the charm could transmit this deliberately altered form" (Roper 1997: 42). The medieval and early modern Bulgarian compilations containing words of power represent a completed stage in this natural selection, preserving charms with high survival value, namely, high effectivity. Thus, these manuscripts have an immense survival value in terms of verbal magic, crisis management and cultural history.

NOTES

[1] These questions were raised, clarified and discussed in a series of personal talks with Richard Kieckhefer, to whom I am indebted for the inspiration and beneficial remarks.

[2] Natsionalna biblioteka "Sveti Sveti Kiril i Metodii" (SS. Cyril and Methodius National Library).

[3] Personification of different health afflictions, especially migraine and tooth ache.

[4] Translation by the author, made after the Old Church Slavonic text in Tsonev's edition.

[5] Containing instructions for divination, based respectively on the twitches of the human body, thunder, and the phases of the moon.

[6] 'Horrific prayers' or 'terrible prayers'.

[7] By borderline cases I mean the texts that have features of both charms and prayers. On the variety of such mixed forms, see Shniter 2001 and Roper 2005.

[8] The historiola may include snake-bite accidents with Apostle Paul, Jesus Christ, Virgin Mary, or with ordinary people, happening in different combinations and settings.

[9] For example, the list of the snake's names contains epithets like "venomous", "pernicious" and "harmful", and comparisons "snake like a cloud", "snake like a raven" and "snake with four mouths", most of which are translations from Byzantine sources.

[10] Quoting the Russian source *O knigakh istinnykh i lozhnykh* (On the True Books and the False) from the 12th century.

[11] Quoted from a 14th–15th-century longer redaction of the same text.

[12] According to Ryan, the exorcistic charm of St. Sisinnius against the twelve fevers, the charm of St. Paul against snakebites and the charms against the nezhit are some of the examples of such transmission.

[13] Smallwood's argument is about English collections of charms, in which the number of charm copies and related prescriptions is too big and it is unbelievable that they were only derived from memory or from "an independent unwritten circulation".

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WHO MURDERED JOE MAGARAC?

Ivan Kovacevic

Abstract: The article examines the origin of an American steel industry mythical hero, Joe Magarac. The analysis is based on the original text by Owen Francis from 1931 and aims to resolve a dilemma – whether the text is genuine folklore or fakelore. The analytical method is layered and varied; it involves comparing Francis's text to other elements of folklore from the host country, confronting the meaning of the legend of Joe Magarac with the genuine interests of steelworkers, and contextualising the legend in the social conflicts of the steel industry in Pennsylvania at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

Keywords: America, Joe Magarac, immigrants, mythical hero, Pittsburgh, steel industry, workers

THE BIRTH OF JOE MAGARAC

Bearing in mind that Joe Magarac, a significant American figure of Pittsburgh steel plants, is considered both a folklore and fakelore hero, it is reasonable to expect that there would be at least three stories about his birth: one of folklore, another of fakelore, and a folkloristic tale. As far as the last one is concerned, folklorists find that Joe Magarac was born in a folklore story and his emergence can be traced as early as the year 1931, to the text by Owen Francis published in *Scribner's Magazine*, in which Joe Magarac was first mentioned. Francis's initial version of Magarac's story places his birth in a steel ore mountain or steel mine. However, by introducing Dorson's notion of fakelore and by applying that notion to the stories of Paul Bunyan and Joe Magarac, the folklore basis of this character is negated, thus leaving his origin a blur. Defolklorising Francis's version of the Joe Magarac saga makes establishing the third variant of the origin of "the man of steel" seem impossible, for if it is not folklore then the *folklore* story of Joe Magarac's birth does not hold weight.

HISTORY

Francis's story of Joe Magarac (Francis 1931) begins with a detailed account of the planning of a weight-lifting contest, organised by Steve Mestrovich, who aims to present the winner with the hand in marriage of his beautiful daughter, Mary. At the contest, which consisted of lifting three dolly bars of increasing size, the second bar was lifted by three contestants: Elli Stanowski, Pete Pussick, and some man from Johnstown, who was locally despised as a resident of a rival village. When none of them managed to lift the third bar, Joe Magarac appeared.

He was more than six feet tall, with shoulders broader than two doors, his hands twice as big as those of Elli and Pete together, and his bulging muscles wider than an average waist. Joe had picked up the heaviest dolly bar together with the Johnstown contestant. Then he introduced himself to the crowd: "My name is Joe Magarac [...] all I know is to work and eat like a donkey. I'm the only man of steel in the world. Behold…". Then he lifted his shirt for everyone to see that, indeed, he was made of steel – hands and legs, his whole body. However, once he discovered that his reward was the hand in marriage of the beautiful Mary, he declined it, explaining that he had no time to sit at home with a wife since he spent all his time working at a steel mill; he added that Mary deserved a far better husband and that he had noticed her "bafflement" whenever she looked at Pete. Joe and Steve winked to one another, and Mary and Pete were exceptionally joyful.

Joe made steel rail tracks with his bare hands, and he was so good and fast at this that in no time there were railroad tracks everywhere in the region of the steel mills. This led to the closing of several mills for a few days. When the steelworkers returned to the factory, they found Joe melting in a furnace; he explained to them how he could not get over the mill closing and that the steel into which he would melt would be the best that was ever made.

ETHNICITY MISHAPS/TROUBLE

Various ethnic identity discussions are related to the character of Joe Magarac. This is not at all surprising, considering the American lack of comprehension of immigrant ethnic relations at the time the Joe Magarac saga was created. Joe's special circumstance was created from a generalised notion that was used as a signifier to encompass several ethnic groups; these groups represented the majority of Pittsburgh's labour population in the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. The words in question are "Hunkies" and

"Hunkietown", which denoted various ethnic groups as well as the places they inhabited. Webster's dictionary states that the word "Hunky/Hunkie" originated as a modification of the word "Hungarian", meaning, mostly derogatorily, a person born or descending from Central and Eastern Europe (see http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hunky). When examining the Hunkies' ethnic structure in one of the steel mills in Pennsylvania in 1919, it becomes clear that Slovakians, Hungarians, Croats and Serbs accounted for more than half of the workforce of non-American background (Foster 1920: 195). Keeping in mind that previously immigrated workers, who were of English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh, German and Scandinavian background, had more complex and better-paid jobs at the same factory, and were not considered to be "foreigners", unlike the Hunkies, it is obvious that the four ethnic groups mentioned above represented the majority of the "Hunkietown" (ibid.: 196–197). Therefore, it is understandable that one of the characteristics that these four ethnic groups had in common led to the same denomination for all the four, which was derived from modifying the word "Hungarian". What Slovakians, Hungarians, Serbs and Croats had in common was *citizenship*; they were all citizens of the Kingdom of Hungary, which was formed by the Austrian-Hungarian Compromise of 1867. The duality of the term "Hungarian" led to great confusion over Joe Magarac's ethnic background: it was initially described as Hungarian but later came under further discussion. C.J. Reutter (1980) had successfully debated against earlier interpretations of Joe Magarac being either Slovakian or Hungarian, proving them untrue. By adopting the interpretation of Croat Hrvoje Prpic, Reutter concludes that the word "magarac" is actually a Croatian word (meaning 'donkey') and that Joe thus must be a Croat, but he obviously overlooks the fact that the word is Serbian as well, which was raised by Marshal Fishwick (1954).

On one hand, the debate concerning the ethnic identity of Joe Magarac looks as if it is about a real historic personality and that some birth certificate would resolve the entire dilemma. Those involved in this debate had, however, thought it was a folklore creation and that they could thereby establish which ethnic group had created the character of Joe Magarac and thus contributed to American mythology. Nevertheless, by deconstructing the Joe Magarac story and branding it as a *fakelore* creation, at least on the surface, makes such research ill-founded. However, to understand the context under which Joe Magarac was created, the significance of knowing the true meaning of the word 'magarac' was substantial, so the ethnic circle of those who understood the word was narrowed down to Serbs and Croats.

In light of this state of language competence or, alternately, (un)familiarity, all the confusions that arose through the myth-creation wanderings become visible, as do various guesses on Joe Magarac's origin and background. For

example, the hypothesis of a Hungarian writer from Pittsburgh, George Sechkai, featured his memories of a story about a certain Hungarian fellow, Andrew Catona, who rose from being a shepherd in Hungary, through a participant in the Hungarian revolution, to working as a police officer in America and as an employee in a company, and whose task was to spy on other workers, for which he was hated and called "Magiaron" and "Magarac" (Fishwick 1954: 172). Regardless of the fact that in both cases the nicknames had been ethnonyms, "Magiaron" and "Madjarac", Fishwick used Sechkai's memories to deconstruct the mythology that ensued after Francis's text.

FOLKLORE OR *FAKELORE*?

The dilemma of folklore or fakelore – the latter a term established by Richard Dorson (1959; 1976) – is present in any consideration of the character of Joe Magarac. Dorson's analyses of such analogue characters as Paul Bunyan or John Henry, and the arguments that bolster their fakelore origin, as well as the further destiny that Joe Magarac's character suffered in numerous, amusingly inspired literary stories, whether due to the needs of the company or the state, imply that Joe Magarac, too, joins the gallery of fakelore characters. Any folkloristic effort of interpretation is obstructed by the inability to prove the veracity of Francis's (1931) article, Blair's (1944) reference to other people's earlier notes, or Carver's (1944) citing a story of a Hunkie. However, at the base of Dorson's dichotomy lies a belief in the existence of a "true", "authentic" folklore as made through the collective creation of the group, and any individual or organised creation can only be *fakelore*. Even if the dualism of folklore and fakelore was this simple, the faith of many fakelore creations shows that they went through a process of folklorisation and that they became a legitimate part of collective storytelling. At the time Dorson established his dichotomy, the notion of popular culture and its relationship with folklore was out of reach of folkloristic thought, whilst today such discrimination is quite often impossible. This path of folklorising the fakelore saga of Joe Magarac is told in J. Gilley and S. Burnett's review of the story's development (Gilley & Burnett 1998), which, again, does not exclude the possibility of looking into its folklore potential.

When analysing the story in its historical context and comparing it to the interests of the steelworkers, for whom Joe Magarac is supposed to be a hero, everything leads to the conclusion that it was classical company fakelore as advocated in Dorson's (1959; 1976), Richman's (1953) and Fishwick's (1959) theses. At the base of fakelore heroes, Dorson holds, is an interest in the capital for which "money-writers" create such heroes, and the wrong idea about the au-

thenticity of these "folk heroes" is spread by teachers, librarians and the general public; these ideas are incited by money-writers and those who promote them (Dorson 1959: 4, 215). However, at the time of the biggest public promotion of the Magarac story – in Francis's text in *Scribner's Magazine* from 1931 – the times of great and harsh social turbulence, like the Homestead Strike of 1892, were bygone times, and decades had passed since the Great Strike. The tension between workers and companies, or unions and companies, was still present, so the need for such company *fakelore* was quite palpable. Then again, there is no folkloristic evidence of Joe Magarac before 1931, nor are there hints of any documents existing that would sustain Dorson's thesis that this was a fabrication of the PR department of the US Steel Corporation. The later participation of the company in the making of a children's comic about Joe Magarac speaks of the instrumentation of the already-made character (Dorson 1959), but it does not articulate their direct involvement in the creation of the character.

With the lack of reliable documents, both hypotheses about the origin of the story are possible, bearing in mind the fact that thus far analyses of its meaning have given more credibility to the fakelore thesis, stemming from the discrepancy between the interests of the workers and the incessant work of Joe Magarac. Nevertheless, the saga contains elements that support both the folklore thesis and its later fakelore twist.

OWEN FRANCIS AS A FOLKLORIST

One of the questions that this article aims to answer is whether Francis's story is true fakelore or complete *fakelorisation*, which ensued through later versions. Therefore, this author includes a detailed analysis of Francis's version of the Joe Magarac saga.

Owen Francis was himself a screenwriter and short story writer. He began his career in the steel mills of Pennsylvania after participating in World War I and while recuperating from gas poisoning; he received his education at the University of California, and after initial failures with movie screenwriting, he returned to Pennsylvania (Fishwick 1959). After being disappointed by the super-sophisticated Hollywood, he returned to the Hunkies and the Polish, who "understood life". Describing his intentions, Fishwick says that Francis, "even though he had neither formal interest nor contact with the folklore, decided to invent the mythical steel hero", and that he did it in order to sell such a story.[1] Dorson attributes a similar motive to Francis, qualifying him, along with other creators of fakelore heroes as a "money writer", in whose childish imagination characters like Joe Magarac were conceived (Dorson 1959: 215).

A question arises if, after such a clear differentiation of Francis's texts from folklore, it is at all possible to question the fakelore character of the Joe Magarac saga. The saga has to be examined in the context of American folklore of the first three decades of the 20th century in order to ascertain whether there are indeed any elements of folklore in Francis's text.

When Francis was writing the Joe Magarac saga, American folklore was mainly based on amateurism and enthusiasm. The possibilities of an education for a folklorist were poor. According to P. Boggs's research from 1940, in earlier times there were only four universities in America that offered specific folklore studies, and only 23 universities had folklore courses, the majority of which focused on ballads (Boggs 1940).

 If Francis's text is viewed from this perspective, a different picture forms. First, Francis speaks out of his own experience, his life and active participation in the steel mills of Pennsylvania; he refers to Slavic workers, whom he had heard many times calling each other "magarac" ('jackass') (Francis 1931: 505). Francis then moves on to explaining how he had spent many a night in the houses of the Hunkies and had the luck to hear the Joe Magarac story repeatedly on those occasions; this represents the description of fieldwork research, which folklorists of his age would not overlook.[2] What Francis did next does not deviate from standard folkloristic practice. He pointed to the formal likeness (and difference) that Joe Magarac shared with Paul Bunyan's or Old Stormalong's stories. In 1931 it was impossible for Francis to have known of Paul Bunyan's fakelore origin, which Dorson ascertained a few decades later (Dorson 1956; 1959). A third, fairly regular folkloristic procedure, which can be identified in Francis's text, was the effort he made in trying to find out whether there were any truthful connections between the Joe Magarac story and the folklore of any country from which the Hunkies came:

> *Although the stories of Joe Magarac are sagas, they have no tangible connection, so far as I have been able to find, with the folklore of any of the countries which sent the Hunkie to these United States.* (Francis 1931: 505)

His lack of formal folkloristic education is reflected in this last effort, although it was rare in America to have been educated in folklore during the first decades of the 20th century. Although he tried to connect Joe Magarac to identical characters in the folklore of the countries from which the Pennsylvania steel mill workers came, Francis's search for a connection produced an expected result. However, when one examines the elements of the story as integrated into a new, more functional whole, it is possible to perceive a new image.

A few features of "old country" storytelling can be recognised in Francis's story of Joe Magarac: the element of having to pass a difficult trial in order to win the bride, the victory one achieves in such a competition for the benefit of someone else, and the "steel man" motif. The fact that such motifs can be found in the folklore of other European nations bears no significance, since the relevance of the Joe Magarac tale is that these themes exist in the folklore of those ethnic groups among the Hunkies, who also have the word "magarac" in their vocabulary.

More generally, the difficult tasks ahead of folklore protagonists who want to win someone's hand in marriage appear in different forms: from a duel between knights, to outwitting or overcoming high hurdles, to archery. Duels and strenuous tasks are elements of the famous epic poem *Dusan's Wedding* (Karadzic 1845), while candidates that outwit the girl's father or the girl herself are present in many tales from Vuk Karadzic's collection (Karadzic 1853; 1870).

In *The King and the Shepherd* fairy tale, which Vuk Karadzic published in 1853, the shepherd completes the difficult task to win the bride. After the task is completed and the shepherd – who, in a competition of cleverness against the king – wins the princess, he addresses the king:

> *"I have outwitted you quite enough, now give the girl, for I have deserved her." The king saw no way out of the situation, so he gave the girl to the shepherd, and the shepherd surrendered her to the rich man, who in exchange awarded him with immeasurable treasure.* (Karadzic 1853)

Joe Magarac acted the same way after he had won the contest that Steve Mestrovich had organised: he gave the beautiful Mary to Pete Pussick and a wink to Mestrovich, saying he had no time for anything but work and that he had noticed Mary's bedazzled look whenever she laid eyes on Pete (Francis 1931).

In *The Man of Iron*[3] (Karadzic 1870) fairy tale, which Vuk Karadzic wrote before 1853, the main character (the king's youngest son) is married to a frog, which later turns into a beautiful woman and causes her mother-in-law to feel jealous. The mother-in-law (the queen) makes her husband give his son difficult tasks, which he overcomes with the help of his brother-in-law, who lives in the well, out of which his wife (the frog) was taken. After two successfully accomplished tasks (with the help of his brother-in-law) the king's youngest son is given the third task:

> *Some time later the king summoned his son again, and said: "I hear you brag about being able to bring the iron man." The poor prince started negating the story, saying how such a thought had never even crossed his mind, and the king replied: "Not one word more; unless you do it,*

you will lose your head." The poor prince then went to his wife in tears, and when she saw him crying, she asked: "To what are those tears?" And the prince recounts the sad ordeal to her. Then she said: "Go to the well again and shout: 'Brother-in-law, brother-in-law!' He will answer and be cross so he will reply: 'To hell with such a brother-in-law.' But then you tell him: 'For God's sake! I'm driven by misery!' and tell him everything." The prince obeyed his wife and when he got to the well he started calling out: "Brother-in-law, brother-in–law!" His brother-in-law responded in an angry voice: "To hell with such a brother-in-law, what do you want this time?" And the prince said: "For God's sake, my brother-in-law, a great misfortune befell me: my father asks of me to bring him the iron man so he could speak to him." Then his brother-in-law answered: "Wait a minute, I'll be up in a moment, but don't be scared or petrified." And the next thing, the iron man was standing before the prince. Oh, he was tall and frightening! Dragging a mace, with which he ploughed the land, leaving a trail behind as if eight strong oxen had ploughed instead. When the king saw from afar that the iron man was coming, he felt very scared, rushed into the castle, bolting all the doors behind, and fled to the highest tower, in which he locked himself. When the iron man came to the door, he started knocking politely to be let in, but when he realised that no one was answering, he launched his fist at the door, which broke in half on the spot; the iron man opened all the doors in this way and came before the king. When he stood in front of the king, he asked: "Why have you sent for me?" but the king fell dumb. "What in hell's name have you to speak to me about?" said the iron man, and chucked the king on the forehead and the king fell dead on the spot. Then the iron man put his brother-in-law on the throne and proclaimed him the king, and so the youngest son lived and ruled with his wife to the end of his days.

None of these elements, not even the description of the gigantic man of iron, should be attributed with any significance for the conception of the Joe Magarac story. The latter story was made up for quite different purposes versus typical folk songs and tales, but the elements of "old" folklore that were "at hand" are indeed useful for creating the story of a new world and rather new social circumstances.

JOE MAGARAC IN THE TYPOLOGY OF THE STEELWORKERS' STORIES AND SOCIAL TYPES

The Joe Magarac legend is an example of how it is possible for a character with qualities diametrically opposed to a certain social group to be imposed onto that same group as their 'hero'. Joe Magarac is the personification of anti-worker interests, which has been stated in a certain number of analytical studies, even in myth-creation texts, in which one of the creators of the myth stated that working fast builds animosity from other workers.[4] Gilley and Burnett state that "magarac (a jackass) is something that workers find to be an irrational super-worker" (Gilley & Burnett 1998: 397). These authors try to align the Joe Magarac saga with Jack Santino's typology of workers' stories (Santino 1978). Santino distinguishes three main types of workers' stories: a) cautionary tales, in which inappropriate on-the-job behaviour leads directly to some sort of avoidable accident or calamity; b) trickster stories which centre on hostility toward authority, realised by a prank that a subordinate worker plays on a superior or a new co-worker; and c) stories of work heroes which, among other things, praise the physical strength of the worker. Gilley and Burnett state that at first glance, Joe Magarac belongs to the category of work heroes possessing enormous physical strength. According to Santino, those workers' stories are based on bringing human characteristics up to their extremes, like rail constructor John Henry – who, according to classical interpretations of the ballads, died of the consequences of competing with a machine. John Henry's story was, along with the tale of the more famous "lumberjack" Paul Bunyan, the subject of a noteworthy analysis to ascertain its folklore-fakelore nature (Dorson 1965: 155–163).[5]

The story of running away from molten steel is about exaggerating and reaching those limits, but within human possibilities. The story that Fishwick presents, about a man who, unprotected, went into a room in which the steaming hot molten mass flooded in, and who later "broke" the world record in running, was told in the steel towns where physical strength and endurance were appreciated (Fishwick 1959: 172–173).[6] That is why the element of fantasy is crucial for understanding Joe Magarac, according to Gilley and Burnett: keeping in mind the fact that he is not human but "made of steel", Magarac thus represented "the summation of what the capital asked in its workers and not the hero of the working population" (Gilley & Burnett 1998: 398).

Magarac was the opposite of everything for what the immigrant workers were striving: he consciously chose to live in extremely poor conditions, like those in which the actual immigrants lived but which they wanted to escape

by fighting in the Homestead Rebellion of 1892 (Burgoyne 1893) and the Great Steel Strike of 1919. He also refused to get married and start a family, which was the antipode of the American standard idealised by the immigrant workers (Report 1920; Foster 1920).

Thus, Joe Magarac could not have been the mythical hero of the Pittsburgh immigrant workers; rather, he would fit into the "Rascal" character, and, more precisely, its subtype, the "Renegade", in Orin Klapp's (1956: 337–338) typology. On the other hand, the sneer and ridicule shown to Joe Magarac makes him similar to the "Fool", particularly its subtype, the "Common Fool" (Klapp 1949: 157), whom Klapp describes as naïve, crude, insensitive, and characterised by funny failures, comic frustrations, inexplicable behaviour and being taken advantage of by others. As far as possibly being a hero in American culture, according to Klapp's classification, Joe Magarac falls under the "Martyr" type; however, he is a martyr for the cause of the company and not for the rights of workers (Klapp 1948: 137).

COMICAL OR MYTHICAL HERO?

The majority of analytical texts examining Joe Magarac in a way declare a humorous touch to the tale. From "the spirit of gargantuan whimsy", of which Dorson (1977: 215–226) speaks, to Gilley and Burnett's text in which the authors emphasise the story's "satirical character", all assessments underscore elements of humour that remain unexplained. In the case of classic fakelore arguments, the author(s) would probably avoid the complicated semantic pun affiliated with the word 'magarac' (jackass) or 'mazga' (mule). Francis himself had that problem, stating that the notion that the word 'magarac' was a compliment caused laughter; this was decisively confirmed by Richman (1953: 287), who concluded in the field that "the word 'magarac' is never used without a sneer". Thus, Joe's last name can be attributed to folklore rather than to fakelore choice. Fakelore choice would avoid negative connotations for the last name of a hero who was imposed on immigrant workers, while the folklore choice is intentional since all the other characters in the story have common last names – for example, Mestrovich and Pussick (which are almost entirely Croatian). This means that the last name of Magarac contains the semantics of the word 'magarac', which is entirely a sneer when applied to people.[7] Academic dictionaries define the word 'magarac' as "vulgarity of an ignorant person" (Rječnik 1907) and as "the one committing stupid acts and flippancies, stupid, unintelligent person, a foolish idiot [...and a] stubborn, obstinate person" (Rečnik 1981).

The semantics of the main character's last name thus transform it into mocking a person who has no pleasures but work and who declares himself too occupied for anything but work. His refusal of the hand in marriage of a beautiful girl means that he is turning down something that is the dream of every young Hunkie, which even more highlights the ridicule aimed at Joe's devotedness to work. The same goes for the end of the story, when Joe kills himself, not because he is left without work but because the mill closed down.

In considering the Joe Magarac saga against Santino's typology of workers' stories, Gilley and Burnett rule out the possibility that this is a trickster story, citing, "If this is a trickster story then the only one duped by it is Owen Francis" (Gilley & Burnett 1998: 397). How seriously Francis was duped, and how much his text actually served as a major twist in the Joe Magarac story remains a question that can be answered indirectly.

One possible approach is to view the story of Joe Magarac in the context of Jauss's typology of relations with the hero (Jauss 1974). Jauss differentiates five types of identifications with the hero: associative, admiring, sympathetic, cathartic and ironic. The typology's application to the story of Joe Magarac is more specific, inasmuch as it refers to the identification within the story itself as displayed by observers of Joe Magarac's actions, whilst the possible folk nature of the story's identification refers to both the storyteller and the audience. Jauss's typology is manifested in all its types in the order that Jauss states. Namely, in the weight-lifting competition, the identification with Joe is associative; his victory causes admiration; sympathy occurs when Joe is shown as an imperfect hero and when he refuses to marry the beautiful Mary. Catharsis occurs when Joe kills himself because the factory stopped working, and an ironic identification stems from viewing the entirety of his harmful influence on the workers in the steel mill. If this identification is viewed in a less rigid manner, the divinisation of the beginning of the story is visible, which Jauss defines as associative and admiring; however, this appears less sincere than sympathy, which can be ironic, as well as less sincere than the irony itself, while the catharsis perfectly solves the problems that Joe creates for the workers. In this way, Joe Magarac is exposed as someone whom the audience falsely admires and with whom they falsely sympathise in his imperfection, and yet they simultaneously laugh at him and are happy to see him go.

JOE MAGARAC AND DUTCHMAN SCHMIDT
(FREDERIC TAYLOR)

Gilley and Burnett, in their text about the deconstruction and reconstruction of the Pittsburgh "Man of Steel", hint at the possibility of perceiving the character of Joe Magarac in light of Taylor's scientific workplace organisation. They refer to Taylor in the description of the workers' reaction to their arduous and monotonous work role, and to his description of the workers slowing down the work, which he named "soldier (or military) behavior" (Gilley & Burnett 1998: 398). However, the importance of including Taylor's work and *Taylorism* while considering Pittsburgh's "Man of Steel" is far greater. It is a commonly known fact that Taylor made the first developments in "scientific workplace management" in Pennsylvania, actually in the steel industry, although not in Pittsburgh but in Johnstown and Bethlehem, the other two centres of Pennsylvanian steel industry. This fact points at the historic parallelism of the workers' rebellions and strikes and the incorporation of Taylorist principals in the production process.

Describing one of his first attempts to implement "scientific work management" in Bethlehem at the beginning of the Spanish-American War in 1898, Taylor writes that one of the first steps was the "scientific selection" of workers (Taylor 1915 [1911]: 43–48). After he had primarily aimed to increase workers' daily performance up to loading 47 tonnes of steel instead of 12.5 tonnes, Taylor had carefully observed those workers who loaded 12.5 tonnes, using the old technique for a wage of $1.15. First, he singled out four men and studied them in detail by examining their past, character, habits and ambitions; Taylor finally chose one Dutchman whom he had named Schmidt. While he was observing Schmidt, he noticed that the man was walking home from work looking as fresh as when he came to work in the morning, that he had managed to save some money of his wage (which was the same for all workers) to buy a piece of land, on which he was building a house, and that he was very "tightfisted" – i.e., he valued every dollar he had earned. In a dialogue with Schmidt, which he recorded in *The Principles of Scientific Management* from 1911, Taylor had insisted on using Schmidt's self-respect as a motive for accepting an utterly disciplined workload with four times the volume, and for 60 percent higher income. Schmidt's accomplishment in loading raw steel became a benchmark for all other workers:

> *As each workman came into the works in the morning, he took out of his own special pigeonhole, with his number on the outside, two pieces of paper, one of which stated just what implements he was to get from the tool*

room and where he was to start to work, and the second of which gave the history of his previous day's work; that is, a statement of the work which he had done, how much he had earned the day before, etc. Many of these men were foreigners and unable to read and write, but they all knew at a glance the essence of this report, because yellow paper showed the man that he had failed to do his full task the day before, and informed him that he had not earned as much as $1.85 a day, and that none but high-priced men would be allowed to stay permanently with this gang. [---] So that whenever the men received white slips they knew that everything was all right, and whenever they received yellow slips they realized that they must do better or they would be shifted to some other class of work.
(Taylor 1915 [1911]: 68–69)

In this way, a particularly chosen and trained worker became the work standard for everyone, and his performance became a norm on which the wages were based. At the base of Taylor's "scientific work management" was the principle of measuring up to the best, strongest, fastest, deftest – which directly jeopardised everyone else and made him the source and target of union organisations.

Even during Taylor's lifetime there was political debate about his system of favouring the paramount of workers. When the workers at a state cannon factory in Watertown raised their voices against the implementation of Taylor's method for measuring the time required for a certain job (Aitkin 1960), a congressional committee was formed, which investigated the situation as well as Taylor himself. Upon Taylor's discourse of "first class men" benefitting from his system, the chairmen of the committee, William B. Wilson, asked him emphatically about the faith of those who were not "first class (rate)" (Kanigel 1997: 21). The fight of workers and unions against Taylorism marked the 20th-century industrialisation, starting from individual protests, then collective uprisings like the Homestead Rebellion of 1892, to the great strikes – of which the most familiar was the one in 1919 – and strong organising into unions in the first half of the 20th century.

Taylor's notion of "first class (rate) men", his description of Schmidt's characteristics and the drill faced by Taylor's chosen super-worker make possible another interpretation of Joe Magarac. It is quite reasonable to imagine some other Schmidt – perhaps by the name of Joe – who was strong, obedient and motivated by a higher wage to set the performance norm for others. The illiterate Hunkies, after finding out whether they had fulfilled the norm from the colour of the paper, showed growing hostility toward super-worker Joe, calling him foul names in their own language. From such a situation, another, apparently irresolvable situation could have arisen quite easily: the former idol and hero of

workers being called a 'magarac', or a 'jackass', which neither his later creators (for the sake of the company) nor folklore analysts could handle. In this way, Francis's informers earn credibility, which does not diminish Francis's role in creating a base for a "workers' hero", who acts in the interests of the company. The question is whether 'magarac' is a direct, general typological reference for a super-worker – who, according to Taylorist methods, created exceedingly high performance standards – or is it just that some Schmidt-like person was called a 'magarac' (jackass) by the Hunkies whose mother tongue was Serbian or Croatian. This will probably remain unanswered, exactly because of the *fakelorist* connotation of a great number of articles about Joe Magarac in the period from Francis's text to Dorson's determination of fakelore, which wasted the time that the story could have actually been confirmed by the then still living Pittsburgh steelworkers. Based on this definition of Joe, who was called a 'magarac', it can be surmised that all the 'research' on his ethnic identity went in the wrong direction and that Joe need not have been a Hunkie at all, although this too is possible. Nevertheless, it is more likely that the Hunkies had been outside of the choice for a super-worker; the super-workers were more likely Americans or those workers whose ethnic groups sooner reached Pennsylvania and had better knowledge of English, which made them all the more suitable for learning and Taylorist drilling than the illiterate Hunkies. Accordingly, the most probable answer to the question 'Was Joe Magarac a Serb or a Croat?' would be: he was neither. Joe could have been an American, or a German or a Dane, like Taylor's Schmidt; that is, anyone who was setting the norm in the name of the company, by which the wage was then determined. Evidently, though, he could not have been a part of 'the workers' community', but was instead a defender of the company.

THE FALL INTO THE MOLTEN STEEL

If the character of Joe, sneeringly called a 'magarac', can be interpreted in this way, then so can his 'death' in molten steel. The fakelorisation of Joe Magarac and his transformation into a workers' superhero, with the characteristics of Superman, cannot successfully resolve how his death in molten steel may be heroic and tragic, yet at the same time satirical and darkly humorous.

Joe's death can be observed in two ways. The first is via the social context, that is, the relation between the illiterate and unskilled workers (in this case, Hunkies), and the exponents of the company (superintendents, super-workers, etc.); the second is through the technological-legal context of the innumerable

accidents that were happening in Pittsburgh and other steel mills in Pennsylvania, which took a great number of lives.

In order to understand the relationship between steelworkers and representatives of the company, particularly those with whom they had direct contact, Frederic Taylor's own experience can be cited, when he was first elevated to the line of 'company men'. When Taylor was first promoted to a 'gang-boss', while he was working in the Midvale Steel Company in Johnstown, the workers, with whom he had shared the same duties up to that moment, all directed to him the same unequivocal threat:

> *Fred, we're very happy you've been made a gang-boss. You know the game all right and we're sure that you're not likely to be a piece-work hog. You come along with us and everything will be all right, but if you try breaking any of these rates you can be mighty sure that we'll throw you over the fence.* (Taylor 1915 [1911]: 49)

A great number of work-related accidents and deaths represent another context in which to perceive Joe's death. In a separate study, which was devoted to work-related accidents in Pittsburgh, Crystal Eastman concluded that in one year alone (from 1 July 1906 to 30 June 1907), there were 195 death cases in Pittsburgh and 526 in Allegheny County (Eastman 1910: 11, 64). Out of those 195 cases in Pittsburgh, 24 (or 10%) were caused by a fall, like the one the workers threatened would happen to Taylor. State law in Pennsylvania demanded a report of every serious incident, but companies consistently broke the law by writing the reports but never making them publically available (ibid.: 64). That means the investigations and the findings remained within the company (which could choose to suspend its interrogation), even when there was a death. Under those circumstances, the threats that Taylor experienced seem very serious, since among the many accidents not further investigated, one case would not really stand out.

The lack of detailed incident reports – and, what is more, their huge number – calls into question whether Joe, called a 'magarac', was actually pushed into molten steel, or whether that was one of the idle dreams of the Hunkies in order to get rid of the super-worker that lowered their wages and increased their workload.

JOE MAGARAC AND THE MARKET ECONOMY

Joe Magarac also had to disappear because he stood against the market economy. The legend kills him by suicide in molten steel, which is one possibility; the other option could place him, the one who put other workers in jeopardy, similarly into molten steel, or on the ground, but not of his own volition. In that sense, the legend has a happy ending, because it eliminates Joe as the creator of workers' predicaments, those being an increased workload, on the one hand, and losing their jobs, as the final consequence, on the other. Not even the fakelore version, which starts from the interests of the company, can leave Joe Magarac alive. His suicide resolves a logical contradiction between aspiring toward absolute production increases and the limited market demand. The folklore version even 'closes' the factory for a few days, and upon reopening they find Joe in the furnace, because it is not in the workers' best interest to go unemployed, while Joe's death removes the major norm increase with a minimal or non-existent wage increase. Also, the fakelore version cannot 'keep' Joe Magarac because the company is not the one controlling the demand of its products on the market, nor does the further production expansion lead to higher profits. On the contrary, hyper-production of a certain product leads to a drop in its price on the market, and finally leads to shutting the business down.

Elementary market logic and its realisation in everyday life makes a character like Joe Magarac a "Common Fool", who sacrifices for the company, in the eyes of the workers, or a "Traitor", who betrays his social group for a meagre wage increase. From a company standpoint he is a "Martyr", who benefits the company far more dead than alive, and from whose character elements a further fakelore construction of a mythical 'hero of the workers' can be constructed.

FROM A SUPER-WORKER TO A WORKERS' SUPERMAN

The saga's twist, when Joe Magarac was transformed from an enemy of the workers – the raw strength worker and a mindless wage earner – into a hero of the workers and a Superman, could not have unfolded without consequence. Not even the writers reporting after Francis could deal with the main character's last name, with the possibility that his devoted work would not lead to shutting down the factory, or with the sneer that met his refusal to take Mary's hand in marriage. If the latter could have been justified by Joe's feeling that Mary should marry the one she truly loved (Pete Pussick), then avoiding the last name 'Magarac' was the only obvious way. Thus, George Carver changed

Joe's last name in his 1944 text into 'Magerac', distancing the original 'Magarac' of Francis's text. Another instance testifies to Carver's consciousness of this change – that he had understood from Francis's text that the word 'magarac' has a derogatory meaning – and he explicitly tries to divert attention from that fact. He begins Joe's story with the following sentence: "Joe Magarac – the name has no significance as far as I could learn – was born…" (Carver 1944: 132). All the writers with interests in the company, who made Joe Magarac to be the workers' hero, had to solve the unsolvable – to transform someone who embodied the opposite of the workers' interests, someone whose actions caused uprisings, such as the Homestead Rebellion and the Great Steel Strike, into a character that workers would admire. This change, while causing trouble for the writers, added the "comic and humorous" elements as well, since these qualities were the only way to soften the transformation.

This is why it is possible to conclude that the character of Joe Magarac was conflicted even during his Tayloristic lifetime. He was perceived by the company management as a real super-worker, as a means of speeding up production processes and lowering workers' wages, or at least as a preventive measure against their demands for a pay rise and better working conditions. The other side, the workers' perspective, opposed the managerial ill-treatment; further-more, in their struggle all resources were allowed – from violence to folkloric and satiric approaches.

The only way of 'survival' for Joe Magarac is outside of the logical contradic-tions: as an abstract, de-ethnicised, denominated mythical creature, one who does not devote himself to production but instead has the role of the protector, just like Carver describes him, attributing such a depiction to Gregory Ipanovich. In Carver's story, he saves the workers from a furnace explosion, from a crane falling on them, or from a flooding river that transported products from the steel mill (Carver 1944: 132). That version eliminates all contradictions in the workers' or company versions, enabling Joe to appear whenever he is needed, without disturbing the production process. For Magarac to become embodied in this way, he has to be de-materialised without any trace; thus, for the purpose of creating a Pittsburgh-based identity, the folklore tale is very convenient.

NOTES

[1] As a proof of Francis's intentions, Fishwick cites that a month after the Joe Magarac saga was published in *Scribner's Magazine*, another, similar story was published about the death of Joe Zimmich, who was also a super-worker like Joe Magarac.

[2] Francis describes his experience "in the field" as at the very factory or in the hills above it, or most often in "Agnes's kitchen with Hunkie friends at my side".

[3] On the meaning of *The Man of Iron* fairy tale in the context of "trials obtaining a hand in marriage", see the interpretation of Dragana Antonijevic (1991: 46–68).

[4] In Walter Blair's version from 1944, which was based on the notes of J. Ernest Wright, folklore collector for the federal Works Progress Administration, the dialogue between Joe Magarac and his co-workers, who hold his working habits against him, nonetheless ends amicably (Gilley & Burnett 1998).

[5] According to the latest interpretation of historian Scott Nelson, John Henry was a convict serving forced labour, and died of the consequences of silicosis, i.e., poisoning caused by dust from minerals due to years of drilling tunnels (Nelson 2006).

[6] It is obvious that the story of running away from molten steel primarily aligns with Santino's cautionary tales, as well as elements of the stories praising the physical strength of workers.

[7] Gilley and Burnett state that the corporate version tried to transform the jackass into a mule, as a less derogatory description.

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JOKES IN IRAN

Bakhtiar Naghdipour

Abstract: This study touches upon the main targets and functions of jokes in Iran. To this end, a corpus of 1000 Persian jokes was randomly selected from different online websites and classified based on their targets. A survey was also administered to 200 university students from around the country to investigate their opinions on the characteristics and functions, or what these jokes may reflect or perpetuate in the Iranian society. The analysis of the collected data revealed that the targets of Persian jokes are mostly ethnic and political issues, which violate the social and political taboos and censorship to achieve their end. The prevalence of ethnic jokes could highlight the unsettling relationship and competition between ethnic groups and the established majority for better socio-economic and socio-political opportunities in this multi-ethnic and multilingual society. This study concludes with a call for further interdisciplinary research into the various factors and forces that may influence the dynamics of jokes in this context.

Keywords: ethnic jokes, humor, Iran, Persian jokes, political jokes, sexist jokes

INTRODUCTION

Jokes are ubiquitous, and they reach their national and international audience through the Internet, mobile phones, friends, colleagues, and other channels or means of communication. Thousands of individuals and hundreds of blogs and websites are involved in the constant spreading of joking, stereotyping, and making myths about different ethnic and religious groups, races, genders, and even animals. In Iran, jokes are so widespread that they are even heard at official meetings, gatherings, and news conferences. Religious figures also exploit jokes in their sermons to consolidate their reasoning and convince people of the veracity of their complicated arguments or narratives. Despite their popularity, however, there is scarcity of research on different functions of jokes in this context, perhaps because of the interdisciplinary nature of studying the humor phenomena that require collaborative work among a team of scholars, as well as transdisciplinary skills and methods.

Different opinions about whether jokes depict any reality in society or joke makers and tellers have any hidden agenda behind their involvement in

joking practices have been voiced. The debate epitomizes best the old riddle of a relationship between language and reality, or language and culture. On the one hand, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis considers language as the shaping agent of different cultural and social processes (cited in Pérez-Arce 1999), seeing culture at the mercy of language. On the other hand, Davies (2007) assumes that political and ethnic jokes rarely affect the joke tellers and hearers as far as the cultural and social changes are concerned, underestimating the prowess of language against the hegemony of cultural and social structures. While recognizing the likely contributions of these two extremes to the studies of the interface between cultural and linguistic phenomena, proposing an alternative in support of reciprocal and bi-directional relationship between language and culture seems inevitable. Simply put, even though it is less likely to argue that jokes, for instance, have stirred the Arab Spring movement, it is then less convincing to admit that language is shaped by cultural and social agendas, leaving no impact on them. All things being equal, language, either intentionally or incidentally, possesses the leverage to emancipate, entertain, criticize, include, or otherwise ostracize people in different situations and under different circumstances. Prior to reviewing the theoretical and practical perspectives on jokes, the following section gives a brief account of the social fabric and dynamics of today's Iranian society.

Iran consists of 28 provinces where various ethnic groups live side-by-side using languages such as Persian, Turkish, Kurdish, Lurish, Baluchi, Armenian, and Arabic. Being associated with specific sociolinguistic and geographical markers, some of these languages are at times unintelligible to the speakers of standard Persian. In addition to enriching its cultural heritage, this linguistic diversity, which oftentimes corresponds to a spectrum of ethnic diversity, has become a distinctive determiner when it comes to joking practices across the country. The socio-economic rivalry among social strata in more populated urban areas could be another reason for the birth of jokes, in particular, ethnic jokes. These places have been the battleground of ethnic challenges and conflicts, especially after the 1970s. Before the Islamic revolution in 1979, a majority of people in small towns and rural areas were leading a feudalistic system of life, keeping their farms or herding their livestock. Meeting the demands of this self-sufficient lifestyle did not leave them any room for abrupt socio-economic changes or developments. After the revolution, however, feudalism, whose pillars had started to shake some two decades before, collapsed, and many people moved to big towns and cities in search for better living standards, job opportunities, and education. The new lifestyle exerted a huge pressure on these immigrants to assimilate into new linguistic and social groups. Their reluctance to an easy and quick conformity to the mainstream social norms and

their rivalry with the established majority for the better social and economic well-being turned more obstinate minorities into the targets of ethnic jokes.

During this time, the post-revolutionary theocratic system undertook major reforms in different cultural, social, educational, and political arenas by institutionalizing and indoctrinating the Islamic norms and values throughout the country. This system has showed almost a zero tolerance policy to the voices of its critics or opponents. Political jokes, which have poured out as a reaction to both visible and invisible social, political, and ideological crackdown, have predominantly targeted a lack of freedom in society, as well as the inefficiency of politicians in the face of national and international challenges. Recently, some columnists and political figures have publicly criticized the jokes that poke fun at old senior clerics who are still active on the political scene. For example, Taraghi (2012), an advisor to the Supreme Leader, condemned telling jokes about Tehran Friday Prayer Imam as unfair and belittling to his achievements and contributions to the Islamic community.

The following section draws on several theories that account for different roles of humor. In particular, it gives an overview of the social, psychological, and political functions of jokes as an important means of delving into the socio-cultural and socio-political underpinnings of any given social context. In the light of these theories, this study intends to provide a classification of Persian jokes based on their targets. It also aims to offer an insider perspective into the characteristics and functions of different types of jokes in this context.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The debate on the nature and role of humor dates back to the thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle (Provine 2000), Kant (LaFollette & Shanks 1993), and Schopenhauer (Provine 2000), just to name a few. The ancient literature also abounds in examples of people's use of humor to express their attitudes towards each other or different social issues (Bullough & Bullough 1994; Holt 2008). However, this debate is still ongoing, as new theories are emerging to cater for the new challenges and new players on the social scene in different contexts. In his linguistic-semantic theory of verbal humor, Raskin (1985 [1944]) classified humor theories into cognitive, or theories of incongruity and contrast; social or theories of hostility, aggression, superiority, triumph, derision and disparagement; and psychoanalytical or release theories. From another perspective, Attardo (1994) categorized humor into two semantic and pragmatic facets: the semantic dimension views humor as a depiction of incongruity, whereas the pragmatic dimension considers humor as a violation of Grice's

Cooperative Principle. With regard to its role in society, humor may function as a social corrective, which is used by society to correct the deviant behavior (Bergson 2004 [1911]), or as a defense mechanism to neutralize aggressive or violent behavior (Oshima 2000). Notwithstanding the diversity of theories on its type and function, however, humor still lacks a comprehensive theory. Veatch (1998) attributed the absence of a unified theory to the interdisciplinary nature of studying humor, and to the fact that various factors could influence the individuals' use and interpretation of humor in different situations.

Among different genres of humor, jokes are predominantly narrative and contain a story of, for instance, stupidity, leaving a less complicated cognitive load on individuals to narrate or make sense of them. Jokes address an array of issues, ranging from the most ideological beliefs to the daily affairs of a community or nation. Ethnic jokes are the most popular and frequent jokes that home in on the social differences and rivalries between different groups, mostly used by the established majority to display their social, economic, and political power or superiority to the minority ethnic groups (Boskin & Dorinson 1985). Davies (1990), who has studied ethnic jokes more systematically in different societies, examined the human traits such as dumbness, aggression, and stinginess that these jokes attribute to different ethnic groups. He focused specifically on the theme of stupidity, originally posited by Hobbes (1981), in his interpretation of ethnic jokes and joke telling behavior. Davies (1990) noted that the so-called stupid characters of the ethnic jokes have always been the people that live in the periphery, such as immigrants from the less developed parts of a country and those who more often than not speak a non-standard language. Ethnic joke wars in multicultural industrial societies during the 1940s and 1950s were also targeting unskilled immigrants, splitting people into two acceptable and unacceptable camps based on their ethnicity, to the extent that the court in America intervened to punish the offenders (Hughes 2003).

Political jokes, as another category of jokes, reveal the citizens' attitudes and struggle to resist the exerted pressure by a state to "standardize their thinking and to frighten them into withholding criticism and dissent" (Benton 1988: 33). Such jokes, which generally arouse a thought-provoking laughter, poke fun at the incompetent politicians and their policies. Political jokes fall into two main groups: those that denigrate political figures by representing them as stupid, tyrant, and unpopular; and exposure jokes that inform the public of the politicians' corruption or their abuse of power. Political jokes are hostile in nature and are exchanged in protest against the status quo (Kulynych 1997; Hart 2007). Text messages exchanged from Tahrir Square in Egypt before Mubarak's departure, saying, for instance, "Talk to him in Hebrew, he might understand", are the most recent examples of jokes serving the agenda of political protest.

Jokes have also been found to offer the joke tellers and hearers mental and psychological benefits, or otherwise represent their mental or psychological states (Ruch 1998; Martin 2007). Jokes could be "inherently neither friendly nor aggressive", but serve as "a means of deriving emotional pleasure that can be used for both amiable and antagonistic purposes" (Martin 2007: 18). In his attempt to ascertain the unconscious and unseen forces behind them, Freud (1960 [1905]) classified them into innocent – those without a serious aim – and tendentious or purposeful jokes, which are laden with a serious message. He suggested that jokes allow for a release of hostile impulses that society will not tolerate; the feelings that are repressed by ego and superego mechanisms; and the voices that are censored by moral conscience. For example, Freud (ibid.) categorized political humor under hostile jokes, although this seems to be determined more contextually and culturally than demonstrating a universal truth. As another example, he located sexual jokes in a situation in which a woman initially arouses a male's sexual desire and then frustrates it.

The relationship between gender and humor has been another source of debate to examine the ways men and women engage in constructing gender identity (see Holmes 2006). In general, it has been observed that the patterns of humorous attacks are ingrained in many societies, and they are practiced as ritual duels much more by men than women (Kotthoff 2006). In addition, since it is unacceptable to assault or show aggression towards women directly, some people find it more appropriate to convey these hostile feelings through joking. Men have traditionally marginalized, restricted, or ignored women while participating in humorous practices to the extent that they have constructed stereotypes such as the very joke that women do not understand jokes (Bullough & Bullough 1994; Kotthoff 2006). Although their level of involvement and indulgence in humor varies from one context to another, women in developing countries such as Iran – despite the dramatic developments – have yet to fulfill their utmost potential in terms of narrowing the gap with men in all social undertakings, especially in making and exchanging of jokes.

In summary, individuals follow different agendas while telling jokes, and the reaction that these jokes generate may be either positive or negative. Whether jokes are preeminently cracked for fun or are indicative of some people's anger and frustration, "a violation of the dignity, comfort, etc., of a disliked character seems to be acceptable, gratifying, and positively pleasurable to humans" (Veatch 1998: 181). Apart from violating others' social rights in many cases, humor can have a strong voice in promoting solidarity and bringing people together for a cause. This was evident in the controversial case of publication of Prophet Mohammed's cartoon by a Danish newspaper, which caused anger among Islamic countries and united them to protest against the offenders

(Kuipers 2008). Jokes in the workplace also proved to increase the sense of collegiality among the staff, besides turning the tedious working conditions into more tolerable situations (Holmes 2006). Similarly, jokes could release pressure and tension among people in society at large, and consequently enhance their intimacy (Cohen 2001 [1999]). This was even noticed among tribal families who exchanged jokes as a means of entertainment and building emotional bonds with each other (Reddy 2003).

THE STUDY

This study intends to classify Persian jokes based on their targets, and to investigate their functions as to what different individuals may project, hide, or simply demonstrate while exchanging jokes. The researcher aims to offer insights into the destructive or constructive power of jokes in the ethnically and linguistically diverse Iranian society. Readers from other cultures can also get a glimpse into the ways Iranians exploit jokes for different personal or social purposes (Kazarian 2011). To achieve this aim, a corpus of 1000 Persian jokes was randomly collected from different online websites and classified into different categories based on their targets. In addition, a 14-item survey was designed in Persian and e-mailed to 200 male and female university students in different provinces in order to investigate their opinions on different features and functions of jokes. These items, which rated on a five-point Likert scale anchored at 1 ('strongly disagree') and 5 (strongly agree), fell into different inventories, such as general characteristics of Persian jokes, ethnic, political, and sexist jokes. University students were selected to ensure their familiarity with completing surveys. Students also form a segment of society that stands at the forefront of social and political changes, and therefore they are at a better vantage point to reflect on such social issues as joking practices. For the sake of easy reporting, the responses of 'strongly agree' and 'agree', as well as 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree', were combined together into 'agree' and 'disagree' categories. Representative jokes, which were translated from Persian into English by the researcher, were reported in support of the findings wherever deemed necessary.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The distribution of jokes according to their targets shows that ethnic jokes (82.1%) accounted for an overwhelming majority of Persian jokes, followed by political (8.7%), sexist (5.2%), animal (2%), and other types of jokes (2%). In addition, the participants' responses to different items in the survey provided some insights into the function and role of these jokes. The sections below report the results of the data analysis and discussion of participants' responses to different parts of the survey.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSIAN JOKES

Regarding their opinions on the specific features of Persian jokes, a majority of respondents (70%) agreed that these jokes are exchanged for fun (item 1). This indicates that humor is basically a social phenomenon, and we laugh at jokes more frequently when mixing with others, although this pleasant feeling comes from making fun of others or demonstrating our own superiority to them (Martin 2007). An overwhelming majority of respondents (82%) opined that Persian jokes are culture-specific (item 2), suggesting that funny jokes in one culture may be offensive or arouse no special reaction in another culture because different cultural groups enjoy different moral and social commitments and attachments (Veatch 1998). In order for the audience to appreciate a joke, they need to share some common socio-cultural and sociolinguistic understanding with the joke teller. Jokes are also time- and place-bound: those that attract the attention of one generation may not be of interest to another generation (ibid.). In spite of these differences, Persian jokes share some linguistic features with jokes from other cultures. For example, they vary in length, form, and content. They are also narrated in different modes such as declarative, imperative, and subjunctive, or different voices such as passive and active. Yet, most of these jokes are short narratives that begin with a description of the main character, followed by a funny story, as seen in the following joke:

> *Ghazanfar was dying. He told his son to let everybody know that his father died of HIV/AIDS.*
> *"Why?" his son asked.*
> *"It is a prestigious disease. Besides that, nobody will marry your mother,"*
> *Ghazanfar answered.* (http://www.4jok.com/show/jok/1391)

Participants (70%) agreed that nothing is sacred when individuals engage in joking practices (item 3), as jokes are more likely than other humorous genres

to violate the moral, ideological, or religious taboos. Davies (2005) has also observed that jokes made during socialist time in the Eastern Bloc showed no respect for the sacred values or institutions. However, while participants (76%) agreed that everybody, regardless of their age or status, enjoys exchanging jokes (item 4), they (48%) did not support the idea that younger generations are behind making and spreading of jokes (item 5). Indeed, people from all walks of life such as doctors, teachers, businessmen, taxi drivers, and even the president (see below) participate in this funny enterprise.

Concerning the psychological impacts of jokes on the joke tellers (item 6) and hearers (item 7), half of the participants agreed that jokes affect both parties, implying that jokes are not exchanged in vacuum; rather, individuals are under the influence of different drives and impulses while deciding what type of joke to tell, in what manner, and to whom. Psychologically, we address "a neighboring and similar people, whom we can perceive as a comic imitation of ourselves, just as we might visit a hall of mirrors to laugh at our own distorted reflections" (Davies 1998: 29). In other words, jokes could stand as psychological projections of our negative traits such as craftiness, cowardliness, and greed we attribute to others who are different from us culturally, socially, or linguistically. These jokes seem to have a cathartic effect on joke tellers and their audience to feel better after releasing their negative or hostile feelings towards socially different others (Freud 1960 [1905]). This applies specifically to the Iranian context, in which media censorship and the Internet filtering by the state is so rife that people do not have the luxury of expressing their feelings and thoughts publicly. Whenever given a chance, people criticize the state policies through humorous practices or works of art. For example, 'Poetry Nights', which are supported by communities or university students, are the occasions when poets have the opportunity to violate taboos in the name of poetry. Most of these poems read during these gatherings are disguised jokes that ridicule the lack of political and social freedom in the country.

ETHNIC JOKES

Participants (72%) agreed that ethnic groups are the main targets of Persian jokes (item 8). As jokes are told for an intended audience, they have an intended target as well. However, being the target of others' laughter is a painful experience most people seek to avoid due to its negative social consequences (Martin 2007). This target, which is usually chosen based on some different geographical, cultural, social, or linguistic aspects (Asgharzadeh 2007), does not refer to a small town, but simply symbolizes a larger region or a deeper ethnic

division. For example, "jokes about people from the northwestern provincial town of Rasht refer to a linguistic minority who live on the borders between Iran on the one hand and Turkey and Azerbaijan on the other" (Davies 1998: 16). Ethnic jokes are produced and spread for different purposes and reasons. Most important, they are exploited to coerce the powerless minorities into conforming to the desired norms, ideals, and manners of the majority, who are not associated with any ethnic group, speak the standard language, and have more social and economic leverage. This power game may put joking under the category of more aggressive practices such as teasing, ridiculing, and sarcasm. For example, the following joke mocks some ethnic groups who are still strict or cautious about pre-marriage relations between young boys and girls:

> *At his wedding night, Cheraghali turns to his wife and asks, "Does your family know you are here?"* (http://eima.ir/view/post:1659878)

The rise of the middle class and, as a result, the class conflict, is another reason for the spread of ethnic jokes. Most of the Iranian ethnic minorities were living in small communities and villages farming and raising livestock, but the breakdown of feudalistic system and also environmental issues such as consecutive droughts and the inefficiency of the government to support these communities facilitated their exodus to more densely inhabited areas for better living standards and job opportunities. In order to survive the costly and difficult urban life, these immigrants had to compete with others, mostly with those who owned the means of production and business. Having conformed to the bourgeois ideals of the society through working hard, these newcomers managed to narrow the economic and social gap with the established majority. This sense of social and economic rivalry provoked the majority to make jokes at the expense of these minority groups in order to keep them at bay or to project their inabilities onto them, as the following joke shows:

> *"Have you ever experienced a miracle?" a TV reporter asked Ghazanfar. "Yes," Ghazanfar replied, "The other day I went to the bank, and when I got there ... Thank God ... the door opened automatically."* (http://andishgar. ir/view/post:352170)

Likewise, the joke below mocks another ethnic group's participation in sports activities, as if they should stay away from the activities that are considered to be within the realm of the dominant majority of the society:

> *As a football coach, Cheraghali realizes that number 10 player is not playing well. He calls him out and sends onto the pitch two number 5s instead.*
> (http://forum.mobilestan.net/archive/index.php/t-92796.html)

The rivalry argument is supported by the fact that Armenians living in the central provinces, Arabs living in the south, Baluchis living in the east, or even Afghan immigrants who are scattered across the country, are rarely the potential targets of jokes because they are demographically, geographically, or socially far from challenging the mainstream cultural or social status of the majority. Besides, there is no sectarian joke among Persian jokes because Shia is the official state religion, and Shiites comprise the majority religious group (more than 90%); thus, they feel no potential threat from the small minority sects or religious groups.

As for the main theme of ethnic jokes, participants (66%) agreed that ethnic jokes are loaded with the theme of stupidity (item 9). Joke tellers not only exert power on their audience and control their behavior but also impose their inner thoughts and mentalities on them (Martin 2007). This mainly includes the joke tellers' attempt to show their smartness at the expense of others' stupidity. However, these bitter ethnic jokes with negative themes could diminish the ethnic groups' tolerance for this type of contemptuous behavior and therefore provoke them to protest against the offenders in different ways. A couple of years ago, an ethnic group made an upheaval, protesting that the former President of the country (between 1997 and 2005) poked a joke at them in a private meeting with some clerics, although he later called it a political smear campaign. In order to regain their lost ground and social dignity, many ethnic groups have recently managed to fire back by making and spreading jokes on different blogs at the expense of Persian speakers.

While previous research gives evidence of true stories behind ethnic jokes (Davies 1990; Chiaro 1992), Persian jokes demonstrate this veracity in terms of cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic disparities rather than in terms of the ethnic groups' actual stupidity or ignorance. For example, some of these jokes target ethnic groups who are not competent bilinguals, or incapable of communicating in standard language as efficiently as native speakers. By the same token, participants (64%) agreed that ethnic jokes are narrated in the targeted ethnic group's dialect or language (item 10). These jokes address these groups' use of syntactically or phonologically marked Persian due to the existence of different structures or phonemes in their mother tongue. For example, jokes about Azeri speakers target their inability to articulate the consonants such as /k/, /g/, and /gh/ properly while speaking Persian. Because of their insufficient exposure to the standard language, these jokes also target their deviant use of the pragmatic and discourse conventions of this language. Therefore, the hegemony of Persian as the standard language not only has marginalized minority languages and vernaculars but also has turned their speakers into a target of jokes.

Another challenge to this veracity debate derives from the fact that the same ethnic jokes are attributed to different funny characters representing different ethnic groups. For example, if the joke is neutral, it will have *yaroo* (a guy) as its main character; however, if joke tellers realize that the context is conceivable to apply it to an ethnic group, they will change the character's name to fit that ethnic group. This repetitive application of the same joke to different ethnic groups justifies the claim that most ethnic jokes are somehow blind rather than depicting a true story. For example, the following joke was narrated with two different funny characters that represent two different ethnic groups:

> *During the war between Iran and Iraq, Ghazanfar sends a message to his comrades saying that he has captured 4 Iraqi soldiers and needs their help to collect the captive.*
> *"Bring them yourself. Will you?" they reply.*
> *"I am afraid I can't. They don't let me move," he replies back.*
> (http://www.ninisite.com/discussion/thread.asp?threadID=561303&PageNumber=1)

This common strategy also applies to the geographical locations of different ethnic groups. As an example, the joke below was narrated in two distant provinces, where two different ethnic groups live:

> *An earthquake killed 89 people in Lorestan: 9 people were killed as they were trapped under the rubble, and another 80 died as the result of fighting over the relief goods such as tents and blankets.* (http://faceloos.ir/view/post:323130)

POLITICAL JOKES

Concerning their opinions on the functions of political jokes, participants (62%) agreed that these types of jokes protest against the lack of freedom of speech and expression in society (item 11). In addition, they (52%) agreed that these jokes carry a political agenda (item 12). In most cases, political jokes reflect the people's disapproval of the politicians' decisions in response to the high-stake issues (Kulynych 1997; Hart 2007). For example, people have recently spread jokes to react against the state strategy of 'economy of resistance', which was developed to curb the impact of international sanctions on the country. It could therefore be highly unlikely to believe that someone supports a political system and ridicules or censures it with humorous practices such as joking. Since the government has closed down the daily newspapers that oppose the dominant

fundamentalists, filtered the online social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, which people might use to share their opinions and information freely, and has prosecuted its critics for the past three decades, people have been exploiting jokes as an outlet to express their criticism. Other types of humor practices are also subjected to this crackdown. As a recent example, a cartoonist has been sentenced to 25 lashes for drawing a cartoon of a member of parliament, suggesting the state's zero tolerance towards using humor even against low-ranking officials. These policies have provoked people to defy this social suppression through employing humor, as echoed best in the following joke:

> *Ahmadinejad: In my dream I saw 8 Mongolians bring me some plum soup. Joseph's interpretation: You will destroy the country to the point that people send blessings upon Genghis Khan of Mongolia*. (http://jock-18. glxweb.ir/post/5/profile.php)

Likewise, the joke below illustrates people's concern about the incapacity of the government to strike a deal with the countries involved over its nuclear program in the past 12 years.

> *Finally the President sent the Group 5+1 a letter responding to their proposal for the nuclear talks.*
> *"The answer is 6," he wrote back to them*. (http://www.lakke33.blogfa. com/8706.aspx)

Although these jokes function as a source of solidarity among people outside the circle of power, more often than not they reveal the hypocrisy, conformity, and conservatism of those who spread jokes to perpetuate a culture of sneering and smirking at serious issues instead of expressing their legitimate demands through other outlets. This popular joking culture has dared politicians themselves to exploit jokes in order to move their agenda ahead or to belittle the opposition (Paletz 1990). During his presidential campaign, Ahmadinejad, the sixth President of Iran (2005–2013), promised people to put their share of exported oil revenue on their dinner table, so to speak. After taking the office, however, he did not keep to his promise and instead joked that the tablecloth would get oily if he proceeded with the plan. Ethnic jokes could even follow a political agenda in this context. They could leave an escapist impact on the poor by diverging their attention from their daily life problems and also entertain and titillate the middle class and affluent to feel happy and forget about the rest. Moreover, cracking down on the political jokes and disseminating ethnic jokes could, in the long term, create politically inactive or indifferent individuals, who, for the fear of 'big brother', go down the trodden path of having fun at the expense of their fellow citizens.

SEXIST JOKES

As for the relationship between joking and gender, participants (48%) disagreed that joking is a male-dominant practice (item 13). Thanks to the global women's rights movements and initiatives, women in Iran have also attained rights equal to men in many respects, although there is still a long way to go before they can achieve equal footing with men in all segments of family, social, and professional life. For example, girls have outnumbered boys in many disciplines in higher education, especially in social sciences studies, and they are enthusiastically participating in the humor duel, as is seen in the following joke:

> *Men are like parking spaces. All the good ones are taken and the rest are handicapped.*
> (http://jokbazar2000.mihanblog.com/post/51)

Finally, participants (66%) disagreed that women are the targets of Persian jokes (item 14). The analysis of the pile of jokes also illustrated that there were more jokes about men than women. This gives evidence of a conscious movement, in particular among the educated women, to be aware of the power of humor in proving their equality and capability in the society, as the following joke has it:

> *A: What do you call a man who's lost 99% of his mind?*
> *B: Infertile.* (http://www.jokekhoone.com)

CONCLUSIONS

The results from this study indicate that the main targets of Persian jokes are ethnic groups, especially those who challenge the hegemony of the mainstream majority by living or working with them neck and neck. This highlights the significance of ethnicity, which is mainly marked by a different language or a geographical location, as a strong indicator of social identity in today's Iranian society. These jokes depict ethnic groups as stupid and ignorant because of their different cultural and social norms and values. The popularity of ethnic jokes proves the principle that people make jokes at the expense of others, ignoring a basic fact that "most people are personally offended when they are laughed at" (Veatch 1998: 176). Not only could these jokes whip up ethnocentric senti-ments and tensions among different ethnic groups, but they could also damage people's respect for the ethnic diversity and peaceful co-existence in society.

Political jokes also make up a fraction of Persian jokes, emanating from people's soft social protest and criticism voiced against the lack of freedom in

a theocratic system of statehood (Benton 1988: 33). They reveal people's reaction to the widespread social and political crackdown that has left room only for spiteful jokes or sneering and smirking at the politicians they dislike the most (Veatch 1998). However, the small proportion of sexist jokes reveals that more crucial aspects of identity politics such as ethnicity, alongside political concerns, have overshadowed the gender issue, albeit there are still religious and moral taboos associated with making jokes about women. Moreover, Iranian women have avoided being the target of jokes by narrowing the gap with men in different areas of professional and social life. Consulting the pile of jokes, sexist jokes were the least likely local types of jokes, highlighting a global taste among women to align themselves with more international women's rights movements against the likely unequal opportunities in various aspects of their life.

This study concludes that jokes not only mirror the realities of society but also help perpetuate those negative mentalities and stereotypes. The popularity of joking practices could give an account of the collective disappointment of people who embark on making and exchanging of jokes to vent their social and political frustration. This is best reflected in the prevalence of ethnic jokes, by which people are intentionally or unintentionally engaged in the ethnic identity politics. However, there is also a conspiracy theory that the state welcomes ethnic jokes in order to keep people distracted from the main political or economic issues. This is reflected in their concern over political rather than ethnic jokes by censoring and filtering the media or online sources that contain such materials. Launching a special cyber police force to deal with the cyber crimes, humor practices included, is another example of the state's iron-fist policy towards violators of the so-called revolutionary and ideological principles.

Although the findings of this study are not conclusive because of the small pile of jokes and the size of the sample, they can provide a snapshot of the taxonomy, as well as different social, political, and psychological functions and implications of Persian jokes. Since investigating jokes falls within the domain of interdisciplinary research, further study needs to employ more qualitative means of data collection with more participants from different walks of life and ethnic groups in order to draw a better picture of jokes and their functions in the contemporary Iranian society.

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CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH ON THE WHITE CLOTH AS A RITUAL ITEM IN THE BULGARIAN WEDDING: ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH

Rozaliya Guigova

Abstract: The aim of this article is to investigate the white cloth in the contemporary urban Bulgarian wedding in anthropological perspective. The white cloth as a ritual item in the contemporary urban wedding ceremony is a simple white rectangular fabric, usually made of cotton, which looks like a path on which the newlyweds have to walk during the wedding celebration. Immediately after entering the restaurant in which the wedding party is held, they step on the cloth. At this point a number of symbolic actions are performed, involving ritual items and characters.

Based on profound fieldwork materials gathered by the author, the paper discusses the fertility function of the cloth and its protective qualities regarding the methods of the functioning of the cloth as a ritual object in the sphere of symbolic thinking today. In this paper, this ritual object is interpreted also in a social context, in the sphere of ritual practises in contemporary and traditional weddings, as an item by means of which people consciously or unconsciously fix a boundary between the public and private spheres of their existence; on the other hand, it is analysed as an object that metaphorically expresses kinship links. The author argues that, as a result of the changed socio-cultural characteristics of the Bulgarian society today, the tradition of close kin relations, which is expressed through objects, gradually loses significance.

Keywords: kinship relations, ritual objects, traditional culture, urban customs, wedding, wedding procession, white cloth

INTRODUCTION

The traditional Bulgarian wedding has often been the subject of research interest (Arnaudov 1934; Vakarelsky 1974). Regarding the traditional wedding, I can mention several substantial monographic studies: a great volume dedicated to the ethnology of the Sofia region (Sofia 1989), since my urban field research has been done in Sofia, a remarkable monographic research of the Slavic traditional wedding (Gura 2012), especially the volume that analyses the symbolism of objects, and a special monographic research dedicated to the

Bulgarian wedding (Uzeniova 2010). Nevertheless, the investigation of the ritual practices and objects in the contemporary urban Bulgarian wedding has, to some extent, remained out of focus. In spite of all this, the research of some authors has been devoted to the rites of the life cycle in traditional and contemporary Bulgarian culture (Ivanova 2000; 2002). Therefore, I think that it seems appropriate to emphasise the fact that interesting perspectives of traditional rites could be seen in the contemporary urban wedding as well as in the way that the ritual objects are functioning in it. A good example of this is the white cloth (*bialoto platno*).

The white cloth is a ritual object that nowadays can be seen nearly at every urban Bulgarian wedding. It is a simple white uncut cotton cloth that always has a rectangular shape. This fabricated item is normally store-bought and is generally spread out in the restaurant in which the wedding celebration takes place. Also called "sponsor's cloth" (*bialo platno ot kumata*), it is sometimes covered with scattered flowers – geraniums, carnations or rose petals. It looks like a white path, on which the newlyweds have to step immediately after entering the restaurant. During the wedding party many ritual actions are performed, with the cloth placed on the floor of the restaurant, as, for instance, breaking of glasses full of wine, breaking of the wedding bread, etc. A detailed description of the corresponding ritual practices is given below.

The cloth in Bulgarian culture has a major significance and it features symbolism. In traditional culture, after baptism the Godfather swaddled the child in a piece of new white cloth (Ivanova & Zhivkov 2004). The cloth (*platno*, *peshkir*, *karpa*) is a common gift in traditional and contemporary rituals of the life-circle. The traditional wedding flag (*bairak*, *stiag*, *feruglitsa*, *priapor*), which can be seen also in some contemporary urban weddings, is made of a red or white cloth. A child walks on a white cloth, placed in front him or her during ritual actions that are performed in order to celebrate the toddler (*proshchapulnik*). A red-coloured non-transparent cloth covers the bride's head and face in traditional culture. In traditional as well as in some contemporary weddings the bride enters the groom's home, walking on a white cloth (Ivanova & Zhivkov 2004). In traditional society the departed is covered with a shroud – a long piece of white cloth. The cloth is considered as a symbolically significant ritual item by many Slavic societies (Tolstoi 2009). Many similar examples could be provided, but here I would confine myself to the abovementioned, as it is not the main subject of my research to investigate the complex symbolic system embodied in this ritual object. Nevertheless, those examples provide a background to my investigation of the white cloth in the contemporary wedding.

In this context, I proceed from the perspective presented by Albert Baiburin, who has developed the idea that objects have a dual nature because every object

can be used both as an object and as a *sign*. Each artificially produced object has utilitarian and symbolic characteristics and can potentially be "implemented" as an object or a *sign*. In this way the existence of objects can be presented as a specific semiotic fluctuation (Baiburin 1983: 9). So objects of the present day can be discussed in various aspects: in their relationship to the objects functioning in what has been referred to as traditional culture, as bearers of the family memory, and as exponents of social relations. On the other hand, we can trace their subordination to cultural globalisation and mass media. They contain many cultural and social meanings, which are sometimes beyond any objective signification because they depend on the cultural and social context. From this point of view, in this article the white cloth is discussed as a ritual object operating in the present-day wedding, and is compared to the cloth in the traditional wedding.[1]

In the present day, the white cloth is an object of an utilitarian purpose, but when operating in the sphere of ritual practice, it acquires signification features: the cloth is a metaphor of the path that the couple starts together; the cloth, as well as the arch that is placed in front of it, symbolically signifies the entrance to the new life that the newlyweds step into together. In this paper, the cloth, which in the present-day Bulgarian wedding is spread out in a restaurant to welcome the newlyweds, is compared to its usage in the traditional ritual, at which the bride passes on a white string or belt when entering the bridegroom's house. Today in some wedding ceremonies in Bulgaria the white cloth is spread out in the house of the newlyweds, at other weddings it is spread out in front of the house of the groom's mother when she receives the newlyweds at the end of the wedding day, or is even placed in front of the registry office. Both at the contemporary and traditional wedding, this ritual object could be interpreted in a social context as a metaphorical expression of the kinship link in the family. On the other hand, it is also regarded as a symbolic element in the rite of passage.

I think that wedding and the rites of the life cycle are preserved as effective symbolic actions in contemporary Bulgarian culture. The objects that function here are connected with the personal life and fate of people; that is why belief in their magic qualities and their semantic meaning remains "alive". Furthermore, I think that they also continue expressing a social meaning. Different examples could be given of this. According to my fieldwork results, the bride, throwing a flower bouquet behind her back, often believes that the one that catches the bouquet will be the next to get married. The object will magically transmit the status of its owner over to the person that receives it. Also, in a traditional Bulgarian wedding the bride leaves several patterns in her costume embroidery half-finished, because a garment without imperfection would attract hidden

evil forces. In the same manner and maybe because of the same belief, the present-day Bulgarian bride unstitches the lining of her wedding dress in several places. Both of them are obliged to accomplish that action secretly, with no one's knowledge. Therefore, I think that some of the objects today may change their material shape, could be susceptible to fashion influences or technology of production, but they continue existing in rites, following the logic of cultural continuity between tradition and contemporary culture. Therefore, the white cloth that is placed today in a restaurant during a wedding ceremony could also be seen as the carrier of cultural continuity. In this context, I hereby also investigate the ritual function of the white cloth in urban culture, as far as culture is understood in a more general sense of the process, through which human groups construct themselves and socialise (Miller 1994: 399). Culture is always a process rather than a set of objects, such as the arts, and it should be seen as an evaluation of the relationship through which objects are constituted as a social factor (Miller 1987: 11).

Figure 1. *The bride kicks the jug while stepping on the white cloth in a restaurant in Sofia. Photograph by Ivan Stoyanov 2012.*

I collected the material for the article (interviews with informants, documentary photographs and material gathered during personal attendance of weddings) in the course of my fieldwork in urban social environment, undertaken in three Bulgarian towns – Stara Zagora, Svilengard and Sofia[2] – within the period 1999–2004. An important part of my fieldwork investigation are Internet forums, in which girls from all over the country exchange information about their wed-

ding days or the future arrangement of their own or somebody else's weddings. All of them come from medium-sized cities as, for example, Plovdiv or Varna[3], and the information has been published by them on the Internet between the years 2006 and 2012. My informants are well educated women between the ages of 23 and 65. All of them live in the capital or in some medium-sized town and all of them are ethnic Bulgarians.

The research methodology that I have adopted in my work includes ethnographic fieldwork and participant observation (interviews recorded during the fieldwork); research into the narratives that are published in Internet forums; analyses of wedding photographs that were kindly delivered to me by my informants; description and analyses of my personal participation in several weddings.

THE CLOTH

On a worldwide scale, the cloth expresses complex moral, ethic and ethnic issues, which are related to dominance and autonomy, opulence and poverty, political legitimacy and succession, gender and sexuality (Weiner & Schneider 1989). It constitutes important forms of social interaction, which are dictated by family and community ties (Askari & Arthur 1999). The uncut cloth is considered sacred and holy in many cultures as, for instance, in south-Asian societies (ibid.: 21). It is used as a baby's first swaddling band, circumcision wrap, coming-of-age veil for girls, a ritual wedding gift and the final enveloping shroud in a burial (ibid.: 21). Furthermore, it has strong possibilities for communication expressed through its shape, colour, patterns and structural elements, and displays endless variability of significations. An object that discloses many possibilities for attaching meaning can also conceal or homogenise differences through uniforms or disguise identities through costumes and masks. Cloth metaphors eco from many parts of the world, not only from the past but also from today (Weiner & Schneider 1989: 2). The production of the cloth itself (in mythology and ritual practice) draws analogies between weaving and dyeing and the life circle of birth, maturation, death and decay. Thus, the cloth is established as a connection that binds humans to each other and to ancestors. On the other hand, the cloth operates as an object of bestowal and exchange, acquiring a social and political meaning. Participants in life-cycle celebrations frequently make the cloth a continuous threat, a connecting tie between two kinship groups, or three or more generations. Cloth as dress gains meaning as part of the culturally constituted body, which also means that it draws boundaries between the cultural and natural worlds in social and ritual contexts (Perani & Wolff 1999: 1).

One more dimension of it is the capitalist production, which re-decoded the symbolic potential of the cloth, eliminating the opportunity for weavers and dyers to infuse their product with spiritual value, and encouraged the growth of cloth fashion as a consumption system of ever-changing variation (Weiner & Schneider 1989: 3). Finally, the cloth is also manipulated as clothing, used as table cloths or adornment, revealing or conceiving identities and values (ibid.).

THE WHITE CLOTH IN THE URBAN BULGARIAN WEDDING

Today, the ritual actions performed with the cloth at the Bulgarian wedding are known in different variants and I will depict them briefly below, based on my fieldwork investigation in Bulgaria. I will concentrate on one of its domains of expressions – the white cloth, spread out in the restaurant during the wedding ceremony – although the cloth in the Bulgarian wedding exists also as a bridal veil, tablecloth, dowry and bride-price, and a wedding gift.

During the contemporary urban Bulgarian wedding a white cloth is spread out in the restaurant. As already mentioned above, it looks like a white path, on which the newlyweds have to walk. It is a simple white uncut piece of fabric that always has a rectangular shape. It is also called the "sponsor's cloth", and it is a fabricated item that is normally bought, but on rare occasions the maid of honour (*kuma*) sews it. As a rule, the guests are the first to enter the restaurant, and when all of them have taken their seats, the couple follows. At some weddings the bridesmaid (*shaferka*) passes first and covers the cloth with wild geraniums, carnations and roses[4]; then follow the newlyweds. In recent years, companies and wedding agencies have emerged, which prepare the cloth, decorate it with flowers and construct something like a stand adorned with artificial flowers, placed as a hedge along the path. Generally the Godfathers (*kr"stitsi*) or sponsors (*kumove*)[5] walk on the cloth behind the couple, roll it up and give it to the bride.[6] The couple stops at the end of the path. The restaurant singer or the bride's father gives them two glasses of wine. The couple takes a sip of wine and throws the glasses over their heads, so that they break into pieces. The organiser, who sometimes is a person from the restaurant staff or somebody working for a wedding agency, says: "As many pieces are there as many boys will be born!" or "As many pieces as many boys and girls will be born!" The belief tells that the newlyweds must not turn and look back, and that the broken glass "brings health".[7] The organiser fetches one small flat loaf of sweet "ritual bread" (*obreden khliab*)[8] and the mother-in-law takes two morsels covered with honey, and gives them to the couple, putting them in their mouths. According to many informants, this ritual action is performed "in order

to bring them a sweet life". The chronologically following ritual action requires that the couple hold the sweet "ritual bread", decorated with ornamentation and flowers and made of flour, in their hands, and raise it above their heads, trying to break it into two big pieces. My informants told me that according to the belief, the one "who holds the bigger piece will bear the responsibility for the family life". Sometimes this action is performed while the couple is standing on the cloth. After that, the bridegroom takes the bride in his lap and carries her to her seat at the wedding table. At some weddings, a small traditional copper jug (*menche*)[9] with water and roses is placed on the white cloth in front of the couple. The organiser says: "Let's see who is the first to kick the bowl!" The bride kicks the bowl and the water spills.[10]

According to the fieldwork materials that I collected, in some contemporary urban weddings the ritual role of the cloth as an object with a symbolic meaning is more broadly displayed. During a wedding that took place in Stara Zagora city in 2002, a cloth was placed on the restaurant floor. It had been bought by the groom's mother. The organiser of the wedding and the DJ decorated it with wild geranium, white and pink gladiolus and red rose petals. The couple walked on it and threw their glasses over their heads and after that three children, one after another, gifted the bride with a white, red and pink flower. At the same time, the organiser cited a verse that she herself had composed, in which the symbolism of these colours was interpreted, inspired by the popular urban culture. It can also be found in many Internet wedding forums: white – the symbol of purity, red – the symbol of love, and pink – the symbol of mutual understanding.

In some Bulgarian weddings, the spread cloth on the floor is the place where another ritual action is performed: that is the symbolic delivery of fire from the old family to the new. In this case, both fathers-in-law hold in their hands burning candles that, according to the informants, are "symbols of fire". They fuse the flames of the two candles and the couple lights a candle from the flames of their candles, i.e., according to the informants in that symbolic way "from two old families a new one is created". After that, the organiser folds the cloth, with all the flowers and pieces of broken glasses in it, hands it to the groom's mother and tells her that she has to keep it for three days and after that clean it. According to my informants, the tradition also says that it has to be kept one week, instead of three days, and that from this cloth the mother-in-law has to sew a bedsheet for the first child of the new family.[11]

There are many internet forums in Bulgaria where young girls exchange information about their weddings, narrating about different objects involved in the wedding rite. I have included here only their opinions in relation to the cloth, although in those forums the information about it, repeatedly called the "sponsor's cloth", is mixed with narratives about different wedding rites.[12]

Kazhete mili momicheta, bialoto platno triabva li da se porabva? Pitam, zashchoto na kumata mi sa i kazali, che ne bilo dobre da ima podgavi i da e zashito po rabovete... Ne znam, dali go obiasnikh iasno, no tai kato tia sama si go pravi i se chudi?

Tell me, dear girls, if the white cloth has to be trimmed. My maid of honour was told that it is not a good sign if the cloth is bordered and its edges are folded and sewn. I do not know if I explained it clearly but I ask you because she does not know what to do. She sews it single-handedly.

Ako stava vapros za tova bialo platno, koeto e v restoranta az znam, che netriabva nikoi drug osven mladozhentsite da minava po nego, no za rabove nikoga ne e stavalo duma. A pak i te ne go li predostaviat v restoranta? Samo tova moga da ti kazha, za da ne te izlazha neshcho!

If you are talking about the piece of white cloth that is spread out in the restaurant, what I know is that nobody else has to step on it except for the newlyweds, but I do not know if you have to put a hem on it… Is it [the cloth] not given to you by the restaurant staff? That's all I can tell you.

Nasheto shche e ot restoranta, kakto i mencheto, koeto se rita tam. A tova s rabovete veroiatno e porednoto sueverie.

We will get the white cloth and the jug (*menche*) from the restaurant staff. The belief regarding the trim is probably one more superstition.

…za bialoto platno i na men niakoi mi kaza, che ne triabva da e porabeno i da e pamuchno, no vse si mislia, che i tova e vid svoeverie.

Somebody told me that the white cloth must be made of cotton and that it does not have to be hemmed, but sometimes I think that it is some kind of superstition.

Momicheta chudia se kak da aranzhiram platnoto. Daite idei. Prilozhete snimki ot vashite svatbi.

Girls, I do not know how to decorate the cloth. Give me some ideas! Attach some photos of your weddings!

Obikoveno na svtabite prosto razpraskvat listentsa po platnoto, na men mnogo mi kharesva varianta na snimkata i smiatam na moiata svatba da e taka.

Generally, only some petals are scattered over the cloth, but I really liked the photo that you attached and I will do it the same way at my wedding.

Az sam reshila da zanesa da mi izbrodirat bukvite ot imenata ni i datata na svatbata varhu platnoto i tai kato sam se zakhvanala da razkrasiavam svatbata s blestiashchi kamacheta (tip "Svarovski") mislia da zalepia takiva i varhu platnoto, kolkoto leko da blesti. Inache sigurno pak shche porasim zdravets i rozovi listentsa pokrai nego.

I've decided to ask somebody to stitch the first letters of our names and the wedding date on the cloth. I decided to embellish my wedding with shiny crystals (Swarovski style) and I think I will stick some Swarovski crystals on the cloth in order to make it shine. I'll probably sprinkle geranium and rose petals all over it.

It is obvious that the girls, although saying that it is nothing more than superstition, are really concerned with whether the cloth should be fringed or not, where it has to be placed and what to do with it after the wedding, and they even exchange photos of the white cloth, which means that it is an object of high significance in their wedding ceremonies. Some of the interlocutors keep it after the wedding, wash it, fold it, and put it in a wardrobe at home. In the same internet forum some more interesting opinions are mentioned:[13]

Bialoto platno s posipani zhivi tsvetia izraziava svetlina i bezoblachen zhivot, kam koito se stremiat mladozhentsite.

The white cloth and the sprinkled flower petals express the idea of a bright and serene life, to which the newlyweds aspire.

…v nashiia krai vmesto po shampanskoto polat na detsata se opredelia po drug nachin. Oshche kogato bulkata i mladozhenetsat sa na bialata pateka, pred tiakh se slaga ukraseno menche s voda i niakolko kitki karamfil, koito sa beli i cherveni… bulkata triabva da ritne mencheto, taka che karamfilchetata da izpadnat, gleda se tsveta na nai-dalechnoto karamfilche i ako e cherveno – parvoto dete se ochakva da e momiche (primerno), ako e bialo – momche (vapros na ugovorka).

In our region, instead of champagne [the narrator means the pieces of broken champagne glasses], the gender of the future children of the newlyweds is determined in another manner. When the bride and the groom step on the white cloth, a jug full of water, decorated with carnations, is placed in front of them. The carnations are red and white. The bride kicks the jug and the carnations fall on the floor. The colour of the most distant carnation is observed: if it is red, the first child of the newlyweds is expected to be a boy; if it is white, the firstborn child will be a girl.

Momicheta, a vsichki neshcha po posreshchaneto v restoranta (bialoto platno i tsvetiata po nego, mencheto, shampanskoto i chashite, koito se chupiat) vie li si gi osigurikhte ili sa ot restoranta? Vizhdala sam po snimki, che bialoto platno sled tova se naviva na rulo ot kumuvete i se dava na maldozhentsite... No te kakvo praviat s nego posle? Pazi li se ili pak neshcho drugo?

Girls, I want to ask you whether all the things (the white cloth, flowers, jug, champagne and glasses) were delivered by the restaurant staff or you bought them yourselves. I have seen in some photos that after the wedding the white cloth is rolled up by the sponsors and is given to the newlyweds ... But what do they do with it? Do they keep it or something else is done with it?

Vsichko tova nie si go osigurikhme, niama nishcho ot restoranta. Platnoto se naviva ot kumuvete i se schita za parviia podarak za mladozhentsite. Az go izprakh i go pazia, bez staklata razbira se. Taka che imame dve platna, tova plius platnoto na koeto biakh stapila, kogato me vzimakha, za da me obuiat.

We bought all those things, nothing was provided by the restaurant staff. The cloth is rolled up by the sponsors and is regarded as the first gift to the newlyweds. I washed it and I still keep it, without the shards, of course. In that way we have two cloths: this one and also another piece of cloth, on which I stepped when they put me on the wedding shoe[14].

I nie vsichko si osiguriavakhme. Platnoto go donese vodeshchiia. Samo che pri nas traditsiiata s platnoto e druga – koito go sabere sled kato minat mladozhentsite negova shche e sledvashchata svatba.

We bought all things. The cloth was given to us by the organiser [of the wedding]. But our tradition regarding the cloth is different: the newlyweds pass on it; then somebody folds the cloth. There is a belief that the person who rolls it up behind the newlyweds will be the next one to get married.

Za prav pat chuvam za tozi obichai, no zvuchi priiatno.
I have never heard of this ritual but it sounds interesting.

Pri nas vsichki tezi neshcha biakha ot restoranta. Ne sme chupili chashite i ne sme si vzimali platnoto – veche si imame 1 – tova, s keto svekarva mi ni posreshchna kato otidokh da zhiveia pri miloto, za kakvo sa ni 2? Inache, nego si go pazim sganato v garderoba.

Figure 2. *Restaurant garden. The bride and the groom are walking on the white cloth. Photograph by Todor Ivanov 2010.*

We got all these things at the restaurant. We did not break the glasses and we did not take the white cloth home. We already had one: the one with which my mother-in-law welcomed us when I entered my husband's home for the first time. Why do we need two cloths? However, we keep this one folded in the wardrobe.

INTERPRETATION: CONTEMPORARY AND TRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Following the method of exact comparison, the white cloth and the ritual actions that are performed on it could be juxtaposed with its usage in the traditional Bulgarian wedding ritual, at which the bride passes on a white string or a white cloth when entering the bridegroom's house. A new white cloth is usually used for that purpose, and it is spread from the fireplace or the threshold of a traditional house to the place where the newlyweds are welcomed (more often in the yard).The brother-in-law or the mother-in-law has to lead the bride when she passes on the cloth, and it has to be folded behind them. In front of the

stairs or on the doorstep she stops (SbNU 1891b: 60) and makes a bow (SbNU 1891a: 42). Long towels, white stockings (Ivanova 1984: 118), a rug, or a white cloth with a *martenitsa*[15], which is a traditional Bulgarian item made of coiled red and white string (Ivanova 1984: 118), could be used instead of the cloth (Hadzinikolov 1980: 404). In some villages the bride takes a step on a string of woollen yarn, which one of her sisters-in-law uncoils from the threshold to the fireplace (SbNU 1935: 248).

In traditional culture sometimes the bride steps on the cloth immediately after dismounting the horse. In some regions two women, who were married a year before, uncoil a string from a red woollen ball. Its end is placed on the threshold. The bridegroom has to pass on the string first, starting with his right foot, and is followed by the bride who must do the same (SbNU 1892: 59). The groom's mother coils the string and says: "I am bringing together home and house for the young couple" (ibid.: 57).

On the basis of my fieldwork, as well as more general and comparative materials, I see the white cloth as a ritual object in present days, as an implication of kinship and a way of its symbolic presentation, transmission and assumption. This object is functioning in the sphere of symbolic thinking since it is bought by the groom's mother; at the next moment the couple passes on it and after that it again transforms into an object that belongs in the sphere of ritual practice of the mother-in-law: she has to sew it into a bedsheet for the couple's first child. In fact, this process holds the characteristics of ritual sewing rather than of an everyday action, as the cloth materialises the symbolic relation among three generations, presented by the mother-in-law, the newlyweds and their child. The ritual of the symbolic delivery of the flame may also refer to that idea and may be connected with the symbolic meaning of the cloth as a kinship link.

From this point of view – functioning in the perspective of social relations today – the cloth expresses the ritual relation among generations. In this way the ritual not only reveals symbolically the link between the individual and society and the link between the different groups existing in society, but it also relates human communities in the course of time (Zhivkov 1981: 16). Moreover, the white cloth assumes functions similar to a traditional ritual object because as a ritual object it regulates the relation person–society and realises the adoption of social knowledge (ibid.). One can push the analyses further and demonstrate that the ritual actions performed with the white cloth in the contemporary urban wedding could be seen in the light of continuity of tradition, as an endorsement of the standpoint that there is a lack of a firm boundary between traditional and contemporary culture, or even regarding the present day as a development process of the tradition (Ivanova 2002: 16).

Thus, the white cloth in a present-day wedding could be interpreted by way of comparison with the symbolism of the cloth in traditional culture. The idea of a gradual incorporation and socialisation of the child exists in traditional culture and one of its realisations is the presence of the father's shirt or mother's chemise among the baby's clothes. In some respect, the mediatory function of the garment personifies the kinship relation between parents and children and the transmission of virtues from a parent to a child. To some extent, the white cloth in a contemporary wedding is an object that transfers socially significant information in a similar way. Here we could draw a comparison with the signification of the white cloth in traditional culture. In Bulgarian traditional culture, the white woven garment, without complementary ornaments and colours, acquires the meaning of 'natural', 'uncultured', and is therefore, to some extent, equal to nakedness. The child that comes into the world naked is wrapped into a baby napkin – a piece of white cloth. It is the first sign of the baby's incorporation in the cultural space, provided that at the moment of birth they are naked and therefore nearer to nature. Transition from a 'covered' with a cloth to a 'dressed' body is regarded as the next step of 'culture' towards mastering the 'nature' (Stanoeva 1994: 74–81). The white colour in Slavic traditional culture is one of the main elements of colour symbolism and white-black colour dualism, finding equivalents in terms such as: white = 'good', 'masculine', 'alive', 'young', 'sacred', 'fertile', etc., and black = 'the worst', 'feminine', 'dead', 'old', 'profane', 'infertile'. The concept of the "kingdom of darkness" as afterlife, opposed to the "white world", is common to all Slavic peoples. The white mourning garments are common in many Slavic societies. In Slavic traditional culture ghosts and mythological characters are represented as dressed in white clothes; yet, women performing ritual actions are also dressed in white (Tolstoi 1995: 151–154). In addition, white is a widely spread colour in traditional Bulgarian culture, which usually designates the ritual status of persons and objects during the initiation rituals of the life circle (many traditional rites are made by people wearing white clothes).

Furthermore, in traditional culture knitting, weaving and spinning are regarded as typical women's activities that separate one part of society from the other: the female part from the male part that is traditionally occupied with ploughing, hunting and war. In many myths and rites, so-called women's activities encode the virginal status of the girl. Myth and rite, as well as fairy tale and epos, are centred on the critical intersections of the life of archaic man, which constitute a transitional period between two social statuses (Marazov 1992: 187–203). For example, in Bulgarian folklore, when women left home, they had to take a distaff with them, and spin or knit, because it was believed

that in that way they were protected from evil forces, i.e., they protected their status of a girl or a faithful wife (Marazov 1992: 187–203).

Traditional culture has provided us with numerous points of comparison. The cloth as an object, signifying the specific social status of the woman, could be observed in a Bulgarian traditional song that tells us about a bachelor that kidnaps a maiden by tempting her with gifts, loaded up on a sailing boat (Miladinovi 1861). The maiden sets a condition that she will go with him if he spreads out a cloth from the gates of her house to the sailing boat. The bachelor fulfils her wish but kidnaps her when she sets foot on the sailing boat. When the maiden steps on the cloth, she is already taken under the man's control. Once the women's work (waving, knitting and spinning) is completed, nothing else protects the virginal status of the maiden. The cloth, a result of female activity, is converted into a classifier of a successful passage, i.e., an effected change of the social status of the maiden (Marazov 1992: 187–203).

Yet another aspect of the meaning of the white cloth in a contemporary wedding that has to be mentioned is its fertility function. It has to assure fertility of the family, i.e., the cloth acquires magical and protective qualities, like many other traditional items, although it is difficult to determine to what extent the informants really believe in its magical qualities. The DJ[16] at the restaurant pronounces wishes for many offspring while the couple is still walking on the cloth.

Figure 3. *The white cloth placed on the floor in a restaurant in Plovdiv. Photograph by Rozaliya Guigova 2007.*

THE CLOTH AND THE WEDDING PROCESSION AS
METAPHORS OF THE WAY

From another viewpoint, except in social perspective, the cloth as a ritual item functioning in the restaurant can also be regarded as a realisation of a rite of passage. Both the contemporary urban wedding and the traditional one symbolically indicate the bride's transitional status by rites that signify leaving the maternal home, travelling, welcoming and reception by the mother-in-law (Ivanova 1984: 120). The white cloth in the traditional Bulgarian wedding, the thread, the rug, the towel, stockings, or their contemporary version – the white cloth in the restaurant – can be regarded as a symbolic signification of the way, passage and transmission. For a maiden, this way is a passage from one social status to another, from one clan to another, from one home to another. The cloth's mythological one-way direction is emphasised by the rite: according to some informants, in the contemporary urban wedding ceremony the cloth has to be folded by the best man and best woman immediately after the couple's passing and given to the bride. Another contemporary example is the prohibition imposed on the couple to never look back while passing. A comparison can be drawn with the traditional wedding ceremony, in which participants never take the same way back after the church ritual, but choose another way. In the traditional wedding ceremony matchmakers are not allowed to return along the same road that they took when going to the bride's home, because it is believed that otherwise the bride will become a widow and go back to her parents (SbNUNK 1905: 16).

In scientific literature, the wedding is regarded as a rite of passage, expressed in the opposition 'familiar–alien', which is fundamental in the system of mythical thought. In wedding rites this opposition is regarded on a social plane, as the bride's family is differentiated from the groom's family, i.e., the "rites of passage" (Van Gennep 1909) are based on the idea of transmission. The initiation is regarded as a classical example of a rite of passage. Three levels underlying every rite of passage are outlined: separation of the sexually mature young man from his mother and sisters (from the group of the uninitiated women and children), passing through a period of trial and communication with demonical forces, and finally his incorporation in the group of adult men ready for marriage. These components of the rite are also investigated by V. Propp, who takes the fairy tale as an example (Propp 1995). According to the scientific investigations of the traditional Bulgarian wedding ceremony, the function of the initiation is taken over by other rites, for example, the wedding. The main function of the initiation – trial of the adolescent – is realised at different levels in the engagement rites and wedding ceremonies (Ivanova 1984: 142).

Similarly to the white cloth in the restaurant, the wedding procession today can also be regarded as a metaphor of the path and the passage. No matter whether it consists of horses and carts (in a traditional wedding), or of special luxury cars and limousines, often rented specially for the occasion and decorated with flowers and balloons (in a contemporary situation), it is always an obligatory part of the rite. Its diligent organisation and conduct is a proof of its stability as a folkloric and social notion. In many contemporary Bulgarian urban wedding ceremonies the groom, accompanied by the best man, musicians and a special procession of decorated cars, goes to the bride's home, to pick her up and bring her to the registry office, and after that to church. That could be regarded as a paradoxical conduct nowadays, as the boy and the girl usually live together for many months or years prior to their wedding day – in the girl's flat, in the boy's flat, or, more often, in lodgings. My informants told me that nowadays some brides even go to their parents' home a day before the wedding party so that the groom can come and pick them up from there. Sometimes, when the parents can afford such a big expenditure, the bride goes to her parents' town, even if she lives and works in another town. The big wedding procession travels to her parents' home in order to pick her up ceremonially; after that the car procession goes to the groom's town, and only then the wedding party can start. There are also occasions when the bride goes to her neighbour's apartment and awaits the wedding procession and the groom to come there and take her along, because she rejects the idea of the groom taking her from their common and usually rented flat. Thus, the path and the wedding procession become an important part of the wedding even nowadays and are often designated with many ritual practices and dances.

In spite of the fact that from a present-day point of view it can be interpreted as an anachronism, the groom, as if according to an unconscious logic of belief, makes an effort to bring his wife to his home as officially and ritually as possible. He seems to believe that this is a more reliable way to legalise his marriage than to put a mere signature in the registry office or conclude a religious marriage. Here I could make a comparison with traditional culture, according to which at the groom's home threshold the rites with the white cloth and bread-eating are performed, which symbolise the bride's incorporation into her new home. It is obvious that the procession is an important ritual action, as it is always performed in cars and never on foot, even if the bride lives in the neighbourhood. The procession always moves slowly, symbolising a long travel, and in this way the cars also assume the functions of ritual items. The participants consider the space between the two houses as ritual and symbolical, and they pass it in a ritual way, differentiating it from the mundane urban space. This procession can also be investigated in connection with the traditional ritual of kidnapping the bride.

Figure 4. *The white cloth laid out in the garden of a restaurant in Sofia. Photograph by Rozaliya Guigova 2008.*

POSSIBLE INTERPRETATION OF THE SPATIAL DIMENSIONS OF THE CLOTH

Today, the cloth's function has one more meaning with regard to its special position and orientation. In this sense, a comparison can be made with the position of the item in the traditional wedding, in which the cloth follows the way from the yard – the place where the couple is welcomed – to the threshold of the house. In traditional culture these spaces symbolically signify border zones which have to be passed ritually by the bride in order to confirm her incorporation into her new home. Sometimes the cloth is spread out up to the fireplace, which in the traditional culture is regarded as the 'centre' of not only the home, but also of the 'cultural space' as a whole, as well as a symbol of the family and kinship. According to Baiburin, the special symbolism of doors and windows in traditional culture is explained by the fact that the meaning assigned to them as border objects is further complicated by their specific implementation: to ensure permeability through boundaries. The borders and the way through them are mythologised, as the door and the window are correlated with the notion of entrance; they both connect home with the outside world. Items (and the cloth in particular) functioning in contemporary urban culture could be considered as speech (parlance), by means of which people consciously or unconsciously

communicate and fix boundaries between the public and private spheres of their existence. In the intimacy of the notion 'at home', items no more exist as 'goods', as far as we separate them from a great number of similar objects that are products of batch production. The person can transform his or her living space by means of surrounding objects (Chevalier 1995: 95).

Today the ritual with the white cloth is performed in urban environment and takes place in a restaurant. The traditional dwelling house with its thresholds, fireplace, many rooms, cellars, attics and yards, has many spaces that have a mythological meaning and that cannot be discovered in the city and in urban dwellings. In traditional culture, there have been such transitional zones between 'personal' and 'alien', between 'private' and 'public' spaces, between 'outside' and 'inside', as, for example, the yard and the threshold where the ritual with the cloth takes place. Today, the decoration of the entrance with plants and small objects indicates special expansion of the domestic sphere outside home walls. The domestic space is considered as an opposition to the public space, and home is fancied as a closed space, which is safe and secure (Krastanova 2003).

From this point of view, the restaurant could also be considered as a mediating space in urban architecture. The restaurant is converted into simultaneously 'private' and 'public', 'personal' and 'alien' space. The cloth is spread out from the entrance of the restaurant to its interior, where the wedding table is situated. Therefore one of its ends signifies exterior space and the other signifies interior space, or the groom's home, where the wedding table is placed. In this case, it is related to the fact that in many urban weddings today, at the end of the cloth the groom takes the bride in his lap – an action that in traditional culture he performed on the threshold of his home – in order to take her to the wedding table. Today, on the cloth's edge the groom's mother feeds the couple with bread and honey, but in traditional culture this action was performed on the threshold of the groom's home. In many contemporary wedding ceremonies, the space of a restaurant is preferred by the participants, but sometimes the cloth is also laid on the home threshold. It is interesting to mention that at some urban weddings, in the restaurant and near it, the cloth is put on a metal 'hedge', covered with white decorations, which reminds of a house fence. There is a curving arc above the cloth that reminds of a house gate.

Nowadays, the construction of high residential buildings with a great many flats, common staircases and landings between them, implies a lack of such type of mediatory zone between personal and public spaces, as, for example, the yard. Sometimes, the yard is much distanced from the flats as the building has many floors. That is why when citizens try to transfer a custom from the

Figure 5. Newlyweds on the cloth. Sofia. Photograph by Todor Ivanov 2009.

village to the city very literally, the process can sometimes be difficult and even amusing:

> *The bride has to sweep the yard, has to demonstrate that she cares for that guy; that she is prepared for him; that she has cleaned up. The bride lived on the sixth floor and she swept the staircase from top to bottom. That was an engagement custom.*[17]

In this situation the staircase in the block of flats functions as a mediatory spatial zone between private and public spheres. The space structure in a multi-storey block of flats is imposed on the inhabitants and they cannot change it but have to comply with the standard and functional dwellings by adapting themselves to nearly similar spatial conditions.

CONCLUSIONS

What I would like to suggest is that a range of ritual practices in the contemporary urban Bulgarian wedding are no longer associated with the traditional culture. The ritual practices involving the white cloth in the traditional wedding are performed by the groom's mother, as far as it bears the meaning of incorporation of a new member into a family or a clan. That is why the groom's mother in a traditional wedding offers a morsel of bread and sugar, raisins, honey, and apples to the newlyweds before they enter the groom's house. The bride is obliged to eat them and it is believed that by doing so she will secure "a happy life" with her. Today, in some weddings this ritual action is performed by the groom's mother, but often also by a random person from the restaurant staff, a restaurant singer or DJ, who have nothing in common with the bride's or groom's family and whose job is to carry out those ritual actions. Thus, many ritual items in the contemporary wedding ceremony obtain the meaning of continuity of tradition and lose or change their traditional symbolic meaning. The

meaning of many beliefs today, associated with the objects functioning in the wedding ceremony, is merely to "bring good luck" or "attack bad forces". Some traditions are also maintained "because in my family it has always been done in that way" or because "my mother-in-law always says that", and therefore the meaning of some customs and ritual objects may have culturally changed and their performance is grounded on the authority imposed by the older members of the family, or is related to the private life, the childhood, and family traditions of the informants, and this is why they continue performing them. In this sense it is interesting that the informants often give their own interpretations of the ritual actions and objects that have nothing in common either with the meaning of the traditional ritual practices or with the interpretations made by ethnologists.

On the other hand, the white cloth, as many other objects, definitely acquires a communication function. It means that there is a code, by means of which transfer of information is realised. The objects are elements of that code and therefore they can acquire meaning. Contemporary items not only "speak" about implementation, but also signify the place of their owners in the public sphere. In many cases the impact of the items on the person is a result of the person "reading" the message on some level (Segal 1968: 39). In other words, the object can be seen as a "speech". Artefacts are mediums by which we give form to, and come to an understanding of, ourselves, others, or abstractions such as 'the nation' or 'the modern' (Miller 1994: 397). Through the medium of the objects and the way in which they are perceived it is possible to understand the meaning of society, culture, and their interrelation with time and space (Serkle 2000: 81). In this sense, in the perspective of social relations today, the white cloth as a ritual item preserves, to some extent, its signification function, marking inter-family kinship relations and some notions regarding the symbolic space, maybe because it is correlated with the private life and kinship relations of its owners or the people that have been put in contact with it.

NOTES

[1] I started my fieldwork and investigation for this article when I was a PhD student at the Institute of Folklore in Sofia. I wrote my PhD thesis under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Valentin Angelov. Later on I studied comparable forms of material culture and developed the structure and theoretical framework of the article at the University of Vienna, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Thomas Fillitz, thanks to OeAD scholarship.

² Sofia is the capital and the largest city of Bulgaria, with a population of around 1.2 million people, situated in the western part of the country and approximately at the centre of the Balkan Peninsula. Urbanisation and a considerable immigration to the capital from poorer regions of the country are among the main reasons for the increase of population in Sofia. The population is made up 96.4% ethnic Bulgarians. Stara Zagora is a city in Bulgaria, and a nationally important economic centre, which is located in southern Bulgaria. The city has a population of 138,272 inhabitants. The agglomeration of Stara Zagora is the fifth largest in Bulgaria. Svilengrad is a town in south-central Bulgaria, situated at the borders of Turkey and Greece, and is the administrative centre of the eponymous Svilengrad Municipality. The town has a population of 18,132 inhabitants.

³ Varna is the largest city and seaside resort on the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast and the third largest city in Bulgaria after Sofia and Plovdiv, with a population of 334,870 inhabitants as of February 2011. Plovdiv is the second largest city in Bulgaria after the capital Sofia, with a population of 338,153 inhabitants.

⁴ The informant is a 65-year-old pensioner who has worked all her life as a history teacher at a high school. She narrates about her daughter's wedding in Stara Zagora city in 1996.

⁵ The sponsors (*kumove*) in traditional Bulgarian culture are very important figures in many rituals, such as, for example, the wedding. In many Orthodox churches (Serbian, Greek, Bulgarian) usually the best man (*kum*) or the bridesmaid (*kuma*) at the wedding acts as a godparent (*krastnik*) to the first child born into the family. The godfather is responsible for naming the child. The godparent to the child will then act as a sponsor at the child's wedding. Godparents are expected to be in good standing in the Orthodox Church.

⁶ The informant is a 23-year-old student who narrates about her brother's wedding in the city of Svilengrad in 2001.

⁷ The informant is a 40-year-old librarian narrating about her wedding in Stara Zagora in 1982.

⁸ The preparation of the ritual bread (*obreden khliab*) in traditional Bulgarian culture is a significant part of the rituals of the life-circle. As a bloodless sacrifice, it symbolises fertility and well-being of the family. Richly decorated with chicks, lambs, vine, shepherds, or a ploughman with a plough, modelled in dough, the ritual breads were prepared for baptisms and weddings.

⁹ This is a traditional metal jug used to carry water and used in many ritual practices in traditional Bulgarian culture. Today it can be bought in every souvenir shop in the country, but some young families have it from their parents.

¹⁰ The informant is a 25-year-old university student who narrates about her wedding in 1999.

¹¹ The informant is a 45-year-old mathematics teacher and DJ acting at weddings and other celebrations. I conducted interviews and assisted at a wedding organised by him in Stara Zagora in 2002.

[12] I found this forum on a web page dedicated to weddings: http://www.svatbata.org (last accessed on January 30, 2013). Sometimes the girls put down the name of the city where they live, and the date. For example, the city where the first interlocutor lives is not known but the date can be seen: she wrote the question in 2006. The second interlocutor lives in Plovdiv and answered in the same year. The third one lives in a town named Pernik. The place where the forth interlocutor lives is not known. The fifth one lives in the town called Gorna Oriahovitsa, and her answer in the internet forum dates from 2007. The sixth one lives in Sofia and answered in the same year. The place of residence of the seventh interlocutor is not known, and she wrote in 2009. All of them are young girls that are planning their weddings.

[13] The first interlocutor wrote in 2006 but her place of living is unknown; the second one wrote her answer in the same year. The third lives in Sofia and wrote in 2006. The place of living of the forth one is unknown, and her reply dates from the same year. The fifth one's answer also dates back to the same year. The sixth one lives in Sofia, the seventh – in Varna, and she wrote in 2006, and the eighth one lives in Pernik.

[14] The custom involving the wedding shoe is very popular in the contemporary urban Bulgarian wedding, and consists in the following: at the bride's home the groom has to find one of her shoes, which has been hidden, and put it on her foot; the bride complains that the shoe is too big and the groom has to put some money in it in order to make it comfortable. Only after performing this action the wedding procession can be launched.

[15] *Martenitsa* is a small piece of adornment, made of white and red yarn and worn from March 1 until around the end of March (or the first time an individual sees a stork, a swallow, or a budding tree). The month of March, according to Bulgarian folklore, marks the beginning of springtime. Therefore, the first day of March is a traditional holiday associated with sending off the winter and welcoming the spring.

[16] In the contemporary Bulgarian wedding ceremony the DJ performs one of the main ritual roles as he organises the whole celebration in the restaurant. His role is similar to that of a DJ in a discotheque, but he also has to arrange the rituals taking place at the restaurant. In the course of the wedding he often stops the music and talks, in a humorous key, asking the newlyweds or the guests to perform certain ritual actions.

[17] The informant is a 23-year-old girl, a university student, who narrates about her brother's wedding in the city of Svilengrad in 2000.

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CHINESE PERSPECTIVISM: PERSPECTIVIST COSMOLOGIES IN *ZHUANGZI* AND *JOURNEY TO THE WEST*

Erki Lind

Abstract: Perspectivism as a cosmology, according to which all beings perceive themselves as humans, has been discussed mainly in connection with the Amazonian region, for the term perspectivism stems from Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, who applied it to the indigenous worldview of that particular region. To a lesser extent, it has also been studied in North Asia and some other hunter-gatherer societies. In this article I wish to demonstrate that perspectivism may be more widespread than previously thought, and its occurrence is not necessarily limited to hunter-gatherer cultures. Perspectivism can also be found in pre-modern China, which can be seen from such well-known texts as *Zhuangzi* (4th–3rd century BCE) and *Journey to the West* (16th century).

The connecting link that makes the occurrence of perspectivism possible both in South America and East Asia is probably shamanism, which is present in both of these regions. It is characteristic of Chinese perspectivism that the multiple perspectives are not equal, but there is one proper perspective that is at the same time also the moral perspective. Chinese cosmology can contribute to the understanding of American perspectivism with its concept of cosmological relations, which fits the model of perspectivism.

Keywords: Amazonian perspectivism, Chinese literature, Chinese philosophy, cosmology, Daoism, *Journey to the West*, perspectivism, *Zhuangzi*

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, the notions of animism and totemism[1] have regained importance in anthropological discourse (see Halbmeyer 2012; Willerslev & Ulturgasheva 2012; Costa & Fausto 2010: 16–17), and a new theory, perspectivism, has been introduced. Perspectivism originally dealt only with South America, but has now been extended to include some other cultural areas as well. In this article, I wish to examine whether perspectivism can also be applied to classical China.

When speaking about perspectivism, I do not refer to the philosophical term, but to the theory by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, which describes the

peculiarities of Amazonian cosmology and anthropology. It states that all beings see themselves as humans or persons, or other species according to their importance in relation to the species in question. So perspectivism can prove itself important in understanding and explaining the relations between humans, animals and spirits, and also regarding the conceptions about the human body. In addition to Viveiros de Castro (1998), other researchers have written about perspectivism; for example, Broz (2007), Silva Guimarães (2011), Lima (1999), Londoño Sulkin (2005), Kristensen (2007), Pedersen (2001), Rasmussen (2011), Rival (2005), Turner (2009) and Vilaça (2005).

My aim is to bring closer together anthropology and religious studies or history of religions as a historical discipline that operates with texts. Of these two, anthropology has laid more emphasis on theoretical approach, and I believe that some of the theories can also be helpful for studying organised religions and written texts. Viveiros de Castro (2010) has said that anthropology compares anthropologies, and this is why I dare to compare two very different anthropologies – those of the Amazonian region and classical China.

In this article, I will first examine Chinese texts from a perspectivist point of view and then discuss what perspectivism can offer to Chinese studies and vice versa. The Chinese texts I used for comparison with perspectivism are *Zhuangzi* and *Journey to the West*. These two texts stem from different epochs, have a completely different cultural background and are composed with different objectives. *Zhuangzi* is a philosophical and religious text from the 4th–3rd century BCE and one of the founding texts of Daoism, whereas *Journey to the West* is a folk novel from the 16th century CE[2]. It was a deliberate choice to use texts that were composed in different eras and belong to different genres. By doing this, I wish to encompass the widest spectrum possible with as few texts as possible, because I do not wish to show the perspectivist nature of one particular tradition, but to demonstrate the possibility of perspectivism in other cultural areas and to prove that it may be a much more widespread phenomenon than previously thought. These two texts have their influence and famousness in common, which makes them both relevant and exemplary.

AMERINDIAN PERSPECTIVISM

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro introduced the notion of Amerindian perspectivism in 1998, with the article "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism". The role of the 'point of view' in Amazonian cosmologies was also examined by Tânia Stolze Lima (1999).

Perspectivism deals with "ideas in Amazonian cosmologies concerning the way in which humans, animals and spirits see both themselves and one another" (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 469). In normal conditions, humans perceive humans as humans, animals as animals and spirits (if they see them) as spirits (ibid.: 470). What makes it special is the fact that animals and spirits also see themselves as humans:

> *They perceive themselves as (or become) anthropomorphic beings when they are in their own houses or villages and they experience their own habits and characteristics in the form of culture – they see their food as human food, they see their bodily attributes as body decorations or cultural instruments, they see their social system as organized in the same way as human institutions are.* (ibid.)

Thus they see things as 'people' do, but the things that they see are different (ibid.: 478). For example, blood is beer for jaguars (Vilaça 2005: 457) and the tapirs see a muddy waterhole as a great ceremonial house (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 478).

A different approach in its definition is used by Lima, yet she describes the same phenomena: "Point of view implies a particular conception according to which the world only exists for someone" (Lima 1999: 117). This is also reflected in the grammar of some languages. The Jurúna say, for example: "This is beautiful to me", and "To me, it rained" (ibid.).

Perspectivist cosmology is essentially connected with the concepts of body, for the body is the origin of perspectives (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 478). The body itself is seen, on the one hand, as an envelope or clothing (ibid.: 471), on the other hand, as an assemblage of affects or ways of being that constitute a habitus (ibid.: 478). It is largely accepted in anthropology that the body is a concept that is culturally constructed (Asad 1997) and in South American indigenous cultures it is literally the case. Vilaça writes about the Wari' that their bodies are continually fabricated and also comprised of affects and memories (Vilaça 2005: 449). The 'soul', Vilaça explains, enables one "to change affection and to adopt other habits, thus enabling the person to be perceived similar to other types of beings" (ibid.: 452). Thus the body and the perspectives that are derived from it are processes, and as processes they can undergo transformations. I believe that the potential transformation plays a crucial role in the understanding of perspectivism. For shamans, transformation is an essential means for performing their tasks. For everyone else, however, it poses a danger of losing one's human perspective.

The importance of the body also builds a basis for Terence Turner's argumentation in his critique of Viveiros de Castro's article (Turner 2009). According to him, Viveiros de Castro dismisses the outward forms as mere "envelopes" (ibid.: 19), and both the body and the perspective are conceived as "singular, unchanging entities" (ibid.: 38). So he proposes that the "notion of the body as the origin of perspectives [---] should be substituted by a conception of both bodies and perspectives understood as sequences of multiple transformations. [---] conceiving the body in appropriate structuralist terms as such a series of transformations opens a perspective on bodiliness as a process of interaction of the physical body, social body, and person, stimulated and guided by relations with other embodied actors filtered and regulated by formal treatments of their bodily surfaces ("social skins")" (ibid.: 38). However, this is also how I understand Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism. The body is seen as habitus, thus produced as a process, and subject to potential transformation.

In addition, Turner writes that humans do not share culture with animals and that the creation myths tell us how humans attained culture and how the differentiation of the species, and with that their respective subjective identities and perspectives, came about as a "corollary result of the one-sided possession of culture by humans" (ibid.: 19). This does not necessarily invalidate the theory of perspectivism, but rather adds an extra dimension to it. With examples from China it will be shown how perspectivism can also describe this process of differentiation. By acquiring a human perspective, the animals may try to reconquer culture. This is what makes the change of perspective and transformation dangerous to humans.

It must be noted that the precondition for these considerations is that the human perspective and culture are the same. However, it would be reasonable to drop the nature-culture opposition, because perspectivist cosmology and anthropology do not need the opposition and, moreover, it would be rather difficult to integrate this opposition in the schemata of perspectivism.

As the Amazonian region is not homogenous but has a multitude of different cultures, so does perspectivism have several forms. It becomes most apparent in an article by Carlos Londoño Sulkin about perspectivism among the Muinane people (Londoño Sulkin 2005: 24). It diverges from the schemata of Viveiros de Castro in two aspects: firstly, humans and animals are not equal and, secondly, being human is being moral.

Perspectivism has been one of the most discussed topics in South American studies and thus different views have been expressed about it. The most prominent alternative has been P. Descola's animism. The two scholars, Descola and Viveiros de Castro, have even held public debates about the topic (Latour 2009). More recently, many anthropologists have held the view that neither of the two

models are fully applicable and argued that choosing only one ontological model is too much of a simplification and does not describe the worldviews of different indigenous Amazonian cultures adequately (Willerslev & Ulturgasheva 2012: 50; Halbmeyer 2012: 14).

What are the outcomes if we look for perspectivism in other cultures? Two questions must be answered for that: Is perspectivism limited to the Amazonian region? What are the socio-cultural preconditions of perspectivism? To the first question Viveiros de Castro answered that "it can also be found, and maybe with even greater generative value, in the far north of North America and Asia, as well as amongst hunter-gatherer populations of other parts of the world" (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 471).

Since then several articles have been published that deal with Northern and Inner Asian perspectivism (Pedersen 2001; Broz 2007; Kristensen 2007). Before moving on to China, which is the aim of this article, I would like to point out that analogous notions can also be found in other cultures and religions; for example, in Mahāyāna Buddhism (Mrozik 2007). Mrozik describes a situation where one's identity depends on another's perspective in monastic life:

> *It is important to note that bodies change not only over time, but also according to circumstance. For instance, junior monks must engage in physical displays of respect such as bowing when in the presence of senior monks. A monk might be junior in one relationship and senior in another. His body language will change accordingly.* (Mrozik 2007: 32)

Two further things can be pointed out here: the instability of the body, which has been described as a feature of perspectivism by Vilaça (2005), and relationships of dominance or seniority, which is a feature of Duha perspectivism (Kristensen 2007).

Further on, there is a very interesting passage in the Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra (2006: 1.16). A man called Śāriputra says to Gautama Buddha that his Buddhafield must be impure, because the world we live in is impure. To that a Brahmā answers that it is Śāriputra's mind that is impure, because he sees the world as magnificent as the celestial dwellings of gods.

Now, as we have seen that the occurrence of perspectivism is not geographically limited, let us turn to the socio-cultural presuppositions and compare these to the situation of Classical China. Relations between predator and prey are intrinsic to Amazonian perspectivism (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 471); this would require a hunter-gatherer society. This is a major difference and could be a decisive factor, if it were not proven by Pedersen (2001) that perspectivism occurs also in pastoral Mongolia. For him, the presuppositions of perspectivism are the classical anthropological notions – 'animism' and 'totemism'. However,

he does not define totemism narrowly as kinship with animals, but as a categorised cosmology. Yet, the latter is especially well-developed in China.

Next to the relations between predator and prey, Viveiros de Castro (1998: 472) mentions that "Amerindian perspectivism has an essential relation with shamanism". Shamanism, which is the essential basis of perspectivism, is the connecting link between the Americas and East Asia and especially China, for shamanism has been historically present there (Robinet 1997: 37; Schipper 1993: 6) and can be still found, especially in Korea (Kim 2003), but also in Chinese folk religion (DeBernardi 1995).

PERSPECTIVISM IN CHINA: *ZHUANGZI*

Zhuangzi is, besides the *Daodejing*, one of the founding texts of Daoism. This book and the philosopher with the same name from the ca 4th century BCE make use of many literary devices, and perspectivism is one of them. However, it is perspectivism mainly in its wider or philosophical sense: "Zhuangzi uses perspectivism, the claim that all knowledge is relative to the observer's point of view, to undercut our normal standards for making value judgements" (Ivanhoe 1993: 645). Perspectivism is also used in *Zhuangzi* for epistemological arguments. Zhuangzi distinguishes between two kinds of knowledge: greater knowledge (da zhi 大知) and lesser knowledge (xiao zhi 小知) (Connolly 2011: 495), and D. Sturgeon (forthcoming) argues that "greater knowledge is the kind of knowledge that holds from a greater range of perspectives". In the text, perspectives change constantly, and as T. Connelly says, the "person who can shift perspectives simply knows more about things than the one who does not" (Connolly 2011: 502).

As the change of perspective is one of the central themes in *Zhuangzi*, he uses it mainly to transmit philosophical and moral ideas.

Already the first chapter of the book tells us a parable of the giant bird Peng and a small dove, which shows how the value of things depends on the point of view. Another good example of such philosophical perspectivism is chapter 2.8., where Zhuangzi demonstrates the subjectivity of knowledge through examples, which show how notions like 'beauty' or 'convenience' mean different things to different species. This chapter takes us already closer to Amazonian perspectivism, because this is a case of "one culture, different natures", as Viveiros de Castro (1998: 478) called it, because different species share the same categories, but not the things that belong to them. This is, however, no perspectivism in a cosmological or anthropological sense, but an epistemological argumentation.

So the question remains whether cosmological perspectivism as that in Amazonian region is to be found in *Zhuangzi*. I found six episodes altogether that can be interpreted as such. These are some of the most important and famous episodes of *Zhuangzi*, which do not, by any means, much consider the volume of the text.

First of all, I regard the probably most famous chapter in *Zhuangzi*, entitled "The Butterfly Dream" (2.12), as perspectivist. The story reads as follows:

> *Once Zhuangzi dreamt he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn't know he was Zhuangzi. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakable Zhuangzi. But he didn't know if he was Zhuangzi who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Zhuangzi. Between Zhuangzi and a butterfly there must be some distinction! This is called the Transformation of Things.* (Watson 1968: 49)

This famous tale has had many interpretations through centuries, but the last sentence, "This is called the Transformation of Things", gives a hint about which interpretation might be correct. In this tale, both the transformation and the change of perspective are present. This could mean that Zhuangzi may have wanted to say that transformation, which has a central role to play in Chinese cosmology, is nothing else than a change of perspective, or that a change of perspective can help one to understand transformations. Both possibilities can be reduced to the Daoist idea of the unity of cosmos, which states that all phenomena are the transformations of One and in constant change and movement: "Hua [transform] is the natural Tao and the movement of yin and yang" (Robinet 1997: 154). This makes it clear that when discussing transformation, Zhuangzi talks about cosmology.

The aforementioned "different natures" by Viveiros de Castro is by no means contradictory to the Daoist notion of the oneness of nature. Moreover, "The Butterfly Dream" explains why it is like that. The many worlds that depend on the perspective of the beholder come into being from the One through transformations. One world or the One, Dao or *qi,* is constantly transforming, bringing forth countless different worlds.

What is missing here is the perspective of the other, which is, according to Viveiros de Castro, important for the transformation (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 483). Only two 'I'-perspectives are being compared in this tale, but the other, for whom Zhuangzi would be either himself or the butterfly, is absent. This could mean that Zhuangzi himself was also the other perspective. This would correspond to the role of the shaman in the Amazonian region, for a shaman is able to transform and thereby preserve his own perspective. It is also impor-

tant to note that the transformation occurred in a dream, because "particular elements that are preserved in some dreams in Chinese folklore are similar in structure and form to shamanic experiences as elaborated by Mircea Eliade, and that this similarity allows for an analysis of these elements as genuine representations of a type of shamanic experience" (Giskin 2004). Dreams are equally important for the change of perspective in Amazonia. Lima (1999: 114) writes that dreams are the primary plane of communication between 'real' humans and various animal species (and other ontological categories such as ogres and spirits).

In this story, perspectivism is the cosmological presupposition, possibly derived from the shamanic tradition of South China, for transmitting a Daoist message. In another famous chapter, perspectivism is also the message of the story. In chapter 17.13., Zhuangzi and his friend, philosopher Huizi, are walking by the water, and Zhuangzi tells his companion that the fish are enjoying themselves. To the question how he knows that, he answers that he knows it by how he himself enjoys walking by the water. Playing in the water is thus the same as walking by the water for Zhuangzi, a human.

Let us take a look at some other chapters as well. A very interesting idea is expressed in chapter 22.11.:

> *The ancients, amid (all) external changes, did not change internally; now-a-days men change internally, but take no note of external changes. When one only notes the changes of things, himself continuing one and the same, he does not change.* (Legge 1891)

The changes, *hua*, as in "The Butterfly Dream", could also be translated as transformations. Here, the shamanic properties of keeping their own (internal) perspective while changing or transforming their appearances are attributed to the ancients, whilst nowadays men act according to Vilaça's notion of 'chronically unstable bodies', i.e., they can be transformed by an outside power without themselves even noticing.

A similar case of transforming the outer form and keeping the perspective is presented in chapter 13.8., where Laozi is the one transforming. However, the Chinese text leaves room for different interpretations. For example, in translation by Legge (1891), Laozi says: "Yesterday if you had called me an ox, you might have done so; or if you had called me a horse, you might have done so", whereas Wilhelm's German translation is much more interesting: "Hättet Ihr mich einen Ochsen genannt, so wäre ich eben ein Ochse gewesen; hättet Ihr mich ein Pferd genannt, so wäre ich eben ein Pferd gewesen" (Wilhelm 1981 [1912]: 151) ('Had you called me an ox, I would have been one; had you

called me a horse, so I would have been one). A parallel to that can be found in *Zhuangzi* 7.1., where the sage sleeps in tranquillity and awakes in simplicity, then appearing as an ox and as a horse, because of his knowledge of the nature of everything.

These are clearly Daoist passages and are conveying Zhuangzi's Daoist ideas. Yet the change of perspective is mostly interpreted as being of purely philosophical nature. I would, however, like to emphasise that the philosophy of an ancient philosopher, who lived in the 4th century BCE, cannot be viewed separately from cosmology. Due to Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism it is easier to understand. Essentially, perspectivism in *Zhuangzi* is a cosmological notion similar to that of the Amazonian peoples, and part of the Daoist idea of reducing the whole of cosmos to one common principle, and of its constant transformation. To master that, true knowledge is required, which is also the Daoist goal in *Zhuangzi*.

PERSPECTIVISM IN CHINA: *JOURNEY TO THE WEST*

Wu Cheng'en's *Journey to the West* represents the plurality of religious ideas in Ming China in the 16th century. In this book Daoist, Buddhist and folkloristic material is found and made fun of. The focus lies on Buddhism, because the main story is bringing Buddhist scriptures from India to China, and thus the concepts of humans and spirits are also Buddhist. The Buddhism in the *Journey to the West* is, however, Chinese folk Buddhism mainly associated with magic powers.

This book offers many things that are of interest for this article. For one thing, transformations and metamorphoses constitute an intrinsic part of its plot. The main character, Monkey King Sun Wukong, who accompanied monk Tripitaka on his journey, is said to possess 72 transformations as part of his magical powers, which he had acquired from a Daoist immortal called Bodhi. The other companions were transformed from celestial beings to evil spirits and back again.

Yet, most remarkably perspectivist in the *Journey to the West* is the transformation of animals into dangerous spirits, thus in the following chapter I will concentrate on this theme.

In chapter 22 in Waley's translation and chapter 20 in Yu's, begins an episode where Tripitaka and his companions reach the Country of Cart Slow. In this land Buddhism is oppressed and Daoism flourishes because three alleged Daoist immortals, Tiger Strength Immortal, Deer Strength Immortal and Ram Strength Immortal, have won the king's favour. Sun Wukong then competes

with them in various dangerous tasks, in which all the three find their end and are revealed as animals – as actual tiger, deer, and ram.

It all started as these animals managed to appear as Daoist immortals to the king. But why did he see them as humans? By way of comparison, I would like to bring a fairly similar story of the Wari' people in Brazilian Amazonia, written down by Aparecida Vilaça:

> *While the human form is a strong indication of a human being, it may nonetheless be deceptive. It is always best to distrust one's own eyes. An event which befell some of my Wari' friends provides a perfect example. A child is invited by her mother to take a trip to the forest. Many days go by as they walk around and pick fruit. The child is treated normally by her mother until one day, realizing just how long they have spent away from home, the child starts to grow suspicious. Looking carefully, she sees a tail discreetly hidden between her mother's legs. Struck by fear, she cries for help, summoning her true kin and causing the jaguar to flee, leaving a trail of paw-prints in its wake. One woman, telling me about this event, said that, after finding her, the girl's true mother warned her to always distrust other people. Whenever she went far from home, either with her mother or father, she should take along a brother or sister as company (in order, I assume, to secure her point of view).* (Vilaça 2005: 451)

Both the king and the Wari' child were turned into the objects of the other, in both cases this subject was an animal. Viveiros de Castro writes that "he who responds to a 'you' spoken by a non-human accepts the condition of being its second person. [---] The canonical form of these supernatural encounters, then, consists in suddenly finding out that the other is 'human', that is, that *it* is the human" (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 483). Lima (1999: 124) makes it even clearer: "The animal should not be given a chance to speak".

The second question related to the first is why the king saw them after their death as animals that they really were. The situation is described as follows:

> *'How can you be so deluded?' said Monkey, coming up to him. 'Have you not seen that the first Immortal's corpse showed him to have been merely a tiger? The second has turned out to be a common deer. And if you have the bones of the third fished out of the cauldron, you will find that he was nothing but a ram, the bones of which could never be mistaken for those of any human being.'* (Waley 1958 [1942]: 247)

Most importantly, it shows that the transformation was not bodily or physical because the animals only appeared human to the king. This means that it is

precisely the body that differentiates between the species, as Viveiros de Castro claimed about the Amazonian perspectivism (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 478). To illustrate this, he used the anecdote from Lévi-Strauss's famous speech. A short time after the discovery of America, the Spanish on the Greater Antilles were trying to find out whether the natives had a soul or not, whereas the natives were at the same time busy drowning the white people they had captured in order to find out whether or not the corpses were subject to putrefaction (Lévi-Strauss 2010; Viveiros de Castro 1998: 475). The reason, according to Viveiros de Castro, was that, unlike Europeans, they believed that animals and spirits had souls as humans did, and their objective was to find out whether Europeans had the bodies of humans or the bodies of spirits.

But let us return to the *Journey to the West*. After leaving the Country of Cart Slow, the travelling party met another monster. In chapter 25 in Waley's translation, Tripitaka and his companions reached a river that led to the heaven. There was a temple of the Great King of Miracles, a wrathful deity, who, as a price for sending rain and fertility, demanded a boy and a girl as yearly sacrifices and devoured them. Sun Wukong and Zhu Bajie defeated the monster, who then retreated into the river. However, when the party tried to cross the river, Tripitaka fell into the water and got captured by the Great King in his underwater palace.

After he was defeated, yet again it appeared that the monster was just an animal, namely a goldfish. So this episode can also be compared to the Amazonian notions. In Amazonian perspectivism it is believed that animals see the places they live in as villages. Here we have fish that lived in a palace. The question is, whether there actually was a palace underwater, or the goldfish and his followers perceived it as a palace. In the text there is one strong hint that the underwater kingdom was a matter of perspective, namely what the Bodhisattva Kuanyin said about the monster:

> It is a goldfish that I reared in my lotus pond. Every day it used to put its head out and listen to the scriptures, thus acquiring great magical powers. Its mallet was a lotus stalk, topped by an unopened bud. (Waley 1958 [1942]: 275)

Thus the goldfish became Great King of Miracles by listening to Buddhist scriptures. Such progress is typical of the Chinese thought and will be examined more closely later on. However, the goldfish also had a special weapon, just like Sun Wukong, but he had not received it from a supernatural being as Sun Wukong had, but it was a lotus stalk turned into a mallet. The lotus stalk could not have transformed due to the hearing of scriptures, so the only possible

explanation is a perspectivist reading. A lotus stalk was a miraculous mallet for a goldfish-turned-into-monster.

The goldfish acquired either the human perspective or that of a powerful spirit by listening to the scriptures, i.e., he had earlier considered himself a goldfish and then a human or a spirit, or, through the power of the scriptures, he had gained the power to enforce his own perspective on others, including humans. The first possibility differs from the Amazonian perspectivism, where all the beings see themselves as humans. The second one, however, would be comparable to the Amazonian notion.

DISCUSSION

Finally I would like to discuss what perspectivism could offer to Chinese studies and, also, what Chinese sources could contribute to the theory of perspectivism. I would thus like to present some further ideas for theoretical discussions. Such a theoretical sketch may be too abstract, yet abstractions and generalisations cannot be avoided here.

A broader question that the topic poses is about the conception of the human being: who is human, what makes humans human, as well as the relations between humans and animals, spirits and gods. Amazonian perspectivism presupposes a similar soul for all living beings (and perhaps also things) (Santos-Granero 2009). Thus the difference lies in the body, which is also the source of the perspective. Yet, the body is very unstable and cannot be relied upon. The perspective can be changed and the body is transformable.

Here, the use of the notion of the soul is problematic, because different cultures have different worldviews and the concept of the soul is clearly rooted in the Western thought. For example, for the Wari' people, the soul is *jam*, which implies the capacity to *jamu*, transform. *Jamu* "indicates a capacity to change affection and to adopt other habits" (Vilaça 2005: 452). This idea differs clearly from the Western notion and also helps to understand the background of perspectivism.

In the Chinese thought, the difference between humans, spirits and gods is not qualitative but quantitative. Intrinsic to Chinese cosmology are smooth transitions, diffuse boundaries and a continuity of being, meaning that all things form a continuum (Tu 1987: 447). This is caused by the breath *qi*, which "animates the whole universe from stone to Heaven" and "makes it impossible to imagine a clear separation between spirit and matter and, by implication, flesh and soul. Understandably, a form of animism and its corollary, panpsychism,

are taken granted by the Chinese" (Tu 1987: 448). Human souls, of which there are two, *hun* and *po*, differ from the great gods of the pantheon only in their relative strength (Schipper 1993: 36).

Also the life force *ling* can be interpreted as the soul (Tu 1987: 448). Either way, firstly it means that the human soul does not differ from the souls of other beings and, secondly, that in China there is no egalitarian cosmology to be found as that in the Amazonian described by Viveiros de Castro, but one with value judgments.

If beings are set in a hierarchy, then their respective perspectives are not equal either. Thus in *Zhuangzi*, although the dependency of things on the perspective is demonstrated, there is one proper perspective, which is the heavenly view of the world (Ivanhoe 1993: 652). Yet, in Amazonia the perspectives are not always equal. For example, Londoño Sulkin writes that this applies to the Muinane people, and true perspective and morality are also linked to each other (Londoño Sulkin 2005: 16).

Value judgments form a connecting link between cosmology and religion. They connect ethics and morality with cosmology and, most importantly, cause some beings to be considered purer than others. But as according to Chinese cosmology everything is in constant change, the boundaries between the profane and transcendent can be crossed. All the matter cleanses with time, so that old things and beings such as trees or turtles are considered holy. Thus, "each person can [---] radiate energy, that is, become transcendent" (Schipper 1993: 41).

In the *Journey to the West* one can also find a turtle who had, due to his old age, developed further from being an ordinary turtle. He wanted to become human and explained his state to Triptaka as follows:

> *I have been perfecting myself here for about one thousand years. This is a pretty long span, and I have already been fortunate enough to learn human speech; but I still remain a turtle. I should indeed be very much obliged if you would ask the Buddha how long it will be before I achieve human form*. (Waley 1958 [1942]: 277)

It was mentioned before that with time beings become transcendent, yet here the turtle, who already had become a spiritual being, wished to become human. This is because in Chinese cosmology "human beings have the finest of vital forces in the cosmos" (Tu 1987: 448). Thus from all potential beings it is best to be human, which means that being human is automatically being moral.

Surprisingly – considering the egalitarian cosmology of Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism – it is exactly here that one can find important parallels to Amazonian perspectivism. The aforementioned Muinane see perspective,

bodily substances and morality as intrinsically connected, which adds a religious dimension to perspectivism. Londoño Sulkin writes that "in the narratives I heard, Real People are intrinsically moral because the substances that constitute their bodies and subjectivities are moral; they are so because they originated in the very bodies of the creator and other cool mythical beings, in those felicitous circumstances in which they succeed in creating things truly human" (Londoño Sulkin 2005: 12).

Animals constitute "failures in moral sociality" (ibid.: 13). This is dangerous for humans because animals try to destruct or sabotage the true human perspective and impose their own immoral views on them (ibid.: 15), a situation exactly as in the *Journey to the West*, in which three animals pretend to be Daoist immortals and persuade the king to oppress the Buddhists.

As Amazonian perspectivism turned out to be useful in interpreting Chinese sources, so can Chinese cosmology help to explain perspectivism.

Due to the important role of transformations in perspectivism one must ask what it is that is being transformed. Perspective alone is not enough, because, as Viveiros de Castro has said, it is not independent but comes from the body. Something must be transformed in order to transform the perspective. I believe that the possibility of transformation is linked to the fact that the body is constructed, because such a processual body indicates that the body is not a biological entity. Transformation is therefore a special case of the construction of the body or its disturbance by an external influence.

This is why I would like to propose a new notion of relations. Perspective is derived from relations or bonds between the subject and its objects. These relations and the perspective are connected because in every relationship it is important to be human and not to establish inter-human relations with non-humans. In case some of the bonds are destroyed, there is a danger of losing humanity. This can be caused by a supernatural encounter. The network of relations determines what a person is. As the relations change in time, the person's identity also changes; for example, a son becomes a father. The dependency of personhood on relations and its instability were also mentioned by Taylor (1996), and it would fit Turner's notion of bodies and perspectives as sequences of multiple transformations, and would thus remove the contradiction between his and Viveiros de Castro's ideas. The body is the centre of relationships, meaning that the bonds in question are relations between bodies. That may be the reason why the body is important as it is, and much attention is being given to its external signs and markings.

Humans are seen as consisting of relations also in traditional Chinese cosmology, in which a person is not an isolated individuality, but a centre

of relationships (Tu 1987: 448). That is why it may be legitimate to add relations into the model of perspectivism, for as it was previously shown, perspectivism occurs also in the Chinese thought.

The notion of relations could also connect cosmology and society, and would explain why morality and being human are connected. As of the many classical Chinese schools of thought, relations are most prominent in Confucianism, I would like to examine some of its notions more closely. Because Confucianism concentrates mainly on society, one might think that it does not directly concern the current topic. This is, however, not the case because society is part of cosmos, and also because Confucius like Zhuangzi operated with terms that were part of the common cultural background.

Confucius differentiates between true humans and those who are human merely biologically, calling them gentlemen (*junzi* 君子) and commoners (lit. 'small people' – *xiaoren* 小人), respectively (Mäll 2009: 24). Perhaps the most important idea in Confucianism is the humanness (*ren* 仁). *Ren* manifests in one's relations to other people and is closely linked with ritual (*li* 禮) (Shun 2002). *Ergo*, being human means behaving in a specific way and having specific relationships. So what I have claimed about perspectivism is already formulated in Confucianism: a true human (*junzi*) is constructed in a constant process, which requires that one behaves toward others as a human (*ren*), acts in a specific way (*li*), and is through relations or bonds connected to other people, living and dead alike. The Confucian notion of culture (*wen* 文) may also be added to this list. For Confucius culture connected the present and the past. As behaviour is part of the construction of a human being, it becomes comprehensible why morality is related to being a human.

Returning to *Zhuangzi*, one can see that these Confucian social ideals, especially ritual behaviour, were vehemently criticised. It is possible to interpret this critique via perspectivism with relations or bonds, as for Zhuangzi it was not the human perspective but the heavenly one that was moral, and his goal was to abolish social bonds. If what a person is depends on relationships or the sum of perspectives, that is, how one sees others and they see him, then a person remains pluralistic. If one abolishes the bonds, also the plurality of perspectives disappears, resulting in the kind of freedom that Zhuangzi propagated. In such a case the first perspective can always remain the "self" or also beyond the "self", thus enabling one to appear to others as one wishes, and at the same time one would see all other things as "they really are". Abolishing the bonds would be exactly the kind of situation as described in *Zhuangzi* 7.1.

IN CONCLUSION

Amazonian perspectivism is a South-American indigenous cosmological notion, according to which every being, independent of its species, sees itself and its species as human. The term was introduced by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998) and has also been successfully applied to other cultural areas, such as North Asia (Pedersen 2001). In the current article I have argued that perspectivism also occurred in pre-modern East Asia. As examples I have used two influential texts from different eras in Chinese history, *Zhuangzi* (4th–3rd century BCE) and *Journey to the West* (16th century CE).

As a result, the following could be concluded:

1. Perspectivism helps to understand and interpret classical Chinese texts. The connecting link between East Asia and South America that enables to compare their cosmologies is shamanism.
2. Zhuangzi's philosophy cannot be separated from its cosmological presuppositions.
3. The Chinese concept of relations can be applied to perspectivism. Relations construct the being, and by changing the relations, the being changes as well.
4. In Chinese perspectivism, all perspectives are not equal. The right perspective and morality are intrinsically connected.

NOTES

[1] The notion of animism differs from the classical understanding and is mainly influenced by P. Descola. As there is not much of his work to be found in English, I would like to cite E. Viveiros de Castro (2012) instead. Descola distinguishes between three modes of "objectifying nature": (1) *Totemism*, in which the differences between natural species are used as a model for social distinctions, i.e., in which the relationship between nature and culture is metaphorical in character and marked by discontinuity (both within and between series); (2) *Animism*, in which the "elementary categories structuring social life" organise the relations *between* humans and natural species, thus defining a social continuity between nature and culture, founded on the attribution of human dispositions and social characteristics to "natural beings"; (3) *Naturalism*, typical of Western cosmologies, which supposes an ontological duality between nature, the domain of necessity, and culture, the domain of spontaneity – areas separated by metonymic discontinuity.

[2] In this article I have used the following translations: for *Zhuangzi* Richard Wilhelm's German translation (1981 [1912]), James Ware's (1963) and Burton Watson's (1968) English translations, as well as consulted the Chinese text from the two-language text of the Chinese Text Project together with an English translation by James Legge (1891). For the *Journey to the West* I used the abridged translation by Arthur Waley, titled "Monkey: A Folk Novel of China" (1958 [1942]), and an abridged version of the scholarly translation by Anthony C. Yu (2008). The ethnographic data about South America and North Asia used in this article are derived solely from secondary sources.

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ON THE NATURE OF THE GOVERNING SYSTEM OF THE QIN EMPIRE IN ANCIENT CHINA[1]

Tarmo Kulmar

Abstract: The article demonstrates that the Inca Empire was not the first early totalitarian state of its kind; we can find an even more obvious precedent for an early totalitarian state from ancient China, namely in the Qin Empire (221–207 BC). The legalist political theory, which was aimed at establishing the ruler's absolute control over society and consolidating the central authority, is the first theory justifying totalitarian power known in world history. The authors of the Fajia (Legalism) theory (Guan Zhong, Shang Yang, Han Feizi) made a number of more or less successful attempts to implement a system of government based on it. The analysis of Sima Qian's chronicle and the main arguments of the studies based on it show that, in view of the existing knowledge of the foundation and collapse of the Qin Empire, the structure of its governmental system, economic measures, ordering of society, legal system, religious and ideological policy, as well as its armed forces and foreign policy, the Qin Empire can certainly be identified as one of the earliest totalitarian superpowers in world history.

Keywords: ancient China, earliest totalitarianism, ideology, legalism, Qin Empire, society, state power

1. INTRODUCTION

I have made an earlier attempt to posit the concept of the so-called early totalitarian state and outline its main characteristics. The aim of that research was to demonstrate, based on historical records, that the Peruvian Inca State set a precedent for a special kind of governing system whose characteristics point, to a greater or lesser extent, to early totalitarianism (see Kulmar 2003: 25–39).

The aim of the present article is to demonstrate that the Inca State was not the first or only of its kind, and that we may find an even more obvious precedent for an early totalitarian state from ancient Chinese history, namely in the Qin Empire. I am not the first to suggest the idea. Legalism has been explicitly identified as a totalitarian philosophy by Leonid Vasilyev, a Russian sinologist (Vasilyev 1989: 108).

Historical material from the period has been preserved for posterity by Sima Qian[2], an ancient Chinese historian, in Chapter 6, *Qin Shihuang benji* (An Outline of the Deeds of the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty), of his grand work *Shiji* (Historical Notes). Sima Qian was the son of Sima Tang, a historiographer of Emperor Wu Di of the Han dynasty (born ca. 135 BC). He started his chronicle in 104 BC, and completed it three years later. In 99 BC, he was convicted of insulting the majesty for writing the truth about a favourite of the emperor, and castrated as a punishment. Sima Qian died a few years later (Kryukov 1972: 12ff.). Chapter 6 of Sima Qian's chronicle is unique as a source of Qin's history. It is considered accurate and reliable because of its reliance on an extremely varied basis of sources; unfortunately, a large number of these original sources are not extant (Vyatkin 1972: 92–95).

Significant advances in studying ancient Chinese philosophy and statehood have been made by the Russian school of sinology headed by N. Konrad, L. Menshikov, M. Kryukov, R. Vyatkin, V. Taskin, L. Perelomov, and L. Vasilyev. Hence it is only natural for me to use the pioneering studies by L. Perelomov, M. Kryukov, and L. Vasilyev for the evaluation of legalist philosophy and the political practice of the Qin state. To avoid the danger of one-sidedness, I have referred to an article by S. Durrant (1987), which contains references to the major representatives of the American school of sinology.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEGALIST POLITICAL THEORY IN ANCIENT CHINA AND THE EARLIEST ATTEMPTS AT IMPLEMENTATION

Legalism *(*Fajia*)* is one of the oldest Chinese philosophical systems; it declares the priority of the state over the individual, subjecting human life and actions to the interests of the state.

The teaching of Fajia was founded and first implemented by Guanzi or **Guan Zhong,** a dignitary from Qi, who lived in the 7th century BC (died in 645 BC). His book *Guan-zi* ([Writings of] Master Guan), containing his teachings on the basics of political theory and economics, was committed to writing in the 5th century BC. The kingdom of Qi, one of the seven states of the so-called Warring States Period of China, had a well-developed economy and commerce. It featured extensive economic differentiation, high taxation and, as a result, a great number of destitute peasants, who fled illegally from the countryside to towns. The main idea of Guan Zhong was "rich state, strong army". In his view the foundation for a rich state was agriculture, and the characteristic feature of a strong state was its army. Guan Zhong divided social hierarchy according

to relative importance into officials, peasants, craftsmen, and merchants. In addition to that, he tried to replace the traditional communal system with a vertical administrative system and to group people – for a more effective control and tax management – into five-family units. Guan Zhong stated that a ruler must be a strong personality who dares to take major economical and political steps for the consolidation of the state. He was the first thinker in Chinese history to formulate the concept of government based on laws. The law is supreme; even the ruler has to observe it. Punishment is a moral factor. People have to fear the power, as they fear a serious disease. Agriculture is a source of prosperity. If people have enough to eat, the well-equipped army is ready for battle and no-one dares to attack the state. Commerce, however, interferes with agriculture. It should be curtailed or even banned. Hence Guan Zhong favoured autarchic economy.

By the order of the ruler, Guan Zhong's laws were inscribed on ritualistic bronze vessels of Qi. Yet Guan Zhong made the mistake of requiring social restructuring and, as a result, lost the support of nobility while tribal legacy was still too strong to resist (Perelomov 1981: 41–44).

In the 6th century, the tenets of Fajia were practiced by **Zi Chan,** who as adviser to Prince Zheng promulgated a number of laws in 536 BC.

Zi Chan devoted much attention to amelioration and opening of wastelands for cultivation, and made an end to periodic redistributions of land. He also divided the populace into 5-household units bound together by the frankpledge or joint liability system (for the first time in China). Zi Chan established a new administrative division headed by the king's officials, aiming to transfer the community members from the hereditary aristocracy's sphere of influence to direct subordination to the ruler and thus consolidate the king's (*wang*) personal power. For the same purpose, uniforms were provided for officials to distinguish them from hereditary aristocracy, and differences between town and country were underlined to emphasise the importance of the capital. Finding that aristocratic families posed a danger to the ruler, he suggested leaning on the middle and lower strata of society. In addition to that, Zi Chan recognised a community member's right to land ownership, which did not please the nobility.

Zi Chan was a state official, not a theoretician. This may have been the reason why he, knowing the circumstances, was more flexible in his reforms than Guan Zhong, not pressing them to completion (Perelomov 1981: 45–50).

The main theoretician of legalist philosophy, who managed to implement his ideas, was **Shang Yang** (390–338 BC). Coming from an impoverished aristocratic family of the state of Wei, he became adviser to Xiao Gong, the ruler of Qin, and was able to persuade the *wang* to carry out the political programme

contained in his work *Shang jun shu* (see Shang Yang 1993: 139–240; Durrant 1987: 497–498).

Economy must be geared to the consolidation of the state. Shang Yang paid particular attention to agriculture in an attempt to stop the peasants' pauperisation and running away from villages. Virgin lands had to be cleared and cultivated as redistribution of land was unthinkable; new settlers were given benefits. At the same time, he prohibited giving shelter to escaped villagers. The sale and purchase of land were legalised to undermine the economic power of hereditary aristocracy. In this way, Shang Yang was able to muster the support of wealthy community members in the struggle against aristocracy. He established the official sale of state offices and ranks of honour, because of its lucrativeness for the state, creating a new privileged stratum of society.

Like Guang Zhong, he found that the number of merchants should be limited. Commerce should be a state monopoly and the state should regulate market prices. On the whole, the ruler's economic function should be to exercise state control over economy (Shang Yang 1993: 139–240; Vasilyev 1989: 108–121).

Political governance and society. The state had to be uniform, undivided, orderly and monarchist (this was also the view of Confucius). But the difference of Shang Yang consisted in the following. A humane ruler, according to him, was unrealistic, for that would give rise to corruption. It was necessary to rely on the foundation of the law. Absolute obedience to the ruler's word was essential. Well-functioning state machinery guaranteed the enforcement of the laws. Laws were to be made by the ruler. The ruler was sovereign over the law and did not answer to anyone. The law was a buttress of the monarchy. At the same time, the law had to be well in accordance with the customs of the people, because it was habitual for people to follow customs. People had to believe in the reliability and infallibility of the political power, and for this purpose explanatory work was needed. The power of the aristocracy had to be curtailed, and aristocracy had to be subjected to the ruler. Shang Yang also provided a definition of the people, "People (*min*) is the unity of the poor and the wealthy, for the former shall become the latter and vice versa". People had no political rights. Distrust and fear of one another needed to be generated (especially among the upper classes) to avoid any threat to the ruler from below. The might of the state consisted in its oneness and unity. Shang Yang's idea was "weak people, strong state". It was necessary to build a new type of state machinery. Only a weak bureaucracy could become a servant to the ruler, whereas a strong bureaucracy would get out of hand**.**

Conception of man. A perfect man could not have any of the so-called parasitic traits, which derived from Confucian values, and in Shang Yang's opinion the depravities were: singing of lampoons, making music, charity, veneration

of ancient customs, respecting one's parents, brotherly love, selflessness, philanthropy, rhetoric, witticisms. All these would lead a man away from serving the state, Shang Yang meant.

Law and order. Offences and punishments needed to be differentiated. A great guilt deserved a severe punishment. Shang Yang thought it necessary, in order to secure obedience and inspire fear, to introduce the system of 'neighbour responsibility': a father will be responsible for a son, a wife for a husband, etc. Joint responsibility in the army made an end to desertion, for if anyone deserted, the whole squad would face capital punishment. Shang Yang also employed prophylactic disciplining of soldiers by beating the soles of their feet with a stick, in order to arouse fear of the punishment waiting for them in case of an offence (Shang Yang 1993: 139–240; Perelomov 1981: 115–130; Vasilyev 1989: 108–121).

Views on foreign policy. Confucius taught that ethical virtues were characteristic only of the Chinese. Shang Yang agreed that the Chinese were undoubtedly superior to other peoples, but the approach had to be pragmatic, based on the needs and profit of the land and the ruler. Warfare, like agriculture, was a source of income and one of the virtues. Wars of conquest were inevitable (Shang Yang 1993: 139–240; Perelomov 1981: 131–155; Vasilyev 1989: 108–121).

At Shang Yang's suggestion, most of the above ideas were enacted in 356 BC as state laws. In 350 BC, he imposed a new administrative division and regulated the tax system. The chronicle of Sima Qian provides a number of examples of that. In villages, groups of five and ten households were formed, requiring mutual surveillance and joint responsibility inside the group. Anyone who failed to report a crime was to be cut in half; anyone who reported a crime was rewarded; anyone who hid a criminal would face a traitor's punishment. If there were more than two males of working age in a family and one of them did not marry, their tax was doubled. Anyone who worked hard and produced much was exempted from the public labour conscription, e.g., the construction works. Military services to one's country were rewarded with a rank of honour. The owner of a rank was entitled to property.

A general who fought with another general for self-interest (for example, as an initiator of a civil war), was punished according to the dangerousness of his motive.

Naturally, hereditary aristocracy offered great resistance to the new system of governance, but their resistance was ruthlessly suppressed (Shang Yang 1993: 139–240; Perelomov 1981: 156–157; Durrant 1987: 498).

So Shang Yang held that economy, politics, and social life had to be entirely subjected to the state machinery. He thereby laid a foundation to the bureaucratic state of China, which in a milder form persisted throughout China's

subsequent history. By its nature, Shang Yang's teaching was clearly anti-Confucianist and totalitarian. At the same time, the strengthening of the state of Qin demonstrated the vitality of Shang Yang's teaching, and it was difficult for Confucianists to fight against it.

The final form to the legalist teaching was given by **Han Feizi** (280–233 BC). Coming from an aristocratic family of the Han state, Han Feizi had learned of the teaching of Shang Yang and his actions in the kingdom of Qin. As Shang Yang's new bureaucracy corrupted and abuse of office started in Qin, Han Feizi paid special attention to the issues of developing bureaucracy, and to the psychology of an official. He maintained that a wise ruler had to know how to conceal his thoughts and motives from his officials, be state-wise, flexible, and to modify the laws according to the need. Han Feizi's main concern was with the tactics of government (Vasilyev 1989: 211–215).

Special interest in Han Feizi's teaching was taken in the state of Qin, where legalism served as the official system of government. The *wang* of Qin, later emperor (*di*) of China, Shi Huangdi, invited him to become his adviser, but, as a result of the intrigues of Shi Huangdi's later all-powerful minister **Li Si**, Han Feizi was arrested and then poisoned in jail (Sima Qian 1975: 53–58; Perelomov 1981: 166–169).

3. THE QIN EMPIRE AS THE FIRST CENTRALISED CHINESE STATE (221–207 BC)

3.1. Historical background: The rise and fall of the empire

In 246 BC, a 13-year-old Ying Zheng ascended the throne of Qin. As Qin's ruler, he set about the unification of the whole China. In 234 BC, Ying Zheng invited Li Si to become his Prime Minister. One after another, all the other states of China were subjected: Han in 230 BC, Zhao in 228 BC, Wei in 225 BC, Chu in 223 BC, Yan in 222 BC, and Qi in 221 BC. By April 221 BC, all the six states had been incorporated into Qin, making it the first Chinese empire. The surrendered armies were disarmed, all weapons were gathered to Qin's capital Xianyang, where they were melted down and cast as bells and statues.[3] Ying Zhen assumed the imperial title of Shi Huangdi ('First Sovereign Emperor') (Sima Qian 1975: 62–63; Perelomov 1981: 191ff.; Perelomov 1962: 34–38).

The emperor died in 210 BC, at the age of fifty.[4] The letter to the heir to the throne, Fu Su, with the dying emperor's last arrangements, was never sent out. Fearing the outbreak of unrest, Li Si concealed the fact of the emperor's death. The corpse was put in the royal carriage and the procession headed for

the capital as if the emperor were still alive.[5] Only Li Si, another son of the emperor, Hu Hai, and some of the more trusted officials knew the truth. With the connivance of Li Si, the 21-year-old Hu Hai was proclaimed emperor, and he assumed the title of Er Shi Huangdi ('Second Sovereign Emperor'), while the legal heir to the throne, Fu Su, was sent the proposal of the "death of honour", i.e., he was forced to commit suicide. Er Shi had higher officials executed and his own brothers murdered. Even the "architect" of the empire, Li Si, soon found his death. As riots became more and more frequent, the emperor had to hide in the secret chamber of his palace and to take counsel only from his new adviser Zhao Gai. In July 207 BC, the adviser staged a *coup d'état*, and Er Shi was forced to commit suicide. At the end of the same year, the last emperor of the Qin dynasty was killed. This marked the end of the Qin Empire that had lasted for 14 years. The civil war that broke out in the aftermath did not end until 202 BC with the creation of the Han Empire by the founder of the Han dynasty, Liu Bang (Sima Qian 1975: 86–98; Perelomov 1962: 182–208; Perelomov 1981: 191–204).

Hence, the Qin Empire came into being as a result of military conquests. Like most totalitarian states, it lasted for a relatively short period of time and disintegrated as a result of escalating interior conflicts.

3.2. Administration: Building up the state machinery

Following the advice of Li Si, centrally controlled organs of state were established, such as departments of war, law courts, finance, the imperial court, manners, and life guard, as well as the prosecutor's office. Li Si as Minister of the Imperial Palace (*shaofu*) had immense powers. He commanded the irrigation systems, commerce of salt and iron, handicraft for the imperial palace, and the arsenal; he was keeper of the state seal, top religious official and head of the emperor's life guard. Enforcement of laws and court decisions was supervised by the State Audit Office. Administratively, the empire was divided into 36 provinces, which were made up of commanderies, which in turn were divided into counties. Each province and each commandery had its governor, offices, and representatives of all the ministries.

Li Si created a standardised system of coinage, weights and measures. Copper, silver and gold coins of fixed weight and form began to be minted as early as 221 BC. The same year saw the creation of a standardised writing system, which played a crucial role in the building of the empire (Sima Qian 1975: 64–65; Perelomov 1962: 44–46; Perelomov 1981: 191–204).

Hence, in terms of bureaucracy, the Qin Empire possessed an efficient state machinery by which the ruling elite, isolated from the people, wielded rigidly centralised power, seeking to exercise absolute control over all the facets of life in the empire.

3.3. Economy and infrastructure

In economy, the main emphasis was on promoting agriculture. Village communities had been replaced by one-family households. Compared to earlier times, the situation of agricultural community members somewhat improved, as the taxation of peasants became standardised and was brought under state control. Hereditary aristocracy was no longer able to require excessive taxes from the peasants. Poll tax was imposed in 221 BC, land tax on farms in 216 BC. Commerce became secondary; merchants and owners of big workshops were supported, but petty tradesmen fell lower than free peasants in the social hierarchy; by such means peasants were shown that they had nothing good to expect, should they escape from the village. For example, petty tradesmen were the first to be conscripted for public works; then came persons of suspicious origin, and, finally, peasants. Wealthier merchants were able to buy their freedom; they could even purchase ranks of honour.

The state required regular public labour service in many fields: the construction of the Great Wall, fortresses, roads, border fortifications and imperial palaces, land and water transport, building of irrigation systems, opening virgin lands for agriculture. Officials and those who could buy their freedom were exempted from labour conscription. The unification of the country through a good network of roads facilitated the settling of hinterlands and cultivating of wastelands, which in turn promoted state economy. The emperor himself travelled extensively and inspected local observance of laws (Sima Qian 1975: 66–71; Perelomov 1962: 111–117; Perelomov 1981: 191–204; Kryukov et al. 1983: 28–29).

So, in the state of Qin, there were prevailing tendencies towards the domination of the state property (belonging to the emperor) over the private property of the old aristocracy, towards autarchic economy, the planning of production and consumption. The other salient features of the Qin economy were general labour conscription, arbitrarily imposed market relations, and state coercion in the execution of herculean projects.

3.4. Social life and measures

In 221 BC, the emperor ordered 120,000 aristocratic and merchant families taken as hostages to the capital, Xianyang, to prevent the subject states from restoring their armies. By repressing the old aristocracy, the emperor supported the new bureaucracy and officers of Qin origin. The army's command personnel were appointed only from the ranks of the latter. Qin's garrisons were planted in all the provinces. In 220 BC, Shi Huangdi promoted all officers of Qin origin to a higher rank.

An individual could choose his occupation only horizontally, within his social stratum, whereas the permission for vertical mobility in the social hierarchy was the sovereign's prerogative to grant or deny. The aim of the state was to make the officials obedient to the emperor by way of benefits and punishments; this was also the aim of the system of buying and selling ranks. Whole communities were forcibly resettled from parts of the empire to wastelands and borderlands. The resettled lived in paramilitary settlements under strict regime, but were exempted from public duties, except for military service. Villagers and petty tradesmen were forbidden to travel or move anywhere without special permission from the state.

The active home and foreign policy was mostly financed from the work of peasants, and as the labour and military obligations increased, many people fled to the swamps and mountains, making up a large asocial stratum that became one of the factors contributing to the triumph of the Han dynasty in the civil war of the empire's final years (Sima Qian 1975: 66–77; Perelomov 1962: 111–117; Perelomov 1981: 191–204; Kryukov et al. 1983: 36ff.).

So the state of Qin used its control mechanisms to regulate the structure of society, to limit the freedom of movement and the freedom of choosing occupation; some strata of society were preferred to the others; some groups of the population were deported and assimilated.

3.5. Law and order

Since 221 BC, customs and laws began to be standardised and a written code of law was established as a basis for the administration of justice. All the provinces had judges, executives and inspectors appointed from the capital. Villagers by groups of five or ten households were imposed joint liability (frankpledge), which involved keeping watch on one another and joint punishment for the whole unit if any of its members offended the law. Emperor Er Shi Huangdi extended the system of group responsibility and watching each other on the

aristocracy and top officials, in order to unmask his enemies and, for example, his brothers as power rivals. In this way very many innocent people suffered; their property was confiscated and they were sentenced to state slavery or executed. In interpreting the laws the tendency was to forbid everything that was not explicitly permitted.

Capital punishment was mostly administered in case of subversive acts, but these were many. Only the higher nobility and officials could expect the so-called death of honour, for which purpose the emperor had a sword sent to them. In the case of high treason the offender was executed, and sometimes the families of his parents and of his wife were also killed. Likewise, the punishment for owning forbidden literature or criticising the authorities was execution of the whole family. Among the legal ways of execution were tearing in four, cutting in half or in pieces, beheading and impaling the head, slow strangulation, burying alive, boiling alive, and breaking the bones. Fear of these terrible punishments was so great, however, that the kind of crimes and executions were relatively rare. Much more frequent were the punishments of "hard labour", which provided the state with cheap manpower: sentencing to forced labour or state slavery, conscripting to work on the construction of the Great Wall, frontier fortifications, palaces or temples. Not infrequently a supplementary punishment of physical mutilation was meted out: emasculation, hamstringing, cutting off the nose or the ears, blinding, and branding. By far the most common, however, was corporal punishment, especially beating the soles of feet with a cane, which was sometimes used in the army for the prophylactic purpose of preventing disciplinary violations (Sima Qian 1975: 75–81; Perelomov 1962: 132–140; Perelomov 1981: 191–204; Kryukov et al. 1983: 344ff.).

The legislation of Qin enforced cruel punishments, above all, for crimes against the state; joint responsibility dominated over personal; the interpretation of laws followed the principle, "What is not permitted is forbidden". The observance of laws was monitored by the large supervisory and coercive machinery.

3.6. Ideology: Measures in the sphere of religion

Li Si himself supervised the observance of customs and worship; the high priest of the empire was subordinate to him. In 213 BC, the destruction of Confucianist literature, which was considered dangerous to the legalist state and conducive to free thinking, was started. In 212 BC, regular prophylactic interrogations of state officials began. The law required that all those who disseminated the teaching of Confucius by word of mouth – those "who say it was better in the old

days" – be put to death. The official who failed to report a crime suffered the same punishment himself. More than 460 Confucianist scholars were buried alive; the rest were exiled. About the same time, the destruction of forbidden Confucianist literature started. A black list was compiled. Those who did not burn their Confucianist books in 13 days were chained and sent to the construction of the Great Wall for a period of four years. Incidentally, the forbidden literature of only the private collections was to be destroyed; in state libraries, a number of copies were preserved and later moved into the so-called special collections. Works of a more applied nature – texts on medicine, pharmacy, divination or agriculture – were not destroyed. Records of Qin's history were preserved, but the chronicles of other states were largely destroyed. By censoring history, which had been done already by Shang Yang, Li Si intended to cut the roots of people's rebelliousness. So Confucianism was banned, whereas the ancient Chinese cult of the nature and heaven was permitted and even favoured as a religion. The superiority of the Chinese was proclaimed at the state level and applied in ruling the subject peoples.

In the sphere of state ideology, Li Si introduced the cult of an all-powerful and divine emperor. People were constantly told that the emperor was a wise and prudent ruler, who worked from early morning till late night for the good of his people; all men and women were law-abiding, and everyone fulfilled their duties; there was peace and order in the empire. This is the text of many inscriptions on stone. The emperor's capacity for work was really huge; he is reported to have read 30 kilogrammes of documents a day. During his last years, Qin Shi Huangdi grew paranoid. He never stopped or lived anywhere for long, nor did he inform even his closest associates of his leaving. The emperor had 270 palaces always ready to welcome him within the radius 200 li[6] from the capital. His whereabouts were known by few; anyone who knew and prated was put to death. Despite repressions and ideological purges, intellectual opposition grew stronger (Sima Qian 1975: 66, 77, 79–81; Perelomov 1962: 153–166; Perelomov 1981: 191–204; Kryukov et al. 1983: 335; Durrant 1987: 499).

Accordingly, legalist political theory and the animist cult of the heaven were raised to the status of state religion. Confucianism as a religion and philosophy like all the other philosophies was banned. To this were added the mythologised emperor cult, the doctrine of ethnocentrism, and purposefully directed educational and cultural policy together with the censoring of information and historiography for the purpose of uniforming thought.

3.7. Armed forces and aggressive foreign policy

In 215 BC, as the rebelliousness of the old aristocracy persisted, the emperor ordered the demolition of all defence structures and domestic fortifications of the six subject states, except for the northern frontier, where the construction of the Great Wall had started. Men were recruited to the armed forces beginning from the age of twenty three. Military service consisted of three parts: first, one month of service in the province; then, a year of service in the regular army, and finally, a year of service in the frontier defence. It was possible to buy one's exemption from the military service, which cost 2000 coins; exemption from the frontier defence cost 300 coins. The price was high, for the empire needed soldiers; especially the rural poor were always required to complete military service. But even the aristocracy had to serve in the army if they wanted to earn ranks.

Shi Huangdi and Er Shi Huangdi waged a number of wars of conquest and defence on the northern and southern borders of China. To thwart invasion from the north, in 215 BC, the construction of the Great Wall was started, which went on for centuries. Hundreds of thousands of people perished in the process even during the Qin Empire (Sima Qian 1975: 74–75; Perelomov 1962: 166–174; Perelomov 1981: 191–204; Kryukov et al. 1983: 105–110).

The Qin Empire built a huge regular army as it sought political hegemony over neighbouring territories and systematically implemented an aggressive foreign policy.

CONCLUSIONS

The legalist political theory, which was aimed at establishing the ruler's absolute control over society and consolidating the central authority, is the first theory known in world history that justifies totalitarian power.

The authors of the Fajia theory made a number of more or less successful attempts to implement a system of government based on it. By far the most successful attempt was that of Li Si, the minister (vizier) to the emperor Qin Shi Huang.

The analysis of Sima Qian's chronicle and the main arguments of the studies based on it show that in view of the existing knowledge of the foundation and collapse of the Qin Empire, of the structure of its system of government, economic measures, ordering of society, legal system, policy of religion and ideology as well as its armed forces and foreign policy, can certainly be identified as one of the earliest totalitarian superpowers in world history.

At the same time, it is possible that several even earlier empires in the Near East, for example, the Ancient Egyptian New Kingdom in the time of Pharaoh Akhenaten and the Neo-Assyrian Empire, already had the essential characteristics of an early totalitarian state.

NOTES

[1] The current article has been supported by grant 5374 of the Estonian Science Foundation.

[2] Chinese names in the article have been given in the *pinyin* transliteration.

[3] 12 bronze statutes were made, each weighing 29,960 kilogrammes.

[4] Due to repeated attempts on his life, Qin Shi Huangdi was extremely concerned about his life. He even sent out a sea expedition in search of the elixir of immortality for himself (Sima Qian 1975: 71–74).

[5] The tomb of Qin Shi Huangdi was built by 700,000 criminals and slaves. All his concubines, many slaves and eunuchs, as well as master builders and architects, were buried with him (Sima Qian 1975: 87).

[6] Traditional Chinese unit of distance, approx. 500 m.

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IN MEMORIAM

LINDA DÉGH

March 18, 1920 – August 19, 2014

Linda Dégh was born in Budapest, Hungary, where she graduated from Péter Pázmány University. She began her teaching career at the Folklore Department of Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. As Soviet power strengthened in Hungary, she left her homeland and started work at the Folklore Institute of Indiana University, Bloomington, in 1965. When the Folklore Institute needed an Europeanist, she became an Indiana University Distinguished Professor of Folklore and Ethnomusicology in 1982.

Linda Dégh was a folklorist and ethnologist, who specialised in the identity issues of traditional rural and modern urban communities as well as individuals, both in Europe and North America. She also focused on groupings and folkloric phenomena which had not been formerly studied, such as spiritism, use of folklore in films, person's and personal folklore, and new forms of folklore.

Dégh published 18 books and about 200 essays, which have been internationally recognised as initiators of a new approach to folklore study. In 1968, she founded the journal *Indiana Folklore*, to publish her students' studies of folklore. This journal developed and tested a new method for collecting, analysing and interpreting what is now internationally known as urban or contemporary legend. In 2001, she initiated a pilot study of Hungarian-Americans, which offered students a unique possibility to observe the essence and evolution of ethnic cultural identity.

She was an honorary member of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research and the International Society of European Ethnology and Folklore, as well as Fellow of the American Folklore Society (1971) and a member of the Folklore Fellows of the Finnish Academy of Sciences, Helsinki, Finland (1993). During her long academic career (her last lectures were delivered in 2013) she received numerous awards and research grants.

The American Folklore Society commemorated Linda Dégh at its 2014 confe-rence in Santa Fe. Also, each participant was able to leave a personal note on the memorial board or bring an item in her memory.

Estonian folklorists will always remember the ever-energetic and industrious Linda Dégh. When looking down at folklorists and the hustle and bustle of the world, you must have found interesting material for research!

Photograph by Andres Kuperjanov 2014.

AFS & Folklore: EJF

NEWS IN BRIEF

SCALA NATURAE: SYMPOSIUM IN HONOUR OF ACADEMICIAN ARVO KRIKMANN

On August 18, 2014, an international academic event under the heading "Scala naturae: Symposium in honour of Arvo Krikmann's 75th birthday" took place at the Estonian Academy of Sciences in Tallinn. This marked the 75th jubilee of Arvo Krikmann, one of the most versatile and productive Estonian folklorists, senior researcher of the Estonian Literary Museum, and member of the Estonian Academy of Sciences.

Arvo Krikmann, who celebrated his 75th birthday on July 21, is undoubtedly one of the most interdisciplinary folklorists, whose contribution has been recognised a number of times, most recently in early 2014, when he was awarded the Wiedemann Prize named after linguist Ferdinand Johann Wiedemann. This distinguished award highlights his work with short forms in Estonian folklore, advancement of linguistic folkloristics, linguistics of humour, introduction of Estonian literary cultural heritage, and promotion of the humanities in general. His main fields of interest have covered source history, historiography and textology of short forms in Estonian and Baltic-Finnic folklore (including the study of the older sources of Estonian phraseology and folk rhetoric); structural levels of short forms of folklore and their interrelationships: syntax, logic, modalities, and semantics of figurative speech; classification in paremiology; theory of figurative speech, humour theories and political humour; geographical distribution of folklore and dialect lexis, etc.

All the presentations at the symposium were, to a smaller or greater extent, associated with Arvo Krikmann's main fields of research. Along with his Estonian colleagues, his academic friends from Finland, Russia, Poland, Austria, and the United States participated.

The festive day started with complimentary speeches from Leo Mõtus, Secretary General of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, and Peeter Tulviste, board member of the Academy of Sciences. These were followed by nine academic presentations. Linguist Joanna Szerszunowicz from Białystok University, in her presentation *Priamels as Carries of Cultural Information*, discussed sayings in the form of priamels and their culturally specific nature. Priamels are utterances, in which a string of words, phrases or short sentences are followed by a point, explaining the enumeration of previously listed elements. The speaker focused, above all, on Polish, English and Italian priamels, the comparative analysis of which indicated several cultural differences emanating from ethnic and gender stereotypes.

Professor Ülo Valk from the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore at Tartu University focused in his paper *Animals, Animism and Vernacular Theorising* on animal image in neo-animistic theories and Arvo Krikmann's former research on animal proverbs and animal metaphors, also discussing proverbs as religious messages.

Professor Alexandra Arkhipova's (Russian State University for the Humanities) presentation *To Fear Stalin, to Laugh at Fidel: Two Ways of Tabooing in Authoritarian Societies* focused on the official and popular discourse of name taboos on the example

of authoritarian societies. According to Arkhipova, earlier cases of prohibitions related to the name of authoritarian leaders (e.g., using the leader's name after his death) go back to the rule of the Qin dynasty (221–206 BC) in China. In this country, official name taboos persist even in the 21st century (e.g., the firewall preventing internet search of the family names of the members of the Politburo of the Communist Party). The presenter gave a brief overview of official name prohibitions and the popular nicknames of the great leader from the Stalinist period, paying special attention to the case of Fidel Castro, the influential Cuban ex-leader: the *Comandante*'s private life concealed from the general public, several beliefs related to naming (e.g. saying the name out loud might evoke unwanted presence of the person or bad luck), and euphemistic (e.g. *el Caballo* 'horse') and dysphemistic (e.g. *el Camello* 'camel') nicknames. Widely spread verbal and non-verbal nicknames could serve as a favourable ground for alleviating fears and prohibitions; yet, according to Arkhipova, people in Cuba today use them rather for fun or from force of habit. In conclusion the speaker admitted that in Cuban tradition a kind of independent oral language emerged on the basis of these pseudo-taboos, euphemisms and dysphemisms, in opposition to the official political language. The presentation caused a lively discussion and questions about analogous taboos in the Russia of today.

Yuri Berezkin, Head of the American Department of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) at the Russian Academy of Sciences, discussed in his comprehensive paper *Three Tricksters: World Distribution of Zoomorphic Protagonists in Folklore Tales* the image of the trickster as a zoomorphic character in the folktales of different peoples all over the world. Based on the database of the distribution area of folkloric-mythological motifs created by the researcher himself (available in Russian at http://www.ruthenia.ru/folklore/berezkin/), Berezkin pointed out the distribution and loan relations of three zoomorphic trickster figures – fox/jackal/coyote, hare/rabbit, and raven (crow) – in world folklore. As to geographical spread, the fox/jackal has no competitors in the whole of Europe, eastern and southern Siberia, central, south-western and southern parts of Asia, and northern and north-eastern part of Africa. In the New World, the trickster-coyote appears in the western part of North America and the trickster-fox in Central and Northern Andes, Chako and Patagonia. Hare as a trickster appears in a major part of Africa as well as in south-eastern and eastern parts of Asia, and is widely spread also in the eastern part of North America.

Mare Kõiva, leading researcher of the Department of Folkloristics, the Estonian Literary Museum, in her presentation *Invented Sacrality* compared and gave an overview of Estonian holy places of today, describing the diversity of these cultural places and interpreting their re-evaluation with the help of Hobsbawm and Ranger's concept of *invented tradition* (1983). As an example of a recently invented tradition, Kõiva mentioned the benches dedicated to Wiedemann Prize laureates in Haapsalu (a seaside town in Estonia), one of which bears the name of Arvo Krikmann as of May 2014.

Professor Peter Grzybek from the Institute of Slavistics at Graz University presented his paper titled *Estonian Proverbs: Some Linguistic Regularities*. By using quantitative linguistic analysis, he tried to find an answer to the question about the linguistic organisation of Estonian proverbs: how long they are, how long are words in a proverb, whether the length of words depends on the length of the proverb, the position of the word inside the text, etc. Grzybek based his analysis on Krikmann's article from 1967 about the linguistic statistics of Estonian proverbs, which is one of the earliest and most remarkable works in this field.

Research without friendship is worthless. Old friends: Arvo Krikmann and Wolfgang Mieder, professor of folklore and German at the University of Vermont. Photograph by Alar Madisson 2014.

Professor Pekka Hakamies from the University of Turku gave a personal-style presentation entitled *Meetings with Arvo Krikmann,* in which he shared his reminiscences of proverb projects that he had carried out jointly with the jubilarian. Hakamies gave a detailed historical overview of a Baltic-Finnic proverb project, *Proverbia septentrionalia*, launched on the initiative of Matti Kuusi in the 1970s (the database was compiled in 2000), providing background information about the Soviet-period obstacles that the Finnish and Estonian researches had to overcome.

Władysław Chłopicki from the Jagiellonian University in Krakòw presented his paper titled *Power of Metonymy*, in which he first summarised the difference between metaphor and metonymy, broadly explaining them in terms of the neck (metonymy), allowing access to the head (metaphor), and referring to Krikmann's contributions to the discussion of the role of metonymy in humour research.

The last academic presentation was given by one of the honorary guests of the symposium, Wolfgang Mieder, professor of folklore and German at the University of Vermont. His paper *Futuristic Paremiology: A Plea for the Study of Modern Proverbs* included a manifest to future paremiology. In his view, modern paremiology has not paid particular interest to the collection and study of modern proverbs; therefore this field is gaining more and more importance. The main problem (which the jubilarian has also tackled in his research) is how to find and detect new proverbs if it is considerably simpler to identify the old ones, which are well known and fixed in publications dedicated

to proverbs. Mieder maintains that researchers have to start a systematic creation of a modern proverb corpus, which, despite the developing IT support, is a complicated and time-consuming process.

The academic speeches were followed by book presentations. Anneli Baran, Liisi Laineste and Piret Voolaid introduced a collection of articles in English, *Scala naturae*: *Festschrift in Honour of Arvo Krikmann*, published by the Scholarly Press of the Estonian Literary Museum. Alexandra Arkhipova presented the 21st issue of *Antropologicheskii Forum* (Anthropological Forum), a scientific journal in Russian, published in St. Petersburg, which, as a tribute to Arvo Krikmann, included a chapter on short forms and humour, entitled *O znamenakh, drakonakh i anekdotakh* ('About flags, dragons, and anecdotes').

It should be mentioned that the heading of the symposium and the Festschrift, *Scala naturae* (literally, 'ladder/stairway of nature') is well in line with the direction of Arvo Krikmann's academic interests. This concept with a long history has served as a basis to a philosophical theory, which is known as the Great Chain of Being. The beginnings of the theory originate in antique philosophy, and according to this all matter and life in the world forms a certain hierarchical system. Those who have an in-depth knowledge of Arvo Krikmann's academic research are well aware of how strongly he has been inspired, since the 1990s, by the chapter dedicated to the metaphorics of proverbs, *The Great Chain of Being*, in the book *More than Cool Reason* (1989), written by cognitivists George Lakoff and Mark Turner. If we apply the theory of the Great Chain of Being to proverb studies, we can say that the creation and understanding of metaphors in proverbs is based on conceptual distinctions 'human-inhuman' and 'natural-cultural'.

The symposium was organised by the Department of Folkloristics of the Estonian Literary Museum (research project IUT-2205) in cooperation with the Estonian Academy of Sciences. The programme of the event is available on the event's homepage at http://www.folklore.ee/rl/fo/konve/2014/scalanaturae/.

Piret Voolaid

EUROPHRAS CONFERENCE IN PARIS

On September 10–12, 2014, two of the thirteen universities in Paris – Sorbonne Paris Cité and Sorbonne Universités – organised yet another conference of Europhras, the European Society of Phraseology, at Paris-Sorbonne University, under the heading *Phraseology: Resources, Descriptive Studies and Computational Processing*. Due to political instability, the conference that was initially planned to be held in Tunisia was transferred to Europe. The organising committee was headed by Salah Mejri and Ines Sfar, who represent the French-speaking researchers of Europhras recently active in organising phraseology events. This is proved by the fact that only a few years ago a paremiology conference in cooperation with Europhras took place in Paris. Despite the name of the organisation, it assembles researchers also from outside of Europe; this year, for instance, from Japan, Taiwan, Brazil, Nigeria, Egypt, Senegal, Tunisia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Madagascar, and Northern Korea.

This year the conference listened to 183 presentations, including 10 keynote speeches, and organised 6 round table discussions. As the heading of the event suggests, the main topics were concerned with digital resources or text corpora, computational processing and descriptive studies. The programme of the conference can be found at http://extranet-ldi.univ-paris13.fr/europhras2014/download/Programme-Europhras-2014.pdf.

One of the focal topics was the classification of phraseology, i.e., how to operate with the multifaceted phraseological linguistic material in the easiest and most reasonable way. For one, it is difficult to elaborate universal and uniform criteria, as the concept of phraseological units covers entirely different constructions. One of the problems, for example, is the relativity of its stability, which prescribes how variants of phraseological units must be treated. There is no common understanding and most probably will never be, which is also proved by the ongoing arguments in the field, which have been continuing for decades. Different schools have different starting points for defining figurativeness and analysing linguistic material. With regard to descriptive studies, it was suggested to pay attention to the fact that researches have mainly dealt with synchronic studies, especially within the framework of discourse analysis, whereas the diachronic aspect finds increasingly more treatment. This is beneficial in investigating grammaticalisation, but also in the study of phraseology in general. So phraseology studies still focus on theoretical and methodological issues waiting to be solved.

Of the ten keynote speeches, two were delivered in English and one in German; all the others were in French. The presentation of the grand old man of proverb studies, Wolfgang Mieder, under the heading *The Proverbial Rhetoric for Women's Rights by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony* was dedicated to the first American female feminists and their powerful rhetoric. Elisabeth Piirainen and Dmitri Dobrovolski, in their presentation *Idiom Motivation and Corpus Data*, discussed the problems of translating and analysing idioms on the basis of concrete language examples. Peter Blumenthal from the University of Cologne, in his presentation *Kombinatorisches Wortprofil und Phraseologieforschung*, introduced a statistical analysis of the changes in German language of journalism, which emerged in research carried out over a period of sixty years.

The round table discussions, mainly in French, focused on pragmatic phraseologisms, phraseodidactic studies, translating of phraseologisms and the aspect of diachrony in phraseology. The only discussion held in English, *Computational Phraseology in Huge Linguistic Corpora: Tools, Methods and Perspectives*, led by Jean-Pierre Colson, with the participation of Adam Kilgariff, Gloria Corpas-Pastor and Ruslan Mitkov, was dedicated to the management of huge linguistic corpora, the nature of the Sketch Engine and possibilities of applying it in phraseology research, as well as its perspectives in the work of phraseologists.

Drawing on the English- and German-language presentations, I would like to point to the main trends and more topical issues in the studies of phraseology today: to ascertain and analyse phraseological units on the basis of language corpora, comparative study of the phraseological material of two or more languages (for example, on the basis of expressions drawn on somatics and gestures), compound words as part of phraseology and lexicographical treatment in language corpora, the role of phraseologisms in (foreign) language learning, differences and similarities of phraseological expressions in journalism and fiction, the aspect of visuality and its applications. Year after year,

there are growing numbers of young researchers still working at their doctoral theses, who take the floor at the conferences of the Society of Phraseology, talking about how they use the possibilities that modern information technology offers, and presenting the results of their work. This tendency is bound to continue, the more so that the past conference elected a board for Europhras, with a new leader – Dr Kathrin Steyer from the University of Mannheim. K. Steyer has been actively engaged in corpus-based lexicography, including phraseology, as well as in the development of the SprichWort-Plattform, a project financed by the European Union.

Within the conference framework, a workshop for the project *Widespread Idioms*, run by the project leader Elisabeth Piirainen, took place. The problems under discussion were associated with the idiomatic equivalents in different languages, material for the next questionnaires, and the content and structure of the publication completed as a result of the material collected with the help of the questionnaires. A great number of phraseologists contribute to the project and nearly all the European languages are represented; yet, representatives of smaller language groups are also welcomed to join.

The next Europhras assembly takes place in Trier, Germany, in two years' time.

Anneli Baran

Main entrance of Paris-Sorbonne University. Photograph by Anneli Baran 2014.

IMPRESSIONS FROM THE 26TH CONFERENCE
OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR HUMOR STUDIES
IN UTRECHT, NETHERLANDS

The 26th Conference of the International Society for Humor Studies was held at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands from July 7 to July 11, 2014. The conference was hosted by Sibe Doosje from the University of Utrecht, with essential support from professors Jeffrey Goldstein and Giselinde Kuipers. 133 participants from a number of European, Asian and American countries took part in the event, along with a few participants from Australia and Africa.

The University of Utrecht provided its historic University Hall for the main conference venue. The five-day conference started off with pre-conference tutorials. The grand old men of humour research, Victor Raskin and Christie Davies, together with the local organiser Sibe Doosje, gave lectures about recent trends in humour research in the fields of linguistics, sociology and psychology.

The following four days were filled with interdisciplinary symposia and paper presentations. One of the key topics was a follow-up to the question posed by Victor Raskin at the 2012 conference in Kraków: identifying what is funny to whom and why. Several presenters tried to pin down the essential features of the humorous. For example, Julia Taylor from Purdue University applied the Ontological Theory of Humor (Raskin & Triezenberg 2005; Taylor 2009, 2010) to witticisms in online social media like Facebook. The fuzziness and contextuality of these data explains well why not many humour researchers want to go outside canned jokes, into studying speech (or CMC) instead.

In fact, many of the papers used internet humour as the main source of their data. A number of these explicitly tackled the unique aspects of this material, focusing on its intertextuality, multimodality and globality. Limor Shifman and Lilly Boxman-Shabtai identified six textual attributes that augment polysemy in mediated humour, including the display of un-stereotypical stereotypes applied to joke targets, self-deprecating humour, or the situation in which a negative character "wins" a situation, etc. Among others, they pointed at polysemy embedded in the intertextuality of the text. Although this term has a different and wider array of connotations in literature studies, it describes the processes that enable the globalisation of humour quite adequately. Jan Chovanec from Masaryk University in Brno also argues that much of the humour contained in YouTube videos is intertextual and relies on background knowledge assumed to be shared by the recipients; the success of such a meme is, to a great extent, decided by the success of the references it contains. It follows logically that the more various references there are, the greater are the chances of its appeal to wider audiences, as also mentioned in the presentation of Liisi Laineste.

Among the various genres discussed during the conference was stand-up. Sharon Lockyer from Brunel University in the UK gave an overview of the first year of the Centre for Comedy Studies Research, which has recently launched a project on comedy and disability. Disability has a long history within comic discourse – from court jesters to freak shows to the disabled making fun of their own disabilities. She has conducted interviews with disabled stand-up comedians and studies the questions of laughing at the forbidden, self-deprecating humour and empowerment in comedy. Eddie Naessens from Trinity College in Dublin, also a stand-up comedian himself, elaborated further

on the interaction between the performer and the audience, stressing that a comedian has to "manage the room", i.e., work with the audience to create the atmosphere. He or she can be seen as performing on a stage that is missing the fourth wall – the invisible line between him/her and the onlookers.

When talking about the audience's reactions, the question of failed humour inevitably arises. Moira Marsh from Indiana University in the US has dwelled upon this topic for several years by now, and gave her presentation on public reactions to a century-old hoax that was referred to as "gruesome" by the journalists of that time. Studying the context and reactions, she suggested that amusement is not something that happens to us, but something we choose to do, sometimes thoughtlessly, sometimes deliberately. She also claimed that an essential constituent of humour perception is disagreement – a sudden comprehension that there is something wrong in this picture; not for "us", but for "them". Of course, a joke can also function without a target, but laughing at someone adds enjoyment.

Through the past decade, there has been a growing number of participants from Asian countries. For instance, Japanese humour research is on a very high level, especially in describing humour from a folkloric perspective.

For those interested in the whole range of topics addressed at the 26th ISHS Conference, the programme and abstracts are available at the conference home page at http://www.eventure-online.com/eventure/welcome.do?type=public&congress=7_14015.

According to a long-standing tradition, several young researchers received awards for their work in humour studies. This year Jennifer Hofmann received the Don and Alleen Nilsen Young Scholars Award for her paper, *The Perception of Facial Features of Intense Laughter in Animations*. Three students received Graduate Students Awards (GSA) for their work: Tristan Miller for *Towards the Automatic Detection and Identification of English Puns*, Sarah Seewoester Cain for her *When Comedians Laugh: Laughter as a Signal for Meta-Communicative Shifts in Monologue Performances*, and Dick Zijp for *Humor, Authenticity and Absorption: Re-Thinking the Conservative Functions of Humor*.

Awards were allocated not only to students of humour research, but were also presented to long-standing members of the ISHS. Victor Raskin received a well-deserved ISHS Lifetime Achievement Award for his service and scholarly work in humour studies.

The next ISHS conference will be held in Oakland, California, on June 29 – July 3, 2015.

Liisi Laineste

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THESIS DEFENCE: TIINA SEPP

PILGRIM'S REFLECTIONS ON THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO AND GLASTONBURY AS EXPRESSIONS OF VERNACULAR RELIGION: A FIELDWORKER'S PERSPECTIVE

On 28 April 2014, Tiina Sepp defended her PhD thesis, *Pilgrims' Reflections on the Camino de Santiago and Glastonbury as Expressions of Vernacular Religion: A Fieldworker's Perspective*, at the University of Tartu.

Tiina Sepp's dissertation makes valuable contributions to the fields of vernacular religion, belief narrative, fieldwork – based methodology and pilgrimage studies. She has, above all, significantly enhanced the folkloristic study of the Camino de Santiago, and in addition has perceptively contributed to the study of Glastonbury, a later addition to her research field.

Her contributions fall into four main areas, which are subsequently dealt with one by one, although of course it is in the skilful intermingling of themes, genres, academic literature, fieldwork experiences, scholarly reflexivity and place-related study that the strengths of this dissertation lie.

1. Vernacular religion

Tiina Sepp has firmly situated her research in the academic context of vernacular religion, defined by Leonard Primiano as "an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the religious lives of individuals with special attention to the process of religious belief, the verbal, behavioral, and material expressions of religious belief, and the ultimate object of religious belief" (Primiano 1995: 44).

Because the focus of study in this approach is, in Primiano's words, "religion as it is lived: as humans encounter, understand, interpret and practice it" (Primiano 1995: 44), this approach "highlights the power of the *individual* and *communities of individuals* to create and re-create their own religion" (Primiano 2012: 383).

For this reason, the author has been careful to record the heterodox experiences and the heteroglot accounts of the people with whom she has worked. She has quite self-consciously avoided privileging the views or expectations of representatives of institutional religion over the lived experiences and perceptions of those self-identified pilgrims she encountered in relation to the Camino, for example.

As Professor Valk and I counsel in the Introduction to our book on *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life*, Tiina has 'observe[d] and capture[d] the flow of vernacular discourse' and perceptively 'reflect[ed] on it' (Bowman & Valk 2012: 2).

As her fieldwork has been based in two rather complex locations, the author has *also* reinforced Primiano's comments in relation to vernacular religion of the "bidirectional influences of environments upon individuals and of individuals upon environments in the process of believing" (Primiano 1995: 44) and, in this case, in the process of *narrating* belief, which brings us to the second area in which the candidate has made a significant scholarly contribution.

2. The content, uses, and construction of belief narrative

Primiano comments that "one of the hallmarks of the study of religion by folklorists has been their attempt to do justice to belief and lived experience" (Primiano 1995: 41), something that has been successfully achieved by Sepp in relation to belief narrative.

Particularly in her research on the Camino, the author records and analyses the wide range of belief narratives expressed by pilgrims, thereby framing pilgrimage as a narrated journey, potentially including miracles, supernatural encounters and spiritual experiences.

Narrative is extremely significant in relation to pilgrimage, for as Jill Dubisch (1995: 126) has noted, "there is a large oral tradition, consisting of pilgrims' own experiences and those relayed to them by word of mouth, a large part of which is not found in the literature of the church". Through the many opportunities presented to the author by participating in the Camino on a number of occasions, and in a range of roles – pilgrim, hospitalera, researcher – she has collected numerous narratives and has commented perceptively on their significance. These narratives have been meticulously and non-judgementally presented for what they are – expressions of belief. As folklorist Gillian Bennett points out, belief stories

1) illustrate current community beliefs;
2) tell not only of personal experiences but also of those that have happened to other people;
3) are used to explore and validate the belief traditions of a given community by showing how experience matches expectations. (Bennett 1989: 291)

Tiina Sepp has not simply presented narratives as text; she has skilfully contextualised them to reveal the varied perceptions of interventions by other than human beings revealed in them, and demonstrated both overt and covert uses of narrative from entertainment to exemplar.

The author has also drawn attention to the role and influence of traditional pilgrim tales, published personal accounts of walking the Camino (her own included), New Age literature and fiction in framing expectations of, and experiences on, the Camino.

If the Camino is a narrated journey, Glastonbury is rather a narrated destination, a location whose multivalence is to a large extent created by and reflected in narrative. While the candidate appeared to move away from belief narrative, or rather to some extent became embroiled in competing narratives around pilgrimage, when the author had a narrative of her own to relate, the 'green scarf story', she returned to a familiar territory, demonstrating the importance of narratives, here in the form of explanations, as expressions of belief.

The third area in which she has made a significant contribution relates to methodology.

3. Methodology, particularly in relation to fieldwork and reflexivity

In her very first sentence, Tiina Sepp states that "this dissertation has been completed through close collaboration between me and my informants", signalling, I think, the importance for her of interpersonal and dialogic relationships.

American folklorist David Hufford, in what I consider a ground-breaking article, *The Scholarly Voice and the Personal Voice: Reflexivity in Belief Studies*, writes:

> *Reflexivity and the strong light that it shines on the importance of viewpoint and perspective urges on us a multiplication of perspectives. We can never have a set of observations made from everywhere any more than we can have a view from nowhere, but the more views we consider, the more reason we have to be hopeful about our conclusions.* (Hufford 1995: 60)

I believe that the author has succeeded in shining some light on the importance of viewpoint and perspective.

Sepp emerges from these studies as a highly skilful and experienced fieldworker, both engaged and engaging. She has given considerable thought to the conduct of fieldwork, and indeed the conduct of the fieldworker, particularly in relation to her third article, somewhat sensationally entitled, *Interview as an Act of Seduction*. This article displays considerable candour and a high degree of reflexivity, but manages to avoid the self-indulgence that reflexivity can sometimes induce in researchers.

To quote Hufford again:

> *The tendency to count disbelief as the "objective" stance is a serious, systematic bias that runs through most academic studies of spiritual belief.*
>
> *If impartiality in belief studies cannot consist of having no personal beliefs, then impartiality must be a methodological stance in which one acknowledges one's personal beliefs, but sets them aside for scholarly purposes. Recognising that each of us has a personal voice, for research purposes we choose to speak instead with our scholarly voice.* (Hufford 1995: 61–62)

The author's reflections on her own 'situated-ness' in the fieldwork process, the potential impact of her personality, her own preferences – and to some extent prejudices – in relation to authority and institutional religion help her to recognise the personal voice that must exist in tension and negotiation with her scholarly voice. This is also relevant to the liminality of the fieldworker and the author's recognition that "as researchers and fieldworkers [we] will always have one foot in the academy and one foot out".

Although the author talks of emic and etic, and putting on her pilgrim's hat and her folklorist's hat, it is obvious that there are not simply two different positions, but a spectrum, along which the fieldworker constantly moves and recalibrates.

So, I think it is fair to conclude that the author has tackled difficult methodological issues, in ways that problematise but also progress the field.

4. Pilgrimage studies

Tiina Sepp said in her comments on her dissertation that when she finished her fourth article, she realised that the process of her research had directly (and unintentionally) reflected the history of pilgrimage studies (p. 22). She had moved, metaphorically, from Turnerian *communitas* to Eade and Sallnow's contestation. This in turn highlights the

extent to which we as scholars frame our research and the impact this might have in relation to what we look for and what we see. Even in the author's first article, although she concluded that the experience of *communitas* was central to being a pilgrim, contestation was there. For example, this was amply demonstrated in the diversity of motivations, experiences and disharmony recorded by her in conversations and narratives.

Professor Ülo Valk and I have observed that "genre [---] has considerable power to illuminate the processes, how texts are produced, perceived and understood. As genres emerge and grow historically, they mix the voice of tradition with individual voices, and instead of being univocal, they are always ambivalent, dialogic and polyphonic" (Bowman & Valk 2012: 8). Producing nuanced, contextualised, folkloristically informed accounts of belief narratives on the Camino undoubtedly has been a valuable contribution by the author to the scholarship of the Camino.

Simon Coleman and John Eade in *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* comment that in contemporary pilgrimage we see "diverse processes of sacralization of movement" and the idea of "meta-movement – the combination of mobility itself with a degree of reflexivity as to its meaning, form and function" (2004: 18). I think the careful recording of the extent to which hierarchies of pilgrim identities were formed in relation to means of transport, for example, contributes to such discourse.

One of the Glastonbury websites claims:

> The growing interest in sacred places has led to a modern awakening in the value of Pilgrimage. In every age there have been Pilgrims travelling to the sacred sites and places of the world as an act of spiritual devotion to their particular creed [---] The difference now is that the modern Pilgrims visiting the sacred places are of many different beliefs and often of no belief.
>
> They do not necessarily come to be in touch with any specific divinity but they come to be in the energies of the sacred places and by being in these places to understand themselves more clearly and to see their role in the world.

Tiina Sepp's fieldwork and reflections on the role of energies as a focus of pilgrimage, and discourses around perceptions of male and female energies and competing energies helpfully develop this strand within the study of contemporary pilgrimage.

Eade and Sallnow have concluded that major shrines and pilgrimage sites have the "capacity to absorb and reflect a multiplicity of religious discourses, to be able to offer a variety of clients what each of them desires" (Eade & Sallnow 2000: 15).

Pilgrimage as a term and concept *is* contested, used in different ways by different scholars as well as by participants. I note that even for informants in the first article, pilgrimage could be a difficult concept. Pilgrimage studies, nevertheless, is a vibrant field, enjoying increasing interdisciplinary interest. Further additions of vernacular religious perspectives and genre-informed, folkloristic fieldwork data of the type produced by the author undoubtedly strengthen the field.

These are some of the contributions to scholarship that I believe have been made by this dissertation.

In the following I briefly discuss some issues related to the contrasting locations chosen by the author as foci for her research.

The Camino de Santiago and Glastonbury

Kim Knott (2005: 33) claims that the "particularity of a place arises from the complexity of its social relations and the sum of the stories told about it" and both the Camino and Glastonbury undoubtedly involve complex social relations and numerous stories. But there are significant differences.

As the author has indicated, on the Camino de Santiago the focus is on the journey, getting to the destination, reached by a variety of highly structured routes with established infrastructures (such as pilgrim hostels). Although people undertake the Camino for a variety of reasons – religious, personal, therapeutic, spiritual, self-discovery – they nevertheless appear willing to conform to this structure, and it seems that the majority want to have the *compostela* that confirms their status as pilgrim. The stress, though, is on the Camino as journey. Belief narratives, as presented in this dissertation, tend to relate to supernatural help in *getting* there, stories relate to appropriate behaviour by people 'on the road'.

However, if the Camino is Europe's pilgrimage superhighway, with service stations and to some extent policed by the Roman Catholic Church, Glastonbury is by comparison a country lane. There is nothing like the same formal pilgrimage infrastructure of the Camino, no unified tradition of what pilgrimage in the Glastonbury context might mean, and certainly something like the official *compostela*, certification of one's credentials as a pilgrim, is simply impossible to conceive of in the Glastonbury context. While pilgrims arriving at the cathedral in Santiago de Compostello can engage in centuries old rituals such as hugging the statue of St James, Glastonbury Abbey, which was the traditional focus of Christian Pilgrimage, is a ruin as a result of the 16th century Reformation.

Pilgrimage and journeying in relation to Glastonbury, in contrast to the Camino, is focussed on the destination, and therefore it is anticipated that extraordinary experiences will result from **being there.** Belief narratives in Glastonbury tend to reflect spiritual encounter and instances of synchronicity or meaningful coincidence once there. While people might and do visit all year round for spiritual purposes, *formal* pilgrimage activity in Glastonbury – as indeed in many traditional pilgrimage sites and shrines in Europe and beyond – has been marked by the procession.

There were, therefore, significant adjustments to be made in relation to fieldwork in these two sites, including terminological and contextual adjustment and expectations.

Conclusions

Accepting, as Primiano claims, that "all religion is both subtly and vibrantly marked by continuous interpretation even after it has been reified in expressive or structured forms" (Primiano 2012: 384), we can comprehend that the study of pilgrimage and the study of vernacular religion *per se* can be enriched by *anticipating* heterogeneity, individual creativity and 'non-conformity', as the author has succeeded in doing. Focusing on pilgrimage as one aspect of religion, "as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it" (Primiano 1995: 44), folkloristically recording and analysing the stories told within the contexts of pilgrimage processes and sacred sites, and the myriad expressions of belief revealed thereby, can only lead to an ever deeper

understanding of the phenomena of vernacular religion. For such academic work to be conducted by a methodologically sophisticated and reflexively self-aware research is ideal.

As I said at the start, it is in the skilful *intermingling* of themes, genres, academic literature, fieldwork experiences, scholarly reflexivity and place-related study that the strengths of this dissertation lie, and Tiina Sepp has indeed made valuable scholarly contributions.

Marion Bowman

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BOOK REVIEWS

SEEING SEERS: AN EDUCATION IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY FAIRY BELIEFS
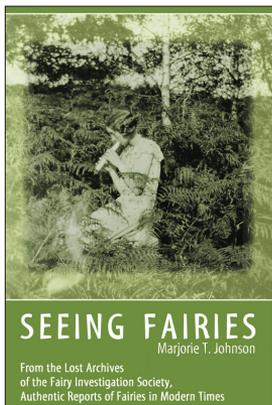
Marjorie T. Johnson. *Seeing Fairies: From the Lost Archives of the Fairy Investigation Society, Authentic Reports of Fairies in Modern Times.* **Edited by Simon Young. San Antonio: Anomalist Books, 2014. 363 pp.**

As anyone with an interest in British fairy-lore will know, fairies were often characterised as mischievous, malicious, even malevolent beings. Their general portrayal in pre-industrial popular belief is of a race of supernatural creatures whose favourite pastime was to cause trouble, even harm and death, for the fearful 'folk' of the British Isles. These, however, are not the creatures we are presented with in Marjorie Johnson's *Seeing Fairies*.

Seeing Fairies is what its title suggests: a collection of fairy sightings – more than four hundred of them in fact, making this one of the densest records of fairy encounters ever compiled, rivalling Walter Evans-Wentz's 1911 *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Counties* and Janet Bord's 1997 *Fairies: Real Encounters with Little People*. A myriad of memorates and anecdotes are recounted by the late Marjorie Johnson, whose eagerness to share her own personal experiences, opinions, and emotions fosters a sense of informal familiarity between writer and reader. This makes me reluctant to refer to her simply as Johnson, so forgive this break from academic tradition.

It took Marjorie, a lawyer's secretary from Nottingham, from 1955 to 1996 to write up her collection of memorates. She gathered her material primarily from the Fairy Investigation Society (FIS), which was founded in 1927 by Bernard Sleigh and Quentin Craufurd. It is Craufurd who fondly pens the foreword to *Seeing Fairies*; a retired naval scientist, Craufurd claimed to have communicated with fairies via radio. His foreword reproduces conversations he purportedly shared with them – conversations which sparked his decision to found the FIS, a society which, in its heyday, boasted a host of colourful, upper middle class individuals as its members, who met periodically to discuss spiritualism and fairy sightings.

Marjorie, who claimed to have frequently encountered fairies throughout her life and thus dubbed herself a 'fairy seer', was secretary of the FIS by 1950, and in that role she received numerous letters recounting fairy sightings worldwide. She kept a record of these letters and, long after she stepped down as secretary, continued to gather material for a book. Sadly she did not live to see it enter print in Britain; it was three years after her death, in 2014, that *Seeing Fairies* was finally published in English, thanks to the work of editor Simon Young, a British historian with an interest in fairy lore.

Young (commendably) stays as faithful to Marjorie's original manuscript as possible, choosing not to rectify the structural problems of the piece. Despite being divided into

seventeen thematic chapters – ranging from 'Nature Spirits in Gardens and the Countryside' to 'Angels and Angel Music' – *Seeing Fairies* would have benefited from further subdivisions. It might also have benefited from a re-structuring; Marjorie recounts the anecdotes of fairy sightings in an order that is neither chronological nor geographical. This results (as is candidly admitted by Young) in a rather random, turbid, and plethoric sequence of examples, which could have been aided by subtitles and the addition of an index.

Structural issues aside, however, *Seeing Fairies* offers a fascinating insight into modern British fairy belief, so enthusiastically recounted by Marjorie. Her writing style is straightforward but meticulously detailed; she introduces each informant by title, name, and place of residence, before providing an exact date and often time (sometimes as specific as 2:30 am) for the informant's fairy encounter. She then presents the memorate, either by paraphrasing or quoting directly from correspondences with them. Her writing is also rather (forgive the sanctimonious quotation marks) "scientific", peppered with terms characteristic of spiritualism and parapsychic research: 'astral projection', 'ectoplasm', 'electrical ethers', 'cosmic space', 'vibratory rate of atoms', and so on. However, these terms are interspersed throughout such fantastical accounts that *Seeing Fairies* proves to be a peculiar mix of erudition and whimsy.

The fairies portrayed by Marjorie and her contributors are not of the same ilk as those malicious creatures of pre-industrial folk belief; at the most, they are distant relatives. Some misbehaviour is recounted (e.g., fairies leading people astray, or hiding possessions) but these activities are generally harmless, more mischief than malevolence, and on the whole Marjorie's fairies are more akin to – indeed, may have set the precedent for – the benevolent, saccharine creatures of modern popular culture. As nature spirits, they help plants to grow and fruits to ripen; they tend to flowers and protect trees; they aid animals and even, occasionally, humans. There is something sweetly pastoral about these descriptions: fairies who frequent fairy markets, push wheelbarrows, go lamb-riding, and on hot summer days sit on toadstools in the shade of turnip rows and partridge-watch for pleasure. And such descriptions are so vividly and meticulously detailed – everything from the fairies' heights and the materials of their clothes, to their odours (some apparently smell of fungus) and the sounds they make – that the reader can easily imagine experiencing the encounter themselves.

It is not, however, just the benevolent nature of these fairies that may seem unfamiliar to the reader, but their modernity. A lot of Marjorie's anecdotes come from the 1950s and 1960s, but some are as late as the 1970s, 80s and 90s, and it is novel, for those familiar with the work of Evans-Wentz, for example, to read of fairy encounters that involve cars, trains, planes, bus depots, the wireless, television sets, washing machines, dishwashers, etc. Such fairy stories seem incongruous in industrial and post-industrial contexts. However, the relative modernity of these sources makes them more, rather than less, interesting. Taken as a primary source, *Seeing Fairies* provides remarkable insight into the mutability of fairies by demonstrating how perceptions of them change over the centuries. The fact that Marjorie seemed to believe wholeheartedly in the authenticity of the accounts she relayed does not detract from the value of this book as an academic resource. If anything, it greatly increases it, demonstrating the extent to which fairy-beliefs survived deep into – and probably beyond – the 20th century.

Ceri Houlbrook

MILESTONE IN THE STUDY OF MORDVINIAN MYTHOLOGY
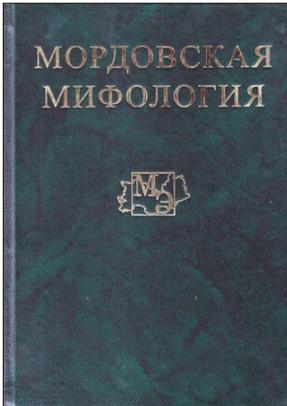
Mordovskaia mifologiia. **Entsiklopediia I. A-K. Sa-ransk: Nauchno-issledovatel'skii institut gumani-tarnykh nauk pri Pravitel'stve Respubliki Mordoviia. 2013. 484 pp. In Russian.**

In 2013, the first volume (484 pp.) of the encyclopaedia of Mordvinian mythology covering references A to K was published in Saransk. This volume published by the Mord-vinian Institute for the Humanities is the third academic treatment of mythology that has come out during the past three decades. This number is impressive, and even larger nations cannot compete with it, not to mention middle-sized or small ethnic groups. The number of the Mordvins (Moksha, Erzya, Shoksha) in the Republic of Mordovia is 331,000 people, and along with the diaspora compatriots it amounts to over a million. The preparation of mythology volumes started with the Finno-Ugric joint project *Mythologia Uralica* (Hoppál 2011), which has, one way or another, influenced all the participants, including the works of T. Deviatkina, N. Mokshin and N. Yurchenkova, who partook in the first meeting in Joensuu, Finland.

The earlier editions represented the views of one author, who also wrote the introduc-tion and articles for the mythology dictionary (Deviatkina 1998; Mokshin 2004). Tatiana Deviatkina's volume is based on poetic and religious folklore, descriptions of rituals, and ethnographic printed word. The articles present terminology in Erzian and Mokshan, and their regional peculiarities. Mythology treatment by a Mokshan researcher is pre-sented in Mokshan, Russian, English, Arabic and French. Nikolai Mokshin's approach is more centred on ethnography/ethnology; yet, publication in Russian also guarantees a wider readership.

The new edition is the most voluminous of the three, a complex reference book. Under the editorship of V. Yurchenkov and I. Zubov, the authors have compiled a collection of encyclopaedic articles covering different fields of concepts, types of folklore, religion, ritual phenomena, and mythology. The encyclopaedia differs from the former ones by its general philosophical foundation. The principles of the approach have been formulated by V. Yurchenkov and N. Yurchenkova (2013: 6–16), who point to mythology as an entirety that influences culture and is in a dialogue with it. Accordingly, the introduction discusses mythology as a worldview, and ritual practices related to it, which are expressed in different mediums. Mythology is also characterised as a source of creation and science, its reflection in different arts and its impact on creative handwriting. Relationships between mythology and science discuss collection, publication and research, identifying different tendencies (descriptive, reconstructive and detailed analyses period).

Entries cover a wide range of notions: general concepts of morals, ethics and religion (e.g. *good and evil*, *wealth*), ethnography (e.g. *house*, *sauna*), rituals, and folklore. The articles dwell upon the calendar system and holidays, deities and demonology, as well as concepts of mythology (e.g. *tree of life*, *tree of death*). Under family rituals the authors discuss cases that have received little attention so far, including relationships between mythology and customs related to children. The last entry covers rituals and beliefs as-sociated with the first bath of the newborn, taking into sauna, putting into the cradle,

up to the rituals related to cutting hair and uniting the community. Children's folklore and their role in rituals have been emphasised in several articles, for instance, cross-references to calendar rituals. This is a nice innovation, especially considering the fact that in the past one hundred years part of the rituals have had a symbolic connection to children, been oriented on them or constitute a part of children's folklore.

The subject thesaurus is based on symbolism in the religious system and culture. As the thesaurus itself will be published in the next volume, I can only share my general impression that articles have been presented for symbolic items, plants, animals, persons, temporal and calendrical phenomena, significant topographical centres, as well as (ritual) acts and practices. Information directly related to mythological creatures and myths is presented as part of a major whole.

The authors also show interest in filtering out invariable messages and connecting different code systems (cf. Tolstoi & Tolstaia 2013). The treatment of rituals in a religious context (one of the special features of the volume) is inherent in Russian folkloristics and associated with long-term theoretical tradition (V. Propp 1963; Baiburin 1983; Tolstoi 2013; etc.).

A considerable number of articles introduce the activity of folklore collectors and researchers. The volume presents biographies, fields of interests and research areas, followed by bibliography with more important researches. In the case of collectors, the collection areas and recorded species have been specified. The articles written in this key provide information about the person's contribution to cultural processes, which is often multifaceted. For instance, ethnomusicologist Nikolai Boiarkin (b. 1947) has, in addition to his widely known research, composed music based on folklore; he is also a conductor and active member of specialty organisations, as well as participant in the activity of scientific organisations.

Viktor Danilov (1942–2002) spent most of his adult life in Estonia, collecting Mordvinian folklore, performing folksongs, introducing and advocating folk culture. The article dwells upon the folklore he collected, his participation in the folk ensemble *Hellero*, and other facts about him.

A voluminous series of articles discusses the relationships between professional arts and myths. In addition to the review article on fine arts and myths, the encyclopaedia presents individual articles on ethno-artists, including wood sculptors, depicters of ethno-futuristic mythical world, etc.

The articles in the encyclopaedia are illustrated with historic documentary photographs, which with their narratives and details constitute a great complement to subject articles. In addition, the volume includes numerous samples of various art styles, in some cases even several reproductions per article. The illustrative side is powerful and leaves the impression of an art album or a visual overview with different styles, schools and typical techniques.

The complex whole covering different topics in alphabetical order is convenient for the user. It is not a bad idea to include the articles of scientific and cultural-historic importance (folklorists, folklore collectors, artists engaged in ethno-art, etc.) in the main part of the dictionary, considering how lazy the readers of today are. The volume provides an overview of mythology and religion, the role of Mordvinian researchers and artists in the process of culture creation, as well as the reflection of myths in the works of art and culture. The work done to present mythology and religion is remarkable, and the reader is looking forward to the next volume.

Mare Kõiva

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PUBLICATIONS ON THE OCCASION OF ARVO KRIKMANN'S 75TH JUBILEE

SCALA NATURAE

FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOUR OF ARVO KRIKMANN
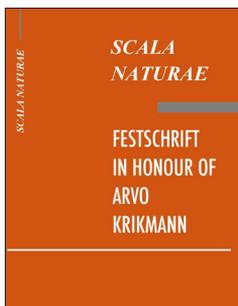
Scala naturae: Festschrift in Honour of Arvo Krikmann. Compiled and edited by Anneli Baran, Liisi Laineste, Piret Voolaid. Tartu: ELM Scholarly Press, 2014. 442 pp.

The volume in English, dedicated to academician Arvo Krikmann, includes writings from his long-term colleagues from Europe and outside (North America, Australia), for whom he has been a good colleague, supervisor and tutor.

The contributions from 29 authors result from the academic encounters with the work published by the jubilarian during his long-term career. The collection starts with shorter tributes, but especially noteworthy is Wolfgang Mieder's selection of his cordial correspondence with the jubilarian from the years 1993–2013. All the longer research articles can be categorised under two main topics – short forms of folklore (mainly proverbs) and humour – and they represent varied methodological approaches to the main subjects.

The publication of the collection was supported by the institutional research grant IUT22-5 and the Cultural Endowment of Estonia.

***Antropologicheskii Forum* (Anthropological Forum)
No. 21, 2014. 392 pp. In Russian.**

The 21st issue of the Russian scientific journal *Antropologich-
eskii Forum* (http://anthropologie.kunstkamera.ru/06/2014_21)
contains a chapter with a collection of articles on short forms
and humour, titled *O znamenakh, drakonakh i anekdotakh*
('About flags, dragons, and anecdotes') as a tri-bute to Arvo
Krikmann. The chapter starts with Alexandra Arkhipova and
Nikita Petrov's joint article *Malye zhanry – bol'shomu uche-
nomu* ('Short forms to a great researcher'), which is directly
based on Arvo Krikmann's research. Sergei Neklyudov's article
discusses the functions of mythological images of the dragon
in sayings and myths. A new topic is introduced by Nikita
Petrov's folkloric treatment of the possibilities to remember the colours of the Russian
flag. Two voluminous articles concern academic collections of humour about two con-
temporary dictators. Material for both Alexandra Arkhipova and Manolo Alejándrez's
article about political humour associated with Fidel Castro, and Anastasia Astapova's
article about anecdotes on Alaksandr Łukashenka, was collected in Cuba and Belorussia,
respectively, and both articles apply the methods elaborated by the jubilarian.

***Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb
Scholarship*, Vol. 31, 2014. 532 pp.**

Under the editorship of Wolfgang Mieder, the University of
Vermont has published a special issue (31:2014) of *Proverbium:
Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship*, which tradition-
ally includes proverb studies, as well as a longer introductory
writing by Wolfgang Mieder about Arvo Krikmann and the
bibliography of his 50 most important paremiological and pare-
miographical researches from the years 1967–2013.

The yearbook contains 17 articles dedicated to proverbs,
the first of which is *Mosaic or Jigsaw? Publishing an Article
from Estonia in the "West", 30 Years Ago, When Circumstances
Were Quite Different from Today*, by Peter Grzybek, professor
of Slavistics at Graz University, giving an overview of the correspondence between the
author and Arvo Krikmann from April to November 1984. This correspondence started
when Peter Grzybek, who at the time worked at Ruhr University Bochum, Germany,
turned to Krikmann with a request to contribute to a special issue of the journal *Kodi-
kas / Code: Ars semiotica*, which was dedicated to the memory of Grigori Permyakov,
who had passed away in November 1983 (the article by Krikmann, *1001 Frage zur
logischen Struktur der Sprichwörter*, was published in the special issue in the same
year). The correspondence and six handwritten or typed letters as examples give us an
idea of the scholarly communication of the period, bringing back to the memory tradi-
tions of the pre-information technology era and explaining the nature (censorship and
control mechanisms) of the Soviet and Western scholarly communication separated by
the 'iron curtain'.
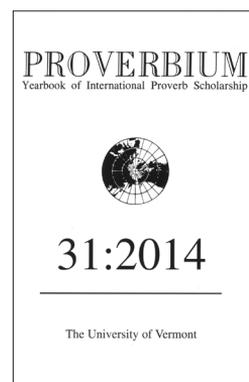
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On the cover: Street vendors in New Mexico. Photograph by Andres Kuperjanov 2014.

Great Wall (About Qin Empire read from p. 165)